

“SANYA WELLNESS RETREAT, A RESTOR THAT EMBODYS THE GENIUS LOCI OF HAINAN”

*the plan*; OCT 2023

<https://www.theplan.it/award-2023-Hospitality/sanya-wellness-retreat-a-restor-that-embodys-the-genius-loci-of-hainan-nerihu-design-and-research-office>



Neri&Hu's design is inspired by the ancient Chinese walled city, elevated on a heavy plinth, it is usually surrounded by water for protection. As such the hotel is defined by two parts, the wooden dwelling comprising guest rooms perches atop a masonry base that contains all the public spaces below. At every given opportunity, the design tries to embody the genius loci of Hainan, to blend elements from the island's collective memory, culture and natural features.

The Sanya Wellness Retreat is located in Haitang bay on Hainan Island, a popular resort destination in China. Facing the ocean, two L-shaped intersecting building volumes come together to form a water courtyard, the central feature from which all the hotel's public amenities spread and emanate outwards. The design tries to embody the genius loci of Hainan, to blend elements from the island's collective memory, culture and natural features.

At every given opportunity, the design tries to embody the genius loci of Hainan, to blend elements from the island's collective memory, culture and natural features. Tapping into local craftsmanship, the masonry walls which envelop the lower levels are clad with handmade clay bricks, while the fabrics and rugs are inspired by textile arts of the Li minority tribe. The technique of soaking and pressing bamboo is also employed as a building material, with woven rattan and yellow bronze accents to enhance the layers to the project.

Two L-shaped building volumes come together to form a water courtyard, the central feature from which all the hotel's public amenities spread and emanate outwards. The lobby becomes a garden landscape with a floating lantern hovering above that allows a gentle light to filter in, and with the soft breeze that flows through, guests are immediately transported to a relaxed state of mind for appreciating the slow pace of island life. At the same time, the ceilings here are lowered and suppressed in order to simultaneously frame views outward to the azure seas beyond. For the guest rooms, each unit is conceived as an individual wooden hut that contains functional amenities such as the washrooms. In the negative space between the wooden boxes lies the sleeping and relaxing zones, including the ocean view balconies. The alternating rhythm between solid and void, the angled walls and textured material expression, all contribute to a dynamic façade that is constantly playing with light and shadow. The corridor between the bedroom units becomes an urban streetscape, an alley where people can traverse and enjoy chance encounters, as such are the delights of being a traveler.