



## **Humanitarian project in Cambodia**



### **EXPECTATIONS**

An important part of the pre-departure support we provide is managing your expectations. This section is not meant to patronize or put you off – but to advise you as to what to expect and how to approach your volunteer programme. This handbook is a general guide to help you prepare. However, you will be volunteering in the developing world and as much as we try to be as accurate as possible, things are prone to change, so please don't read into the information too literally.

Full details of your placement will be given to you during your in-country orientation.

### **THE PROJECT**

We always do our best to give a good overview of the programme on our website. However, each project is different and each volunteer's contribution is unique. You should be willing to take the initiative to identify areas you can assist with. Whilst there is a general structure in place at the project, you should not expect an itemized schedule to your day. You are there to make a positive difference and so you are expected to help in any way possible (within reason!).

## **CULTURAL DIFFERENCE**

Volunteering in a place where the lifestyle may drastically differ to your own will expose you to various cultural differences. Whilst the majority will amaze and entertain you in so many ways; some you may find difficult to accept and understand. We ask that you try to appreciate the context of the situation and see both sides of the story before making a final judgment. Many of the customs or types of behavior that you may find offensive or strange are easily understood when you learn more about the local culture. As a volunteer you are there to help and not impose your values upon the local people. If you can teach the local people about a more progressive way of doing things then we always encourage this. But you must remember that change is slow and values are deeply rooted, so you will need plenty of patience and diplomacy.

If you join us with an open mind, give things time, talk to us if you are struggling and adopt a positive attitude whereby you help where you are needed, then you will have a life changing experience and make a valuable contribution.

## **THE PROGRAMS TEACHING**

The education level in Cambodia still is very low and is causing poverty and unemployment. Though English skills are required for most jobs in Cambodia, in practice, not everyone has equal access to education nor gets the opportunity to learn the language. Therefore, orphans or children whose parents cannot afford education rely heavily on NGO run schools or orphanages.

When you are teaching in Cambodia, you will be placed in Phnom Penh and the surrounding communities at a project where volunteers are urgently needed to help out with specific skills like English. Sometimes other skills (IT, mathematics or art) are also required. A typical school year depends on the type of school. Orphanage and NGO schools run throughout the year and only have holidays during the public holidays. You will teach a whole class or small groups and might work alone or alongside other teachers or volunteers. In some schools, you will prepare tests and exams and even correct exams; the longer you stay the more responsibilities you will receive.

Even for experienced teachers, teaching English to a group of Cambodian students will be challenging; it will also be rewarding and enjoyable. Many volunteers have limited teaching experience and therefore, learning as you go is essential. The key requirements are an open mind, a desire to help Cambodian children, and a willingness to learn. However, that desire to help must be supplemented by good lesson preparation. Although time-consuming, thorough lesson planning is necessary for making your teaching experience enjoyable and beneficial for both you and your students. Without well planned lessons, teaching will be very hard and less satisfying than it should be.

Fortunately, teaching is a collaborative activity; your ideas and experiences should be shared and discussed with your fellow volunteers. Most difficulties that you experience will be common to all beginning teachers, regardless of where they are teaching, so it is helpful to share the things you've learned as you go.

The children you will teach are typically ready to learn and very respectful of their teachers and volunteers. That doesn't mean that they will sit silently in class and listen attentively to everything you say – they are children and behave as children do all over

the world. If they cannot understand you or if the lesson is going too fast or too slow for them, they will become inattentive and talkative.

A good lesson will use a variety of activities. The frequency with which you change from one activity to another will vary with the level of the class. The lower the level, the less time you will spend on an activity before changing. Suitable activities include: singing, stories, word games, writing, grammar, drawing, dictation, and spelling. The following are some other things to keep in mind as you teach:

### **DO**

- Have clear objectives for each lesson
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Give clear, concise instructions using language that the class will understand
- Make sure that all the class can hear you
- Have well-prepared lessons
- Divide lessons into manageable sections
- Provide a variety of activities in each lesson
- Provide activities that are interesting and engage the class
- Pace your lessons appropriately
- Deal with off-task behavior on an individual basis rather than at the class level
- Mark work regularly
- Acknowledge student success
- Evaluate student progress on a regular basis
- Set revision exercises
- Learn some Khmer – the students will help you
- Dress and act appropriately

### **DO NOT**

- Talk too much
- Give complex, multiple instructions
- Speak too fast
- Shout at the class
- Arrive unprepared
- Jump randomly from one topic to another
- Direct lessons to only some of the students
- Assume that just because you have taught something, the students will have learned it. Effective learning requires regular reinforcement
- Fail to ask for help if needed

Teaching English in Cambodia gives you the unique opportunity to implement your own ideas and teaching methods. So, bring some ideas from back home, and if you have some specific materials that you think could be useful and fun, bring it along. Play games, sing songs or whatever you think might help the children to pick up the language.

## **Arrival**

Look for someone holding a sign with your name when you pass through the door after the baggage claim area and are outside.

## Accommodation

As a volunteer, you can stay with one of our carefully assessed local host families. In Cambodia, it is common for extended family members to live in one household. Often many Cambodians (of the same sex) will share one room (and bed) or sleep on the sofa or in the family room. However, you will have your own room (most likely) or share a room with one other volunteer. The rooms are usually quite simple, the same way your host family lives: a bed and sheets, a fan and maybe a small cupboard to store your clothes. Some rooms might have a private bathroom while others share a bathroom.

