



Som Leng

the voice of

HANUMAN TOURISM VOYAGES

ISSUE 2

JANUARY — APRIL 2006

Welcome!

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the second edition of 'Som Leng', and Happy 2006!

2005 was another successful year for Hanuman Tourism Voyages and all of you played a big part in that success - for that we would like to thank you.

However, as always the Hanuman team do not want to rest on our laurels and we have been working hard to develop new and exciting holiday itineraries and activities throughout Indochina. In this edition you will discover our new 'Lifestyles' holidays, our

adventurous cycle tours, and our enhanced commitment to Responsible Tourism with the establishment of the 'Hanuman Foundation'.

We wish you all a very successful 2006 and are looking forward to working with you all and providing you with the quality service for which we are renown.

All the very best from the Hanuman Team...

Kind regards

Kulikar Sotho
Chief Executive

Baphuon Temple Re-opens

Baphuon temple – the greatest Cambodian architecture of its time, which was only surpassed in size by Angkor Wat itself a century later – is reopening to tourists in January 2006, as epic reconstruction begun almost 50 years ago comes to a close. Initially, visitors will only be allowed in the eastern courtyard on the first tier of the three-tiered pyramid, as the project will not be fully completed for about 3 more years. Originally built to honor the Hindu god Shiva in the 11th century, Baphuon was later reinvented as a Buddhist temple.

It was all great! We really enjoyed our time in Cambodia. Our guide was superb, his knowledge of everything is amazing. It is the most enjoyable tour we have had anywhere in the world. We will be back to Cambodia soon and we will recommend Hanuman Tours to our friends.

Will & Lin Wilson (UK), Nov 05

Angkor Lifestyles

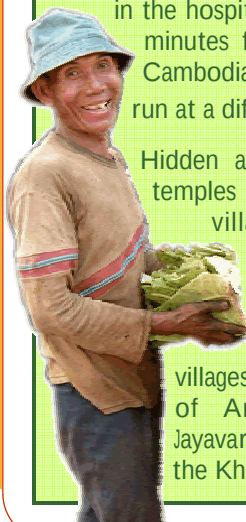
The temples of Angkor are undoubtedly one of the wonders of the world and have helped to put Cambodia back in the spotlight as a leading tourism destination. However, as visitor numbers continue to soar, Angkor is becoming isolated from the reality of life in rural Cambodia. Visitors can pass through Siem Reap without seeing the real Cambodia, and only meeting Cambodians engaged in the hospitality industry. However, just ten minutes from Siem Reap lies a different Cambodia, where the rhythms of rural life run at a different tempo.

Hidden away in the forests behind the temples are traditional Cambodian villages inhabited by farmers, fishermen, weavers and craftsmen. We want to take you closer to Cambodia with a visit to the most interesting of these villages to meet the original inhabitants of Angkor, the descendents of Jayavarman VII and the mighty kings of the Khmer Empire. Ride an ox cart to a

rice field. Learn about the harvest and what rice means to the country. See a farmer climb a sugar palm tree to harvest the daily wine and taste this local brew. Enter a family home for some traditional Cambodian snacks and learn about the daily lives of the people. Real people in a real situation, something that is all too hard to find in the world of mass tourism.

Hanuman is setting up a unique programme working exclusively with villagers who are keen to communicate more about their lifestyle to visitors. We have selected vulnerable or needy villages to ensure that your visits will have a positive impact in the community and we plan to set up a social fund (p.4) in conjunction with Tourism Against Poverty to provide essential services such as wells, mosquito nets and power to some of the poorer and more remote villages we visit on our tours.

Our half day lifestyle programmes are the perfect way to break up the temples into bite-sized chunks and to take your guests closer to Cambodia.



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Featured Tour

KOMPONG PHHLUK - *another world...*

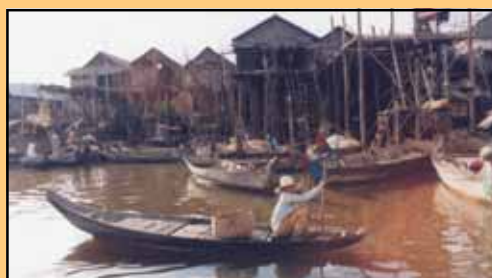
For the ultimate temple and lifestyle experience, join our one day adventure to the stilted village of Kompong Phhluk, discovering the flooded forest of the Tonle Sap by dugout canoe and exploring the early Angkorian temples of the Roluos group on a village walking tour.

