

Update 4: 15th February 2018 sailing out of Vietnam en route to Myanmar

I just learnt how to do one the scariest things ever – how to cross a road in Vietnam! There’s a t-shirt sold in the markets here that says “Green-I can go, Amber – I can go, Red - I can still go”. How true! A river of motorbikes will pour over the street (and sometimes pavements) and just not stop. The advice is – walk at an even pace and don’t stop – they will manoeuvre around you.



Plus it’s Tet – so millions are travelling – mostly on Chinese made scooters with their whole family (I saw 5 on one), plus luggage – all on one bike. I even saw someone transporting a large fridge in the box on the back of one. A fridge! I can’t even think of the logistics of how you actually get it on the bike, stay upright and drive.



Angkor Wat, Cambodia

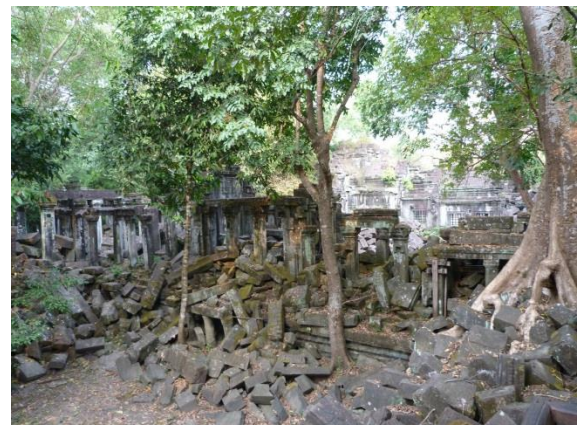
But apart from my abject fear crossing the road this visit to Vietnam and my additional 3 day trip to Cambodia was immense! I skipped the China update as I left the smog (and freezing cold) of Shanghai on the day we arrived in port – taking a 19 hour overnight sleeper train to Hong Kong (also still very cold) and then spent 4 days there. I

worked using decent Wi-Fi and tried to recover from a cold, and then joined the ship again for the trip to Vietnam.



Angkor Thom

In the middle of the Vietnam stay I was fortunate to lead the 3 day ‘Authentic Cambodia and Homestay’ trip; me and 19 SASers. What an incredible place! We saw three lots of temples including Angkor Wat.



I also sailed along the Mekong to the lake to see fishermen and a floating village. These informal businesses reminded me of other producer organisations I have seen in the Amazon River. So far my theories around producer supply chains and the informal economy developed in an Africa and Amazonia context appear to be holding.



On the final day we visited a school (building a greenhouse), and then visited an informal economy business making noodles.



Most of these activities took place with students dressed in the new SASer uniform of elephant pants (wide leg trousers with elastic bottoms made from materials covered in elephant prints!) bought in the markets of Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh city!



Me and my SASers

We also spent the night in a rural homestay – 16 ‘girls’ asleep on floor pads in a large open room, plus the 4 ‘boys’ in the other house! The homestay was similar to the ones I have seen in Brazil and helped me to make some comparisons. Also the floating village is a community-based tourism area, so I was again able to compare and contrast with others that I have seen elsewhere in Africa.



On the final day in Vietnam I visited another province (Ben Tre) and sailed along the Mekong Delta. We also had a chance to see how local bricks are made – it takes 6 weeks to make 800!

We saw coconut producers’ organisations and some of the artisanal crafts in the area making coconut sweets. Of course I had Dong left to spend – so had to buy a few things to remember the trip by apart from elephant pants!



This final trip was another chance to sail along the Mekong River. The next day we sailed it again – on the World Odyssey as we began the 4 hour slow sail down its bends and turns leaving Ho Chi Minh for the ocean.

For the next 5 days we have classes and the Sea Olympics and then we will arrive in Myanmar. We have gone from the minus temperatures of China to 27C+ and humid. Thankfully I now have elephant pants!

Diane