



## Shinta Mani Wild



*Courtesy Shinta Mani Wild*

### At a Glance

One of the most unique settings for a property in southeast Asia, Bill Bensley's Shinta Mani Wild is made up of fifteen luxury tents set along a river in 600 acres of Cambodian jungle.

### Indagare Loves

- The feeling of exclusivity, thanks to the limited guest count and high guest-staff ratio
- Sundowners at different prime locations every night
- The team who are enthusiastic about sharing this special place with guests
- The lodge's commitment to safeguarding this natural environment for generations to come - 100% of nightly rates go towards conservation

# Shinta Mani Wild Review

The “wild” of Shinta Mani Wild, the gorgeous jungle lodge that opened in southern Cambodia in 2019, starts pre-arrival when guests are transferred to a zipline platform five stories in the air and sent off on a 1,300-foot wild ride that leads straight to reception. (Fair warning: this activity is not for the faint of heart and completely optional.) In many ways, the zip-line arrival encapsulates the experience of staying at this special place: it’s completely unique, it will push you outside of your comfort zone, and, for the right person, it’s pure, unadulterated fun.

Conceived by star-architect/designer Bill Bensley, the property comprises 600 acres of jungle with just fifteen luxury tents set up along a river. Bensley and his longtime business partner Sokoun Chanpreda purchased the land at a logging auction in 2010 (logging and deforestation are two of the most critical present-day issues in Cambodia). Determined to preserve this small tract of land of one of the last great wilderness areas left in southeast Asia, they established a lodge that is part Maharaja-style tented camp, part colonial jungle camp.

The lodge is plush and it feels like a privilege to be one of only 30 guests experiencing these vast and mostly untouched forests, rivers and waterfalls at a time. A team of 150 coddles guests’ every wish—suffice it to say that part of the all-inclusive nightly rate are unlimited spa treatments. The tents are true design extravaganzas, with large open decks and *al fresco* bathtubs, soaring open-floor bedrooms with ceiling fans and large bathrooms (these tents have some walls as well, so it’s not all canvas). Drawing inspiration of Jackie Onassis’ 1967 trip to Cambodia, Bill Bensley is at the top of his whimsical design game here. The tent accommodations are an explosion of color and such cheeky touches as a cooler covered in zebra-print (alcohol is also included in the nightly rate) and shelves stocked with antique design and travel books. It’s bright and fun and thanks to the fact that tents are set far and wide apart, each feels entirely private.

Meals are back at the central Basecamp, requiring a walk (your ranger escorts you with a flashlight at night) and the menu changes every night. Thanks to the small number of guests, special requests can be readily accommodated with some advance notice. Basecamp also has an atmospheric bar as well as a gorgeous black-bottom pool that is shaped like an enormous bathtub.

The experience of staying here is one of nature exploration and guided activities with lots of downtime. You might go boating or kayaking in the morning, then take a butterfly or orchid walks guided by an expert. Interested guests may also join the Wildlife Alliance on their anti-poaching survey. Your dedicated ranger is with you the

entire time, so customizing an itinerary according to whim and sensibility is easy. Overall, the team here is an exceptional, well-rounded group of nature experts, hospitality pros and worldly travelers. Everyone is enthusiastic about sharing this special place with guests.

Between the wild setting, the over-the-top design and the remote location, Shinta Mani Wild delivers bragging rights—for sure—but it's also one of those special places that has its heart in the right place.

Good to Know: The tents are set along the river and some are a significant walk, across uneven terrain, from the main restaurant/bar hub (no golf carts here). Also, Shinta Mani Wild is more expensive than most properties in Cambodia but 100% of the nightly rates go back towards conservation efforts.

## Who Should Stay

The “wild” in the name cannot be overstated. There will be bugs (not in the tents, but everywhere else). It will be dark (a ranger walks you back to your tent after dinner with a flashlight). It will be noisy (between the waterfalls and the Asian cicadas, which sound like something electrical, you always have a soundtrack). It is best for couples and families with older kids that would enjoy a nuanced nature experience in a special setting (the minimum age is 13).

## Getting There

Shinta Mani Wild is nearly equidistant between [Phnom Penh](#) and Sihanoukville. It's a 3.5-hour drive from the Phnom Penh airport and a 2-hour drive to Sihanoukville (where you depart for [Song Saa](#) or [Six Senses](#)). The car is very comfortable, with nice touches like eye masks, cookies and WiFi. Roads in Cambodia leave something to be desired and can be bumpy at times, but for the most part, you are traveling on Highway Number 4, one of the few national highways in the country. Helicopter arrivals are also possible from [Siem Reap](#) and Phnom Penh.

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- Simone Girner on January 24, 2020

