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GEBG Explorations Cambodia Tentative Itinerary June 2014

Discover the Mekong region with Hanuman Tourism

Knowledge is power in the travel industry and no-one knows the Mekong region better than Hanuman. We have covered every corner of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to bring you the best product from this fast emerging region. We pride ourselves on excellent service, not only ensuring a personal touch for all our partners, but communicating effectively and efficiently to ensure you get the information that you need when you need it. But this service doesn't come at a price, as we have some of the most competitive rates in the region. Whether you judge on knowledge, service or price, you won't find a better partner in the Mekong Region than Hanuman, the leading locally-owned, locally operated destination management company in the Mekong region.

Hanuman has been at the forefront of tourism development in the Kingdom of Cambodia since the company began life as a travel consultancy in 1990. Today it is one of the most trusted tour operators and remains, true to its origins, locally-owned and locally-operated. The senior staff at the company have almost two decades of experience running innovative and imaginative tours to every corner of the region. No-one knows Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam quite like Hanuman, as no other company has explored the region in such depth, travelling to the furthest reaches of the most remote provinces in order to bring the best of the Mekong to the world. While the senior staff at the big regional travel companies come and go, our senior staff are here for the long haul and that is reflected in our intimate knowledge of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

This Global Education Benchmark Group trip will be led by Joe Vogel, Hathaway Brown School, and Saya McKenna, Head Royce School. Joe recently visited Cambodia with a group from Hathaway Brown, and this will be his fifth time to the country.



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Day 1—Saturday 8 June 14: Chicago

We will meet in Chicago to fly Asiana airlines to Phnom Penh

Day 2—Sunday 9 June 14: Phnom Penh

Upon arrival at the Phnom Penh International Airport, we will be welcomed to Cambodia by Hanuman staff and transferred to our hotel in the center of the busy capitol.

Accommodation at Ohana Hotel

Day 3—Monday 10 June 14: Royal Palace, National Museum, Wat Phnom Penh by Cyclo

This morning we will explore the stunning **Royal Palace** complex, home to the Cambodian royal family and a symbol of the nation. We begin amid the beautiful royal gardens, landscaped with tropical plants and studded with gleaming spires. We enter the **Throne Hall** where the royal receptions are held and the Cambodian king's coronation took place. We will then pass the **Napoleon III Pavilion** made from iron, a gift from the French emperor in the 19th century.

We will continue to the **Silver Pagoda**, named after the 5000 silver tiles covering the floor, each weighing 1kg. Inside are some of the country's most cherished treasures, including a life-size gold Buddha studded with 9584 diamonds, the largest weighing 25 carats. There is also a delicate emerald Buddha made of baccarat crystal, which gives the temple its Khmer name of Wat Preah Keo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha).

We will leave the Royal Palace and continue to the nearby **National Museum**, home to the world's finest collection of sculpture from the Angkor period. The exquisite building was completed between 1917 and 1920 and features a lush courtyard garden surrounded by collections from the pre-Angkor, Angkor and post-Angkor periods. We concentrate on the incredible sandstone sculpture from Angkor, as well as the intricate bronzes.

In the afternoon, we will discover the streets of Phnom Penh with a cyclo tour of the city. A popular form of transport throughout Southeast Asia, the cyclo is still widely used in the Cambodian capital and is a comfortable way to see the sights. We will start at **Wat Phnom**, symbol of the city, before heading west past.



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Accommodation at Ohana Hotel

Day 4—Tuesday 11 June 14: Visit PSE; PM at Killing Fields of Choeung

We will arrive at **PSE** around 9:30 and visit PSE (a French NGO supporting children from the garbage dump). After an extensive tour of this amazing NGO that works with thousands of children a day, we will eat lunch with the kids in one of the canteens. After lunch, the group will spend around 3 hours in the beauty school for some treatments. Students in the beauty school will soon be graduating to work in salons throughout the country. This will allow our students to speak English with them and make new friends.

After PSE, we will travel out of town to the **Killing Fields of Choeung Ek**. Prisoners from Tuol Sleng followed this same route to their fate. An old Chinese cemetery, Choeung Ek was turned into an extermination camp for political prisoners. The remains of 8985 people were exhumed from mass graves and are kept in a memorial stupa here. Despite the horrors of the past, it is a peaceful place to go and a tranquil spot to reflect on the tragic events that engulfed Cambodia and its people.

Late in the afternoon, we will come face to face with the horrific crimes of the Khmer Rouge with the help of one of its survivors. **Tuol Sleng** was a former high school that the Khmer Rouge turned into a centre for interrogation, torture and death. Today it is a museum of torture and serves to remind visitors of the terrible atrocities that came to pass in Cambodia. 17,000 people passed through the gates of this prison and only seven lived to tell the tale. The Khmer Rouge were meticulous in their record keeping, photographing all the prisoners and many of these haunting black and white images are on display in the cells. Tuol Sleng is a profoundly moving experience and not everyone will want to visit. However, it is key to understanding the hell into which Cambodia descended and how far it has come in the years since.

