



Hi Everyone,

I've come to the conclusion that using my website is the most efficient way to keep in touch and allow everyone to view my photos.

I've been in Cambodia for over two months now and feel quite at home here. My friend, Angela from Australia, has also just spent six weeks here with me, but has just left for China to take up an English teaching position. (Hence the reason for my "tardiness" in keeping my emailing up to date - well that's my excuse anyway.)

Yours truly using a traditional Cambodian scarf to shelter from the sun.

As quite a lot has happened since I've been here I'll briefly recap what I've been up to. (Sorry this first newsletter is so long, I promise the next ones will be more frequent and therefore shorter.) So that this page doesn't take too long to download I have split it into two.

After six wonderful weeks living at the orphanage it was time to move on. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there and became very close to the children. I still go back regularly to visit them.



A friendly

I'm still in Phnom Penh (the capital of Cambodia) and call Narin II Guest House my home. Its very inexpensive and is a friendly, family run establishment so I always come home to a welcoming and friendly face. Admittedly, its very basic - my room contains only a bed, a small table, a plastic chair and a hat stand (what the!), but its a heck of a lot more than many, many Cambodians have to call home. There are also some other "long termers", other foreigners who call Narin home, so as well as having the opportunity to meet lots of travellers. Narin also has a restaurant that serves very good and very inexpensive food, as well as fast internet access - so all in all its perfect for me.



Street kids in Siem Reap.

After leaving the orphanage, as well as spending time in Phnom Penh, Angela and I did a bit of travelling to Siem Reap (where the famed Angkor Wat and other ancient temples are) and to Sihanoukville, a coastal town, for a bit of much needed "R and R".



A very ill man in a remote village.

I've also been doing some volunteer photography work both for the orphanage (making slide show presentations for promotional purposes) as well as for a new magazine that is being developed for the garment factory girls. The magazine is being developed by Charlie, a lovely English lady, and its main aim is to help the girls develop self esteem and a sense of their own value. So far we have done three shoots - one of some of the factory girls for an article on friends, another on different eye make up styles and the third on cooking and nutrition. The makeup shoot was really interesting as it was done with girls that have been rescued from vulnerable situations where they were being commercially exploited. the girls were lovely and were tickled pink to be involved. The cooking shoot was lots of fun too. We had to photograph every step of the process of the recipes being prepared as many of the girls who read the magazine won't be able to read. Then, of course, we sat down to enjoy the three dishes that had been prepared!

SIEM REAP

Angela and I took a trip west to Siem Reap with Charlie and a couple of other ladies. Siem Reap is where all the amazing temples of Angkor Wat are, but as Angela and I had seen them last year we decided to pass up on them this time. Instead we visited the children's hospital again to give blood. Denghi fever is a huge problem here and the children who get it need blood transfusions or they



At the orphanage with one of the staff and children.



Street scene near the guest house.



A shot from the magazine shoot.



Above and below: Photos from the magazine shoot.



will die.

We also met up with our guide from last year, YouSa, who has a real burden on his heart for his people. He took us on a trip out to a remote village where the people live in quite mind boggling poverty. YouSa is hoping to set up some foundation to try and improve their lives. There was one man we saw there who was so incredibly sick that he looked like someone from a concentration camp. I am intending to go back to Siem Reap in a couple of days time and hope to try and help this particular man - if its not too late.

Sori; He has lost both forearms and now lives at the Land Mine Museum.

I also spent some time at a place called the "Land Mine Museum". It is run by a man called AkiRa, an ex soldier, who now dedicates his life to ridding Cambodia of the millions of land mines that still cripple the land. Everyday, someone is killed or disabled by land mines. In the course of his work demining AkiRa meets many boys who have been disabled by land mines. Because of their disabilities and poverty the parents of these boys often don't send them to school and the boys are destined to a life of begging. AkiRa has "adopted" 20 of these boys who all live with him and his wife at the Museum (which is really just a collection of shacks). The Museum and upkeep of the boys is funded purely by donations from tourists.



I am going back there again shortly to spend five days with the boys in order to work on a project with them creating art work. There is a man in Australia, Damien Kamholtz, who works with art therapy with children who have been through traumatic situations. Damien is mounting an exhibition in Toowoomba in November of art works from children all over the world who have been through traumas of one sort or another and I will be sending the boys artwork over to be exhibited.



Island Paradise.



The view from our bungalow.



A young girl and her sister - homeless children who live on the riverside.

Above and below: children from the remote village.



SIHANOUKVILLE

Sihanoukville is a coastal village about 300kms south of Phnom Penh on the Gulf of Thailand and is home to some beautiful beaches and islands. It is still a very poor and undeveloped area and has yet to be overtaken by the tourism monster. Angela and I stayed right on the beach front in a bungalow on stilts that overlooked the bay - absolutely breathtaking and all for the grand total of \$10.00 a night! We spent 4 days and 5 nights just soaking up the sun. One very sad aspect that bothered me a lot was the amount of rubbish on the beaches and islands. Unfortunately, the Cambodian people have yet to embrace the concept of environmentalism and it is just the norm for them to leave all their rubbish behind.

WHAT'S NEXT?

My plans now are to head back to Siem Reap for a week or so in order to spend time with the boys at the Land Mine Museum working on their art for the Exhibition in Toowoomba. While I'm in Siem Reap I will also be doing some volunteer photography at an orphanage (for their web site, etc). I also intend to visit the remote village again with YouSa and hopefully help out the sick man as well as look at other ways to help the village in general.



A woman in the remote village.



Street boy in Phnom Penh.



Then its back to Phnom Penh as I have been fortunate to secure a weeks paid photography work with an organisation called Hagar. They have been established in Cambodia for a decade and run a number of wonderful programmes helping disadvantaged women and children.

There is also an old man here in Phnom Penh who walks the streets begging. He comes to our guest house every second day and it amazes me that he can even get out and about - he is so old and frail. In Cambodia, there is no social security network at all so if the elderly have no family to look after them they are basically left to fend for themselves. I really feel compelled to follow up on him and find out more about him and if there is any way to assist him.

I have also made friends with a homeless single mother and her two children who live on the riverfront in Phnom Penh and want to spend more time with them. There are many homeless people here and the riverfront seems to be a popular place for them to "live". Most beg to get by.

Well, everyone, I hope you enjoy the photos - I'll be working to add many more over the coming days.

If you feel inclined to donate money to any of the "causes" that I've mentioned above (particularly the Land Mine Museum boys, the poor, sick man in the remote village, the elderly man in Phnom Penh and the homeless river kids) please send me an email and I will reply with details of my bank account. You can rest assured that every single cent, without exception, will go directly to these people. Even a very small amount can go a long way here. My email is grovesphotography@yahoo.com.au

Warmest regards,

DEBORAH



A homeless child who lives with her mother and sister on the riverside