

Sanya Wellness Retreat

The Sanya Wellness Retreat is located in Haitang bay on Hainan Island, a popular resort destination in China. Neri&Hu's design is inspired by ancient Chinese walled cities; elevated on a heavy plinth, they are usually surrounded by water for protection. The hotel is defined by two parts: the wooden dwelling comprising the guest rooms and a masonry base that contains all the public spaces below.





Two L-shaped building volumes come together to form a water courtyard, the central feature from which all the hotel's public amenities emanate outwards. The lobby becomes a garden landscape with a floating lantern hovering above it, allowing a gentle light to filter in; with the soft breezes flowing through, guests are immediately put into a relaxed state of mind to appreciate the slow pace of island life. The ceilings are lowered to frame views outward to the azure seas beyond.





At every given opportunity, the design aims 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 walls surrounding the lower levels are clad with handmade clay bricks, while the fabrics and rugs are inspired by the textile arts of the Li minority tribe. The technique of soaking and pressing bamboo is also employed in the construction, with woven rattan and yellow bronze accents to enhance the different layers of the project.



As for the guest rooms, each unit is conceived as an individual wooden hut that contains functional amenities such as washrooms. The sleeping and relaxing areas, including ocean view balconies are nestled into the negative space between the wooden boxes. The alternating rhythm between solid and void, the angled walls, and the 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 stroll and enjoy chance encounters – such are the delights of being a traveler.

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