



*amansara*

Activities Guide

## Experiences at Amansara

Experiences are personal journeys. Our goal at Amansara is to introduce you to Siem Reap's deeply-rooted cultural heritage, natural wonders and contemporary attractions, and help you establish a personal connection with its warm and friendly people.

As home to Angkor – the vast, Unesco-protected ruins of the once-mighty Khmer empire – Siem Reap is the cultural capital of Cambodia, combining natural splendor and a rich tradition of Khmer history and culture that is unparalleled.

Nestled at the threshold of Angkor, Amansara offers a variety of temple tours and customised excursions as part of the Amansara guest experience. Several tours utilise Amansara's own fleet of remorks (moped-powered trishaws), each with its own Amansara driver and English-speaking guide. Outside the Angkor temples explorations, off-the-beaten-track excursions can also be arranged to suit individual interests and pace. Set out to the outskirts of Siem Reap on a countryside jeep rally, take a cruise among the time-frozen floating villages of Tonlé Sap lake, participate in culinary experiences including a Khmer cooking class at the Khmer village house, and enjoy holistic wellness and immersive experiences such as movement classes and forest walking meditation.





## East of Angkor

The destination for this Jeep outing, the three principal temples of Roluos Group stand some 12 kilometres east of Siem Reap on the road to Phnom Penh: Lolei surrounded by an active wat, Preah Ko and Bakong, a five-tiered manifestation of Mount Meru, the home of the Hindu gods. Jayavarman II chose this spot, later called Hariharalaya, as one of the first capital cities of the Angkor period in the 9th century. Hence Roluos offers an appropriate starting point for our early Angkorian exploration. The setting is somewhat quieter than the more frequented temples within the Angkor Archaeological Park.

For a slightly longer excursion the southernmost Roluos temple ruin of Trapeang Toteung Thngai may also be visited. This Hindu temple set in a bamboo forest was possibly constructed under the reign of Jayavarman III during the 9th century and consists of seven brick towers each containing stone pedestals from which the cylindrical Shiva linga would project.

The anthropomorphic linga representations of the god Shiva have disappeared but what does remain is a large number of stone channels, called *snanadroni*, to the yoni (a Hindu symbol of the divine mother) which collected sanctified water. Ask your guide to point these out and notice the quality of the stone as something to keep in mind during your following Angkor tours. According to locals, this temple remained in good condition until 1970, full of marvellous statues, before the ravages of war took their toll. Today, although very little of the temple remains, the setting surrounded by water is extremely picturesque.

Returning to Amansara by country road reveals glimpse of authentic rural life, a timeless highlight in itself. On the road home there is one more small temple complex for true enthusiasts. Prei monti with a most unusual stone bathing pool may have been the site of the Hariharalaya royal palace.



### Angkor Thom, The Great City

Angkor Thom was the centre of the Khmer kingdom from the end of the 12th century. Jayavarman VII's great city remained the seat of Khmer power until the capital was moved south sometime in the 15th century as the Khmer empire crumbled.

We commence this exploration at the rarely visited Ta Nei temple. Although lacking the grandeur and intensity of better-known Angkorian monuments, this intimate shrine provides a sense of discovery as access is via a sandy track through thick forest. From here, your guide will lead you to Ta Keo, the epitome of Angkorian temple- mountain with its massive five-tier pyramid structure. It is still unclear why the work stopped on Jayavarman V's masterpiece, whether the king died and there was a succession struggle or as legend suggests, because lightning struck the temple which the Khmer interpreted as an evil omen.

The discovery of Angkor Thom commences at the Victory Gate, walking on the enclosure wall heading south to the fifth and little visited East Gate. Here we meet the remork and drive onwards to Vihar Bram-Pi Loveng where we will stop to admire a stone carved Buddha seated on a naga that was moved from Bayon temple to this shrine by the French in 1933. We depart Angkor Thom by the South Gate, stopping to admire its enigmatic carved faces before returning home to Amansara.

### Enigmatic Bayon

After departing Amansara we first visit the South Gate of Angkor Thom before continuing on by remork to the Bayon where we begin with an explanation of the lower level bas-reliefs carvings, gradually circling to the inner walls where you will notice unfinished carvings completed after the reign of king Jayavarman VII. A narrative is provided on the faces of the king. A short climb leads to the upper level which offers the best perspective on watching the morning light reflect upon these captivating stone faces.