We depart Siem Reap by remorque moto, a charming carriage hitched onto the back of a motorbike, the famous local transport of Siem Reap. For the more adventurous we offer the option of a Trek mountain bike or for those wanting more comfort we can provide a car.

We follow small back roads through rural landscapes and picturesque villages. Our first stop is the temple of Bakong in the Roluos group, the first of the great pyramid mountains which later kings were to copy. From Bakong, we continue into Roluos town to visit a very local market, untouched by tourism. After some refreshments here, we follow the course of the Roluos river to the nearest navigable point where we board small wooden boats for the trip to Kompong Phhluk.

Cruising down a narrow waterway, we enter this medieval floating village, where the houses stand atop stilts as much as 10 metres above the water. Everything lives on the water, pigs, dogs, crocodiles and people, all jockeying for space in this incredible floating town. We explore the local wat here, before boarding a bigger boat to take us through the flooded forest and across the Great Lake to Chong Kneas and the holy mountain of Phnom Krom. We climb Phnom Krom for a glorious sunset over the Tonle Sap before heading back to Siem Reap by road.

This is an unforgettable adventure which introduces visitors to an alternative Angkor, undiscovered by the majority of visitors.



HanumanAlaya Boutique Guesthouse it just keeps getting better !

Hanuman's very own HanumanAlaya Boutique Guesthouse is already gaining a reputation as Siem Reap's 3 star guesthouse with 5 star facilities. Due in part to the unique partnership with the 5 star Sofitel Royal Angkor Hotel. All guests staying at the HanumanAlaya enjoy complimentary access to the Sofitel's superb lagoon swimming pool, complete with swim-up bar, and an international standard gymnasium, as well as discounts on dining in any of the Hotel's fine restaurants.

The HanumanAlaya itself is an idyllic retreat from the bustle of Siem Reap, with its perfect blend of traditional Khmer design and sophisticated international amenities. It is lovingly finished in wood and elegantly decorated in local antiques.



And as we welcome in 2006 we also welcome the introduction of 3 new exciting facilities which truly enhance our guests stay at the HanumanAlaya even further. The 'Reahou Restaurant' situated next to the new 'Ganesha Pool' is delightfully airy and traditionally designed. It is the perfect complement to our balcony eating area and the seating can be

arranged to cater for a romantic meal for two, or for larger groups. Our menu has also been enhanced, our much loved classic Khmer food has now been joined by some Western favourites.

The delightful 'Ganesha Pool' secluded and surrounded by lush vegetation is an ideal spot for a cooling dip. Yet if it is true relaxation you are looking for after a hard days temple exploring then our serene 'Sita Spa' is perfect. Here you can take a journey of self discovery, immersing yourself and indulging yourself with our traditional range of health and beauty treatments.



After a days walking what better than some reflexology and a foot massage to sooth away the aches ready for the next days explorations. Or if those aches spread further than your feet you can opt for the traditional aromatherapy full body massage to stimulate your circulation and reinvigorate the senses.

Then there is the Herbal Steam Sauna, we mix a secret selection of local herbs and spices into a boiling cauldron, the steam rises up penetrating your pores and smoothing your skin.

The HanumanAlaya Boutique is now truly the place from which to explore the Angkor Wat temples and beyond...



CYCLE CAMBODIA

Cycling tours to Cambodia are increasingly popular and Hanuman has been offering pedal powered adventures for several years now. Many cycling tourists have discovered the delights of cycling in Vietnam, but are yet to take to two wheels in Cambodia. Hanuman is taking the cycle touring concept to the next level with the purchase of quality front suspension Trek 4400 mountain bikes.

