

Special points of interest:

- Paved roads have only been in Cambodia for a few years.
- You can buy a Tuk tuk for \$1200US
- We have a poker group once a month.
- Most software in Cambo is pirated
- There are no English language cinemas in PP

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Arrival Days

The International School of Phnom Penh is a class act. The first few days the new teachers arrived in the country we were given accommodations at the Anise Hotel. The Anise is just a few blocks from school, has a daily laundry service, provides wireless and LAN connections for internet, and includes a small breakfast menu.

Being comfortable is a key issue when everything is new. The first few days were hectic for me. Thida, the secretary, arranged for me to meet with several realtors so I could find a place to live. It was strange. I went with four different realtors and saw the same places several times. What I wasn't prepared for was the price quotes being different! My superintendent, Rob, sat down with me and explained how it could work. As soon as I found the

apartment I wanted, Vanni (finance secretary) would call the owner and bargain for me. Then the school cut a check for the first year's rent. (The contract provides a monthly housing allowance which was a hundred dollars shy of the rent I had chosen.) Apartments, flats, and houses run in price ranges from 300US to 2000US per month. Basically, it is reasonable to afford a nice place. My 2 bedroom- 2 1/2 bath is across the street from the elementary school! You cannot beat that!

The only way to meet the incoming teachers was to hang out in the office. Setting up a phone line, getting a cell phone, hooking up internet, finding a reliable driver, and a few other things all came easy to me. I spent time helping other teachers set these

things up. The school arranged for some of these, but sometimes it just helped to have a clear explanation of how it should work.

Thida, Vanni, Christine, and Sally were all a big help when we first arrived. This office staff's main goal was to make sure we were able to find a place to stay. Once that was done, we could concentrate on our jobs.



Tuk Tuk - the local taxi. Safe, open-aiored, fits 4 comfortably.

Motos and Tuk Tuks

Phnom Penh is a small city. The traffic moves at a snail's pace. It's a good thing too! There are so many motorbikes, street vendor carts, tuk tuks, and bicycles that the traffic has to move slowly.

I have found the best mode of travel is the tuk tuk. PP (Phnom Penh) has only had tuk tuks for the past two years! These little carriages are pulled by a motorbike - which usually run like they have one cylinder! Four or five Westerners and fit in

snugly, but I once saw seven Cambodian Monks sharing a ride. (How many Cambodians can you fit on one scooter? - One more!)

The rates vary, but you can ride from one side of the city to the other for as little as one dollar US. A moto is fifty cents or less. You can hire a tuk tuk for the day for as low as ten dollars. No matter what, if you speak Khmer (Cambodian) then you will ride cheaper.

An important aspect of living

here is to form a relationship with a moto or tuk tuk driver you can trust. I befriended PoPo, a tuk tuk driver from the Riverside district. Unfortunately, I only call him once in a while. His turf is along the river and I live ten minutes south. It wouldn't make sense for him to drive down to get me. There are thousands of motos and tuk tuks around.

The fact is, I will probably buy a scooter. If you walk around this city, everyone wants to give you a ride. It is VERY annoying!



Except for the cart, this is what I now own. Can you say "Minimalist"?

For the first time, [since moving to Texas in 1993] I am truly starting out with nothing in the kitchen!



I live at the bottom of the city...literally! The streets flood when it rains, just like my apartment!

This Apartment is Almost a "Home"

Home! This will certainly be a "home". My last apartment was too far away from school and in a slum. This is a total turnaround.

I live on the first floor, up only one flight of stairs from the open area garage. I cannot hear my upstairs neighbors and I rarely see my one next door neighbor. With only 12 apartments in the building, each apartment is relatively spacious.

Each of the two bedrooms has a bathroom with a tub/shower. (water is heated electrically by a wall mounted box) There is ample closet space in each room and they came furnished with queen sized beds—the mattresses are quite comfortable too.

The living room is barren. In time I will have it furnished. The wooden couch and chairs are very uncomfortable and will be

fine on my small back balcony.

My kitchen is spacious and has a full sized refrigerator, compact washing machine, and propane stove. A small half bath is accessible from the kitchen and will come in handy for parties. The wooden table and four chairs will have to suffice. Whomever designed the kitchen did a poor job on the cabinets. There is no place to put dishes or cutlery. One of the low cupboards houses the propane tank, so nothing can go in there. Perhaps this is a good thing?

