

Hotel review: Anantara Angkor, Siem Reap, Cambodia



By Mark Hodson, Editor of 101 Holidays

I first visited the temples of Angkor in 1994 as a young backpacker. Hotels were thin on the ground so I stayed in the back room of a family's modest home and borrowed their motorbike to explore the vast – and mind-blowing – archaeological park. Thirty years on, Angkor is firmly on the tourist map, the temples are as exquisite as ever, the nearby town of Siem Reap is a bustling attractive riverside town and there is no shortage of luxury hotels, among the finest of which is the Thai-owned [Anantara Angkor](#).

This is a genuine boutique hotel with just 39 suites, a single restaurant and an outstanding spa, conveniently located between the town and the temples. You can get a tuktuk into Siem Reap for \$2 and – as I did – take the short drive to Angkor Wat to watch the sunrise (your car departs at 4.45am, so it's advisable to request a wake-up call). Allow plenty of time to explore: anything less than three days visiting Angkor will feel like a missed opportunity. And after a long (and hot) day of sightseeing, the Anantara is the perfect sanctuary in which to unwind.

A great deal of thought and sensitivity has gone into the design and finish of the hotel, which combines the look of a grand French colonial villa with traditional Khmer architecture. Under the expert stewardship of General Manager Supratik Guha, the service is impeccable: staff members not only anticipate guests' every need, they also know when to stop and chat. Check-in set the tone: a traditional Khmer kroma scarf was draped around my neck and I was taken to the spa for a short foot massage while my luggage made its way to my suite. My own personal butler would take care of all my needs. I was clearly in good hands.



Rooms

The Anantara is an all-suite hotel: the [39 suites](#) all face out towards the elegant saltwater swimming pool and even the smallest measures a generous 44 square metres. I loved the handcrafted teak furniture, the rich fabrics, the Nespresso machine and the wooden shutters between the bedroom and bathroom that guests can choose to open or close. In spite of all that dark wood, the room was bathed in natural light and never felt gloomy.

There are some nods to sustainability and local sourcing here too: no single-use plastic, local snacks and drinks in the minibar rather than Pringles and Coke, and bathroom amenities all crafted from bamboo.



Food and drink

The hard-working [Chi restaurant](#) – the name means “spice” – serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you’re at Angkor Wat for sunrise, you can get back in time for the fabulous breakfast buffet, along with a la carte cooked options. Before my early morning start, I also ordered a breakfast box which was waiting for me at reception at 4.30am: coffee, fresh orange juice and croissants. Just the job. My perfect day invariably involves two breakfasts.

Lunch and dinner at Chi were outstanding – my personal favourite dishes were the pomelo and prawn salad, and coconut panna cotta. Starters and mains cost around \$12-\$20. Guests can also order food at the poolside and in their rooms. A new bar, [Road6](#), had opened shortly before my visit where I was served a faultless negroni.



Spa and wellness

Aside from the complimentary foot treatment on arrival, the [spa](#) offers a range of signature treatments combining the hotel's Thai heritage with traditional Khmer restorative techniques. I had the Anantara Signature massage, which was superb, although there is also a full-body thermal therapy that uses Himalayan salt stones followed by an Indian head massage. I'd advise booking a slot near the middle of the day: spend the morning at the temples, have a spa treatment then lunch, then head back to see more of Angkor in the late afternoon.



Photo: Mark Hodson

Around the area

The Anantara offers so many luxury experiences and excursions that it's had to put them into a PDF booklet which you can download [here](#). As well as temple tours, you'll find cooking classes – for adults and children – plus hot air ballooning, street food tours, quad biking, jeep adventures, zip-lining and mountain trekking. However many days you think you should spend in Siem Reap, my advice would be to double that number.

More info

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