JATI Is A Poppy Piece Of Paradise

The poppy new resort, JATI Koh Russey, is a haven with a heartbeat, paradise in imperatives.

by David Kaye — 7 July, 2025 in Travel

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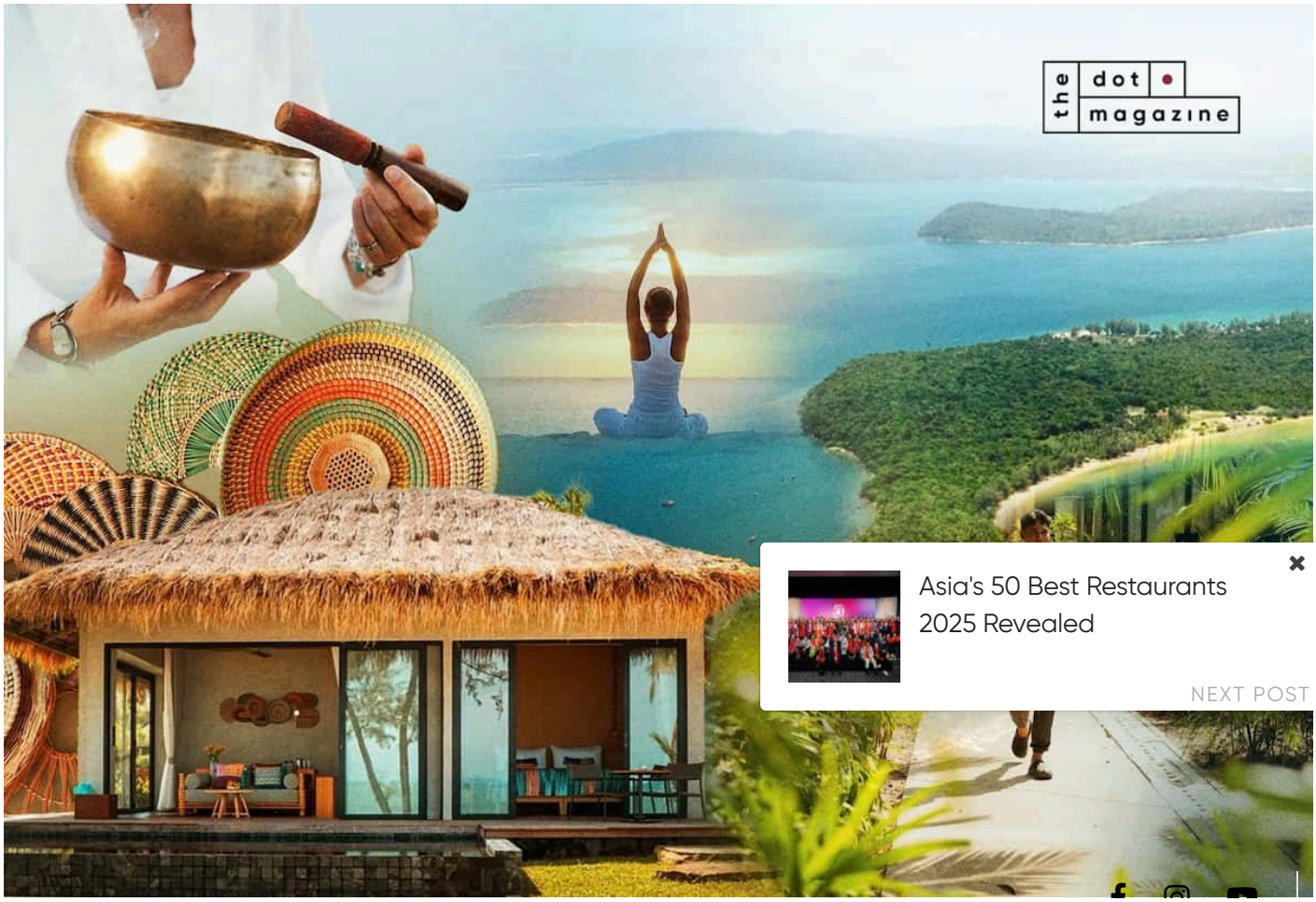

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resort on Cambodia's Koh Russey Island, is a poppy piece of paradise.

Beside the beds, in JATI's Garden Pavilions, Garden Villas, and 1- and 2-Bedroom Beach Villas, the notepad breaks down the options for the day succinctly: Have a massage (like you needed an excuse), walk barefoot (feel the earth and trust the process), swim in the sea (salt water cures everything), sip something tropical (bonus points if it has a tiny umbrella), do absolutely nothing (you're on island time now), or close your eyes and listen (nature's playlist is better than Spotify anyway).