Accommodation at Ohana Hotel

Day 5—Wednesday 12 June 14: Rehabilitation Centre, Tiny Toones, and Sunset Cruise

The group will be split in two this morning; one will go the Rehabilitation Center (*starts 7.30am departs 11.50am*) and the other group will visit several markets.

In the morning, the first group will drive to Rehabilitation Centre (Across the Japanese bridge). The rehabilitation center receives the majority of its funding from USAID and provides prosthetic limbs, free of charge, to victims of



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landmines, car crashes, accidents, and birth defects. After visiting the center, the group will have time to play wheelchair basketball with the patients and discuss the center with the director.

At the same time, the second group will travel to the Russian Market, one of the premier shopping destinations in the Cambodian capital. Known as Psar Tuol Tom Pong, it earned its nickname in the 1980s when Russians were the only tourists in Cambodia. A rambling place, it is bursting with bargains, including local crafts, carvings, silk, textiles, clothing, footwear, CDs and DVDs, and enough motorcycle parts to assemble a homemade moped.

After some time here to browse or buy, the group will travel to the impressive Central Market, one of the city landmarks. Originally completed by the French in 1937, this striking structure is known as Psar Thmei in Khmer or New Market. The huge dome is wonderfully ventilated, a testament to design, and this market is loaded with anything and everything available in Cambodia.

In afternoon, the whole group will visit **Tiny Toones** (*starts 2.30pm, departs 4.30pm*), an organization that uses rap, hip hop, and breakdancing to keep kids off of the streets and in school. The students will watch some of Tiny Toones best breakdancers before an exhausting lesson themselves.

After Tiny Toones, we will board a local boat for a **sunset cruise** on the river. We set off on the **Tonle Sap River**, which famously reverses direction each year, acting as the world's largest natural flood barrier for the **Mekong River**. We cruise past the **Royal Palace** compound and around the **Chrouy Changvar Peninsular** on to the mighty Mekong River. We cruise past small villages and see fishing boats preparing their catch. We return to Phnom Penh after dark.

Accommodation at Ohana Hotel

Day 6—Thursday 13 June 14: A New Hope for Cambodian Children and Kampot

After breakfast, we will leave Phnom Penh and reach **A New Hope for Cambodian Children in Kompong Speu** around **9:00 am**. PSE is the first and largest orphanage for kids with HIV/AIDs in Cambodia. It was started by an American couple, John and Kathy Tucker, who have become known around the world for the work they are doing. Our students will lead English lessons, help in the pre-school and play sports with the children. After lunch we head to **Kampot** Province.

We will travel south on National Highway 3 towards the south coast. As we leave behind the suburbs of Phnom Penh, the road passes through some beautiful rural areas and there may be some good photo opportunities. We stop for a short



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break in **Angk Tasaom** before continuing to the graceful riverside town of Kampot. We check into a comfortable hotel for the night.

Accommodation at Natural Bungalows

Day 7—Friday 14 June 14: Phnom Chnork/Rabbit Island

After breakfast, we will take a local remorque open taxi) to Phnom Chnork and continue Kep via pepper plantations. From Kep, we will travel to the boat pier to board a local boat for the journey to Koh Tonsay or **Rabbit Island**. We journey across calm waters to this beautiful palm-fringed island, home to a small community of fisherfolk and farmers. We leave some time free to enjoy the white-sand beaches that ring the island. After a lunch of fresh seafood, there is more time to enjoy the sun, sea and sand before we travel back to Kep by boat. Drive back to Kampot.

Drive to Phnom Penh.

Accommodation at Ohana Hotel.

Day 8 —Saturday 15 June 14: Meet Mrs. Em They and Drive to Siem Reap

This morning, we will meet Mrs. Em They, a famous Khmer dancer who survived the Khmer Rouge. After meeting with Mrs. Em They, we will leave Phnom Penh and travel northeast to the bustling provincial city of **Kompong Cham**. En route, there is the chance to pause at **Skuon**, affectionately known as 'Spiderville', where it is possible to sample the local delicacy of deep fried tarantula, crickets, and grasshoppers. We will then journey west to the provincial capital of **Kompong Thom**. Later, we continue northwest on National Highway 6. This was an old Angkor road and we stop in Kompong Kdei to see one of the ancient Angkor bridges that were built to span the rivers. **Spean Praptos** or the Praptos Bridge has more than 20 arches and is a spectacular sight, reinforcing the impression that the Khmers were like the Romans of Southeast Asia. We will then continue to **Siem Reap** and check into our hotel.

Accommodation at Hanuman Boutique Hotel.

Day 9 —Sunday 16 June 14: Angkor Wat Sunrise—Banteay Srei, Land Mine Museum, Butterfly Centre

Pick up at 5am.

Rising at the crack of dawn, we will journey out to the mother of all temples, **Angkor Wat**. Believed to be the world's largest religious building, this temple is



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the perfect fusion of symbolism and symmetry and a source of pride and strength to all Khmers. Built in the 12th century by King Suryavarman II, this is most famous temple at Angkor. We stay at Angkor Wat to enjoy a picnic breakfast. As the crowds return to their hotels, we will venture into Angkor Wat to enjoy its magnificence in peace and quiet. We begin by unraveling the mysteries of the bas-reliefs that tell of tales from Hindu mythology and of the glories of the Khmer empire. Stretching for almost one kilometre, these intricate carvings are a candidate for the world's longest unbroken piece of art.

