SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

Page Bazan

Page’s Major: Undecided

Program: UW Buddhism and Service Learning in Cambodia, Summer

Academic Life: Although our program centered on our service placements, we attended a number of lectures throughout our stay in Siem Reap. Experts spoke to us on a variety of relevant topics including, the Khmer Rouge, ancient Angkor, land mines, and human trafficking. Usually my peers were simply the other UW students in the program, but many events were open to the public, allowing us to get local insight on these subjects.

How Study Abroad Changed Page: I learned that there is never a wrong time to be kind. Cambodians are renowned for their warm dispositions and hospitality. To me Khmer people were nothing but gracious. What really struck me though is how they treated each other. On a trip to a temple, our driver waited at the entrance while we explored. When we returned, he was laughing with one of the monks whom he had just met. Whenever I traveled with Cambodians they would always start up a friendly conversation with whoever they met regardless of status or background. I realized that kindness is not a switch that you turn off and on. It should simply be the natural response.

Tip for Study Abroad Students: Make sure to abide by local cultural customs as best you can wherever you may travel. In Cambodia, despite the heat, people tend to dress more modestly. To avoid looking like a tourist I wore pants and shirts that covered my shoulders. Locals will take you more seriously if you make an effort to respect their culture.

“Cambodia is an amazing country with kind people, beautiful landscapes, and rich tradition.”