There's a checkbox next to each, to mark your progress. The ultimate choose-your-own-adventure for the chronically overstimulated.

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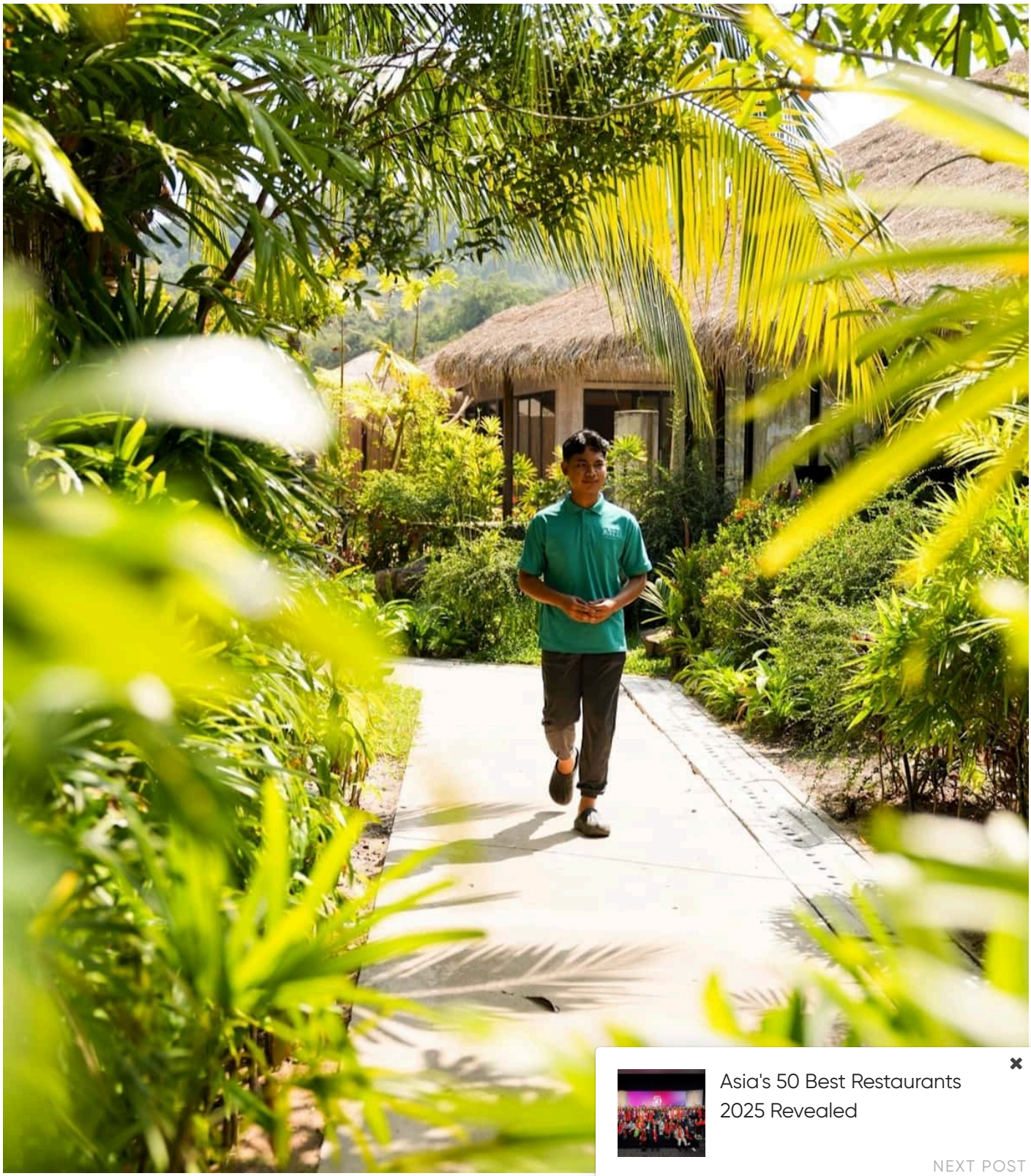

