



Trailblazer Foundation Volunteer Protocols



The following are essential guidelines for participating in any of our projects:

1. Volunteers need to act in a responsible and respectful manner whilst interacting with the local people, staff and other volunteers.
2. When working with any of our team in the countryside, you must dress appropriately, * see Dress Code.
3. If you are invited to join one of our teams into the countryside, please come prepared to deal with sun, dust, rain, and thirst. If you believe you will need any snack, please bring something along.
4. When you are working in the countryside, you will at times be asked to join in lunch which has been prepared by the local villager. The food is always fresh and well cooked so there is no need to worry. However, if you have dietary restrictions or serious concerns, you can decline. If you must decline, please do so in a respectful manner. If you do not eat what they provide it may be seen Cambodians would understand if you state that it would be against your religion or is a matter of health that you are not eating what they provided.
5. If you experience any improper treatment by staff or other volunteers, please report it to our management staff.
6. Handing out political or religious materials is forbidden and against our agreements with the government.

Basics:

Cambodians are very friendly and a smile goes a long way.

- Be respectful to elders.
- Shouting or public displays of over emotion are considered impolite.
- Remove your shoes before entering a temple or someone's home.
- Dress respectfully, especially when visiting temples.
- Do not point at someone with your naked foot and do not touch people's heads (including the children).

Dress Code:

Cambodia is a conservative country and we ask that you respect them by dressing accordingly, especially when traveling into the country side. Siem Reap hosts many tourists and one of the major concerns to the Cambodian people is the liberal and inappropriate dress worn by tourists. Please do not be influenced by the liberal clothing of other tourists, use the locals as your fashion guide.

The basic rule is to cover your knees and shoulders, T-shirts covering the shoulders and anything that covers the knees are the bare minimum and acceptable. Modest, high cut sleeveless tops are acceptable. Men should always wear a top and woman should always wear a bra. Buddhism is an integral daily part of Cambodian life but you will rarely see them walk off the street into a Temple, they will wash and change into clean, conservative clothing before entering, and hats are not to be worn inside Temples.

Buddhist Monk Etiquette:

Buddhist Monks are very highly regarded in Cambodia. There are some basic rules when working with Buddhist Monks:

- Wait until a Monk acknowledges you before you acknowledge him.
- It is forbidden for a woman to touch a monk or even brush past his clothes, not even a hand shake!

- Try not to make the Monks feel uncomfortable by sitting next to them on public transport.
- A woman may not directly pass anything to a Monk, she must place it on a table for him to pick up.
- Monks in Siem Reap are fairly used to foreigners and will try to be tolerant and flexible, respecting our culture as we try to theirs.

Body Language:

Placing the hands together and bowing ones head is the normal greeting in Cambodia, however, many people will now extend their hand to shake yours. Be respectful by going that step further to immerse yourself into the Cambodian culture.

- Cambodians believe the head is holy and the feet are low and dirty. To touch someone on the head is an insult, and to point your feet at someone is also an insult. To point your feet at the image of Buddha is unforgivable.
- Never show anger or try to make someone look stupid, saving face is important and one should maintain a cool head.
- When bartering, do so with a smile – Cambodians are not aggressive barterers.
- Do not show public emotions towards your partner, hugging and kissing is seen to be inappropriate public behavior.
- The left hand should never be used for handshakes, eating or to exchange money or goods.

Toilets:

Guesthouses have western style flush toilets, where you can usually put the paper down the toilet. If you see a bin in any bathroom, it is there for toilet paper. If you feel this is unhygienic then consider the consequences of blocking the toilet. You may sometimes encounter a “squat” toilet. This is the norm style for locals. A scoop and water holding vessel is to be used to manually flush the toilet by pouring the scooped water down the toilet.

Cambodian Time:

In the Western world we are very hung up on time, with our meetings and schedules. Cambodian people do not stress over time and it is not uncommon for things to happen later than arranged. Just go with the flow and forget stress, it’s better for you anyway!

Photos:

Always ask permission before taking someone’s photograph. You can ask permission by saying, “Som tort rupe?”

Children will be very interested to see their image on your digital camera and may rush to see it after the photo is taken.

Beggars and Hawkers:

- Try to be courteous to hawkers selling gifts to tourists. A polite “no, thank you”, or in Khmer, “aw te arc oon”, and a smile is usually all that is needed to be left alone. Even though they may be poor, begging is an unsustainable activity. We strongly recommend you not give anything to beggars out of guilt. By being a volunteer you are providing them with a sustainable future.
- Giving sweets to children who have no access to tooth paste or brushes causes major problems, when you consider that they also have no access to dental care.
- Giving money to children makes them spend more time begging and prevents them from going to school. With no education, when they become older and “less cute” they earn less money and have no possibility of employment.

Siem Reap town:

- The official currency is the Riel, although \$USDollars are used in most restaurants and hotels
- The exchange rate of Riel to USD is 4,000Riel to \$1USD
- There are ATM machines throughout town, ATMs dispense cash in \$USD
- There are money exchangers throughout town, often at jewelry stores
- It is recommended you avoid the use of Traveler's checks. They can be difficult to cash, and often a commission is charged
- It is recommended you convert a small amount of \$USD into Riel – perhaps \$10 or \$20USD, it will give you better bargaining power in the markets and for use as change
- Local transport [moto] costs an average of 2,000 Riel for a short journey, \$8-\$10USD all day
- Tuk tuk transport costs an average of \$2USD for a short journey, \$12USD+ for all day – depending on where you are going
- Bicycles are provided through many Guesthouses, and around town for hire, at an average of \$2-\$4USD per day
- Food sold by street vendors is inexpensive, ranging from \$1-\$3USD, just make sure it is thoroughly cooked
- Meals in a restaurant range from \$3-\$20USD
- It is not customary to leave a tip, however with the increase in tourists it does occur more often at restaurants [although not at a Western % rate]
- Bottled water is available all over town and range in price from 500Riel to \$.50USD per bottle
- Ice cubes that are cylindrical in shape are made with potable water
- There are laundry services available throughout town, and at most accommodations, most charge \$1-\$2USD per kg
- A one day pass to the temples is US\$ 37; a 3-day pass is US\$ 62; a 7-day pass is US\$ 72
- Internet / Wifi is available at many accommodations and internet cafes
- Telephone services are available in some internet cafes, but prices vary so be careful
- Cambodia is set up for mobile connectivity, check with your mobile phone provider to see if you are set up for international roaming and if your phone will work in Cambodia
- The main Post Office is located on Pokambor Avenue, along the river, near the FCC club. It is open 07:30 to 17:30 everyday
- Siem Reap is equipped with cable TV with English language programs

Language Guide:

English is widely spoken in Siem Reap, but it is always good to know some basic Khmer

(Cambodian language) phrases:

Hello - so sa dai

How are you? - sok sa bai?

Thank you - arc-oon

Please - som

Excuse - me som dtoh

Do you speak English? - niak jek ong-layh

Beautiful - sa-aat

The bill please - som ket loi

I have read and understand these protocols and agree to abide by them when volunteering for Trailblazer in its activities that I may participate in.

Volunteer Signature

Date