

# Volunteer in Cambodia



## Highlights

**Spend an unforgettable week as a volunteer in Cambodia. See the breathtaking Angkor Wat temple complex and connect with the Cambodian people in a way no all-inclusive trip will ever give you.**

Cambodia is an exotic country with a rich history. You may think at first of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge but don't let that dark period in Cambodian history colour your impressions of the country. It borders Thailand, Laos and Vietnam and you will see influences in Cambodia from those neighbours and also from France who ruled it from 1863-1953. For many people it has become a more exotic holiday destination than the more conventional choice of Thailand, but it certainly has everything you could want from a trip to Asia: intricate and almost unbelievable temples including Angkor Wat, exotic flora and fauna like elephants, monkeys, a mind-boggling 536 species of birds and an incredible 240 species of reptiles. As you walk around the markets, towns and temples you will see colours that seem a little brighter than at home, smells you never thought existed and meet people so proud of their country they will make you feel truly welcome.

Siem Reap (where the tour takes place) means "Defeat of Siam" in commemoration of the Cambodians' fights with their Thai neighbours. Even the names of things are a nod to the complicated and interesting history of Cambodia. While exploring Siem Reap you will be surrounded by so many influences: the colonial and Chinese architecture, the French infused cuisine and the Buddhist temples. You'll have time to visit the spectacular and iconic Angkor Wat, the 12th century temple with so many intricate carvings and unique structure, you'll be lost for words on how best to describe it. In between sightseeing you will feel even better knowing that your tour fee has gone to help locals and you can see it with your own eyes - what will it be like when you teach novice monks English colloquialisms or present a wheelchair to a small child injured by a landmine? You have to agree to this wild and fulfilling adventure to find out.

## Is it for me?

"Volunteer vacations" as they are called, are certainly not the stereotypical luxurious holidays. This is an active holiday, both in body and mind and you will have to be up for that. Cambodia is a complicated place with a sad and bloody history - since you will be up close and personal with the people, you may be confronting some hardships that they face so it could be quite an intense week. That said, this is a perfect tour for people who want to make a difference, see something completely unique and want to truly experience a different culture from the inside. It might be hard at times but it will be a life-changing and positive experience in the end. If you only stay in five star hotels, don't like trying new food and want to sleep in (the starts on this tour are as early as 5.30am) don't book this tour. You don't have to be a teacher or work for non-profit organisation to have a successful week, just an open mind and willingness to try new things and meet new people.

## Accommodation

You will stay in sparse but comfortable hotel lodging where you will have electricity and running water. Food is served at your accommodation and will be a mix of American and Khmer delicacies. Most people haven't had Cambodian food before but don't worry! Many people have described it as Thai food with less spice so you're bound to find something you like

## Itinerary

Everything is subject to change but here is a rough idea of what an itinerary for this tour might look like:

Prices from

**785** GBP (7 days) per person

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**Saturday:** Meet with trip coordinator, get settled in and then enjoy a welcome lunch. That will be followed by program orientation where the itinerary will be reviewed and you'll be encouraged to think about your goals for the week. At night there will be a team building exercise for the group and some free time to explore, relax, have dinner, whatever you want to do.

**Sunday:** 7am wake-up then breakfast at the hotel. Then you will visit the awe-inspiring Angkor Wat temples. After that you'll have lunch at a cafe and then meet to organise the wheelchair project and then take part in a cultural scavenger hunt. In the evening there will be dinner, some free time and then a spectacular sunset at the entrance to the temple.

**Monday:** The day starts at 6.30am with breakfast and a Khmer lesson. Then you will go on foot to the work site and spend the morning assembling wheelchairs. After lunch you will visit the Landmine Museum (Cambodia still has about six million landmines). Then you will have the rest of the day free. Suggestions on how to spend your time are sampling local cuisine and drink, exploring or writing in your journal. The day ends with a cooking lesson and dinner.

**Tuesday:** Early start today - 5.30am! But it's worth it as you will be giving alms to monks. Then you will have breakfast and another language lesson. The afternoon is spent working on the wheelchairs and then a break for lunch. Afterwards you will visit a micro library and the APDO (a non-governmental organisation that fights poverty) information centre. The day ends with some free time, another Cambodian cooking lesson, dinner and then a trip to Phnom Bakheng, a 9th century Hindu temple shaped to resemble Mount Meru, home of the Hindu gods, for another exotic sunset.

**Wednesday:** You will wake up at 7am and eat breakfast. The morning continues as you finish assembling the wheelchairs and present them to the people who will be using them. After lunch you'll be teaching English to novice monks and then conclude the day in the usual way - with free time, a cooking lesson and dinner.

**Thursday:** The wake up call on Thursday is at 7am. You will then be teaching a trio of important classes to local children: English, computer skills and self-esteem. You will break for lunch and then take a trip to Tonle Sap Lake where you'll see quirky floating villages and a very diverse biological backdrop. Upon your return you will have time to explore, eat dinner and prepare for the farewell party the next day

**Friday:** After waking up at 7am you will have the morning to check out Siem Reap. There will then be a good-bye lunch and then a visit to the poignant Killing Fields Memorial. After that you'll have more free time to revisit any of your favourite sights or go to the archeological park. In the evening you will have your last Cambodian cooking lesson followed by dinner and reviews of the week.

**Saturday:** Another 7am wake up call is followed by evaluations, breakfast and a fond farewell to your new friends.

## Details

### Getting there

The closest airport is Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport (REP) which is only 7km outside of town. There are plenty of direct flights from Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh as well as other Asian cities.

### Price includes

Accommodation, meals, any activities outlined in the itinerary, on-site travel (but not airfare), emergency medical evacuation, medical insurance, donations to the various community projects, orientation package, volunteer coordination, programme development, country manager expenses, community team recruitment, logistical support and project consultants.

### Available

Jan—Dec

### Typical Duration

1 week

### Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

### Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

### Travellers should bring

A detailed packing list will be sent out upon registration.