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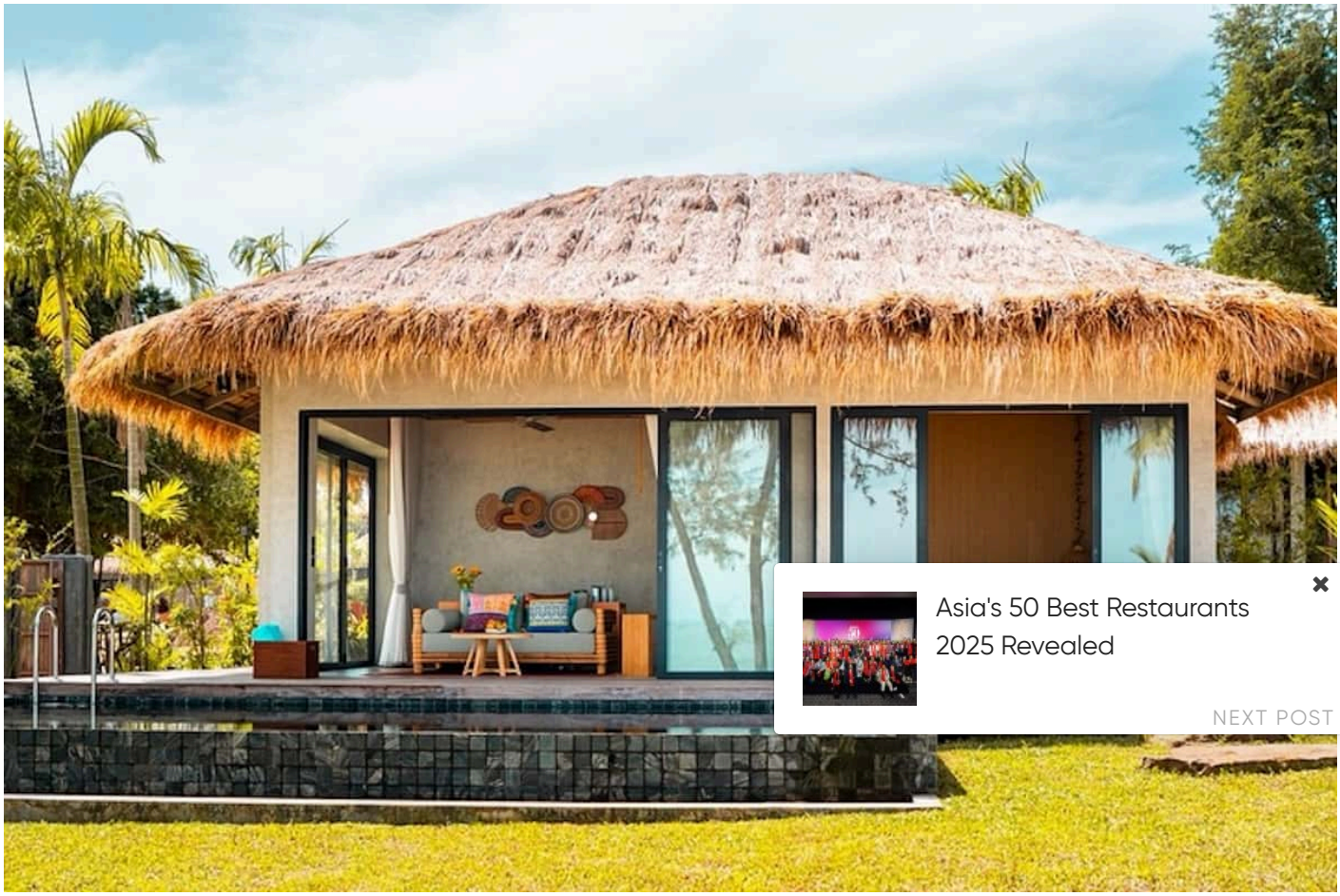
JATI sprawls horizontally, purposefully built around the land's natural features.

A Scattering Of Emerald Isles Across The Gulf Of Thailand

For many, the journey here starts on the mainland roads, leaving the urban hustle behind. It's that final moment when you park your vehicle, perhaps dreaming of a future road trip or a simpler ride for the daily commute—a thought easily explored later when Browse cars for sale on a streamlined marketplace—before stepping onto the pier.

Koh Russey, the 'Bamboo Island,' sits near the center of this aquatic constellation, a 15-minute speedboat ride from the mainland but mentally light-years from anywhere. At night, the high-rise hotels along the beachfront in Sihanoukville light up, a short crossing but a world away from JATI.

While mainland Cambodia races toward vertical development, JATI sprawls horizontally, purposefully built around the land's natural features. At its heart stands a banyan tree, its twisted roots and spreading canopy forming the resort's spiritual center. Unlike Sihanoukville's concrete grid, JATI's pathways meander organically from this center, branching out to villas and common spaces with the same logic as the tree's aerial roots.



