

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Cambodia 



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August Two Week Special Group



Children enjoy rocking the new swing that just set up at the center.



All the children and the Two Week Special group in August.



Two Week Special volunteers play with the kids during break time.

Over the summer season, we welcomed many Two Week Special volunteers to Cambodia. In August, a group of 15 teenagers of different nationalities came to volunteer for two weeks. The schedule was established and every step was arranged for them. On the first day, our Two Week Special supervisors provided an induction and a sightseeing tour. Then the volunteers were ready to get started with the activities we had in store. On their first working day, they received a huge welcome from the children at the Phsar Lec daycare center, which is one of the kindergartens that Projects Abroad supports. They made a great contribution by creating a playground for the children and installing a swing at the center. They also planted vegetables for the children to grow for food and created a concrete pathway from the kitchen to the toilet. Furthermore, they treated all the children for lice and painted the entrance and toilet walls. All of this work was also in addition to providing support and care to a lot of children at the center. If you would like to know more, take a look at the article by volunteer, Adeola Gay, in new issue.

We would like to extend a warm thank you to Sara Kowdley, Axelle Joye, Natalie Kriebel, Ryoga Asaka, Alexandra Brunjes, Siana Schofield, Adeola Gay, Aya Nagai, Megan Thompson, Coline Migeot, Julie Engelschion, Tsubasa Ogura, Verena Klein, William Klein and Alberto Wataru Ichikawa for all of their incredible help and hard work.

To see pictures from the day on Facebook, please [click here](#).

My trip 2014

By Matthew Richardson



Matthew and other volunteers taking good bye photo.

If someone had asked me how I'd spend my summer vacation after finishing 14 years of education, I wouldn't have guessed that I'd be hurtling through monsoon-soaked central Phnom Penh doing charity work. My name is Matthew Richardson and I am from Guernsey in the Channel Islands. In the summer of 2014, I decided to pack my bags and do a care and community Two Week Special in Cambodia.

It comes as no surprise that my arrival in Phnom Penh at 11pm after 46 hours of travelling was a bit of a culture shock. On top of the heat, we were thrust into a very busy city despite it being late in the evening. The dual carriageways were still heaving with tuk-tuks and motorbikes (many carrying at least 4 passengers). The sides of the road were scattered with people bustling along with their Friday night. Old women were pushing food carts through the street selling rice, noodles and unnervingly suspicious forms of meat. Don't be disheartened though, it is this totally new environment that makes these trips so enjoyable and memorable.

The guesthouse where I stayed for my Two Week Special was located in the heart of Phnom Penh. The security guards and the friendly faces of the receptionists at the Beoung Mealea Guesthouse made me feel both relaxed and welcome. I was immediately greeted by our in-country coordinators, Jesse and Danny, despite it being nearly midnight. They also offered me their phones to use in order to call home. The guesthouse was a 5 minute walk from one of the main Projects Abroad apartments, where we usually ate our breakfast and dinner. A Khmer (Cambodian) meal will typically consist of a pot of rice and/or noodles, chicken or beef curry with added tofu and an assortment of fruit such as pineapple or watermelon.

After a few days of settling in, it was time to start working at my first placement. This was at the Home of Hope located near Phnom Penh International airport. This is a home for men, the majority of whom have physical or mental disabilities. However, the first floor of the home was reserved for men of all ages infected with HIV. Our job was to construct a sun shelter over the playground since the children

found it too hot to play outside during the summer months.

Meanwhile, other members in our group were tasked with painting what would become a sensory therapy room. This manual work was also paired with teaching some of the



Making frame for mini garden.

younger residents and organising activities and games for them. The manual work was tough and certainly a challenge, however, Danny's enthusiasm and the prospect of constructing something that would benefit the home kept us working for the week. Despite a serious language barrier, I do feel that our group did bond with the residents and it will amaze you at the level of communication you can achieve without words.



Weekend trip at Angkor Wat

On my first weekend in Cambodia, it had been arranged for our group to travel up to Siem Reap and visit the world famous temples of Angkor Wat. I'd certainly recommend that wherever you choose to go, you should try to travel around the country and see landmarks or historical sites. Not only is it a great way to discover more of your placement country but you will also learn a lot about the local history and culture. Angkor Wat is a huge complex in the middle of the Cambodian jungle, and exploring the temple ruins and running in to some of the local wildlife made this an unforgettable experience.