I don't have any dishes, pots, pans, or cutlery yet. Most of the teachers have shipped a lot of theirs from other countries. I can plan cabinet space and install some shelves before I look into dishware. (I miss my Warner Brothers dishes boxed up in GB). For the first time, I am truly starting with nothing in

the kitchen. I bought some paper plates and a few odds/ends to make sandwiches. It will take a dinner date before I spend time shopping for the kitchen. For now, I am happy with the beer and sandwich bachelor pad!

There are air cons in every room, each with a remote control that works! Imagine that. Perhaps after my first electric bill I'll purchase some fans from the local markets.

All in all, this apartment is a home. One of my bedrooms serves as an office. Friends can sleep in the extra queen bed and watch movies on the wall. I am planning the colors for my living room, but that will require some feminine expertise! There are some really good quality, inexpensive rattan furniture stores down the road.

No complaints, except the flooding. That's another story.

Rainy Season - The Flooding Apartment

Rainy season is here to stay for a while. When it rains, it pours! Streets flood, kids play in the puddles, and the traffic slows. All the tropical plants turn green! But not everything is positive.

Once again, it seems to be a good thing that I own virtually nothing. If only I had brought my scuba fins! Here is why...

I was at school finishing up some computer work on a Sunday. I was so engrossed in the 23 computers that I failed to notice the near-monsoon taking place outside. The storm came and went.

When I finished my work, I packed up and enjoyed a brief

walk home. Everything was fresh, green, and dripping wet. Water was rushing down the stairwell at the apartment. "Somebody must have left a window open?", I thought to myself.

As I climbed the short flight of stairs, I noticed the hall was flooded. Then I noticed water was flooding under my door and under my neighbor's door! Where was it coming from?

I opened my door to a completely flooded apartment. It is completely tiled so musty carpets were not a worry. But where was the water coming from? I decided to keep my dinner appointment and buy a squeegee on the way home.

Dinner was great, but I didn't want to fork out 10US for a squeegee. Thankfully, I had some help. The guard downstairs used his squeegee to push the flood out.

The flood came from my balcony! I asked the guard if this had happened before. He said, (get this) ..."ALL THE TIME!"

I have to talk to my landlord - or buy new fins!



So Greg, What ARE You Teaching?

When I signed on in January 2007, I was hired for 4th-5th grade. That was cool. The teachers stay with their students for two years. It builds a relationship between the students/parents/teacher. The school enlarged its student body. My principal asked if I wanted to teach computers and Special Needs instead. I accepted the idea with open arms. Now I have over two hundred new students! Can you imagine having to learn all these international names? The students come from everywhere!

The classes come only once a week, but I have all of the students from Early Years to PYP Grade 4/5. The computer lab is great! Twenty three computers are shared by staff and students. My com-

puter is connected to an LCD projector so students can watch the screen as I lead them through a maze of technology!

More than anything, I work together with the homeroom teachers to integrate the technology class with their mainstream curriculum. It takes a lot of team work and planning. I'm off to a slow start, but Green Bay wasn't built in a day! Part of my puzzle is finding the time to plan.

There are two of us working in the Student Support Services (i.e. special needs). I hold small classes in our SSS office, take students out for 1/1 times, and push into classrooms to work with individual students throughout the week. It's not easy to find time in the day to breathe.



The computer lab (elem) 22 desktops, 11 laptops, wireless, more.

I couldn't do the SSS alone! Luckily the art teacher, Kristin, also has Special Needs experience and we can divide up the workload. Kristin and I have our work cut out for us. There are a few cases at this school that will require some research, patience, and outside help.

The Top 10 Strange Foods Eaten in Cambodia

Southeast Asia is an exciting experience to say the least! Walk along any street in Cambodia and you will see vendors selling things Westerners would not even consider ordering. Here is only a taste of what is here: (pun intended)

10. Parts - any part of a pig, chicken, or cow

9. Frog Legs (the frogs are skinned whole and set out to dry in the sun)

8. Eels - or virtually any other sea life you can imagine

7. Worms

6. crickets

5. black eggs (there is a special preparation that goes into these, but NO WAY!)

4. baby chicken embryos - they look like normal white eggs, but they let the embryo mature so it's not just a yolk.

3. grubs - yellow and brown grubs all squirming around in a pile on a plate!