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The rustic glow of the rooms features polished concrete floors and warm wooden wall panels arranged in vertical slats that add texture without overwhelming the space. Floor-to-ceiling glass doors maximize the ocean views while flooding the interior with natural light. The bedrooms combine functionality with carefully selected decorative elements.

An arrangement of woven baskets and rattan mirrors serves as natty wall art, bringing local craft into the space without feeling contrived. Pendant lighting hangs beside the bed, providing both illumination and a bit of sculptural interest.

Throughout, the furnishings are straightforward yet refined — lightweight wooden chairs, simple side tables, and a comfortable bed topped with a distinctive textile throw in blues and corals that references the surrounding seascape.

The outdoor deck extends the living area, where palm trees frame the vista, their trunks visible from the bed. Throughout the rooms, the material palette remains consistent: concrete, wood, rattan, and natural textiles, creating a cohesive aesthetic that feels appropriate to the island setting without resorting to tropical clichés or unnecessary flourishes.

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A cohesive aesthetic without the tropical clichés.

JATI, Koh Russey: A Haven With A Heartbeat

This is a haven with a heartbeat. Paradise in imperatives: walk, sip, close, listen. Even the bathrooms, big boundless spaces with tropical plants tapping at the glass, prefer you wouldn't get too laid back. There are no lazy bathtubs here — spacious rainforest showers. And on the beach right outside, invitations to stand up, row, paddle, dive in, the call of the azure bays broken by a curve of sand, ahead of the beach club, like a camel's hump; the emerald outlines of trees casting silhouettes on the rectangle of plunge pool like a printed batik shawl laid across the grass.

The rooms come with a portable Bose speaker that can sit beside the plunge pool or in the sand, where it duets with the sound of the sea.

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Everything at JATI, Koh Russey feels dialed up to dazzling.

JATI Is Dialed Up To Dazzling

All the colors at JATI feel saturated. The orange beach umbrellas, bright green loungers, and sky blue towels feel as if JATI took the colors of the sand, leaves, sky and sea and dialed them up to dazzling.

Even the beach club is dialed up – big boisterous round tables licked by breeze, an enclosed air-con area for the unsettled urbanite, and some seats at the counter. And it's curiously carnivorous for its island setting. BBQ Angus Shortribs, Beef Cheek Tagliatelle, Double Lamb Chops, and a Lamb Shank Rendang all make up a meaty menu – there's a Seafood Laksa and a King Prawn Spaghetti to balance things out a bit – that's as sun-kissed and eclectic as the playlist where bubbly Parisian pop holds hands with rum
You half expect Jack Johnson to trip by on a creative re
album.

