Advanced Study of Khmer (ASK)
Summer Abroad Program 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

US Embassy
http://cambodia.usembassy.gov/
advanced_study_of_khmer_ask_program.html

Sage Insights
http://www.asiatravel-cambodia.com/

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
www.uhm.hawaii.edu

Pre-Departure Handbook
For Student Participants
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April 2008

Dear ASK Participants:

Aloha! Congratulations on your acceptance and decision to choose to study abroad with the Advanced Study of Khmer (ASK) Summer Abroad program in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Study abroad is a unique experience during which you will have the opportunity to learn both in and out of the classroom. Going overseas will not only enhance your education, but will also expose you to different cultures and ways of life.

These next few pages cover some of the necessary information to plan for your upcoming trip.

With the right preparation and planning, your study abroad experience is sure to prove rewarding and enlightening. Different people, different lifestyles, and different ideas will challenge and stimulate you. You are about to embark on a life-changing experience.

There may be times when you feel frustrated by differences in language, culture, schedule, etc. We hope that you will meet these challenges with intelligence, maturity, patience, flexibility, and a sense of humor. We also believe that adequate preparation and information will help you meet these challenges. Within the text, we have included the addresses for some great websites designed to provide as much general information about Cambodian and travel as possible to prepare you for your program. The more you know, the better your experience will be.

Please read each section carefully, and be sure to contact us with any questions you have. We look forward to meeting each of you individually. Congratulations again!

Chhany

CONTACT INFO:
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(808) 561-6850 (cell)
Email: saks@hawaii.edu
MISCELLANEOUS

METRIC SYSTEM/CONVERSIONS:

Cambodia operates on the metric system (the U.S. has been out of step!). The following are a few simple conversions that might be helpful:

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters
1 mile = 1.6 kilometers
1 square mile = 2.6 square kilometers.
1 liter = 1.06 quarts
1 gram = 0.04 ounces
1 kilometer = 0.62 miles
1 U.S. pint = 0.47 liter

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

The following is a list of public holidays, during which schools, banks, and some businesses or agencies may be closed:

Jan 1: New Year’s Day.
Jan 7: Victory Day.
Feb 5: Meak Bochea Day.
Mar 8: Women’s Day.
Apr 16-17: Cambodian New Year.
Apr 25: Visaka Puja Day (Birth of Buddha).
May 1: Labor Day.
May 14: King Sihanouk’s Birthday.
May 19: Royal Ploughing Day Ceremony.
Jun 1: International Children’s Day.
Jun 18: Queen’s Birthday.
Sep 24: Constitution and Coronation Day.
Oct 11-12: Pchum Ben Day.
Oct 30-Nov 1: King’s Birthday.
Nov 23: Water Festival.
Things You Need To Be Aware Of

For a general overview about study abroad, see the State Department’s website:

(This site provides links to travel warnings, legal issues, and so forth)

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html

All ASK participants have been registered with the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, as part of the program requirement. For more information about the embassy, see http://cambodia.usembassy.gov/general_information.html

1. Conduct
   As a student in the ASK program, you are expected and obligated to conform to the regulations of the University of Hawaii and the laws of the country that you visit. Misconduct can jeopardize your welfare, the welfare of other students, and the study abroad program.

2. Illegal Activity
   Neither the University of Hawaii nor the United States government and its agencies abroad may be able to ensure that you are not discriminated against should you participate in an illegal activity. They cannot, for example, protect you from arrest, incarceration or punishment if you break the law. If you commit an illegal act, you will be subject to local, not U.S., laws.

3. Travel During the Program
   All students are required to attend afternoon excursions/field trips as part of their curriculum. These will be organized by the language instructors, assisted by the ASK Field Coordinator/Project Director. Please also note that both class attendance and attendance during field trips is mandatory. If you are planning to travel on your own when there are no scheduled trips, please notify the Field Coordinator and/or the Program Director of your travel plans. While doing so may seem inconvenient, information about where you are going and when you plan to return is vital to help us to locate you in the event of an emergency. Any independent travel will be at your own expense and at your own risk.