From here it is a short walk to the celestial palace of Baphuon, an early Angkorian temple recently restored. Your remork remains on call with cool water and cold towels. The state temple of King Udayadityavarman, Baphuon has been described as the world's largest three-dimensional puzzle. An easy but little-known walk through lush jungle brings us to the South Gate of the Royal Palace to visit Phimeanakas, then we continue to the north side to see the royal baths which makes a wonderful location to rest. Cast your eyes downwards to look for scattered shards of roof tiles and domestic pottery underfoot, remnants of the sovereign's private dwellings that once filled this royal enclosure. We will exit through the East Gate leading to the Elephant Terrace with its scenic bas-reliefs and the terrace of the leper king which represents Mount Meru, the centre of the Buddhist cosmos. Here the driver will meet you and escort you home to Amansara.



### Angkor Wat, the Great Wonder

Capturing the atmosphere of the temple as the sun rises is our preferred way to present this magnificent monument.

A 4:30am wake up call and prompt 5am departure from Amansara will allow you to arrive by remork with the first morning light as we head for the East Causeway. Your guide will escort you through the entrance gate along a forested path and then into Angkor Wat to the first level and up to the second level of the temple, providing time for personal exploration. All being well, you should witness dawn with very few others.

Afterwards, following a brief introduction to temple life and King Suryavarman II, you return to the first level which contains the bas-reliefs of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the 'Churning of the Sea of Milk' in which the Hindu gods and demons cooperate to create the nectar of life which renders them immortal. These extensive and dramatic relief panels are the main feature of this morning's outing. Depart Angkor Wat by way of the cruciform terrace, passing the libraries and the grand entrance pavilion before crossing the West Causeway.

Depending on your schedule, this is often the perfect time to head onwards and visit Ta Prohm.

### Towards Ta Prohm, the jungle temple

Prasat Kravan commences this excursion. It is one of our favourite small Angkorian brick temples and is particularly notable for its dramatic carvings of Vishnu reclaiming the earth, sea and heavens from the demon.

Continue onward to the little understood Banteay Kdei. During the dry season, access is through the East Gate along a jungle path hardly ever used by visitors and leads up to a rare statue of the Buddha still worshipped today. Further along comes a sizeable rectangular terrace known as the Hall of the Dancers, thought to represent female tantric attendants or yoginis. From the West Gate of Banteay Kdei, we set off by remork for our next destination.

You will recognise this temple on first sight. Ta Prohm, its hewn stones entwined with the silk-cotton and strangler fig tree roots of the encroaching jungle, is one of the most popular and photogenic temples in the archaeological park. Once home to 615 apsara dancers according to this temple's precise records carved onto a stele, Ta Prohm provides you the rare opportunity to witness man versus nature in action, against the glowing rays of the sun. When you have admired the intricate carvings within the Hall of the Dancers at this shrine Jayavarman VII built to honour his mother, it's time to hop in your remork for the ride back to Amansara.



### Banteay Srei, the citadel of women

Your destination, the remote temple known both as Banteay Srei and the Citadel of Women sits approximately 45- minutes by car from Amansara. Renowned for its intricate carvings in pinkish sandstone, these exceptionally fine quality scenes from the Hindu epics are etched into nearly every visible surface. For those who are interested, between Banteay Srei and our next temple stop, we may detour to the Landmine Museum (built by 'CNN Hero' Aki Ra) or the Butterfly Centre to watch these captivating creatures flutter around us.

We leave the main road and head east over an embankment of the Eastern Baray, passing an engaging landscape of photogenic, palm fringed villages. From here, a short walk on a country track leads to the North Gate of Banteay Samre, one of the best-preserved temples at Angkor. Your guide will point out excellent examples of both Hindu mythological scenes as well as the remains of Buddhist imagery carved into the stone.

Another recommended stop to pair with this excursion is Golden Silk Farm, where the finest Cambodian silks are produced using traditional and natural methods.

### Preah Khan, the sacred sword

Preah Khan was built by Jayavarman VII after liberating Angkor from Cham invaders, he then later, in 1191, dedicated it to his father. Open and sprawling, Preah Khan with its trees and other vegetation twisting around the ruins is an excellent showcase to garuda, the mythical bird of flight often shown grasping the tails of his adversary the naga serpent. Ask your guide to lead you to a special chapel towards the north, where one of Angkor's most exquisite devata or sacred female deity, hides.

Following Preah Khan we recommend a continuation on to Banteay Prei, the 'citadel of the jungle' though in fact this underrated gem has lost its forest cover and now sits on the edge of thriving rice fields. Visiting Banteay Prei after Preah Khan offers an interesting comparison, as this temple has all the attributes of a larger temple in reduced scale. Next comes Neak Pean, which sits in the middle of Jayatataka Baray, the last great reservoir of the Angkor era. Its pools of water were believed to have curative powers.

