

DONALD WONG OF SONG SAA ON THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL IN CAMBODIA

DONALD WONG, WHO HELMS THE THE ULTRA-LUXE SONG SAA PRIVATE ISLAND, SPEAKS WITH REMOTE LANDS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL IN CAMBODIA.

CAMBODIA

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TRAVELOGUES STORYTELLER

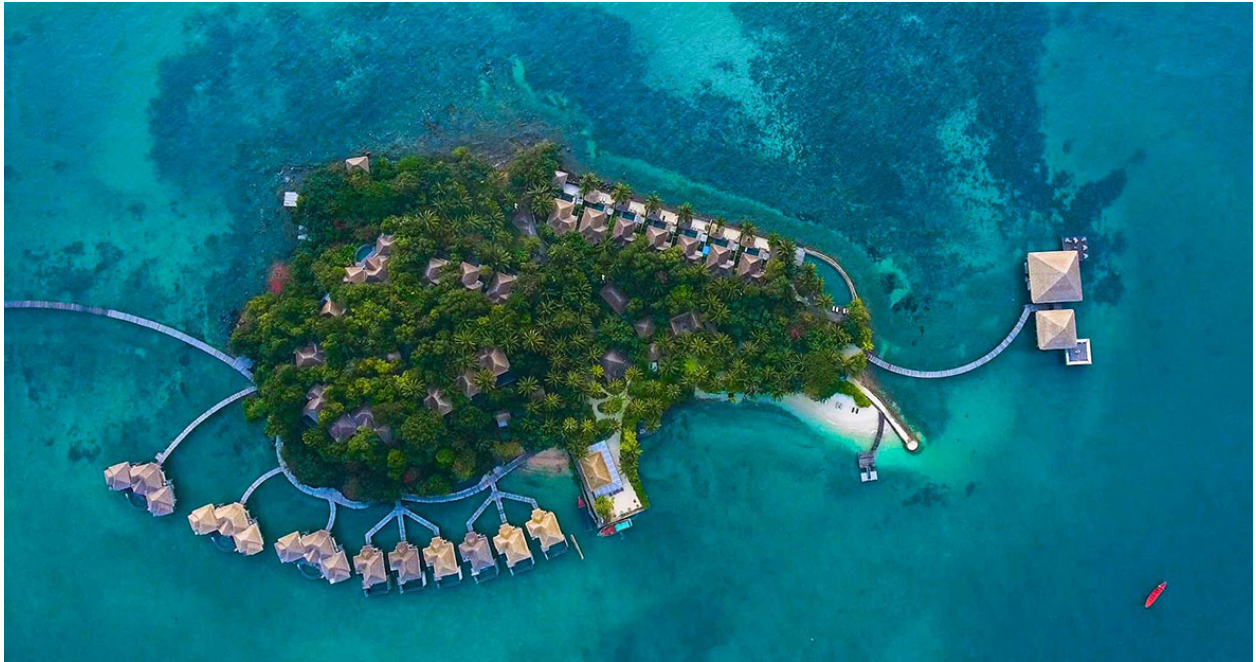


TRAVELOGUES



The return of international travel has heralded a new call for more intimate, private experiences, and in Cambodia, few can rival the likes of the Song Saa Private Island. Found a 45-minute speedboat ride from Sihanoukville, the ultra-luxe Song Saa Private Island is helmed by Donald Wong, who

took time to speak to Remote Lands about the future of travel in Cambodia.



Song Saa Private Island from above.

Compared to other areas of Southeast Asia, Cambodia has been spared much of the fallout from Covid-19. How do you see international travel shaping up in the coming months?

Fortunately for our Khmer family of staff, Song Saa Private Island has remained opened during the pandemic, welcoming locals and expats who live in Cambodia. After months of confinement, it's a blessing to offer a sanctuary where people craving to be reunited with friends and family may gather freely and celebrate. Looking ahead, I feel recovery from our international markets will be slower. Cambodia introduced a unique and mandatory US\$2,000 Covid-19 deposit for each arrival to cover medical expenses including testing and a 14-day quarantine stay if required. For now this limits our ability to attract foreign tourists back to the destination.



Royal Villa Interior.

As a private island experience, how does Song Saa Private Island mesh with trends for privacy in the post-Covid World?

Song Saa Private Island is just that, privacy. All of our villas — Overwater Villas, Jungle Villas and Ocean View Villas — offer enough privacy that our guests never feel in close contact with each other. On top of that guest experience, we've implemented new policies & procedures to minimize points of contact and optimize safety and hygiene while still providing the utmost level of service.

Has the moratorium on international travel had an effect on the underwater wildlife surrounding Song Saa Private Island? And can you tell us about some of your diving experiences?

Thanks to our partners, collaborators and volunteers, the Song Saa Foundation continues to make a positive impact on our communities and environment. In 2019, we received a prestigious “JUST” label from the International Living Future Institute for how we champion social and environmental equality. We have a 200 meter marine reserve around Song Saa where the underwater wildlife is thriving like never before and we have conducted 132 coral transects. We offer dives for certified

PADI divers, as well as dive orientation in our main pool and scuba review/refresher courses for anyone who's been a 'fish out of water' for too long. Whenever you come, you can expect to see a diverse abundance of corals and anemones as well as fish a plenty including scorpion, angel parrot, moray eels, seahorses, barracuda, Napoleon wrasse, trigger fish, puffer fish, rainbow runners, sting rays, octopus and horseshoe crabs, just to name a few.



Villa exterior at Song Saa Private Island.

This year has been a rough one for international travel. What are some new features travelers can look forward to at Song Saa Private Islands in 2021?

We feel the effects of 2020, my Khmer staff and I, but our nature is thriving. In 2021, we look forward to welcoming guests with nature more abundant than ever and seemingly infinite open space to breathe again. We continue to support sustainability for the environment here in the Koh Rong Archipelago which remains largely undeveloped. So until you can visit, picture our deserted oasis of virgin tropical jungle, vibrant coral reefs and glistening white beaches. Then as our guest, you'll be among a handful of lucky adventurers to walk among old-growth rainforests, to watch reef fish swim under your private villa and with a little luck, to see our favorite rare hornbills alight on your balcony.



Royal Villa Exterior.

Wellbeing and wellness activities seem to be the theme of much post-Covid travel. What are some of the wellbeing features of Song Saa Private Island?

At Song Saa, we strive to embrace the Buddhist tradition of 'Metta Bhavana,' meaning loving kindness and we aim to share this by offering blessings to others. For example in our island's spa, products are all sustainable and natural, made by artisanal producers who in turn support their communities in Cambodia and elsewhere. For guests, our wellness treatments center around themes of Stillness, Healing and Blessings. We'll take you to a special meditation rock on our twin island, Koh Bong to watch the sunrise while your body is soothed and relaxed, your mind is made calm and composed.