Things We Need From You

Address and Contact Information

Please make sure we know where to reach you between now and your departure date. Accurate mailing addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are crucial to ensure that updates, any program changes and other last-minute information reach you. Please inform us of any change in your contact information prior to departure!

Contact Project Director, Dr. Chhany Sak-Humphry at
(808) 956-8070 (office)
(808) 561-6850 (cell)

Questions/concerns

We want your ASK experience to be positive and memorable. If there are any issues we should know about — such as severe allergies to medicines, etc. — or if you require any accommodations for a disability, please let us know. Please also feel free to ask any questions and/or bring up any concerns — whether academic or personal — with the Project Director and Field Coordinator.

Again, let us congratulate you on your selection for the ASK Program, and for your decision to participate.
Cambodian Culture & Etiquette

- Cambodians always offer drink such as water, tea or juice to their guests; sometimes food is also offered. To honor the host, the offer is accepted, even if the guest take just a sip or a bite.
- Some homes use beds or mats for receiving guests. If that is the case, visitors should sit by tucking their feet backward. It is impolite to cross or stretch legs.

Head & Feet

The Cambodians regard the head as the highest part of the body, both literally and figuratively. It is considered the focal point of intelligence and spiritual substance. It is, therefore, considered an insult to touch or pat anyone on the head. In a like manner, the feet are considered the lowest part of the body and it is extremely rude to point with one's feet, step over a reclining body, or kick anyone.

Respect for Religion

Both Buddhism and the monarchy are highly regarded and proper respect should be shown to all Buddha images (old or new, ruined or complete). Do not climb on Buddha images or otherwise act in what may be considered a disrespectful manner.

Buddhist monks are also deeply respected and should be accorded extreme politeness. Never stand when talking to seated monks. It shows grave disrespect. Because of vows of celibacy, a woman must not touch or even brush against a monk.

Monks eat only breakfast and lunch, which have to be finished before noon. In the evening, monks are allowed to drink water, milk, or tea. Any schedule or engagement should take this restriction into account.

When visiting temples one should dress in a way that will not cause offense. Bare shoulders, shorts, or other attire that may be considered acceptable otherwise should not be worn when planning a visit to a temple. Shoes may be worn when walking in a temple compound but must be removed when entering a wat containing a Buddha image.

Do's & Don't

**DO**

- Remove your shoes when entering a temple and other places where you observe Cambodian people removing their shoes.
- Be patient with a Cambodian whose English is limited. Speak in a slow, clear, moderate voice in literate English.
- Be the first to Say please or greet an elder.
- Ask for advice if you are uncertain about anything. The Cambodian people are very courteous and will help you if they can.
- Use good manners – Cambodians are very understanding and appreciate good manners of any culture.
- Bargain in shops. Only department stores and expensive shops have fixed prices.

**DON'T**

- Touch a Cambodian on the head!!!
- When sitting, do not allow your toes to point directly at another person.
- Stand over a seated Cambodian when talking to him/her.
- If you are a woman, don't touch an orange-robed monk, hand anything to a monk, or let your clothes brush his robes.
- Be impatient when a Cambodian pretends to understand but obviously doesn't. He or she is just being polite. Be patient and try again.
- Raise your voice, shout, or call out to people. You will lose face if you shout or lose your temper in public and it will accompliish nothing. If, when discussing a problem with Cambodians, they smile or giggle, it is not a sign of disrespect, but rather a nervous reaction to a tense situation. Cambodians tend to smile or laugh both in positive and negative situations, thus, it should not be considered as expressing happiness, agreement, amusement, embarrassment, or ridicule. Great caution should be taken in interpreting a smile or laugh in order to avoid misunderstanding.
- Disturb monks or any Cambodians at prayer or meditation.
- Touch pieces of carving or statuary in temples and/or on public exhibition.
- Point or shake your finger at anyone, especially at the face/head. Cambodians believe that we all have a guardian spirit from the moment we are born, and that spirit is usually perched on the head or shoulders.
Academic Preparation

Below are key ways you can be academically prepared for the demands of the ASK program.