The journey home will take you past Ta Som with its massive faces carved in stone reminiscent of Bayon, East Mebon best known for its exquisitely carved sanctuary lintels and guardian elephants and finally, Pre Rup where according to the local lore, one Angkorian king took refuge here for three months and emerged as a much younger man, hence the name meaning 'to turn or change the body.'



### Phnom Bakheng

The climb up the sacred hill of Phnom Bakheng which delivers phenomenal views to the forests of Angkor Thom, the West Baray and the monumental towers of Angkor Wat.

As the state temple of the first city at Angkor, Phnom Bakheng has a special importance as the site which Yasovarman I chose to move his capital from Roluos (13 kilometres southeast of Siem Reap). After you have witnessed this magnificent sight, your guide will lead you down the hill via the east side to Prasat Bei, a relatively intimate, three-towered brick temple set along the moat of Angkor Thom. From here it is a short walk to Baksei Chamkrong meaning 'the bird with sheltering wings.' The small yet elegant pyramid shrine dedicated to the parents of King Hashavarman I is an architectural masterpiece mostly overlooked by visitors.

### Beng Mealea & Koh Ker

#### *Full-day excursion*

The climb up the sacred hill of Phnom Bakheng which Originally enclosed by a moat nearly the size of Angkor Wat's, Beng Mealea is a 12th century temple now disappearing as the jungle encroaches. This tucked away temple lies 40 kilometres east of Angkor and was once the starting point of a canal used to float massive local stone blocks down from the surrounding mountains to build the Angkorian temples.

Elevated wooden walkways allow you to walk (carefully) above the ruins of Beng Mealea's collapsed galleries and towers whilst shaded by the jungle canopy. Even fewer tourists visit Koh Ker, another 50 kilometres northeast of Angkor along the same road.

Briefly the site of the Khmer empire's capital in the 10th century, today Koh Ker's tranquillity leaves you to explore without distraction. Originally dedicated to Hindu gods, Koh Ker is dominated by Prasat Thom, a 30-metre masonry temple mound which rises above the surrounding forest. Carved garuda, the mythical mount of Vishnu, still stand guard atop the temple pinnacles. Meander at your leisure among the many tower sanctuaries here. Several house spectacular stone linga, the phallic shaped symbol honouring Shiva, which have led scholars to question King Jayavarman IV's ego as they are truly enormous.

We suggest an early start, leaving around 6.00am with a direct two-and-a-half-hour journey to Koh Ker, the furthest point. On your return, this allows plenty of time to explore Beng Mealea which can be comfortably viewed in the afternoon due to the jungle canopy. Your return drive will take one hour. A breakfast basket and picnic lunch are included. Your journey may also include the Citadel of Women (Banteay Srei), one of Angkor's best-preserved temples and renowned for its intricate carvings in pinkish sandstone, as a first stop on route to Koh Ker.





*Museum tour with private curator  
At Angkor National Museum*

Embark on a journey to the ancient city of Angkor between downtown Siem Reap and the northern road to explore the magnificent Angkor National Museum on a private tour with our museum curator, Ven Sophorn.

A short walk for Amansara, this state-of-the-art museum offers a glimpse into the magnificent history of the ancient city of Angkor. Learn about the Golden Era of the Khmer Kingdom, discover the origins of Khmer art, culture, and architecture, and view the eight art galleries that showcase the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the ancient empire.

Dr. Sophorn, an expert in archaeology and ancient arts with eight years of experience at the Angkor World Heritage Site, will guide you through this exceptional opportunity for an in-depth and extraordinary experience.



### Angkor jungle hike and sunset boating

Cambodia is a land of wonders of many kinds. When the first explorers in the late 19th century rediscovered the magnificent remains of the capitals of the Khmer Empire, the nature had long reclaimed its rights over the Temples and yet had acted as a protective forest buffer to the magnificent temples stones, against the harsh impact of tropical sunshine and monsoon rains preserving over 300 Temples and Shrines among the dense tropical jungle.

Designed for those who wish to experience an easy hike into the forest, our Angkor walks in the rugged, convoluted jungle offer a sense of adventure and achievement in cool beautiful surroundings. Our experienced guides will guide you through the lost city of Angkor on hidden trails with their sky-high trees those crones hide the sun to Preah Khan temple.

