



## Humanitarian projects 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.

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.

## **1 - TEACHING PROGRAM**

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.

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. 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.

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.

**Suitable activities include:** singing, stories, word games, writing, grammar, drawing, dictation, and spelling.

### **DO**

- Give clear, concise instructions
- Have well-prepared lessons
- Divide lessons into manageable sections
- Provide a variety of activities in each lesson
- Acknowledge student success
- Learn some Khmer – the students will help you
- Dress and act appropriately

### **DO NOT**

- Give complex, multiple instructions
- Shout at the class
- Jump randomly from one topic to another
- Direct lessons to only some of the students

## **2 - Centre for People with Disabilities**

There are only 200 centres for children and young people with disabilities in Cambodia. Our partner centre cares for children and young adults with mental and physical disabilities, as well as children living with HIV. These children attend public school in the morning and return to the centre in the afternoon.

This project is particularly interesting for physiotherapists and physiotherapy students who would like to take part in a humanitarian mission, as the children need intensive daily care. The centre has a sensory room with lights and soft music to soothe and stimulate children with disabilities.

The centre can accommodate around 130 patients and receives very limited funding from the government. Children with disabilities are often abandoned because parents frequently do not have the means to care for them, and specialised facilities are rare.

The aim of the centre is to help reintegrate patients into society. Some are able to learn small practical skills, such as doing a bit of cleaning, in order to earn a small income.

## **3 - Support for local businesses**

The partner organisation offers international volunteers with specific skills (public relations, social media, marketing, strategy, etc.) the opportunity to help small projects and NGOs grow in Cambodia.

It is an association founded three years ago by two Australians. Their project supports women who are trying to find their place in society by starting their own businesses, mainly in crafts, sales, and services such as hairdressing. Most of the requests are local, but they are beginning to come from all over the country.

The association is in contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cambodian government in an effort to improve the status of women in Cambodia.

## **4- Children's daycare centre**

The daycare centre for underprivileged children is located about 20 minutes by tuk-tuk from the volunteers' house and is sponsored by a Catholic school. The children are picked up in their neighbourhood early in the morning, around 6 a.m. They are given food, take a shower, spend the day doing activities, and are then taken back to their parents in the evening.

These are young children aged 2 to 5 who need to be kept engaged for several hours with games, painting, and early lessons in basic English.

## **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**

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.

## **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.

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