

Tropical

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7th Anniversary Issue!

Malaysia's
Two Heritage Towns
From **Georgetown**
to **Melaka**

Cambodia
The Knai Bang Chatt

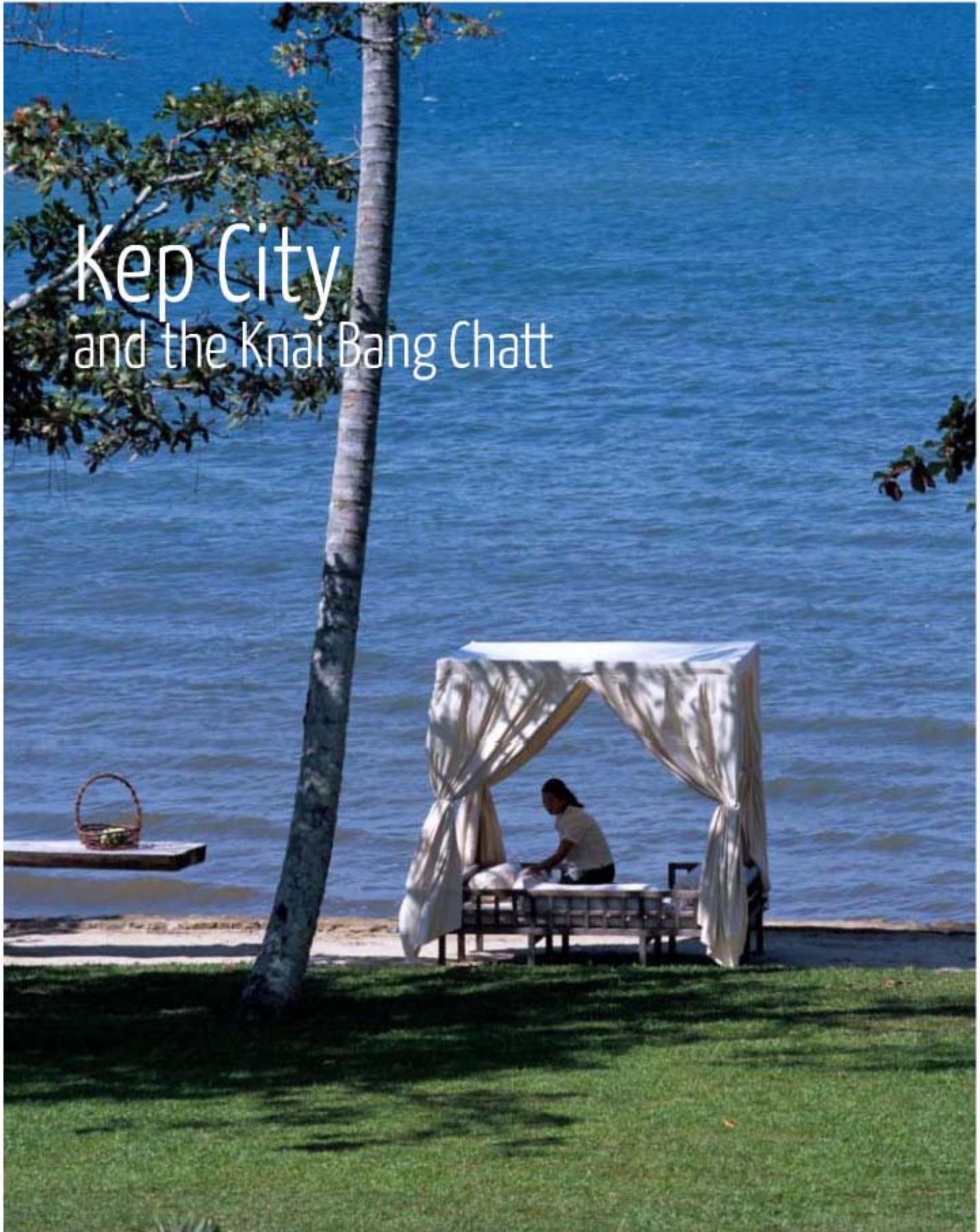
Hong Kong
Hutong Restaurant

North Thailand
Tracing The Lanna Kingdom's Sacred Trails

Little India : Penang's Aromatic Streets



Kep City and the Knai Bang Chatt





Overshadowed by Sihanoukville is a beach destination as yet undiscovered by the legions of tourist buses, Kep City is some 2 and a half hours drive from the main city of Phnom Penh. A quiet seaside town whose charms are all the more appreciated (and its inefficiencies easily forgiven), Kep has amongst its attractions the nearby island of Koh Torsay, the tragically beautiful ruins of Bokor and the 6th century temple-within-a-cave, Phnom Chngauk.