Review past lessons:

We cannot emphasize how important it is to remain refreshed in your language skills. In the weeks to come, review the lessons you have learned thus far to ensure your preparedness for the ASK program.

Read and listen to recent Cambodian news:

In order to be fully prepared for the ASK program, it is also important to be up-to-date on the recent news in Cambodia. You can do that through reading Cambodian newspapers or listening to Khmer radio via the Internet. This will give you a deeper understanding of the country, as well as an opportunity to practice your reading and listening skills.

Below are some websites to check out:

Khmer radio:

- Radio Free Asia
  http://www.rfa.org/khmer/
- Voice of America
  http://www.voanews.com/khmer/

Newspapers:

- Somme Thmeuy
  www.nmcambodia.com
  Click on “Download Archives” on the left. Go to “Somme Thmeuy” for a choice of recent newspapers to read.
- The Cambodian Daily
  www.cambodiadaily.com
- Phnom Penh Post
  http://www.phnompenhpost.com
- BBC News Online (search for “Cambodia” top right box)
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/default.stm

Tips for Safe Travel

Double-check before you leave home that you have these important documents:

⇒ PASSPORT. Make two photocopies of the first and last pages of your passport—one for the Field Coordinator and another for yourself, to keep somewhere separate from the original passport. Having the copy will expedite getting you a new passport should you lose yours.
⇒ Tickets!!—if paper tickets; credit card to swipe as ID at airport kiosk if an e-ticket
⇒ Traveler’s checks, Credit Cards, Currency, etc.
⇒ List of valuables (if you bring any—though I would leave irreplaceable items at home)
⇒ Business cards, if you have them—you can also make excellent quality business cards in Phnom Penh at reasonable prices. Either way, these are very good to have as you will be meeting many people with whom you’ll want to keep in touch.

You should also bring at least two or three extra passport pictures, as they are sometimes requested for use on entry visas, ID badges at Angkor, etc. Officials will take a picture of you on-site, but it will be much more expensive.
What to Pack

B. MEDICINES, CONT.:
- Comb/brush
- Fingernail clippers
- Toothbrush & holder
- Toothpaste
- Dental floss
- Mosquito repellent
- Sun screen
- Soap & shampoo
- Sink stopper
- Wash & dry towelettes/hand sanitizer
- Other hygiene items

C. THINGS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE A LITTLE EASIER:
- Alarm clock
- Plug adapter & converter
- Ziploc or similar bags, pint & gallon
- Padlock(s) & keys
- Camera gear, film
- Your own pillowcase or pillow
- Extra glasses or contact lenses
- Daily planner (we will be very busy!)
- Tape recorder
- Laptop computer
- Travel journal (for example, see:

For more packing tips, see
http://www.luggagepoint.com/iptables.asp

Cambodian Culture & Etiquette

The Cambodian people are in general a tolerant and easy-going people and a visitor can quickly find acceptance. However, as with all nations, there are a few social customs that should be followed. An awareness of these will show courtesy and avoid embarrassment.

Greeting

The correct form of greeting is the Sampeah which is performed by placing the palms of the hands together, raising them to the face with the fingertips, and inclining the head slightly forward. In general, the higher the hands and lower the bow, the more respect is being shown. When meeting, Cambodians will Sampeah and say ដើម្បីយើង. When departing, again they will Sampeah and say សួស្កាម. Cambodians use Sampeah for greeting and to display respect. When used for greeting, it would be impolite not to return a Sampeah; it is tantamount to rejecting an offered handshake in Western culture. Adults do not Sampeah small children nor initiate Sampeah with servants, vendors, or other service providers.