Otherwise known as the Temple of the Royal Sword, Preah Khan is one of the most beautiful and underrated temples, a hidden jewel in the crown of the Angkor Archaeological Park. Wandering down its narrow corridors and exploring its inner chambers and courtyards evokes the feeling of being one of the first explorers to set eyes on the raw beauty of this jungle temple.

A few steps further along the forest path will reveal our private dock where our local boatman will take you through the crystal clear water of the Preah Khan Baray until you reach the secretly submerged smaller temple of Neak Pean. An absolute moment of bliss and serenity awaits you! With plenty of photograph opportunities along the way, you will witness water birds, water grass, and with some luck, a fisherman catching fish. If weather permits, the sunset is a resplendence of colours to enjoy.





## Nature & Immersive Experiences

### Monk led forest walking meditation

In a forest inhabited by monks and novices, this highly spiritual hidden gem welcomes you for a walking meditation led by a Master Monk. The first thirty minutes are dedicated to the preparation of the walking meditation itself, giving a sense of place and presence. This experience is a valuable mental training on mindfulness, concentration and serenity.

### Angkor forest bathing

An immersion in the beauty of ancient Angkorian forest where you connect intimately with the healing and restorative elements of the nature. The feelings of urgency dissipate inviting you to the present moment in all of its fullness, beauty and simplicity, rediscovering the calm, the intuition and joy that resides within us.

### Spiritual water blessing

On the still rustic outskirts of Siem Reap, we'd like to bring our guests to a remote Buddhist Pagoda to engage with Cambodian Buddhism in a more personal way by receiving an authentic water blessing.

There is a small changing room where you will find an Amansara sarong to wear for the 15-minute private ceremony. As the monk gently pours flower-infused water over you, he chants to cleanse your spirit, leaving you feeling remarkably at peace.

### Sound healing

Experience a holistic session combining meditation, breathing exercises with a sound healing bath, held in the Pagoda offering a deep stage of relaxation using vibration to re-tune the body, mind, spirit and your inner harmony. Best after the spiritual water blessing.



### Countryside picnic

Embark in one of our vintage jeeps heading to the off-road countryside and experience rice fields and villages with breath taking views of the harvesting season, crowds of water buffalos or school of birds. Depending on the season you will catch the ritual of daily sugar palm sap collection, rice planting or harvesting, fishing for a tiny catch from the roadside canals and the fascinating cottage industries of sugar palm production, basket weaving & fresh rice noodles as prepared in simple village homes. Wonderful photo opportunities with candid moments along the sandy dirt roads of the nearby countryside. An exciting and immersive moment with a simple yet charming picnic is completing the journey.

### Countryside jeep rally

A slice of local rural life in the outskirts of Siem Reap and Angkor Park. Our well-chosen route will have you passing children riding their bikes whilst their mothers will be on their way to market for fresh food supplies or heading off to work in the rice fields. Depending on the season you will catch the ritual of sugar palm sap collection, rice planting or harvesting, fishing for a tiny catch from the roadside canals and the fascinating cottage industries of sugar palm production, basket weaving & fresh rice noodles as prepared in simple village homes.

Wonderful photo opportunities with candid moments along the sandy dirt roads. We can also arrange additionally to integrate an adventure by bicycle as part of this trip, taking you through buffalo, hidden pagodas or along the Angkorian walls.

### Jungle temples cycling

In the centuries since the enigmatic fall of Angkorian civilization, the lush Siem Reap countryside has become crisscrossed by sandy tracks best explored on a mountain bike. Cycle rides along leafy paths shaded by tall trees to the ruins of Angkor deep in the forest. Sustained by ice-cold coconuts along the way, a bike ride through the Angkor park is a thrilling way to get your bearings around the world's largest religious monument. Venture a little further along what were once Angkorian highways and are now sandy tracks, to catch a glimpse of a rural life. The ruins of 10th century temples are reminders of Southeast Asia's greatest empire and provide the perfect setting for deserved.



### Bird watching excursion

Tonle Sap is the largest natural lake in Southeast Asia, increasing in area by up to four times annually as the floodwaters of the Mekong River cause the Tonle Sap river to flow backwards and fill the lake. This early morning or late afternoon exploration will take you into the heart of the countryside past vegetable gardens, rice paddies and buffalos and arrive at a picturesque spot on the edge of the Tonle Sap Lake where flocks of storks, egrets and pelicans congregate to feed and rest. Continue by local boat venturing into the mangroves for rare pictures of the Cambodian wetland species.

