



# Review: Treeline Urban Resort, Cambodia

11 JUN 2019 · KATRINA HOLDEN



It's just after sunrise and slashes of pink still streak across the early morning sky. I'm the only guest awake and up at the Treeline Urban Resort's rooftop infinity pool, an oasis that could be anywhere. I dive into the dark water of the pool and float on my back as birds zip overhead. It's a refresh from Cambodia's humidity, even at this early hour.

Opened in November 2018, this is one of Siem Reap's newest hotels, just a short drive from the UNESCO temple site of Angkor Wat.







This sleek design and eco-conscious hotel sits across from the Siem Reap riverfront and offers a contemporary option in the city. A neutral colour palette, minimalist design, lush green foliage and numerous art installations create a space that is tranquil and serene despite its position in a central part of Siem Reap's historic quarter. The Treeline property takes its inspiration from the Angkorian trees that line the riverfront at Angkor Wat, which now wrap their jungle vines around ancient stones. Treeline aims to meld nature and civilisation while reflecting Siem Reap's unique place in the world.

Owner Hok Kang, a designer, wanted to create an urban resort and creative arts space to reflect the pioneering spirit of Cambodia and its burgeoning food and cultural scene. The Treeline Art Foundation promotes local artistic efforts through a rotating artist in residence program.



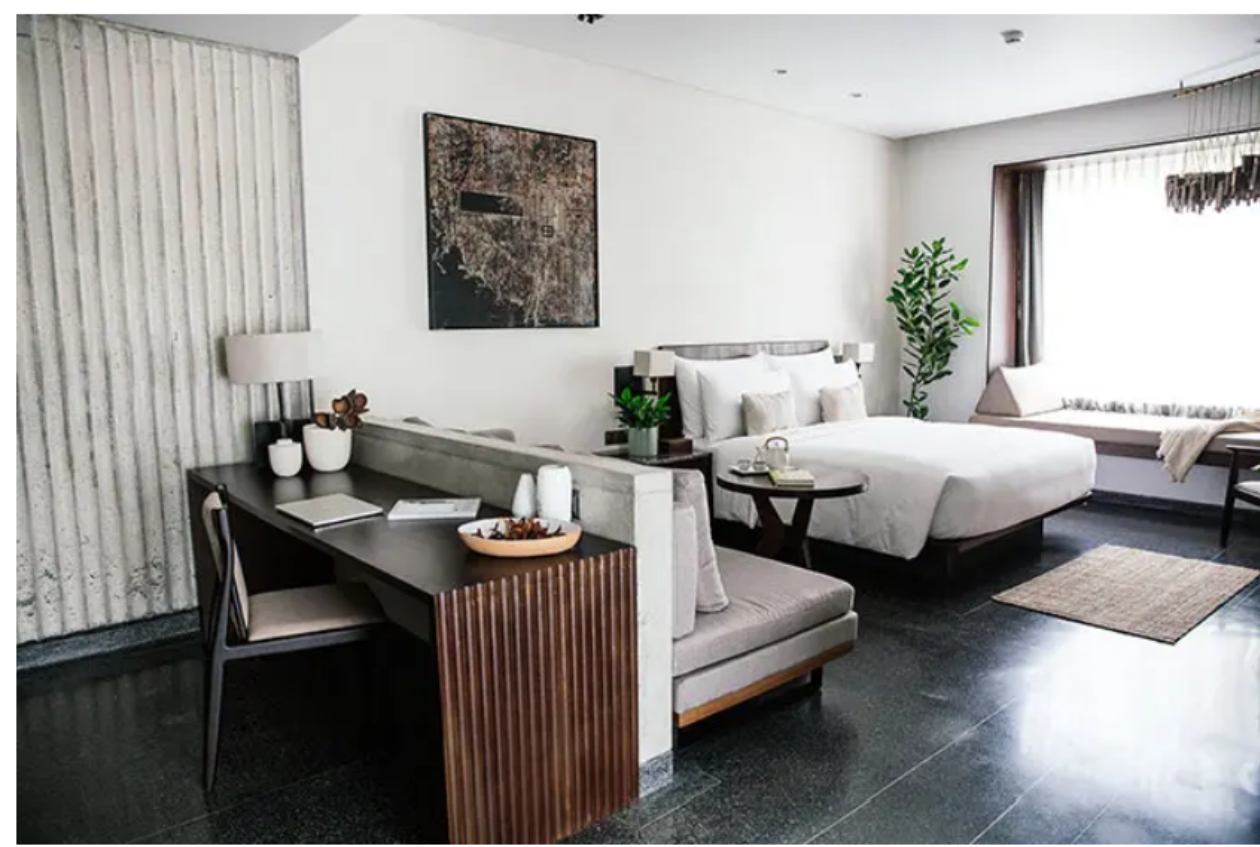




While taking breakfast in the courtyard at Seed, I overlook a number of artworks on display from a group exhibition titled 'Face Forward'. A water sculpture trickles in the background while I sip on jasmine tea and sample the fresh and mostly locally sourced breakfast foods, including the 'Green Goddess Toast' with green pea guacamole, poached eggs and a salad of sugar snap peas; and a roti paratha – with Hyderabad style eggs, raita and bird chilli.



In my spacious and calming Junior Suite, there's thankfully not a plastic bottle in sight. The entire hotel is free of single-use plastics including straws, water bottles and packaging. Jars of trail mix, dried fruit and biscotti provide welcome snacks alongside my Harney & Sons tea. Native timber is used in the stylish space, including the large sliding door to the bathroom. A sculptural piece dangles from the ceiling above a bench seat by the bay window. A large stone sculpture stands guard near my door. A corrugated wall of curved concrete frames the desk area. The bathroom has a cool and sexy sunken bathtub with a single window and blinds that can be lowered at the touch of a button via remote control – privacy guaranteed. The bed is incredibly comfortable and a pillow menu will please even the fussiest of travellers. I enjoy a long and peaceful sleep.







I spend nearly a full day exploring the vast temples and ancient wonders of Angkor Wat, along with the other 8,000 or so daily visitors to the site. Treeline has organised a local registered tour guide for me – a gentleman named Toma. His story is almost as fascinating as the temples themselves. Toma, aside from being incredibly knowledgeable about Cambodian history, was also full of life and positive spirits. I spend the day learning the fascinating history of his country as well as his own background –including that he had been a former monk for 10 years but left the monastery because he wanted to learn more. At just six years old, his father was killed by the Khmer Rouge, and his mother was sent to a camp. He never saw her again. Despite all of this, the highly educated Toma was full of appreciation and joy. At times during our tour, in his pure, Buddhist way he would sometimes just say “happy” – which was both a statement and a question. Although he’d visited the temples literally thousands of times, he would gaze in awe and sigh, “beautiful” as we looked on. He was living in the moment, and teaching me to do so as well.





Tour guide Toma. Image: Katrina Holden

As marvellous as the temples are, there is no doubt that the crowds can leave you feeling exhausted. Which is why returning to the seclusion of Treeline and the haven of its SURI Spa feels incredibly rewarding.

Before my late afternoon treatment, I sip on cinnamon tea served to me by the spa manager, Theavy, and select my blend of oils (not surprisingly, I choose the 'Relaxing' blend).





What I love about Treeline Urban Resort, aside from providing a slice of design-driven serenity in a bustling city, is the ethos of Treeline to preserve the 'roots' of Cambodian art and culture. The hotel's private art collection celebrates how contemporary art and design has grown and flourished in Cambodia. For a sophisticated, sustainable and grounded stay in the heart of Siem Reap, branch out from the usual offerings and check out Treeline Urban Resort.