2. Coagulated blood - supposedly most Cambodians put a chunk of this into

their breakfast noodle soup!

And, the **Number 1** grossest food on the menu.....

Tarantulas! - you never know if you will find a live one in the heaping pile of cooked ones!

One of my current goals is to challenge my arachnophobia once again. You may remember when I let a tarantula walk up my arm in Honduras? Well, stay tuned to my Cambodia days. At least once, in the next five years, I will go to the provinces and eat some tarantula surprise! That's a promise.

Work Hard, Play Hard - This Staff Likes to Party!

The Superintendent and his wife invited the entire staff to their house for the Friday night ending the first week of school. Rob and Kirsten (and their two daughters) really know how to put on a party.

The food was catered by FreeBird, a local Bar inspired by the song. Great food. I usually eat my Saturday morning breakfast at FreeBird! Anyway, the party... A lot of the staff - and their families - showed up to socialize and meet the new teachers. The drinks and food were plentiful, the music

was just loud enough, and Rob's girls entertained (babysat) the little ones that came with their parents.

The informal atmosphere was a chance for me to see a variety of staff that work over in the Secondary campus and meet the spouses of the teachers I had already worked with in primary.

Networking is the best way to survive the opening weeks of living in a new country. I know several new friendships were

forged this night and a lot of problems were solved. Of course, any time you get a bunch of staff together, you will inevitably hear the phrase "I don't mean to bring up shop, but..."

Poker night was mentioned. The Khmer staff was mingling with the imports. I heard several different languages spoken, even Canadian!

This party was a notch above the other schools I have been to. Why? Because it was at the Superintendent's house. Leadership!



The Lemoine farm in Green Bay, Wisconsin!



Alpacas and fine alpaca products are available online.

Alpacas are extremely funny looking animals. I'm not really sure, but I think God asked Dr. Seuss to help plan out what these beasts should look like.

I certainly hope you might be in the market for a new pet. My brother Jason and sister-in-law Erin have built up a small farm in good ol' Green Bay to offer specially bred Alpacas. You HAVE to visit their website or take them up on their farm visit!

Green Bay Alpacas LLC
3119 Bay Settlement Rd.
Green Bay, WI 54311

Phone: 920-469-4581

E-mail: greenbayalpacas@yahoo.com

This is a family operation. I have never seen their farm, but it is one of my first stops upon my next US arrival. Picture a 2 year-old Ella waking up in the early dawn hours to fill up some feed buckets. Her sister, Sam, must help her out all the time! I can just see Collin sitting around the house a bit bored and saying to himself: "I think I'll grab a pair of shears and shave a few Alpacas this afternoon!" TJ has probably already taught a few of the alpacas to act as goalie while he kicks the soccer ball around. I have one final thought: These Green Bay alpacas probably have the cleanest alpaca teeth in the nation because Jason is such a fine Oral Surgeon.

<http://greenbayalpacas.com/>

Acronyms FAQ

As you read this newsletter, and as you read future ones, there are a lot of big letters. Here is a short list of the more frequent ones:

ISPP- International School of Phnom Penh.

IBO- International Baccalaureate Organization. This is an association of schools that include the best K-12 schools in the world. Founded in 1968, the association allows students to travel to virtually ANY country and continue a quality education as a global citizen.

IB- Grade 9-12 students strive for the IB Diploma, often with an eye on a Western University or College.

MYP- the Middle Years Pro-

gramme. Middle school students in grades 6-8 preparing for the 9-12 IB programme.

PYP- Primary Years Programme. This is the elementary group of students from PYR to Grade 5.

PYR- Primary Years Reception. Basically the kindergarten students.

EY- Early Years students are 3 and 4yr olds.

PP- Phnom Penh

YBYSIA- if you don't know this one then you haven't become a true turtle. Talk to my brother Jeff. He can induct you into this perfect group of world class drinkers.

MAC- an Apple computer. I just started working with one

that the school provided for me. Since I trouble shoot for a lot of teachers, and half the school uses Mac computers, the school provided me with one. I still cannot convert to MAC psychologically. Actually, I just refuse to. PC is better.

I hope these acronyms help you understand a bit more of my pictures and newsletters. The IB schools are a cut above the non-IB schools. We get a lot of extra training, have higher standards to meet, and turn out brighter students. It's not easy for teachers to get into the IB World Schools, but once you are "in" you are set.

