



Everywhere you look, there are geckos and Monks!

# St. Sometimes

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## Special points of interest:

- Theravada Buddhism is practiced by 95% of the population.
- Average annual income per capita here is \$310 making Cambo one of the world's poorest nations.
- Roughly the size of Oklahoma
- The Tonle Sap lake makes up 5% of the area

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## Buddhist Monks Everywhere!

I love this country! This is so different than the Arab world...for the better. The presence of so many monks is the most obvious. While my time in the Arab world was surrounded by people who play two roles - the devout Muslim on the outside, distinctly non-Muslim behavior on the inside, this country is filled with genuinely devout and spiritual people.

I recently attended a blessing ceremony that is held for each new building in Cambodia. Several Monks were invited to lead the spiritual chants and prayers to bring health and good luck to the people under the

roof of this new building. I watched and listened as the monks meditated and chanted in the Khmer language, while the participants prayed and showed respect. The monks showered the audience with Holy water and offered small gifts.

After the inside ceremony, the monks led a small group around the outside of the new elementary classrooms and showered the building with Holy water.

Monks do not ask for anything. So in return for their blessings, a small basket was presented to each monk. The baskets contain



A ceremony - a monk blesses the

toothbrushes, soap, rice, and other essentials of health.

This was a very moving and spiritual ceremony, just the "tip of the iceberg" of my Cambodian experience.

## Bare feet - customary throughout S.E. Asia



Take off your shoes before you enter a private home! Sometimes you may even notice shoes

by the entrance of smaller business buildings. Believe it! It's no wonder the most common footwear is a pair of sandals. Sandals are easy to take off and put on, don't cost as much as shoes, and dry out a lot faster if you are caught in a sudden torrential downpour. Surely there is a more spiritual or

cultural reason for taking off your shoes. As yet, I don't know.

All of the students leave their shoes outside of the classrooms at school. Imagine that? My first reaction is "what if someone steals your sandals?". Spend some time here and you will quickly lose that feeling.



We have students and families from all over the world. I know a lot of schools in the USA have diversity, but a whole school?

## A Truly Multi-Cultural School!

Dutch, Swedish, Khmer, Thai, Vietnamese, US, Canadian, Malay, German, French, Chinese, Mauritian, Japanese, Spanish, South African, Russian, Ukrainian, Kiwi, Australian, Bolivian, English, Welsh, Scottish, Italian... to name just a few of the languages and cultures that make up I.S.P.P. Imagine the conversations that come up in

class, at the parent conferences, and in the staff lounge. This is where I want to be! English is still the lingua franca but you cannot breathe without hearing a conversation in some foreign language or accent.

Students in the IB program are required to take foreign language but this school goes a step further. For

example: the elementary students have “Mother Tongue” classes twice a week. A native speaker leads students in activities and lessons to students of the same native language background. I love it! Any other schools do this?



The hand of friendship has no color.

**“Eric and Robin are definitely settling in. They have a spacious house that feels like “home” and an army of guards, maids, and drivers. “**



Erik and Robin Wilensky

Some of my readers are familiar with this topic. It is one of the most vital parts of being an overseas teacher. No matter if you are single, married, or married with dependents (children), overseas teachers have are drawn to each other to “survive” and “thrive” in a foreign culture.

Dinner parties, happy hour “meetings”, poker parties, in-country trips, and vacations are all part of the life we lead. Time that we would normally spend with family at home is spent among our surrogate families.

You cannot get along with everyone, but it’s worth a try. Most of the time it works out for the best. At the end of a new posting, I

go away with a few “friends-for-life”, a lot of good friends, and a few people whom I’d rather not be in the same country with anymore. Hah!

The beginning is always the most exciting. Erik and Robin invited over a small group of newest teachers for a party. Both of them spent the last two years in Kuwait like I did. We have a lot of common memories, even though they taught at a different school. Erik and Robin love this country even more than I do! We are probably the most likely to stay on for extended contracts.

Eric and Robin are definitely settling in. They



Darren, Erik, and I pose in front of Erik’s “Anti-Kuwait” tribute bar.

have a spacious house that feels like “home” and an army of guards, maids, and drivers. Robin is so happy because they have a large patio to entertain friends and family. Their time in Kuwait was similar to mine - living in a small, bare apartment that never felt like a “home”. I look forward to spending more time with Erik and Robin, as long as I keep winning at Poker and taking Erik’s cash!

## The Phom Pehn Drinkers Club

Once a month we have a small group of 5-10 guys that meets for the drinkers club. No, this isn't the final step to AA meetings. This is our version of a (safe)guy's night out.