Recently they were successfully used on the 1,000km plus Bangkok to Saigon Cycle Challenge operated by our partner Symbiosis. Now the bikes are based at HanumanAlaya, Angkor's Boutique Guesthouse in Siem Reap. We are devising a series of day programmes for cyclists to explore Angkor and the Siem Reap area and these will be available as optional excursions for all our partners to enhance their itineraries, as well as guests at HanumanAlaya. Designed with help from Nick Ray, author of Lonely Planet's groundbreaking Cycling Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, we plan to offer a rotating option of guided rides each day, to explore some of the lesser-known temples in the countryside around Siem Reap and take clients closer to the lifestyle of the people in the Angkor area.

These trips will include a temple tour to take in the best of the temples on the small and big circuits, which can be run over two days to take time to explore each place. A second circuit will involve a gentle half-day spin through the countryside to visit the floating village at Phnom Krom, which will include a

stop at some of the contemporary temples around Siem Reap, such as Wat Bo, Wat Dam Nak and Wat Athvea. A third tour will take cyclists on a half-day adventure out to the mighty Western Baray, the largest manmade reservoir built during the Angkor era and offers the chance to continue around the back of the baray and enter Angkor Thom through the forgotten west gate. Finally for serious cyclists, there will be the option of riding out through the village of Preah Dak to the Angkor Wat-era temple of Banteay Samre and the hilltop sanctuary of Phnom Bok. From here the route heads south to Roluos, making for a challenging countryside loop and there is the possibility of finishing with a boat trip to the amazing stilted village of Kompong Phhluk (see p.2).

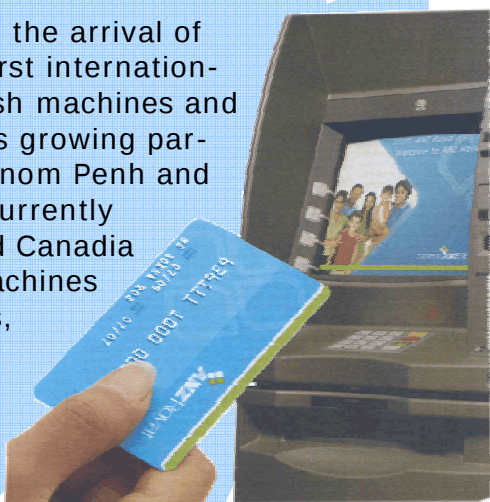
As well as these innovative rides around Siem Reap and Angkor, we will also be developing a few touring programmes to bring you the best of Cambodia on two wheels. These will include a full country circuit taking in Phnom Penh, the south coast and the majestic temples of Angkor, as well as multi-country combinations, including Bangkok to Saigon via back roads and Luang Prabang to Siem Reap via the Mekong River. These tours will include support vehicles, a cycling guide and a maintenance team to keep the show on the road.

Look out for all these and more in the following months. If anyone has a particular interest in cycling tours in the region, please do not hesitate to contact us for a preview of our plans.



connected CAMBODIA

Mid 2005 saw the arrival of Cambodia's first internationally linked cash machines and the network is growing particularly in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Currently ANZRoyal and Canada Bank cash machines accept Access, Visa, Maestro and Cirrus.



Angkor Thom Bus Ban

The Apsara Authority, which manages the Angkor Wat site, has issued a directive that will restrict heavy vehicle movement in the park. The Authority believes that the growing number of vehicles is unacceptable for the ancient monuments, saying that 'emission and vibration' caused by vehicles can damage the temples, as well as ruining the views for tourists. As of March 1st 2006 tourist buses with more than 24 seats will not be allowed to enter the walled city of Angkor Thom. Hanuman is currently working on various innovative transfer methods for its larger groups.

Laos / Thailand New Bus

Thailand and Laos have agreed to start scheduled bus services between Ubon Ratchathani and Pakse in southern Laos starting January 06. There will be between 4 to 8 departures per day, using 2 to 4 buses to cover the 140km. Pakse's (Laos) is 800km south of the capital Vientiane and its main attractions are the Khon Phapheng waterfall and Wat Pu.

