SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

BECCA WANTA

Becca’s Majors: Religious Studies, Social Work

Program: UW Buddhism and Service Learning in Cambodia, Summer

Academic Life: In addition to my service learning placement, I took one class with eight other UW-Madison students. Every weekday we would meet at a local library and attend a guest lecture or a discussion prompted by our Resident Director or on-site staff member. During our month long stay in Cambodia we hosted a dozen guest lecturers that spoke about the culture of Cambodia, its history, current societal issues or movements. We also read autobiographies of Cambodians who had suffered through some of these societal issues. I learned a lot within that classroom and I feel that my learning was really applicable because I was able to observe what I had learned. The constant learning and everyday discussion really helped me adjust to and understand Cambodian society better.

Cambodia as a Second Home: My host country definitely became like a second home. I started to realize this when I felt comfortable navigating around the city alone and bargaining with ease in the market. It was most prominent when I started to recognize people around the city. Several times I would just hear, “REBECCA!” screamed on the street and it would either be somebody from the English conversation table or a child I taught at the library. Recognizing people around town and casually saying hello to them really made me feel like I was at home.

Tip for Study Abroad Students: One tip I would tell to anyone studying abroad is everything is an adventure! Take every opportunity you can, get out of your comfort zone and try talking to as many different people as you can. And if plans fall through, just think of it as a new opportunity or experience. If you can solve your problems creatively and with an optimistic outlook, is it even really a problem? Time abroad is limited, so really try to make the most out of it!

“I’m not sure if I would be so in tune with the present moment if I hadn’t studied abroad.”

Venerable San Van performing srauv duk for Becca, a cleansing and reorienting water blessing for good luck and health.