



SONG SAA
CAMBODIA

There's a pervading sense of calm that radiates from Song Saa, two private islands off Cambodia's once-overlooked southern coast. It starts with sunrise Buddhist blessings from tangerine-robed local monks and lasts until the candlelit suppers soundtracked by the splashes of leaping fish. Australian owners Rory and Melita Hunter are accidental hoteliers – he was a Saatchi executive, she an interior designer – who had an epiphany while sailing a rented fishing boat along the mangroves and white-sand beaches of the Koh Rong archipelago in 2005. The couple bought tiny Koh Ouen and Koh Bong and spent six years crafting overwater villas with upcycled furniture and salvaged wood from abandoned boats. They also set up a foundation to protect and support the surrounding rainforests, sealife and communities such as the stilted Prek Svay village on neighbouring Koh Rong. Six Senses and Alila Villas have since arrived on nearby Cambodian islands, but Song Saa is the original; a living, breathing passion project that has that intangible essence – a soul. songsaa.com. *Doubles from about £855*



South-east Asia:
More Classics

Four Seasons Resort Bali at

Sayan, on the banks of the Ayung River just outside arty Ubud, is still queen of the jungle two decades in. Waterfront villas with lotus-filled pools and a lobby terrace that overlooks dense, tumbling palms create a sense of lush timelessness. But a new cookery school and refreshed wellness programme are now speaking to the mindful crowd that flock to this corner of Indonesia. ♦ At **Nihi Sumba**, above, an hour's flight from Bali on a lesser-known island, solitude – 27 villas are spread across 550 acres of forest – is more prized than pomp.

As is adventure; the hotel opens onto God's Left, one of the world's top private waves. With ties to the local community and a rustic surfer ethos, Nihi has managed the near impossible: to be five-star and cool. ♦ There was relief in 2018 when Malaysia's **The Datai Langkawi**, with its nature-luxe architecture by the late Kerry Hill and jungle-meets-sand setting, emerged from an almost £50 million overhaul as fantastically wild as ever. There are new rainforest villas and a nature centre, but the best thing to do is still to scope out dusky leaf monkeys on the walk to the Andaman Sea. ♦ Thai island Phuket has grown up from backpackers' hangout to serious hotel destination. Which makes it all the more impressive that relative newcomer **Rosewood Phuket** is leading the pack, with breezy bungalows and a prime beach spot.