

# Island Development Very Much on Song – Phnom Penh Post, Jan 2010

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An artist's impression of the Song Saa Island Resort.

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Sihanoukville is getting ready for the “next Asian Riviera” just off its coast.

Located on Koh Ouen and Koh Bong in the Koh Rong archipelago (a 30 minute boat ride from Sihanoukville) the Song Saa Island Resort development was launched in Phuket, Thailand on December 17.

The Song Saa (“lovers” in Khmer) islands, adjacent to Koh Rong, are owned by the Cambodia-based Royal Group. The twin islands are pitched to be the next Phuket, with plans to develop them as Asia’s first environmentally planned island development. While maintaining high standards for environmental quality, the hope is to make the archipelago comparable to established markets such as Phuket, Samui and Bali.

The resort’s 14 one- and two-bedroom residential villas have a starting price of US\$200,000. The facilities will include a five-star over-water restaurant and bar, swimming pool, spa and wellness centre, a yoga and meditation centre and a beachside water sports centre.

Construction will begin next year and is expected to be finished in the second quarter of 2011.

Rory Hunter, chairman of developer Brocon Investment, said the launch of Song Saa Island Resort has put Cambodia on the global map and paved the way for future developments.

“I believe the uniqueness of the product, the charm of the island and the pricing have been the key factors for Song Saa’s success,” Hunter said.

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While there are other resort developments in Sihanoukville, including Sokha Hotel and Koh Puos (Snake Island), Song Saa Island Resort aims to be the first project to target foreign buyers.

Offering a 99-year leasehold, it is the first international development of its kind along the Cambodian coast.

While Cambodia is still an emerging destination for five-star beach resort seekers, LA-based real estate agency CB Richard Ellis is optimistic the region is a sure bet.

Chairman of CB Richard Ellis Thailand, David Simister, said at the resort's launch in Phuket the Cambodian coast would likely see a boom similar to Thailand's coastal tourist mecca.

"The Phuket market has clearly identified with the product," Simister said.

"Despite being an emerging destination, Song Saa has attracted a global mix of investors, including Norwegian, French, Hong Kong Chinese, Hong Kong expatriate and British."

By the end of the launch, CB Richard Ellis reported eight bookings had already been made.

Development of the archipelago is dependent on the resumption of commercial flights to Sihanoukville Airport, which currently limits its operations to chartered flights and private jets. Flights from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are expected to resume in the near future, with regional airlines expected to provide services within the next year.