After we returned from Siem Reap and our visit to Angkor Wat, we were sent to our second placement at the Khemara Organization. This is a local NGO with a mission to support and educate children and women in an underprivileged area. Our activities included teaching the children simple English through books and songs, painting a playset outside in the yard, and helping with other small tasks in the care centre. One of the main things that make a trip like this so special is the gratitude and excitement on the faces of both the children and other local care workers when you arrive. The children were all eager to learn and I was roped into singing 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' a fair few times.



Sing songs for farewell party at the placement

Needless to say, the farewells at both of our placements were emotional as it marked the end of our two weeks of work in Cambodia and a goodbye not only to the people in the care centres but also to the other volunteers. On our last day, we first visited the Home of Hope and, as a farewell gift, we gave the residents fresh fruit and ran a few final activities. After this, we travelled to the Khemara Organization where we gifted 4 bags of hygiene products (toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap) to the care centre, which would be used during the children's bath time. We also put up some educational posters

that some of us had brought from home and again handed out fresh fruit to the children once they had had their lunch.

While on my flight back to Guernsey from Cambodia, I thought about how I would write this article and what I could possibly include about this trip in two sides of an A4 piece of paper. The more I think about the trip, the more I seem to remember, and the more I think about Cambodia, the more I miss



Last day at Svay Pek day care center



Last day at the other center for disabled kids.

the busy Phnom Penh nights and the bustling markets selling local handmade souvenirs. This trip also allowed me to meet some amazing people who had come to volunteer on the Two Week Special, as well as the friendly, funny and supportive local staff. My trip certainly was a memorable one and I'd recommend Projects Abroad to any young person looking to do meaningful charity work abroad. The company allows you to gain valuable life experience as well as to make a real difference in the lives of the local people.

Cambodia – An Extraordinary Country

By Kylie Steer



Kylie celebrate birthday for children at the center

The eight weeks that I spent in Cambodia were the most rewarding and most amazing weeks that I've ever had and I felt that the time changed my life in a very positive way.

I have always been the type of person that enjoys helping others and always puts other people's needs before my own but I've never fully had the chance to put my caring ways to use until I decided to become a volunteer through Projects Abroad. It was something I've always wanted to do but life seemed to always get in the way. In March this

year, I decided it was time to make a brave step. I had been settled in my job for over 4 years but gave this up to

follow my dream of becoming a care volunteer in Cambodia for 8 weeks.

People kept asking me why and what made me choose Cambodia as a destination. My answer to this is that I wanted to make a difference to people who are less fortunate than me and I chose Cambodia as it

is not a touristic country and one that I knew much about. I had read about the horrible history surrounding the Khmer Rouge but I wanted to find out more and to actually experience the Khmer culture firsthand.

When I arrived at my accommodation on my first day in Phnom Penh, I was very apprehensive as I did not know what to expect. However, my mind was put at ease by the staff and volunteers who later become like a second family to me.

I had an induction two days after arriving and then it was straight to work at one of the Khemara daycare centers. I knew from my first day that I was going to enjoy spending time with the children but I did not realize that I would fall in love with them instantly and would care so much for each and every one of them.



Kylie at placement – daycare center

A typical day of work would be waking up for breakfast at 7am then taking a 30 minute tuk-tuk ride to my placement. I would arrive just as the children were finishing breakfast so after they all greeted me, I would help them clear their breakfast things away and then spend the next hour and a half giving English lessons. The children would be split into two rooms; one consisting of the younger children and one of the older children so that it was easier for them to learn. After this, it would be play, snack and song time. At around 10.30am, I would help set up for lunch by getting the tables and chairs ready and teaching the children to wash and dry their hands. At 11am, it would then be time for me to go

back to the apartment for lunch whilst the children ate theirs. I would return at 1.30pm when the children would all be having their afternoon nap and I would either join them or teach the local teacher English. The children would awake at around 2.30pm and then it was shower time for all of them. I would help style all the girls' hair, which they loved! Once they were washed and dressed, it was time for their afternoon and sometimes I would bring them a treat, which they got very excited about. After this, it would vary each day but would consist of playing, games, songs or basic English until home time at around 4pm. I would then be collected by my tuk-tuk driver to be taken back to the apartment.

My first few weeks at the placement were very difficult as it was hard to communicate with the children due to the language barrier. However, eventually we began to form a relationship and with my help to teach them basic English and from me picking up Khmer words, things did become easier and more enjoyable. I would teach them basic things such as the alphabet, numbers, months of the year, colours, animals, food and drinks, objects and basic sentences as well as songs such as '5 Little Ducks', 'If You're Happy and You Know It' and 'Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star'. To make things more exciting for the children and to keep them interested, we would play games and would make up actions to the songs. I found that the more creative you were with the activities, the better the children learned the content. I brought lots of learning posters and flash cards for the school, which helped me with the teaching.