The most common polite form of address in Cambodia is សុី or សុី៖ followed by the person’s first name. Use of the first name does not necessarily imply any close friendship and the practice is followed even when meeting someone for the first time. In an informal situation, Cambodians will refer to an older man as ពេញ(grandfather), សេ(uncle), សេប(uncle) and to an older woman as ពេម(Grandmother), សេ(aunt), or សេប(Grandmother). They are also widely used in a situation where one is not sure the age of other parties, in deference to one who may be a senior. In Cambodia, for a younger person to address an older individual without using a title would be considered rude or a form of misbehavior. People of the same age or younger can be called by their given name without the use of a title.

Entering a Home

- Remove your shoes before entering a home, showing respect.
- Remove your hat when entering a home.
**Tips for Safe Travel**

**LUGGAGE INFORMATION**

Most airline carriers impose restrictions on luggage weight and size. You are generally allowed two pieces of luggage and one small carry-on bag, plus a purse or laptop computer. For specific restrictions inquire with the airline directly. Excess baggage may also be subject to extra charges and also run the risk of being refused by the airline. Simply said: `pack light`!

A suitcase on wheels or a backpack is highly recommended. For in-country travel, too much heavy luggage is a hassle. You should also familiarize yourself with the standards of dress in Cambodia (see “what to pack” guidelines included in this packet) to know what is acceptable. Label all your baggage inside and out. It’s also helpful to “mark” your bag with a ribbon or other identifying feature, so that you can pick your bag out of the baggage claim line-up.

**UPON ARRIVAL IN PHNOM PENH**

**VISA:**

You can purchase your visa on-site at Phnom Penh International Airport. The visa fee for 30 days is US $20. The Field Coordinator will assist the ASK group with renewal of the visas during the program, but if you plan to stay or travel after ASK (i.e., after July 29), make sure to renew your visa on your own as well. For additional information, see http://www.cambodia-travel.com/information/cambodia-visa.htm.

The ASK program van will be at the airport to pick you up upon your arrival in Phnom Penh. Please look for the large sign reading “ASK PARTICIPANTS.” Please do not take other transportation from the airport! We will be waiting for and looking for you.

**UPON EXITING PHNOM PENH**

**DEPARTURE TAX:**

Departure tax is paid at the airport at US$25 cash per person. Note: Pay the tax before you put your bags through the scanner. Otherwise you will be sent back from passport control to pay the departure tax and re-scan everything again. This tax is payable only in cash and only in US$, so spend your Riels before you get to the airport.

**Traveling and Studying Abroad**

**MONEY**

The amount of money you will need depends on individual spending habits and the expenses you might incur on your program. Review the details of your program fees and be sure you understand which expenses are included and which are not. If you are uncertain about a particular expense, please contact Dr. Su or Dr. Sak-Humphry.

**Currency:**

The currency in Cambodia is the Riel, but USD dollars are widely accepted and exchanged. The exchange rate is approximately 4000 Riel = US$1.00 (for up-to-date exchange rate info, check out http://www.xe.com/ucc/). USD dollars are accepted throughout the country and exchange for less that $1.00 is given in Riel due to the lack of coins.

**Traveler's Checks:**

Traveler's checks are a safe way to take money overseas. American Express checks are the most widely accepted and can be exchanged for the local currency at most banks and large hotels. Rates of exchange/fees will vary. A short list of banks can be found at [http://www.winne.com/asia/cambodia/2004/images/to35graphic.jpg](http://www.winne.com/asia/cambodia/2004/images/to35graphic.jpg), although it is advisable to bring cash (US dollars), and possibly a credit card for emergencies. Once in Phnom Penh, you will want to have a small amount of Cambodian currency (riels) to have on hand for small purchases.

**ATM's:**

ATM's now operate in Phnom Penh & Siem Reap distributing USD. Credit card withdrawals incur a 2% charge.