The bathrooms are usually very clean, have a toilet, sink and shower (Cambodian showers are often just a shower head attached to the wall, without a surrounding cabin), but might not have hot water, which you will not miss in the hot climate of Cambodia. Please be aware that many Cambodians do not use toilet paper (they use a small shower attached to the toilet instead), so it is advisable to buy some toilet paper for your own use and carry it in case you need to use a public restroom.

Generally, Cambodians are very conscious about cleanliness. Because of the heat, some take showers several (up to 3) times a day and it's ok for volunteers to do the same.

The host family will provide you with **three meals a day**: breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you prefer to have lunch at work, it might be possible to ask your host family to prepare a lunchbox for you.

A typical lunch and dinner includes rice or noodles with fried vegetables and meat. If you have any special dietary requirements, please let us know when you apply for the program so we can make arrangements for you.

The volunteer house has electricity, cool & hot water and WiFi access. The bathroom is inside all rooms. Bedrooms are comprised of single beds and bunk beds with bedding provided. The house also has a dining area downstairs, a living room with TV & books. Volunteers can expect to share a room with one or two other volunteers.

### **Living with your host family – things to keep in mind:**

- Host families often worry a lot about their guests and feel very responsible for them. Therefore, it is important to inform your host family when you go out. Out of courtesy and respect for the family, tell them where you are going and when they can expect you back. If you will miss dinner, you should also call and inform them in time so they don't have to wait and prepare food for you.
- Try not to stay out too late. Your risk of getting robbed is much higher at night, and your host family might worry. Also, many Cambodians go to bed early, so they lock their gate and turn off the lights. If you return home late, you are likely to wake them. Ask your host family when they would like you to be back and try to be home at that time.
- Keep valuables such as passports, airline tickets, extra money, and important documents locked in your luggage or in another safe place.
- Don't keep any food in your room as this might attract ants, cockroaches and rats. It should not be a problem to store it in the kitchen.

## Weather

Days can be very hot, especially in April and May (up to 40 °C). The temperature goes down a bit during nights, but only drops below 20 °C in the mountains.

## In your bag

- Always try to travel light.
- When you have to carry your valuables on you, you may wish to hide them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid keeping your valuables in handbags, backpacks and outside pockets.
- Make photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license and the credit cards that you plan to bring with you.
- Bring travelers' checks and one or two major credit cards instead of a large amount of cash.
- The average temperature is around 30 degrees Celsius, so a few shorts, long (or at least knee length) skirts, long pants and shirts should be fine.
- Comfortable walking shoes.
- Cambodians dress much more conservatively than people in western countries. If you are working in an office or school, you are a role model and certainly want to show some respect to your colleagues, so make sure you are wearing decent clothes.
- Sun hat, sunglasses
- A raincoat
- Small backpack or travel bag for weekend and day trips
- Towel or sarong
- Electric adaptor: Voltage (230 V, 50Hz) is not always reliable in some areas so use it at your own risk. Electricity outlets are usually suitable for plugs with 2 (sometimes 3) round or flat pins. If you are not sure if that matches your electronic devices, make sure you bring an electric adaptor.
- Small flashlight
- Insect repellent

## Country overview

Cambodia is a fantastic country with a unique culture and very generous people and it is characterized by its significant history of glory and beauty as well as violence and war. The history is an important part of the Cambodian culture and shapes the mindset and thinking of the Cambodian people.

Cambodians take extremely good care of their guests. They will sacrifice a lot for their guest and often give up a bed and prepare the best dishes for their guests. Most Cambodians are very eager to please the guests, especially "western" guests. As guests receive special treatment and are always the priority, hosts will be very willing to provide guests with whatever they need. If that makes you a bit uncomfortable, be careful when voicing your wishes or ideas as a lot of effort might be taken to fulfill them.

As families are very big and very important in Cambodia, it is sometimes hard for them to understand why volunteers travel by themselves and are willing to be away from their family for such a long time. Some Cambodians may also wonder why older volunteers decide to go abroad instead of finding a spouse and having kids.

Greetings between Cambodians depend on the relationship/hierarchy/age of the people. The traditional greeting is to bow a bit and bring your hands together at chin level (similar to bringing hands together for a prayer).

## **Freetime**

Things to see and do in Cambodia:

- Sunrise at Angkor Wat, Siem Reap Cambodia
- Angkor Thom, Siem Reap, Cambodia. Locals pronounce this temple “Uncle Tom,”
- Ta Prohm, Siem Reap, Cambodia; The “Tomb Raider” Temple, which was left as found - crumbling walls intertwined with tree roots - to show tourists the state in which the rest of the surrounding temples were discovered.
- Have lunch at New Hope Restaurant, Siem Reap
- Take a Tuk-Tuk to Downtown Siem Reap
- S-21 aka The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Phnom Penh; Pol Pot, the Hitler of Cambodia
- Eat A Spider (or watch someone else do it); there’s a stop along Route 6 Cambodia that features platters of fried tarantulas, crickets and birds. There are also bananas and mangos for the non insect eater.
- The Killing Fields, 15 kilometers from Phnom Penh, Cambodia. It’s a monument unlike any in the world