

St. Sometimes - Some Traffic



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This is the Cambodian Transportation and Flood Issue!

Readers have heard me rant about the Phnom Penh traffic issues before. It just keeps getting worse, so an entire issue devoted to the Sights and Descriptions of Cambodian traffic is now here. The photos come from a range of sources.



Almost every day for the past two months it has rained around 3pm for several hours. With the extensive funding (note the sarcasm) of the Cambodian

government, most inner streets of Phnom Penh flood over when it rains even 20 minutes.

The already impossible traffic becomes a beehive of motorbikes, trucks, bicycles, cyclos, and other forms of moving traffic. On my way home from school, I



have learned to weave my way through “off the beaten path” side roads to avoid impassable main streets. Sometimes I run out of options and push my motorbike

through sewage runoff up to my waist. (It’s a good thing there is a good doctor in town to keep me healthy!)

When main roads in Phnom Penh are backed up with traffic, all of the side streets adopt the traffic. Impatient motorbikes are plowing through deep waters until their mufflers get buried and the bike stops for some reason! Hah. The riders are miffed as they get off and start to push as shop owners laugh at their plight.



This is not run off water from the Tonle Sap River. The flooding is due to the lack of infrastructure for the road system. To make things worse,

when the government DOES work on the drainage system, they dig up the roads (that were initially built as gifts from other countries like the US or Germany) the DON’T repair the road they dig up. This is a vicious circle that causes further traffic nightmares even on dry days. Is there hope? No. Until the government starts to really learn from developed countries, Cambodia will experience more and more traffic growing pains. Cambodia remains a developing country due to stupidity, not ignorance.



Unbelievable but “normal” here!

This is a rare site. Traffic does not stop at stoplights, usually. This police officer will only pull over foreigners when he wants money for lunch. This picture doesn't show how the motos line up farther to

the left into the oncoming lanes. That makes it difficult for any traffic wanting to go in the other direction! Laugh, but this is “normal” for Phnom Penh. I guarantee, when this photo was taken, at least 20 motos, 2 bikes, and one tuk-tuk ran the light.



on a moped. I was so confused I had to ask about it. There must be a law against riding “double” on a moped in Wisconsin.

It is definitely an absolute MUST to keep my camera handy. My favorites are still the animal motos that are carrying geese, ducks, chickens, or piglets to the different markets.

Speaking of overloaded vehicles:

What the...?

There is no limit to what you can put on a motorbike. The “moto” is the main form of transportation in this little beehive of a city. There are no rules or regulations. I think any Green Bay police officer would check into a mental ward if they were to visit this wild west version of a city. No kidding. The only regulations here are based on nature's rules of physics and the determination of cambodians to role nature's dice.

When I was in Green Bay last summer, I saw a strange site: a police cruiser writing a ticket for two teens that were riding “double”



My friend Ron and his wife Annie have been to Cambodia back and forth from Canada since 2001. Ron reports seeing 8 on a moto.



Six seems like enough. Look at the expression of the front kid (above).



When in Rome...



Times of Greg Lemoine, international teacher at large!
I just had to try this out. One Sunday morning, I got onto my Suzuki (bought in Honor of Khaled) Moto and went shopping for few bamboo shelves for my growing book collection. In earlier days, I would have hired a moto to take the load for me. This time, however, I decided to load up for the short ride home. Hah! A nearby moto was bored and decided to help me attach the shelves to my bike. (Is there a Cambodian that DOESN'T know how to attach bulk to a moto? He attached them so well that I could have gone "off road" with them attached!



It is a good thing that I am heading out of Cambodia at the end of the year. I probably would end up carrying a load of chickens, some bulkier furniture, or a Cambodian family on the back of my moto.

My first Tattoo!

Don't get all bent out of shape. I didn't want a tattoo! It just happened when I was careless. My new "tattoo" is the shape and size of a poker chip. It is a "Cambodian Tattoo" i.e. a muffler burn! I was wearing a pair of shorts on the weekend and grazed my right calf on the muffler. Ouch! It still hasn't healed after two weeks. Lots of antiseptic creme needed.

Sidebar: Recycling in Phnom Penh

It's not an issue. Everything is recycled out of necessity.



There are innumerable Cambodians that walk the streets of Phnom Penh towing carts to collect every imaginable plastic, paper, or reusable material. Like the woman in the picture (right), the collectors walk the streets with a little plastic horn attached to a bubble that makes a honking noise to let everyone know they are collecting. It reminds me of when a kid squeezes a clown's nose and it squeaks. This is just one of the many sounds you hear on the streets of Phnom Penh. Recycling is a money opportunity for a lot of the poorer people so little is ever wasted. Most is

reused and used again and again.

Final Comments on Traffic

Kids and Infants on Motos? Ignorance or Necessity?



I still cannot get used to the sight of kids, even infants, in their parents' laps atop a moto. Yes, most Cambodians cannot afford a car or to hire a tuk-tuk all the time. However, isn't the most cherished part of an adult's life a child? I saw a man, his wife, 2 kids, and infant (in it's mother's arms) driving on a small moto, weaving through oncoming traffic. My first thought was: if ANYTHING hits that moto, everything that man holds dear in his life will be wiped out instantly.

Rest assured, I may carry bamboo stacked up on my moto, but you won't ever hear about kids or infants on my bike! Drive safely and think about why the US has so many traffic laws and police to enforce them!