### Tonle Sap lake private cruises By Amanbala Boat

Aboard our renovated local motorboat, passive approach to Cambodia's captivating landscape. As you recline on our cushy daybeds, we cruise the nearby lake of Tonle Sap, visiting the floating village of Chong Kneas.

Skillful drivers motor their boats quickly past us with just inches to spare. It is fascinating to witness the adaptation of village life on water through the changing seasons. If you return to Amansara after the green season, be sure to re-board Amanbala to see the transformation and relocation of these traditional villages. The rich and varied plant, fish and bird life here makes this, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, vital to Cambodia and the region.





## Dining & Culinary Experiences

### Traditional Khmer kitchen

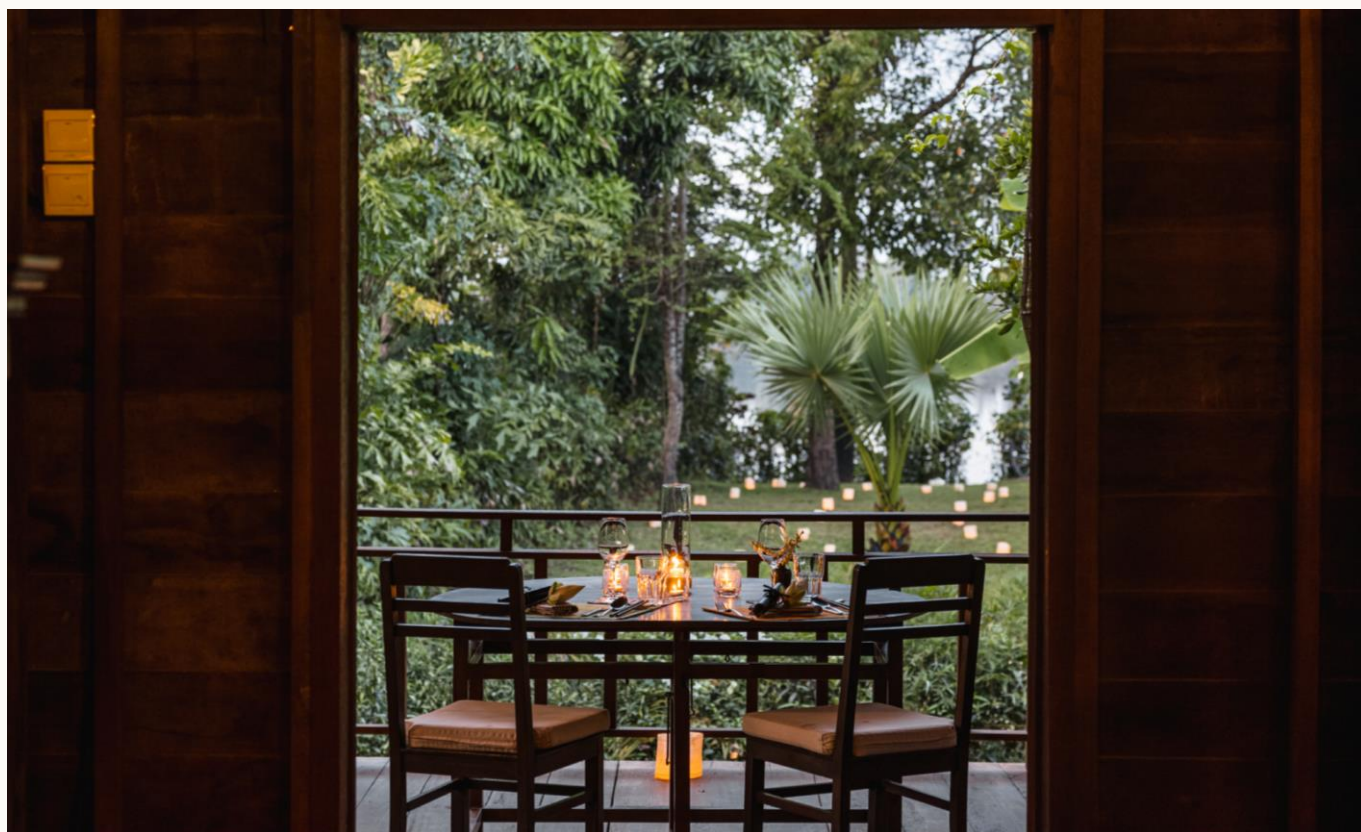
The delicate flavours of Khmer cuisine are only now being discovered. To introduce you to local culture through your taste buds, we leave Amansara around 7.30am when it is cooler and make the chef's favourite market, Psah Leu our first stop. Follow one of our kitchen team along lanes teeming with fresh produce as you weave through one lively area of the open-air market to the next. In the one hand a shopping list, some riel in the other to buy a few essential items for the day's menu.

