

Feature

Luang Say Residence, a taste of colonial life

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When you enter the Luang Say Residence, the latest addition to Luang Prabang's collection of luxury hotels, you feel transported decades back in time. This is another world. This is another time, the time when French explorers sailed up the Mekong River and stopped in this magic northern city.

French architect Francois Greck has recreated the colonial atmosphere by designing the elegant architecture of the main building and the five pavilions scattered amidst the lush one-hectare tropical garden in the quietness of Luang Prabang's Ban Phou Pheng.

"We don't want our guests to feel they are in a hotel. They must feel they are at home in a luxury master's house," says General Manager Rodolphe Gay, who has spent a dozen years managing hotels in the United States and Thailand.

The hotel's 24 suites are comfortable, exquisitely decorated and functionally equipped. The colonial style furniture was made locally of precious wood. The beds are hung with mosquito nets, which add an old-fashioned touch to the overall atmosphere. The four Explorer Suites are located on the upper floor of the master building, which also houses the lobby, restaurant and bar.

The pavilions take you through the history of French exploration up the Mekong River in Laos in the 19th century. Each villa houses four Pioneer Suites and is dedicated to such personages as Auguste Pavie (1847-1925) a Consul General and then Commissioner and Plenipotentiary Minister, who wrote books about his mission



The main building and one of the five villas near the swimming pool offer an oasis of luxury in Luang Prabang.

to Laos; Doudart de Lagree and Francis Garnier; artist Louis Delaporte, who made precious prints of the ruins of Vientiane, which had been ransacked by the Siamese; and naturalist Henri Mouhot, who died in Luang Prabang. Their statues stand in the garden near the entrance of their respective pavilions.

Back in the main building, in the bar and smoking room decorated with ancient weapons, you might expect to see moustachioed explorers boasting of their hunting exploits while sipping a glass of Cognac amidst the fumes of cigars. You would not be surprised to hear somebody addressing another man seated in a cosy velvet armchair "Dr Livingstone, I presume?"

The restaurant La Belle Epoque, in an elegant setting with one main room and surrounding terrace overlooking the swimming



One of the 24 suites with balcony overlooking the tropical garden and a view of the mountains surrounding Luang Prabang.

pool, features traditional Lao cuisine from Luang Prabang but also western classics like baked salmon, duck leg confit, coq au vin, lamb chop and rib eye steak.

Chef Pittaya selects fresh produce from the market

every morning to craft the most delicious dishes and is ready to heed any of the guests' culinary fantasies. Just ask young F&B Director Edouard Dore. For those who are eager to visit Luang Prabang's temples and the

region's waterfalls and have no time for a sit-down meal, the chef has prepared an array of burgers and fresh baguette sandwiches.

For those who prefer to laze around and splash about in the swimming pool, huge

elephant canopies await to shade them from the sun.

Wherever they are, guests are looked after, pampered efficiently but discreetly. Luang Say Residence is the epitome of past elegance and luxury.