

VIETNAM & CAMBODIA

DISCOVERING THE MEKONG AND THE TEMPLES OF ANGKOR

EXTENSION TO KEP KEP & PHNUM BOKOR NATIONAL PARKS SEPTEMBER 20 to 26, 2010



You are invited to join an extension to our Pandaw and Angkor Wat journey. The small town of Kep, on Cambodia's southwest coast, was once a popular luxury resort area for Cambodia's elite, both Cambodians and French; even King Sihanouk built a house here (though it was never occupied). Due to the country's turmoil during the seventies and eighties most of the 1000+ villas and homes were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge, or fell into disrepair. However, the town retains its elegance, albeit somewhat disheveled. The wide sidewalks, beach promenade and black sand beaches remain, and many of the large houses and even casino present evocative photo opportunities. Some villas are now small hotels, and the town is beginning to reclaim its place in the minds and vacations of Cambodians, but very few other travelers make it to this region. So Kep remains a quiet place, away from the usual travel route, rather than a sophisticated and busy resort town. Just offshore is Koh Tonsay, a small island with white sandy beaches and good coral reefs just offshore. Adjacent to the town is Kep National Park - our hotel has trails that lead into it - and a little further away is the large and significant Phnum Bokor National Park. During our time at Kep we'll be visiting both parks, and Koh Tonsay.

Please note that this area is largely undeveloped, with little tourist infrastructure. We will be one of the first small tour groups with an interest in nature to visit, so we'll be learning as we go along. This makes for often exciting and unexpected experiences, rather than those found during the well-trodden and predictable tours we more usually take.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Monday, September 20: Angkor area/ Siem Reap

Although we have been able to see numerous birds and other wildlife over the last two days, today we are guided to sites near Siem Reap for wildlife, with more time devoted to this often neglected aspect of Cambodia.



As with the previous two days our guide is from the Sam Veasna Centre, which we visit, named after a dedicated researcher responsible for the protection of important conservation sites in Cambodia, including Sam died at the age of 33 doing fieldwork which included both determining important conservation areas, finding important wildlife populations (including the Eastern Sarus Crane, virtually extirpated in Southeast Asia) and bringing conservation values to local people. While we'll still be taking in cultural aspects of the area, including some temples, for those who prefer to continue with the

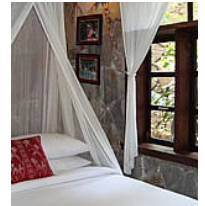


archeological aspect of Cambodia, or would just like to explore on their own, alternative touring can be arranged. After bidding farewell to our fellow travelers we overnight once again in Siem Reap. *(B.L.D)*

Day 2 - Tuesday, September 21: Siem Reap/ Phnom Penh/ Kep



This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Phnom Penh. On arrival we are once again met by our guide from the Sam Veasna Center, and we drive south to the coast. It's about 3 hours, and we'll take advantage of our travel to stop along the way to take in some Cambodian life, and at a village famous for its silk weavings. On arrival at Kep we settle into our hotel, individual bungalows dotted about a hillside overlooking the bay. We'll then take a stroll along the beachfront, with its



promenade and many impressive statues, still remaining from Kep's heyday as Cambodia's premiere resort town. *(B.L.D)*

Day 3 - Wednesday, September 22: Kep National Park

Today we begin to explore the area, starting with Kep National Park, covering most of the headland adjacent to the town. Although not large, there are trails which are sure to reveal new wildlife and plants. Naturally our expert naturalist guide will be leading us, and making sense of the cacophony of sounds and greens, but Asian Fairy-bluebird is one species likely to be found here. On top of the headland is the small Wat Samathik, used by Buddhist monks to meditate, and which we'll visit. As we are well away from the usual tourist area this will give us an opportunity to see a pagoda typical of much of Cambodia away from the large cities and towns.



This afternoon there will be free time to explore, or visit the mangrove areas for their very different nature. Kep is famous for its seafood, especially crab, and we'll be taking advantage of this area speciality at dinner tonight. As trails lead directly into the park from our hotel, we may take the opportunity to look for nocturnal animals tonight. *(B.L.D)*



Day 4 – Thursday, September 23: Koh Tonsay

Today we take a boat out to Koh Tonsay, also called Rabbit Island (despite a lack of rabbits). Just a few families live here, growing coconuts and tending to the few tourists that do make it to the area. There is snorkeling to be had offshore, with corals and tropical fish. We'll enjoy a simple and typical Khmer lunch on the island then return to Kep. For those interested we may be able to arrange some fishing this afternoon. Once again the exploratory nature of our time in Kep will inform our activities, and we may have other areas to visit as well. However, the ruins, nooks and crannies of the town should reward some personal exploration for those serendipitous moments that remain in the memory long after more expected moments are forgotten.



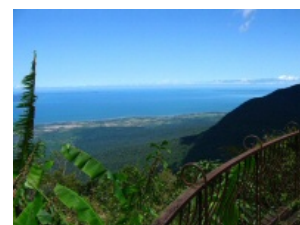
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Day 5 – Friday, September 24: Phnum Bokor National Park

Today we drive to Phnum Bokor National Park, about miles away. Bokor is a significant park, the largest in Cambodia and once slated for World Heritage nomination, but a lack of management ability ended the possibility. A wide range of rare and endangered fauna lives in the park, from tigers to (native) peacocks, although the dipterocarp forests give most seclusion from human sight. Likely encounters of the bird persuasion are, Himalayan



Buzzard, various bulbuls and tropical pigeons, Indochinese green-magpies and Orange-breasted trogons, many of which would make most birders' day. At the top of the mountain is an old, and abandoned French hill station (hot weather retreat). The road is usually open, though it may close at times due to weather. Once again our guide and our best efforts will direct our explorations today, however, we expect to see and experience a very pristine (in most areas) and rich habitat for a range of wildlife. Once again photography should be a highlight, as the frequent mists of this high elevation but coastal parks shroud the hill station's lichen-clad abandoned buildings with evocative secrecy.



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Day 6 – Saturday, September 25: Kep/Phnom Penh/In Flight

After an easy morning we return to Phnom Penh this afternoon, in plenty of time for the evening flight that begins our journey home.

(B,L,D)

Day 7 – Sunday, September 26: In Flight/US Gateway City/Home City

We arrive back in the US today, clear customs and immigration in our gateway city, and fly to our home city, taking with us many memories of our epic journey along the Mekong, the amazing architecture of Angkor, the exotic wildlife and of course the friendship, both shipboard and in the villages and towns, we have encountered.

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