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Thailand & Cambodia Itinerary

Day 1

Let the Journey begin! Depart New York for Thailand.

Day 2

Arrive in Bangkok and transfer to hotel. Dinner and rest. Overnight — Bangkok.

Day 3

Full day to explore **Bangkok**, Thailand's capital city, known as *Krup Thep* — **City of Angels**. After breakfast we will take a cruise up the Chao Phraya River to the **Royal Barge Museum** and **Wat Arun** (Temple of Dawn), one of the most beautiful Buddhist temples in Thailand. We then continue to the **Grand Palace** and **Wat Phra Keo** to see the beautiful **Emerald Buddha Temple**. In the afternoon we will visit **Wat Po** that houses the largest reclining Buddha image in Thailand. We conclude our first day with a visit to **Wat Traimit** that is home to a gleaming 6 foot tall solid 5-ton golden Buddha figure. Overnight — Bangkok.

Day 4

After Breakfast we drive outside of Bangkok to **Ayutthaya**, the former capital of Thailand. Ayutthaya was the former Thai capital for 417 years. It was founded in 1350 by King U-Thong. Here we will explore the most important sights that include: **Wat Sri Sanphet**, **Wat Phanancheong** and **Wat Yai Chaimongkol**. The Chedi (stupa) at Wat Tai Chaimongkhol is among the largest at Ayuttaya and was built in 1590. There are many ancient Buddha images in Ayutthaya and we will see many of them as well as studying the ancient Thai sacred architecture. Overnight — Bangkok.

Day 5

Early departure from Bangkok on a drive to **Aranyaphrathet**, the Thai/Cambodia border. Here we will cross over into Cambodia and will drive to **Siem Reap**. Siem Reap is the capital city of Siem Reap Province and is located in Northwestern Cambodia. It is a vibrant town surrounded by silk farms, fishing villages, rice-paddy fields, a lively market and many Buddhist Pagodas. It is the *Gateway* to the World Heritage site of **Angkor Wat** the ancient capital of the great Khmer Empire. After we check into our hotel we will take a late afternoon stroll through Siem Reap's lively market. Overnight — Siem Reap.

Day 6

After breakfast your classroom will be **Angkor Wat**, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Angkor Wat is the most famous of all temples on the plain of Angkor and is one of the largest religious complexes in the world. It is even larger than the Imperial City in Beijing. It is a prime example of classical Khmer art and architecture and an archeologist's treasure trove. After lunch you will visit **Wat Bo Pagoda**, one of the oldest pagodas in town. Built in the 18th century and located in the heart of town, it contains a fabulous collection of Buddhist sculpture and wall paintings. Here you will have an introduction to Theravada Buddhism, the Buddhism of Cambodia. Overnight — Siem Reap



Day 7

After breakfast you will explore your first ancient temple, the early 10th century **Prasat Kravan**. Here you will learn how for nearly six centuries, between AD 802 and 1432, the great Khmer Empire was the most powerful empire in Southeast Asia that extended from the South China Sea to the Bay of Bengal. Ancient Cambodia was highly influenced by India and many of the Khmer Kings built temples dedicated to the Hindu gods such as Shiva and Vishnu. Both temples at Prasat Kravan were dedicated to Vishnu and they contain excellent frescos of him. We then proceed to **Pre Rup Temple**, constructed in the middle of the 10th century. Pre Rup is distinguished by its size and was once a State Temple and was surrounded by a thriving city. After lunch we will visit **Banteay Kdei Temple** that was constructed in the late 12th century. From the 10th century onwards, Buddhism began to spread throughout the Khmer Empire and the kings began to incorporate both Hindu and Buddhist elements in the architecture. There is a marvelous Buddha meditating in one of the sanctuaries. Overnight — Siem Reap

Day 8

Your day begins with a visit to **Wat Preah Prom Rath Temple and Pagoda**, the largest and most impressive pagoda in the area located directly in the center of Siem Reap. In Cambodia, temples are the places where the pious Buddhist comes to worship and you will see many of the devout coming to pray, meditate and make offerings to the monks. This temple has a superb collection of wall paintings illustrating the stories of Buddha's life. It also has a beautiful larger than life statue of a reclining Buddha. At this Wat, we will receive a lecture from a venerable senior monk on Theravada Buddhist philosophy. Before lunch we explore Wat Bo Pagoda, the oldest pagoda in town. This temple has a fantastic collection of Cambodian sacred art with colorful frescos and bronze Buddha statues. Here you will have the honor of offering the monks the lunch. After your lunch, you will visit **Preah Khan**, built in the late 12th century. Preah Khan was built by one of the greatest Khmer Kings, Jayavarman VII. One of his largest projects, Preah Khan was more than just a temple. With over 1000 teachers, it was more of a Buddhist university and monastery. We then proceed to **Ta Prohm**, one of the area's most beautiful and mysterious temples. This temple has been relatively untouched because, unlike the other monuments in Angkor, it was abandoned and swallowed up by the jungle. The main entrance is filled with many images of the Buddha and one of the sandstone buildings has a remarkable row of intricate celestial dancers carved into its walls. Overnight — Siem Reap