Kylie and some volunteers at ancient temple

Back in England, I would dread waking up each morning to go to work but here I could not get out of bed fast enough as I could not wait to see all my lovely children each day. It is the best feeling ever and I have missed this every day since I returned home!

My evenings and weekends would consist of socializing with other volunteers, sightseeing and travelling around Cambodia with the friends I made. I enjoyed learning all the history and seeing all the main sites while experiencing the Khmer cuisine. I would definitely recommend this country to everyone

as it is extraordinary, with the most amazing, caring and friendliest people you could ever imagine.

My 8 weeks flew by and before I knew it, it was my last day at my placement. Over the 8 weeks, these children became family to me and I was so proud of them for what they had achieved. Their English improved and I felt like I had really helped make a difference. I threw a party for my children on my last day and we had cakes, drinks and played and sang songs all day. Something so little put the biggest smile on these children's faces, which I will always be able to picture in my head. It was a very emotional day for me to say goodbye to them all. They all kept hugging me saying "teacher we love you, please don't leave," which broke my heart. On this particular day, I stayed at the placement for lunch and the teachers cooked me Khmer food, which was delicious. I brought the teachers a little gift to say thank you for their help and for having me at the placement and, in return, they gave me a handmade basket of paper flowers and gave me a letter in English, which they had been trying to write for the past few weeks. This made my last day so special and I will never forget this moment as I will always keep this precious gift in a safe place so I can always look back at this wonderful memory.



Overall, my volunteer experience in Cambodia was the most incredible thing I have ever done and one that I will never forget. I have learnt that we really do take things for granted in life and that we should just learn to be happy and appreciate everything we have. It has also made me realise that we can all help make a difference if we make time in our lives. I will definitely be continuing my charity work as it is the most fulfilling thing you can ever do.

Projects Abroad - thank you for all of your help and support. Cambodia - I miss you very much and will definitely be back to visit the children one day. I think about you each and every day and I will never forget the time we spent together. I will treasure it forever and the memories and pictures will always be in my heart!

Conservation Two Week Special

By Danika Coulbourn

Motos and tuk-tuks swarmed around our bus as we swerved to avoid cows and dogs. It was an incredible sight as my soon-to-be friends and I began our journey from Phnom Penh to the island of Koh Rong Samloem. Extreme jet lag from my two days of travel from Vancouver in Canada seemed to disappear as I stared out of the window in disbelief and excitement. After months of planning and organizing, I was finally on the bus to the place I would call home for the next two weeks. Once we arrived in Sihanoukville, we quickly got on to a large boat and began our final journey to the island. I will never forget the feeling when we first pulled up to the island. It looked like something out of a movie. I was

beyond excited to be staying here. That night we were introduced to all the volunteers that were already there. We were instantly accepted and taken out to the Fishing Hook Restaurant on the pier to grab milkshakes with everyone. I had only been there a couple of hours but I felt like I had already known everyone for a long time.



On the boat to the mangrove plantation



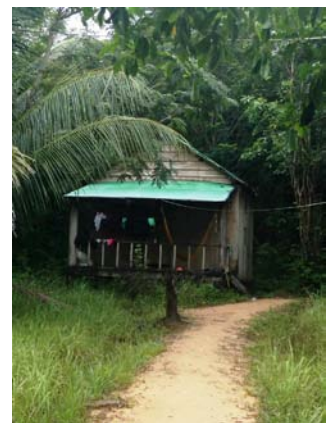
Group prepare to dive

The next few days were filled with learning how to dive so that we could do all the marine conservation work. Watching diving videos, taking quizzes and then applying what we learned out in the water became a daily routine! By the end of the week, we were all PADI certified and were all experts at setting up our scuba gear! In the second week, we were allowed to conduct surveys to count different aquatic species and look for seahorses. Seeing my first seahorse was definitely a highlight!

When we weren't diving, we filled our time with trips to the

village and the local restaurants. We also helped to clean long beach, relaxed in hammocks and played cards. We even worked on other community projects like painting and designing garbage cans as well as cleaning up the school's playground. Although the days were tons of fun and jammed packed with activities, some of the best moments came during the night when we swam in the glowing water, had bonfires on the beach or lay on towels staring at the thousands of stars. Peaceful nights like these will go down as some of the best nights of my life.