The HANUMAN Foundation

Hanuman Tourism has always been a keen supporter of responsible tourism, sustainable tourism and ecotourism in Cambodia and the Mekong region. We try our best to support NGO-related tourism projects to assist disadvantaged Cambodians, including Friends Restaurant in Phnom Penh, the DRIVE project in Ratanakiri and the Artisans d'Angkor project in Siem Reap.

However, we believe we can and should do more to help the underprivileged and impoverished in Cambodia. In order to take our commitment to the next level, we are establishing 'The Hanuman Foundation' to support grass-roots anti-poverty programmes in the more remote areas that our tours visit.

We believe the values of pro-poor tourism are shared by many of our partners and their guests around the world and we intend to give everyone the opportunity to assist in any way they can. We plan to work with local pro-poor tourism organisation Tourism Against Poverty (TAP).

Many of our international visitors ask us 'how can we help?' and in the past we have directed them to such worthy causes as the Cambodia Daily Mosquito Net Campaign, operating nationwide, and the Angkor Children's Hospital in Siem Reap.

We will continue to support such projects, but we plan to develop initiatives of our own, in consultation with TAP, to target vulnerable communities in the poorest parts of Cambodia. Currently we are still at the planning stages, but we have already earmarked several communities for assistance based on our current tour programmes.

We plan to concentrate on the fundamentals first, which means providing access to cleaner water for communities by drilling wells and supplying water filters, providing protection against life-threatening diseases such as malaria through the provision of mosquito nets and improving the quality of materials in the local schools.

In time, as the Foundation grows, we plan to provide a mobile healthcare worker and mobile teacher trainer to rotate through our selected villages, training local nurses and teachers, educating the community and contributing to a better life

in the village. Clinics and schools are usually the most popular form of assistance to countries like Cambodia, but they can be a waste of resources if there are no well-trained, well-paid staff to run them.

Initially we plan to concentrate on communities in Preah Vihear and Siem Reap provinces, linked to our innovative Temple Safari itineraries. Communities under consideration include the small village at Preah Vihear temple, the village of Koh Ker, the village of Phum Tahan on Phnom Kulen, the village of Ta Seng near Preah Khan and other smaller villages along the old network of Angkorian highways criss-crossing this part of Cambodia.

We will also introduce some initiatives to assist the disadvantaged ethnic minorities of the northeast, including the Pnong people of Monduliri and the Jarai of Ratanakiri.

We will be introducing this programme in the first half of 2006 and will be happy to send you more details. We look forward to working together to make tourism a force for positive change in rural Cambodia.

Extra 2% Accommodation Tax

Mid 2005 the Cambodia Government announced an additional 2% tax to be added to tourist accommodation, effective 1st Sept 05. Hanuman, along with other local tour operators and hotels were annoyed by the extreme short notice of the decision and how it would affect contract rates with partners. After hard lobbying the Government has postponed the tax introduction until 1st Jan 2007.

STARS

The Cambodian Ministry of Tourism will soon begin inspecting all hotels in Cambodia and assigning them official, government determined ratings from zero to five stars. It is expected that the process will be complete by late 2006. The inspection committee will use 127 criteria to assess accommodation quality. It is believed the move will end the current practice of hotels deciding for themselves how many stars they believe they deserve. The ratings will be revised every two years to give hotels a chance of upgrading and ensuring quality is maintained. It is hoped that the scheme will help to ensure consistency in quality so that guests know what to expect when a Cambodian hotel says it has 3, 4 or 5 stars.

The last two months of 2005 saw the arrival of the first low cost airline flights landing in Cam-

bodia. In November AirAsia introduced flights between Kuala Lumpur and Phnom Penh, Kuala Lumpur and Siem Reap, and Bangkok and Phnom Penh. December saw Jetstar Asia entering the Cambodian market with flights between Singapore and Phnom Penh, and Singapore and Siem Reap. Tiger Air is also in negotiations to enter Cambodia. As with all low cost airlines, to secure the best deals you have to be flexible, taxes and fees are not included in the advertised prices, purchased tickets are not refundable, and no 'free' drinks and/or meals are provided during the flight. But taking all that into account, great savings on traditional flight costs can be made.

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