Day 9

After breakfast your program will continue to **Angkor Thom** (Great City) that was founded by King Jayavarman VII in the late 12th century. At one time, Angkor Thom was the largest city in the Khmer Empire and it is quite remarkable in scale and architectural ingenuity. Here we explore the **Banon Temple** with its unique 54 towers decorated with over 200 smiling faces of the Bodhisattva of compassion — Avalokitesvara. You will also explore the **Elephants Terrace** and the **Terrace of the Leper King**. In the late afternoon we will return to Angkor Wat to see the sunset. Overnight — Siem Reap



Day 10

Your day begins with a beautiful morning drive through the countryside to **Kbala Spean** where you will take a 45 minute hike through the lush forest to the Thousand Linga River. Here you will study the 10th - 12th century sculptures chiseled from the rocky riverbed. You will also enjoy the Royal Bath and waterfalls. After lunch your classroom will be one of the most important and enchanting temples in Angkor and one that is considered to be the crown of Khmer classical art — **Banteay Srei Temple** constructed in the 10th century. The charm of this temple lies in its remarkable state of preservation. Its small size with excellent decorations is a must see. Late afternoon is free time to explore the market. Overnight — Siem Reap

Day 11

After breakfast you explore the small semi-ruined 12th century temple of **Ta Nei** that is located deep in the jungle. Although overgrown by moss and tree roots, this small temple has some exquisite carvings that are still in good condition. After lunch you experience local Cambodian country life. You will walk through rural communities, meet local families, learn mat weaving, trek with an ox cart and plant rice in the paddy fields with the farmers. The day will end with a visit to a local market to see the diversity of fresh countryside products. Overnight — Siem Reap

Day 12

Morning drive through the lush Khmer countryside to one of Cambodia's most sacred mountain ranges — **Kulen Mountain**. Some of the stones from this mountain were actually used to construct the magnificent temples of Angkor many miles away. At Kulen Mountain we will see the Lingas of the Hindu God Shiva that are carved into the riverbed by successive kings. Here we will also see a reclining Buddha carved into a huge rock and a beautiful waterfall. Late afternoon we will visit an old Buddhist Wat in Siem Reap. Overnight — Siem Reap.

Day 13

In the morning after breakfast we fly from Siem Reap to **Phnom Penh**. After we check into our hotel and lunch we will explore **Wat Ounalam** that was built in 1443. Wat Ounalam was built to house a hair of the Buddha and is considered to be one of the most important temples in Cambodia that was once home to 500 monks. We then continue onto **Wat Botum** that was founded in the 15th century and is the residence of Cambodia's most venerated patriarchs, the venerable Ghosananda. Overnight — Phnom Penh.

Day 14

Our day begins with a boat ride from **Takeo** to **Phnom Da** to explore **Phnom Da Temple**, a 6th century pre-Angkorian temple. We will also visit the beautiful 6th century **Asram Maharosei** Indian style sandstone temple that is constructed in a style unlike any temple in Cambodia. We then take a short hike to the 11th century **Brahman Temple** where we will have a picnic lunch. After lunch our classroom will be Prasat Neang Khmao with its stunning view of the plains below. Overnight — Phnom Penh.



Day 15

After breakfast we explore our last Wat and one of the earliest structures in Phnom Penh, **Wat Phnom**. Here we will receive a lecture from one of the resident venerable monks on Theravada Buddhist philosophy and mediation. In the afternoon our focus will turn to Cambodia's sacred art with a visit to the **National Museum**. Built in 1917, it houses an exceptional collection of Khmer art and sculpture. In the late afternoon you will have free time to explore the Russian Market, a lively outdoor market that sells jewelry, wood carvings, silk and spices. Overnight — Phnom Penh.

Day 16

Full free day to explore Phnom Penh, shop at the famous **Russian Market** relax and prepare for our next day return flight home.

Day 17

Depart Phnom Penh on our international flight back to the States.