The journey from Phnom Penh reveals a quintessentially Southeast Asian landscape- desiccated paddy fields, itinerant water buffalos and languid youths reading on a hammock. Reaching Kep City, or Kep-Sur-Mer as it was known during the French colonial period, one can understand the appeal this seaside town once had for the French colonizers, the Cambodian elites post-independence, and now, the tourists who have fallen in love with the town- enough to pick up a piece of real estate to convert into a holiday home or a charming hotel.

And these holiday home owners are not in bad company either given that King Norodom Sihanouk still maintains a holiday bungalow in Kep City (take a motorbike up to the house and persuade the lady who's maintaining the house for the King to give you a private tour of the property).



The best place to stay in Kep is the Knai Bang Chatt, with its interesting architectural pedigree, enlightened management and the philosophical underpinnings of the resort's name. Referencing the 'rainbow aureole encircling the sun', the phenomenon of the Knai Bang Chatt in Buddhist culture is in turn seen as providing divine protection.

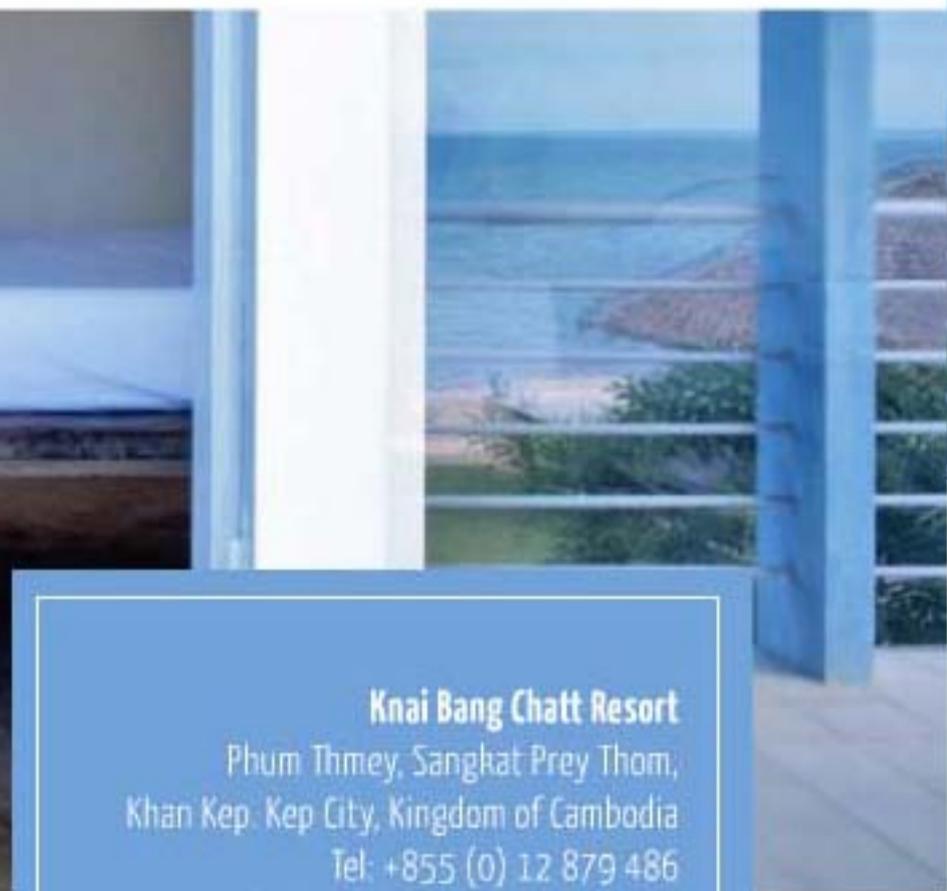
Designed by a protégé of Vann Molyvann- the most famous architect in Cambodia, and in turn a pupil of Corbusier, the Blue Villa forms the central feature of the Knai Bang Chatt and is an example of New Khmer Architecture. With open air massage cabanas offering views to the Gulf of Thailand, Cambodian objects d'art within a pared-down, contemporary setting and quite possibly the most famous swimming pool and restaurant in town, the Knai Bang Chatt's sedate, exclusive air provides a welcome antidote to the rigours and masses of Angkor Wat.

The Sailing Club of Knai Bang Chatt

Next to its resort, Cambodia's Knai Bang Chatt recently opened its Sailing Club. Two old fishermen's houses were turned into a cocktail bar and seafood restaurant. It can host up to 50 people for a sit down dinner. A pier and a dock built into the water makes it an ideal place to swim or to watch the sunset.

People of all ages can enjoy a fun beach volleyball game, play petanque or ping pong. Most of all, one can go sailing, surfing, water skiing or kayaking. Depending on the wind, a chance to sail out to the sea can be a breathless experience.

The sailing club, open to the public, is the newest form of enchantment available for visitors to the charming city of Kep, on the southern coast of Cambodia. Come set sail! Find more info at www.knaibangchatt.com.



Knai Bang Chatt Resort

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Story: Urbane Nomads – www.urbanenomads.com

Photos: Knai Bang Chatt & Hajar Ali

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