**Credit Cards:**

Visa or Mastercard are accepted in many hotels and the larger souvenir shops but in few restaurants. You should carry enough cash (in fairly small denominations) to cover your immediate costs.

**Money Advice:**

Carry plenty of US$1.00 and other smaller currency. Most daily transactions are conducted in cash and you should carry plenty of US$1.00 bills with you. A surprising number of things cost US$1.00!
Communications

ADDRRESSES ABROAD

Every effort will be made to provide you with your foreign residential address and telephone number before you leave the U.S. In some cases, however, circumstances simply make this impossible, in which case you will need to let your family and friends know the official program address and/or your residential address shortly after arrival.

TELEPHONE/E-MAIL

At your study abroad site and in your residence, you may have limited or no access to a landline telephone. However, cellular phones are easily obtained at a range of prices from various companies and mobile usage operators in Phnom Penh. There are also many “public” phones (i.e., you will pay someone to use his/her phone) –these areas are openly designated on Phnom Penh streets.

There are many internet cafés available nearby. Here you can do e-mail and make inexpensive international phone calls. This is the best and most convenient way to contact your family and friends back in the US.

TIME ZONES

When making phone calls to or from the United States, keep in mind that there is a very big time difference! Check out:

http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/ or
http://www.worldtimezone.com/

What to Pack

Remember, it will be HOT in Cambodia. There are many markets where you can purchase appropriate clothing, toiletries, etc., but if you prefer one brand of shampoo or soap, etc., bring it with you.

A. CLOTHING:

- handkerchiefs (great for patting your sweaty forehead or cleaning your glasses)
- Docker-type/other lightweight pants suitable for walking/travel
- shirts suitable for hot weather (mostly casual, but perhaps a dress shirt or two as well)
- shorts; skirts (for women--note that dress, particularly for women, is rather conservative by American standards)
- Hat w/ brim; Sunglasses
- COMFORTABLE walking shoes; pair of dress shoes
- Sarong/sampot/other items for walking in hallway from bathroom to room (these can be purchased in Cambodia as well)
- Rain jacket (you will likely not need a sweater or other jacket, except if the a/c inside gets too cold!)
- Flip-flops or Tevas; shower slippers; socks; underwear; belt

B. MEDICINES:

(There will be a basic first aid kit available; however, you should keep your own supply of items on-hand just-in-case)

- Prescription medicines AND a copy of your prescription
- Antacids
- Diarrhea medicine
- Antihistamine/allergy medicine
- Anti-nausea medication
- Band-Aids
- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen
Traveling and Studying Abroad

HEALTH

1. Pre-Departure Doctor/Dentist Visit
   We recommend that you see your doctor and dentist for a routine examination prior to departure. While you will be in Cambodia a relatively short time, everyone knows that a major toothache in the middle of the night can make one minute seem like one hour! Preventative health care before you go can save you from discomfort while abroad.

2. Immunizations
   It is important to get immunized for certain diseases that you might come into contact with while in country. Below is the website for a list of recommended immunizations for Cambodia: http://www.cdc.gov/travel/seasia.html#vaccines

3. Prescriptions/Medicine
   If you take a prescription medicine regularly, be sure to have an adequate supply to last the entire time you are abroad. Keep the medication in labeled containers marked clearly with your name, prescription number, Dr.'s name, etc. If you take allergy shots or insulin, take an adequate supply of well-labeled syringes. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take an extra pair and a prescription with you. There are many opticians/eyeglass shops in PP.

4. In Case of Illness
   If you are sick or injured, inform the Field Coordinator and/or the Program Director immediately. Ask for help! In case of serious illness, consult the Field Coordinator, Program Director, and local health practitioners to determine if you should return to the U.S. for appropriate treatment/care.

5. Insurance & Medical Services
   ALL STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE OBTAINED MEDICAL INSURANCE FOR STUDY ABROAD BY THIS TIME. IF YOU HAVE NOT, PLEASE DO SO IMMEDIATELY. INSURANCE IS REQUIRED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I CENTER FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES.