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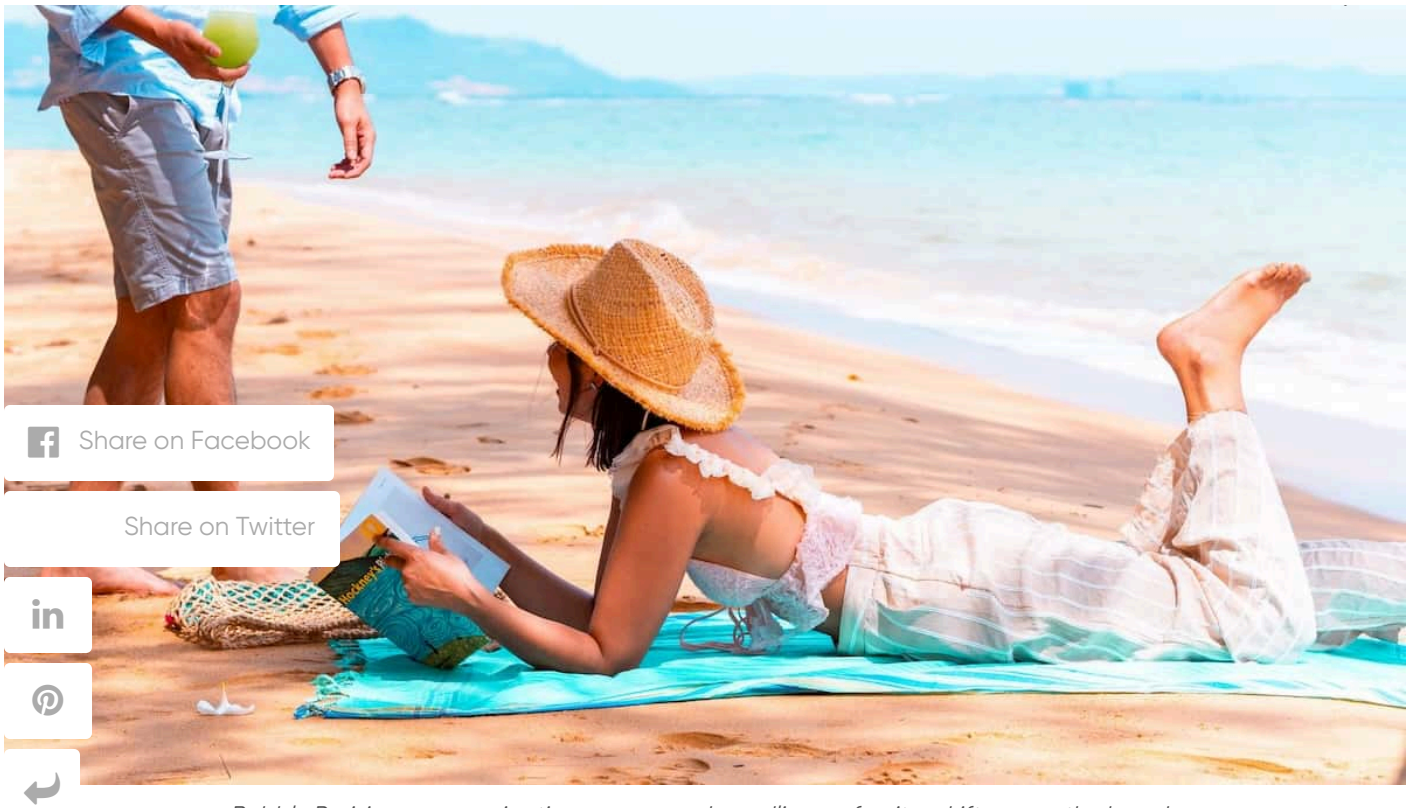

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Bubbly Parisian pop, ruminative reggae and noodling surf guitar drift across the beach.

Any reticence about going full carnivore is brushed off beside the pier where Koko stands out among a confederacy of places – a shop with the kind of bright floral kimonos you get in the room and colorful costume jewelry – Arun Restaurant for leisurely breakfasts, and Le Manolis Wine Cellar. All of which look like they landed on the island and, awestruck by the view, couldn't move any further.

Koko (which, like Le Manolis, also features in the outlets around sister hotel TRIBE in Phnom Penh in the area crowded with characterful Belle Epoque and Art Deco structures around the restored Post Office) serves Wagyu Katsu Sandos, plump bone marrow to carve out with a spoon, and hulking dry-aged steaks like their Bone-In Prime Rib and the signature 1.5kg A5 Tajima Wagyu Tomahawk.

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Going full carnivore at JATI Koh Russey.

Becoming A Part Of It

Ahead, at the pier, speedboats arrive from the navy base (Koh Russey once served as a small outpost of the Cambodian Navy) 15 minutes away where the JATI experience begins. Some are full.

And as the guests trundle in a line of golf carts up to the
influx of more tourists might disturb the calm quickly diss
hot tea, these new arrivals don't disturb the solution. They become part of it.

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The spa, like the island, is called Bamboo. Their signature Khmer massage offers three pathways: leaves, roots or earth. We choose the first. Lying face down, the therapist holds a leaf

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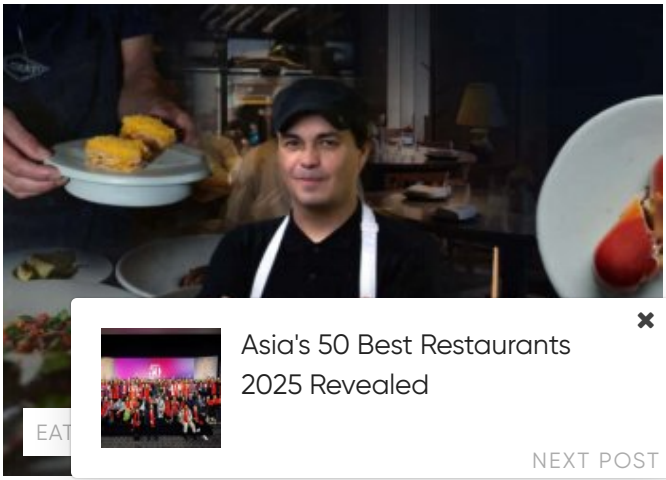

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