

SECTION 5

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

TRAVEL SECTION OF THE YEAR

TRAVEL

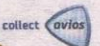
BEST 100 HOLIDAYS 2017



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THE BEACH TREND

CAMBODIA'S BEACHES

LAURA GOULDEN



Washed by the Gulf of Thailand, Cambodia's beaches are every bit as Instagrammable as those of its neighbour to the west – and, crucially, they're quieter. They've also recently become that bit better connected to the rest of the world, thanks to direct Cambodia Angkor Air flights from Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) to Sihanoukville, which launched last summer.

Sihanoukville is also accessible via an hour's flight from Siem Reap or a 3½-hour drive from Phnom Penh.

This improved access to one of the last unspoilt regions in Southeast Asia (once you get out of Sihanoukville itself) has been duly noted by some of the world's dreamiest hotel brands – and the first of what is likely to be a flurry of openings is slated for the second half of 2017.

Leading the charge is **Alila Villas Koh Russey** (kohrussey.com), which is due to open in August on a private island a short speedboat ride from Sihanoukville. It will sport seriously slick white and wood decor, and have a vast spa. Room rates are likely to be about £250 a night, which

could be worse, considering that the Villa properties are the brand's most upmarket offering, and that rooms at the equivalent Balinese outpost cost at least twice as much.

Alila will be followed, towards the end of the year, by a

Six Senses (sixsenses.com)

on nearby Krabey Island. The decor will fit the brand's signature rustic-luxury mould – expect lots of turquoise scatter cushions and billowing muslin – while outside it's all untouched white beaches and jungle.

What's that? You can't wait that long? It is possible to go now, but the only high-end base is the glamorous **Song Saa Private Island** resort (songsaa.com). Rooms here start at £690 a night, but

Turquoise Holidays is offering a week combining Song Saa with Angkor Wat from £2,335pp, including flights (turquoise.holidays.co.uk).

The more budget-minded traveller might prefer a cute, affordable boutique base such as **Tamu** (doubles from £86; tamucambodia.com), on laid-back Otres Beach, south of Sihanoukville.

Song Saa, top, and Krabey Island