Baskets full, we take the short drive to Amansara's Khmer Village House within the Angkor Archaeological Park overlooking the 10-12th century royal bathing pool of Srah Srang

Here we raid our small garden to gather fresh herbs, chillies and salad items. Our resident Khmer cooks are on hand to share some local tricks as you chop, slice and pound away. Your reward for this fragrant labour Home cooked Khmer cuisine served to you with a chilled glass of wine or frosty Angkor beer on our shaded veranda nestled amidst history.

For foodies and gourmand travellers, or as an engaging break from contemplating Angkor's many temples, cooking your Khmer lunch offers another memorable vantage point on this elegant culture.





#### Khmer breakfast in Angkor

*At Amansara's Khmer Village House*

To share Cambodia's heritage at its most intimate, Amansara brings guests to enjoy breakfast, at our favourite places around the countryside. Plunge your soup spoon into a bowl of steaming nom ben chok noodles over a relaxed morning meal while enjoying the rural scenery at our village house after touring the temples.

#### Twilight private dinner

*At Amansara's Khmer Village House*

Take advantage of the season's cooler evenings and clear skies with an al fresco dinner at our traditional wooden house, located adjacent to the Srah Srang reservoir. Start with a cocktail on the balcony before enjoying a family style Khmer dinner cooked over charcoal while relaxing underneath the stars. Surrounded by candles, with a local musician playing in the background, this is a special way to reflect on Cambodian culture after a day busy exploring temples.

#### Candle lit private dinner

*At Amansara's Roof Terrace Garden*

A perfect way to enjoy the evening, and savor a Khmer feast served on our Roof Top with talented traditional musicians or dance performances reflecting on Cambodian traditional culture.

#### Cocktail hour

*At Amansara's Roof Terrace Garden*

Our aromatic Roof Terrace Garden aims to connect people, offering a simple, mindful and authentic taste of place. Local, fresh, natural produce and indigenous spirits & herbs are the base of inspiring cocktails to savor in the early evening hours.



*Angkor temple dinner*  
*At Prasat Kravan Temple*

An immersive evening in a unique setting for inspiring memories. Amansara's Temple dinner is an exclusive experience which takes you on a journey through Cambodian performing arts from traditional to contemporary, amidst the 10th century temple Prasat Kravan, aglow with 1,000 candles. Enjoy an evening of traditional Cambodian arts including the Sacred Dancers of Angkor from the renowned Conservatoire of Banteay Srei.

Commence the evening with a spiritual offering of Buong Suong. Relive the epic tale of the Ramayana through one of Cambodia's oldest performance art forms, Sbaek Thom, also known as giant shadow puppets. Also joining in the art show is the young artists of Phare, The Cambodian Circus who will astonish you with their emotion, enthusiasm and talent and ensure the evening ends with a festive energy.





## House Talks & Cultural Performances

### Angkor Settlements

*House Talk by Roland Fletcher*

Roland Fletcher is from the Department of Archaeology, at the University of Sydney, Australia. He is Director of the 'The Greater Angkor Project', a joint research program of University of Sydney- EFEO- APSARA . The work of the Greater Angkor Project was reported in the July'09 issue of National Geographic. The Greater Angkor Project is a long-term research program concerned with producing a new map of the extent and settlement pattern of Angkor, analyzing how its water management system operated and also studying the demise of Angkor between the 15th and the 17th century AD.

Professor Roland discusses his latest research and remarkable findings of Angkorian civilization and takes you to rarely seen sites in Angkor . This will include a visit to West Baray- the largest Angkorian reservoir built nearly a thousand year ago . He will discuss its remarkable relationship to the Temples.

### Rethinking Angkor : from landscape and settlement to collapse

*House Talk by David Brotherson*

David has been working in Cambodia since 2009 where he has worked extensively across Angkor at numerous sites . He is a member of the Greater Angkor Project. David is currently completing his PhD with the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sydney. His research investigates the decline and transformation of Angkor between the 14th and 18th centuries . Using the latest technology , David examines the environmental and man-made factors which brought about the demise of Angkor, changing it from an imperial capital into a handful of villages scattered amidst the forest.



### SNAP, 150 years of photography in Cambodia

150 years ago, the very first photographs were taken of Angkor. We honour that age by lead you through the country's photographic history with live music, special effects and shorts from old movies.

