

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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The wheels on this aquatic bus - March 27, 2023

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SUMMARY

Scott went on the morning excursion to see a local elementary school and village. I opted to stay onboard and get some exercise and catch up on e-mail. In the afternoon and further up? down? stream we docked again and visited Hanchey Temple. There we sat on a carpet in prayer position and were chanted at by two monks. The "water blessing" portion of the ceremony consisted on them throwing damp heavy lotus blossom petals at us which was a little surprising when your eyes are closed and you're not expecting it! Back onboard we "sailed" to Phnom Penh and docked. I had a nice albeit occasionally painful leg and foot

massage. - Karen

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DETAIL

Today is our first full day on the ship and our first excursions. When we wake up we find we're docked, but just to a grassy bank. There's a small clearing where we are but not much there. A couple ashore are tending to their cows, providing them some grass (most likely the greens from the rice harvest earlier in the year). The lady forcefully pounds a stake into the dry ground to keep the bull from wandering too far.

Breakfast is delicious and varied, with fruits and normal western stuff and of course local soup and spiced vegetables. Karen is opting out of this morning's excursion in to the local village in favor of relaxation and exercise. Scott heads off the boat, with the other seven ship-mates, scrambling up the dry mud bank, again with crew to assist.

For the next hour or so we walk down a dirt road and see the houses and modest enterprises going on. Under one small home is what's described as a local 7-11 with a small array of products on offer. There's gas for sale by the liter in old glass Coke bottles. Further along we see a few dozen clay pots, that can each hold maybe 30 gallons, filled with dark water. We're told these are big white radishes fermenting with salt and water.

There are random chickens and dogs wandering around. At one house a lady is ladling rice wine into empty half liter water bottles. We're told this is for the farmer buying it, to give him strength throughout the work day. At one house there's a good looking stairway leading up to nothing. The house has been taken away but the stairs were left behind, presumably for the next house. We see ladies harvesting asian cabbage that will be sold in the local market later. Little kids follow behind us at a safe distance, smiling.

There are different types of fruit trees growing, some with fruit, some just with leaves. There's fish drying in the sun and rice drying, too, for the chickens. We stop and watch as a group of woman quickly peel big white radishes to prepare them for pickling. We're told these ladies earn about \$6 doing this for a long day. The radishes, once pickled, will go for around 15 cents per kilogram. There are tall stacks of salt bags nearby.

We ask about a scare crow we see propped up against a house. Apparently they all have these. They're kind of a message to the evil spirits to say "hey, we've already given... we've already had a death in this household, try the place down the street!".

At the local school we meet the principal and get to talk to one on the classes. The school teaches 250 students and has 8 teachers. This is for K through 6th grade for the local families. We tell the kids our names and where we're from. They sing us a couple of songs and we get to ask them questions, including 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' It's mostly doctors and dentists, with the occasional 'police man' thrown in.

How does one know when a kid is ready for school? It's not whether they can drive a motor scooter or not, because there's no minimum age for that. And it's not age at all. It's whether you are able to reach over your head with your right arm and touch the your left ear. We given the school a donation and head back to the boat, enjoying the milk from a fresh and heavy coconut along the way.

After lunch we get off the boat again. We've moved. There's a buddhist monastery here and a couple of monks are going to chant for us and give a water blessing. We nine, plus the two guides, sit with the two monks on their rug, the big buddha statue watching us. We mustn't point the soles of our feet towards the monks, too rude!

The chanting starts and it sounds like a Texas auctioneer. I'm afraid I'm going to shout out a bid. We're seated in an awkward manner and are afraid we're going to keel over at any minute or possible get a leg cramp. Eventually the chanting stops and the monks throw a large quantity of flower pedals all over us. We're startled. Apparently this isn't the customary water blessing, but since we're tourists, and perhaps not completely immune to things one might catch from the local water, this is what they do.

Back on board we get a briefing on Cambodia, it's people and geography. We learn about it's surprising mineral wealth and that it's #4 in the world for fish production (check where that fish sauce in your fridge is from). We learn that The Mekong River changes direction in the rainy season, the water flowing out of the big lake for a while. We learn that there are precious few tourists in the rainy season, but that the mosquitoes are thankful for the ones that are here.

Another great dinner on board. We have drinks before (the daily drink special) and eventually agree that it'd be a good idea for everyone to do Tequila shots. Sadly the ship is currently low on Tequila. We're supposed to check back tomorrow. Sounds dangerous. There was also some loose talk bout doing Karaoke. For sure, the wheels are starting to come off this aquatic bus!

Photos



Our view of the shore, a couple tends to their two cattle.



Our route ashore, rustic but effective.



As we walk along the road we're taunted, good-naturedly, by a couple of young kids.



Radishes being pickled. Apparently it's a big deal around these parts.



A lady farmer harvesting good looking cabbage.



Settling up after some home-made rice wine has been ladled into empty water bottles



A calf stopping for a morning drink.



A seemingly pot-ready chicken looking for breakfast



A big pile of white radishes wishing to be peeled.



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A teacher and her class singing to us.



Nicholas' idea of having us all sit together comes to pass



Getting our water blessing



Nevel explaining the Chinese investment
in Cambodia



Sunset over Phnom Penh

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