



# A COUNTRY OF MIXED

How to get to Phnom Penh? By Murli Menon

**P**hnom Penh is connected by direct flights from Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Singapore and Hanoi. The easiest way for Indian tourists to get to Phnom Penh is to fly to Bangkok and take the Air Asia flight from Bangkok to Phnom Penh. This flight ticket by budget airline Air Asia should cost no more than 5000 Baht (₹6000) for the return ticket, if booked 15 days in advance on the Internet. It is advisable to stay overnight at Phnom Penh before making the long bus journey to Kratie. From Kratie one has to travel 15 km to Kampi to watch the dolphins. This journey can be made by a motorbike taxi for \$3 (includes pick-up from one's hotel to drop back and waiting charges). The entrance fee to the Dolphin Conservation Area

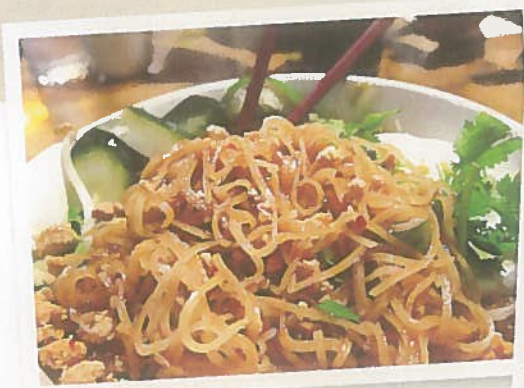
is \$7, which includes a three-hour chartered boat cruise along with a boatman who also doubles as a guide.

**Where to stay at Phnom Penh:** Cambodiana Hotel, located on the banks of the Tonle Sap River is the most convenient location to stay, as almost all tourist attractions including Grand Palace, Museum and Silver Pagoda are easy to reach.

Also, the hotel is itself located on the banks of the Tonle Sap river offering spectacular views if one can manage to get a river-facing room by booking well in advance. The average room tariff at Cambodiana inclusive of taxes and buffet breakfast ranges from \$80 to \$100 (₹3000 to ₹4000) per night in the low season which is from August to October.

**Where to stay at Kratie:** Riverside Hotel offers basic fan-rooms at \$5 per night. No hot water showers are provided. It is ideal for an overnight stay. There are a few high-end hotels at Kratie offering air-conditioned rooms with hot showers for \$15 per night for those who wish to stay longer at Kratie.

**Where to eat at Phnom Penh:** Many small restaurants serving Khmer, Thai and Indian cuisine are found near Sisaworth Quay in Phnom Penh. Steamed beansprouts with flat rice noodles and Chinese spinach garnished with celery is a local dish which is good to taste and nutritious. This dish is as delicious to eat as it is pleasing to the eyes. The food at the high-profile hotels is only for the gastronomically adventurous who like greasy food. Fresh tropical fruits



# DELIGHTS

including papayas, pineapples and watermelons are available at the local market. Siam City Hotel's buffet breakfast has a selection of fresh fruits, watermelon juice, orange juice, fresh vegetable salad and rice soup for vegans who don't consume any products which contain minute traces of any product of animal origin. Shere-Punjab is tiny restaurant serving Indian cuisine and the Indian chefs are happy to whip up pure vegetarian meals on request. The *dal handi* which goes well *chappatis* and *aloo jeera*, is recommended. An average vegetarian meal for two should not exceed \$6 (₹240/-)

**Where to eat at kratie:** Many street vendors selling everything from sliced fruits to fruit juices to stir-fried noodles are found by the roadside promenade. Vegans can get a delicious mixture of grated coconut,

baked with rice and sprinkled with baked beans and packed in environment-friendly bamboo containers. Each bamboo stick is about a foot long and two centimetres in diameter and costs 2000 riel (₹20) and makes an ideal breakfast for one person. This delicacy tastes similar

to *kozhekkata* or *puttu* made in Kerala.

However, no sugar is added to this sticky baked rice snack. Tender coconuts are available at street corners. A bigger version of litchee called *rambutan* is juicy and filling and a smaller version of the litchee is delicious and one can eat lots of it to replenish fluids during the long bus journey.

Star Restaurant at the market serves hot steamed rice with vegetable curry which (includes boiled potatoes, beans and carrots steamed to perfection with Khmer spices like *galagal* and lemongrass in a coconut-milk gravy) for \$3 which is a lip-smacking, tasty meal in itself. The quantity is sufficient for two people.

## SHERE-PUNJAB IS TINY RESTAURANT SERVING

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A minute's success pays the failure of years. -Robert Browning