Images and short archival film clips trace Cambodia's history from colonialism to independence, the Khmer Rouge struggles and finally, to an era of peace including some pictures of Villa Princière, King Sihanouk's guests residence which welcomed Jackie Kennedy, Charles de Gaulle among others and nowadays Amansara.

It's an emotional experience as you see and hear the stories of royalty, temples, parties and war and personal memories unique to Cambodia.

### A thousand years of beauty'

*House Talk by Darryl Collins*

After graduating from Australian National University in Canberra , Darryl Collins first journeyed to Cambodia in 1994 on a mission from the National Gallery of Australia to participate in an Australian government-funded project assisting the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh.. Since then, he has established himself as an authority on Khmer civilization, its arts, culture and architectural heritage . His extensive research documents post-Independence architecture of the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period (1953-1970) . Along with serving as a Cultural Advisor to the APSARA Authority and to the Department of Culture & Research in Siem Reap, Darryl writes on art, architecture and cultural topics including the highly regarded monograph *New Khmer Architecture*.

## The sacred dancers of Angkor

Born in the sacred land of Angkor largest religious complex, the humble background and unique spiritual dimension with prayers and daily meditation of the Sacred dancers of Angkor reflect the Apsaras as out of the stones, emphasizing the beauty of the gestural without distracting the eyes of the audience on lavish costumes and ornaments.

Their costumes are toned down but with the respect of the colours and shapes of each role. Their fresh beauty is not enhanced with make-up, their ornaments are hand made by each artist woven in palm leaves, their masks in paper mache and hand painted.

They have recently had the honor to perform in Tokyo accompanied by HRH Princess Buppha Devi and with the Support of UNESCO, where the major performance was at the Sumida Hall with the incredible privilege of the presence of the Imperial Couple.

As part of Amansara's commitment to preserve cultural heritage, we are proud to regularly invite the young Sacred dancers of Angkor.

## The new Cambodian artists

The new Cambodian artists is a group of three talented young female performers from Siem Reap who choreograph and perform modern dances based on classical vocabulary.

Fashion designer Eric Raisina who has shown at New York Fashion Week and sells his 'silk fur' couture creations around the world designed the delightfully vibrant costumes inspired by the music and expressive movements.

## The new spirit of Cambodia: PHARE, The Circus

The Cambodian Circus, a Khmer music, dance and acrobatics spectacle established by the Phare Ponleu Selpak ("Brightness of the Arts") Association.

Phare was formed over 20 years ago in Battambang with nine Cambodian artists who grew up together in a Thai refugee camp and their drawing teacher to help other children express the trauma of war. More than just acrobatics, each Phare high energy performance makes a sharp but entertaining commentary on present day Cambodia through the eyes of a new generation of artists.

## A bubbling afternoon tea with designer Eric Raisina

After exploring the monochromatic beguiling temples, an afternoon of colours is in order. Like entering a whimsical world, Eric Raisina's couture house displays an array of colourful handwoven Khmer silks interpreted in contemporary and chic designs.

Originally from Madagascar, Eric trained in Paris and developed his unique style showcasing his talent in pieces of texture and colours. His innovative work with woven silks, layering organza, raffia and his famous "silk fur" makes him truly a master of "haute texture."

Colours and Champagne; An afternoon of fashion, sipping bubbles with the Siem Reap icon, trading fashion stories and inspiring ideas or like a true fashionista, shopping a piece or two or three wearable work of art.

## Phare, the Cambodian circus

We are privileged here in Siem Reap to have Phare, The Cambodian Circus, a Khmer music, dance and acrobatics spectacle established by the Phare Ponleu Selpak ("Brightness of the Arts") Association which provides free schooling and vocational arts programmes for young Cambodians. The circus troop is one of the most popular attractions in our town. They will enthrall, excite and amaze the whole family with high energy performances, whilst giving you a little insight into Cambodian, beliefs, lives and culture through their dazzling story-telling.





## Young Explorers & Family Adventures

### Vintage countryside jeep adventure

A slice of authentic rural family life in the outskirts of Siem Reap and Angkor Park. Our well-chosen route will have you passing children riding their bikes to early morning school whilst their mothers will be on their way to market for daily fresh food supplies or heading off to work in the nearby rice fields. Depending on the season you will catch the ritual of daily sugar palm sap collection, rice planting or harvesting, fishing for a tiny catch from the roadside canals, basket weaving & fresh rice noodles as prepared in simple village homes. Wonderful photo opportunities with candid moments along the sandy dirt roads of the nearby countryside.