Following in the footsteps of the devout and the destructive before us, we will then continue to the upper levels of the inner sanctuary. The final steps to the upper terrace of Angkor are the steepest of all, as pilgrims of old were to stoop on their pilgrimage to encounter the gods. Finally the pinnacle: the sacred heart of Angkor Wat, a blend of spirituality and symmetry so perfect that few moments will measure up.

In the afternoon, we will head to **Banteay Srei**, Angkor's ultimate art gallery. This petite pink temple is the jewel in the crown of Angkor-era sculpture. The elaborate carvings here are the finest found in Cambodia and the name translates as 'Fortress of the Women', thanks to the intricate detail here, considered too fine for the hands of a man.

Originally believed to date from the latter part of the Angkor period, inscriptions at the site suggest it was built by a Brahman in 967. However, some architectural historians have suggested that the inscriptions may date from an earlier structure on this site and the temple is in fact later, marking a high-water mark in Khmer sculpture.

On the way back to Siem Reap, we will visit the **Cambodia Landmine Museum** to learn more about the scourge of landmines and the shadow they cast over rural communities in Cambodia with a visit to this flagship museum promoting mine awareness and education.

The Land Mine Museum displays a large collection of weapons of war, including guns, rifles, rocket launchers, mortars, bombs and landmines. The site includes a mocked up minefield and visitors can attempt to locate the deactivated mines. The museum is a rich resource of information about landmines and UXO with many educational displays detailing how certain mines are used and in what situations. There is also a DVD available telling the story of landmines and UXO in Cambodia and the disastrous impact they have had on the population. Not only a weapon of war, they are a weapon against peace.

The Landmine Museum promotes land mine accident prevention awareness and public education; and provides educational facilities, programming and rehabilitation facilities for survivors of land mine injuries. It also provides education and support for dozens of at-risk, land mine-affected children who have suffered overwhelming hardships. The Cambodia Landmine Museum was created so that it might serve as a place of healing for bodies, hearts and minds.



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We will then continue to **Butterfly Centre**, a wonderful NGO that uses the raising of butterflies to help farmers increase their income and preserve the land.

Accommodation at Hanuman Boutique Hotel

Day 10 —Monday 17 June 14: Ta Prohm at Dawn and Cycle Walled city of Angkor Thom. Elephant ride. PM cookery course

Pick up at 6am.

We will rise early to travel to **Ta Prohm** in the dawn light. Ta Prohm has been abandoned to the elements, a reminder that while empires rise and fall, the riotous power of nature marches on, oblivious to the dramas of human history. Left as it was 'discovered' by French explorer Henri Mouhot in 1860, the tentacle-like tree roots here are slowly strangling the surviving stones, man first conquering nature to create, nature later conquering man to destroy.

After soaking up the unique atmosphere of Ta Prohm, we will hit the saddle and cycle through this majestic landscape to the awesome walled city of **Angkor Thom**. We will enter the city at Victory gate, here we leave the ground trail and cycle our bikes across the top of the fortified walls to the Gate of the dead (East gate). Our time in this wonderful place will take us to, perhaps the most magical of all Angkorian temples, the Bayon. We will also take time to view **Baphuon**, the **Royal Palace complex** and **Phimean Akas** before arriving at atmospheric **Preah Palilay**. We then emerge on the central square of Angkor Thom, winding our way along the **Terrace of the Leper King** and **Terrace of Elephants**. We will then make our way out of the ancient city, passing troops of monkeys, through the South Gate. Here we will have the option of leaving our bicycles behind and returning to town or making the cycle past **Angkor Wat** and back home ourselves.

Elephant Ridding from South Gate to Bayon Temple

This afternoon, you will be taken to do the Cookery Course at **La Tigre de Papier**,

Menu: Starter, main course and deserts

Time: 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM

La Tigre de Papier, the leading cooking school in Siem Reap, gateway to the temples of Angkor. We spend some time learning the secrets of the Cambodian kitchen, a cuisine laced with subtle spices and tempting aromas. The students will choose from a selection of favourites, including meat, fish and vegetarian options. Once we finish the class, we will enjoy the fruits of our labor, eating our very own creations. In addition, you may take these recipes home and impress your friends with a Cambodian evening.



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Accommodation at Hanuman Boutique Hotel

Day 11 -Tuesday 18 June 14: Boat trip Kampong Phluk – Departure

Breakfast at hotel,

In the morning, we will travel to Roluos and follow the course of the Roluos River to the nearest navigable point where we board small wooden boats for the trip to Kompong Pluk. Cruising down a narrow waterway, we enter this medieval floating village, where the houses stand atop stilts as much as seven meters above the water. Everything lives on the water, pigs, dogs, crocodiles and people, all jockeying for space in this incredible floating town. We will explore the local wat here before returning back to Siem Reap by road.

Afternoon, free until time transfer to the airport for flight back home.

Day 12 – Friday 19 June 14: Arrive in Chicago



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