There are 130 bar names in our bag. Everyone throws about 15-20 US to the treasurer (Darren). We start at the Green Vespa Pub.



Allen, the GV bar manager starts us all off with an Angkor beer and pulls the next name out of the hat. The night starts.

Here are the rules: 1. we go to as many bars as our cash allows us. 2) we take two tuk tuks and reserve 10US to pay each tuk tuk 3) we must each buy one beer per stop 4) beers

don't have to be drunk AT the bar, they can be taken in the tuk tuk on the way to the next stop 5) no women allowed 6) go home early if you want - more beer for the rest of the guys 7) end of cash end of official evening 8) the President - Andy - calls stay or go 9) don't leave beer in the can 10) don't pay more than \$1.50 US for a can of beer- most are



Andy, among many other duties, is the official President of the PP Drinkers club.

## MacMan Commeth

I have not used a Mac since summer of 2004. The decision was made to add me to the list of teachers to get a laptop (Macbook). It is important that I am fluent in Mac and PC so I can help teachers and students. Our campuses use both Mac and PC servers and a good number of teachers prefer

to use Mac. It takes a while to get used to, even though the main tech guy (Eric) installed software to run both Mac and Windows on the laptop. I never knew that was possible.

Sunday mornings you can usually find me using the Macbook in one of the many small restaurants

that offer WiFi. It just isn't easy to navigate without the right mouse click! But, Mac users claim there are no viruses, which run rampant in Cambodia.



**“Where is the right mouse click? Uggghh!”**

## End of First Week Party at Mockrish's



This story can fit 75-125 words.

Selecting pictures or

graphics is an important part of adding content to your newsletter.

Think about your article and ask yourself if the picture supports or enhances the message you're trying to convey. Avoid selecting images that appear to be out of

context.

Microsoft Publisher includes thousands of clip art images from which you can choose and import into your newsletter. There are also several tools you can use to draw shapes and symbols.



Im Un is a liaison between the Khmer staff and the expat staff. He has helped me a lot with drivers license and moto stuff! Thanx, Im! I owe you and your wife dinner!

Other Issues of St.Sometimes are on the web at:

<http://itre.us/stsomewhere>

## Virtual Socialization?

How many screen names and passwords and email addresses and website hosts and and and... do you need to keep track of for just one person? There are only a few for me that you really need to know. The rest might come and go. It's the nature of Tech2.0 - the technology of today.



Are you a **FACEBOOK** fan? I am not really. Friends have just dragged me into it. Some of those friends don't even Email anymore. They would rather use the facebook system inbox. OK by me. I'll conform. Yes, I am active on Facebook as my name.

I am also on Skype, Hi5, hotmail, itre.us, and a bunch of other places. Maybe I'll see you out in Tech2.0 somewhere.

The best way to keep track of me is my website.

Your business tag line here.



## The Kingdom of Cambodia - Outside of Phnom Penh

This place is hard to put into words. There hasn't been a lot of travel for me yet. I plan on it, but I did a lot of traveling this summer and that has sufficed for a while. Getting around South East Asia is a weary affair. Did you know this country has only had paved roads for the past two or three years? The main highways are only two way roads that weave in and out of the countryside towns. Perhaps a mental picture of going 25 Mph on the highway puts things into perspective. It takes hours to get anywhere. You cannot be in a rush!

Let's say you take a bus from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap. That will take 5 hours on a good day. No matter what you ride in or on, it is an experience similar to driving in Honduras and Central America. There are oxcarts, motorbikes, bicycles, walking families, children playing on the side of the road, cows crossing, tour buses, and all sorts of traveling human beings. My favorites are the motorbikes that have pigs in crates stacked up about 3 people high. No kidding. I have no idea how they can ride like that - the driver I mean. When you stop to wait for the ferry (to cross the Ton Le Sap River) the hawkers crowd around selling every form of living animal or plant.

Waysides are basically roadside restaurants. Any transportation company (buses, motos, taxis, tour groups, mini-buses) get commission from particular roadside stops. The funny thing is it doesn't really matter. They all sell the same stuff. Noodles, khmer foods, cold Angkor beer or cokes, coconuts, strange fruits, Pringles, and cokes. Same same everywhere.

There are basically three major places to go in Cambodia: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville. The outlying provinces are full of adventure too. Sihanoukville will be next on the list. I'll go to the beach in early October. Then, it's time to find the village where people eat tarantulas. I cannot wait for that! Maybe we'll hire a driver or take motorbikes out to the provinces. We'll see. Thank you for reading. - GL