   The US/ED requires that participants be covered by health and accident insurance plans. The insurance should include Emergency Medical Evacuation as well as Repatriation of Remains Coverage. (continued on next page)

Traveling and Studying Abroad

6. Everyday Precautions
   Cambodia has a very tropical climate, so tropical diseases such as malaria and dengue fever are present. Sensible precautions such as wearing mosquito repellent should ensure that you don't get bitten. The water is not potable, even in the city. Use bottled water and ensure that it is opened in front of you. Wash your hands frequently in clean water to prevent any other sicknesses. It is recommended that you carry hand sanitizer/disinfectant wipes with you for this purpose.

Remember to take care of yourself!

The ASK program will be both extremely rewarding and extremely challenging. It is fast-paced, and there are so many things to see and do outside of the classroom. However, Cambodia in the summertime is very hot, sometimes dusty, sometimes noisy, and sometimes—inconvenient. It's easy to get stressed.

Maintaining good health includes paying attention to your state of mind—your mental and emotional well-being. If possible, try to relieve any stress you might be feeling prior to leaving the country. Otherwise, you may find that travel and the adjustment to a new environment may compound your anxiety. Many students experience culture shock and varying degrees of homesickness while studying abroad. The Coordinator or Project Director will be available for individual counseling and/or referrals (in addition to guidance for your individual projects).

Helpful/interesting sites to check out:
http://www3.niu.edu/niubroad/healthy-safe.htm;
WEATHER/CLIMATE

Essentially it is consistently sunny, warm, and humid. Cambodia has a tropical climate following the Southeast Asia rainy seasons. There are two seasons in Cambodia: wet (May-October) and dry (November-April). The daily nature of the wet monsoon in Cambodia is regular with clear, dry mornings and 2-3 hours of rain in the afternoon. Be prepared for high humidity and sun, with an average temperature of mid-80’s to 90’s Fahrenheit.

TRANSPORTATION

The ASK program van will also be available throughout the summer for the group program transportation needs. It will take you to/from school and other ASK project activities. If, however, you find that you need other transportation, there are taxis available everywhere. We highly recommend you use the tuk-tuk versus the moped taxis for safety reasons. DO NOT GO ANYWHERE ALONE!!

HOUSING

All ASK students are required to stay in housing/accommodations designated for the program. Some of you will have your own rooms; some will double-up (if you requested to do so). The Coordinator will assign rooms before arrival in Phnom Penh. If you require any special accommodations, please inform the Coordinator ASAP (before you leave the U.S.)

ELECTRICITY

Voltage in Cambodia is 220 volts, 50 cycles. Any 110 volts equipment brought from the US that is not dual voltage will require a converter. You can find converters and adaptors either here in the US or in Cambodia.

MARKETS

Twice a week time will be allotted for group grocery shopping where you can buy water, food, etc. Other shopping needs at the outdoor markets can be done in your free time. In these outdoor markets it is accepted (and expected) to bargain for your purchases.

RESTAURANTS

Twice a week there will be mandatory group dinners where you will be able to share/be informed of the week’s activities. Outside of that you have the option to eat at local restaurants. Please be cautious about where you choose to eat, being mindful of sanitary conditions. We recommend that you do not eat anything from street vendors for health reasons. Helpful Hint: tipping is not required in restaurants.

SECURITY INFORMATION

Personal security is an all-important concern in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, even for experienced travelers. Although we hope you have an enjoyable, uneventful stay, it is important to know where and when to call for assistance. We encourage you to use good common sense and follow some recommended defensive security procedures to reduce chances of experiencing trouble.

- Pickpocketing and bag snatching seems unfortunately to be on the increase. Keep your valuables safe and a photocopy of your passport separate from your passport.
- Carry minimal amounts of currency
- Do not wear expensive jewelry openly
- Do not travel alone at night
- Avoid dark alleys and isolated areas
- Avoid con artists advertising good bargains