### The lost temples of Angkor

Amansara's lost temples discovery has been thoughtfully designed so as to be away from the crowds and enjoy the smaller jungle temples in solitary splendour, giving the children plenty of space to run away with their imaginations, become explorers and expend all their excitable energies.

Our guides are all parents themselves, so they know best how to keep the whole family engaged and enthralled throughout this Indian Jones style adventure before enjoying well deserved light refreshments among Angkor mysterious lost treasures.

### Cycling through temples

A bike ride through the Angkor is a thrilling way to get your bearings around the world's largest religious monument. Venture a little further along what were once Angkorian highways and are now sandy tracks, to catch a glimpse of a rural life that has changed little despite Cambodia's tumultuous past. Cycle rides along leafy paths shaded by tall trees to the ruins of Angkor deep in the forest. Sustained by ice-cold coconuts along the way we finish the ride with a hearty breakfast at our village house or sunset over Sra Srang





### Ox cart riding

For many centuries, the ox and cart has been a very common form of transport for Cambodian people. It serves many purposes, from family transportation to farming activities, and by partaking in this adventure you are also helping to safeguard its use for the future as well as provide a much-needed source of income in these rural outskirts of Siem Reap. The adventure takes you on a bumpy ride through the countryside with a local guide who will open your eyes into these local fishing and farming communities. A fabulous adventure of learning and excitement for the whole family.

### Monk chanting

Traveling along typical Cambodian villages in one of our vintage jeeps, we reach the gigantic rectangular West Baray in the Angkor archeological complex. An awe-inspiring moment lies ahead with the sound of the gong ringing out, calling young giggling novices from the local pagoda to gather round for their daily chanting - an opportunity for the younger guests to discover their pearls and their intriguing life style while witnessing sacred incantations chanted by novices and young monks, led by a Master.

### Spiritual water blessing

We'd like to bring our younger guests here to engage with Cambodian Buddhism in a more personal way by receiving an authentic water blessing. In the neighbouring monastery, there is a small changing room where you will find Amansara sarongs for all the family to wear for the 15-minute private ceremony. As the monk gently pours water over you, he chants to cleanse your spirit. Full disclosure: everyone will get very wet. Our sincere hope is that this humble Khmer Buddhist ritual will leave you feeling remarkably at peace.

### Khmer kick boxing

For those looking for a more active session, Amansara's resident martial arts instructor, Makara Phok, who has boxed competitively for Cambodia, will introduce our guests to the most ancient Khmer martial arts, Pradal Serey which is part of Cambodian's culture. Pradal Serey is most well-known for its kicking practice and consists of four types of striking techniques: pinches, kicks, elbows and knee strikes.

One session includes warm-up, gentle cardio, fight techniques and meditation. This practice will help your child to focus, strengthen the body and relax.



### Cooking class

The delicate flavours of Khmer cuisine are only now being discovered. To introduce you to local culture through your taste buds, we leave Amansara around 7.30am when it is cooler and make the chef's favourite market, Psah Leu our first stop. Follow one of our kitchen team along lanes teeming with fresh produce as you weave through one lively area of the open-air market to the next. Baskets full, we take the short drive to Amansara's Khmer Village House within the Angkor Archaeological Park overlooking the 10-12th century royal bathing pool of Srah Srang. Our resident Khmer cooks are on hand to share some local tricks as you chop, slice and pound away.

The children will be fascinated by array of fresh products on offer at the market (think whole pigs heads!) and when they tire of cooking, there's plenty of space to play in the garden of our traditional Khmer house in between learning to prepare traditional Cambodian delights such as fresh spring rolls, lemon grass skewers, Khmer doughnuts.

### Lotus folding

Lotus flowers are a part of daily life in Cambodia. Growing up from muddy waters and emerging into such beauty, the flower symbolises purity of body, speech and mind for Buddhists, and are an integral part of offerings at every local pagoda. Test your dexterity and join our nimble-fingered staff who will teach you to fold the petals into beautiful designs.

### Community assistance

Giving plays a central role in our Amansara effort to participate in Cambodia's post-war recovery. We have found our guests too are touched by their experiences here and wish to help. Many of the activities mentioned above already give back to the local community in one way or another. Our community assistance booklet details many more ways in which our guests can support the fabulous local charitable organisations including those which focus on helping local children and their families. We find that giving our young guests the opportunity to participate in a food drop for local children and families, or visiting a local school created for children who would otherwise be working in the fields, is an incredibly eye-opening, inspiring and often life changing experience.



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