The good thing about the High School Special is that you have a planned weekend trip. Over our weekend, we visited Kep, planted mangroves in the ocean and hiked in the beautiful national park! It was great to be able to see another town in Cambodia and contribute towards conservation in this way. I love the fact that there will forever be a tree in Cambodia that I planted myself - not many people can say that! I truly believe anyone that comes on this



Bungalow on the island

project will have an incredible time. How can you not love being in paradise on an island? Personally, I loved having very basic accommodation. Having a break from my life, where my phone is constantly in my pocket and am always connected to social media, was really refreshing. Being without things such as running water and lights at night allows you to really appreciate what you have back home. The best part, especially if you join a High School Special like I did, is that you are guaranteed to meet people your age from around the world. I am so lucky to say that now I have friends from France, the UK, Hong Kong and Australia!



Along the beach side on the island.

Staff Update

We had a great lunch at BBQ Chicken as a farewell for [Jessi Warner](#), who is leaving Cambodia as she has been appointed as an Operations Manager back in the UK head office. We would like to offer our warmest congratulations to her and also to [Ouk Keobuntheang](#), who has been appointed as our new Country Director.

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome [Leigh-Ann Faitunblog](#), our new Project Manager in Cambodia. We are grateful to have her on board as part of our team.

Dirty Weekend – Rabbit School



Before repainting and repairing



After repainting and repairing

On Saturday, 30th August, a group of five volunteers from Projects Abroad restored and renovated the playground at Rabbit School, which provides an education for mentally disabled children. We would like to thank [Laurane Boullay](#), Marta Karbowska, [Silvia Regolin](#), Helene Gandelin and Celine Attwell for their invaluable contribution.



A part of the playground before repairing



A part of the playground after repairing

One of our volunteers remembers the experience fondly: "I had a lot of fun with my 4 volunteer friends! We made a lovely colorful playground for those disabled children. It was a great moment to get to know each other better and to help this school. We had lunch together and that was fun as well! I'm very glad about this because I came to Cambodia to help people and this was a very fun way to achieve my goal!"

To see pictures from the day on facebook, please [click here](#).

Mobile Library

About 35 children from one of the slums (Orn Lung Kangan) have been inspired to learn thanks to the mobile library, which was run by Projects Abroad on **Monday, 8th September to celebrate World Literacy Day**. Mobile learning is used to give less fortunate children, who cannot afford to attend official schools, the chance to learn.

After starting with a few children, Nafy, our coordinator, was then taken around the slum to encourage more children to participate in this event. When they had all gathered together, we started to introduce ourselves and the purpose of the mobile library. In addition to this, we introduced them to learning resources that could help them. We provided the children with story books, coloring books, puzzles, and some toys. We also read a story to them in Khmer.

All of our staff were surprised that almost all of the children paid a lot of attention to what they were saying. We then asked them to choose what activities they wanted to get involved in. They could choose between storytelling, coloring pictures, solving puzzles or learning the English alphabet. Our staff helped to



Group photo at the slum that we did the activity.



Tuk Tuk has been used for reading space.

coordinate the children and the activities to ensure that all of them had something to play with. Our staff were amazed to see how much the children were interested in the activities and enjoying themselves. It was truly a day to remember and, with this motivation, we look forward to repeating this event in the near future.

To see pictures from the day on Facebook, please [click here](#).

Pchum Ben Festival – Going to temple



At the temple where we celebrate Pchum Ben

A group of six volunteers came on the social outing to Langka Temple to offer food to the monks. Projects Abroad Cambodia organized this excursion to celebrate Pchum Ben, which is one of the most important festivals in the country. It is celebrated for fifteen days during which time, everyone goes to the temple to offer food to the monks at least once. It is a belief in Cambodia that whatever is offered to the monks will be spiritually delivered to our ancestors who have passed away.

There are three times a day when we can go to the temple to offer food. The first is early in the morning from 4am to 5am. During this period, we can only offer food to the spirits that have sinned as they can only appear during this time. The second time is from 6am to 7am for breakfast and the third time is from 7am to 10.50am for lunch when we can offer food and fruit to the monks.



To see more pictures from the day on Facebook, [Volunteers and staff at the temple](#) please [click here](#).

**Thank you so much for spending your time
reading our Cambodia Newsletter.
We hope you enjoy reading it. For any update
from Cambodia, please read the next issue.**