**Mollie Mckenzie’s Account**

At midnight, Saturday the 19th of November two groups of Northcote High year 11's and 10's boarded a plane for Cambodia. Exited to be done with exams and ready for adventure, guided by Antipodeans Abroad and four brave teachers, our three weeks of action began. Stepping out of the airport in Phnom Phen was like walking into a wall of heat, humidity and noise. As it was "student run", trip this meant right off the bat a leadership group made up of 3-4 students had to call up hotels, book our accommodation and negotiate our transport with Tuk-Tuk drivers. As well as finding places to eat and buy water. The leadership teams swapped around and each team had control of about four days each. It took a while to get into the swing of making decisions as a group. At the start that meant wandering the streets of Phnom Phen on our first night searching for somewhere to have dinner, in the end giving up and having pizza because we weren't quite brave enough yet to try the local food. However our confidence grew and by the end of the trip we could sniff out a $2 breakfast from a mile away, and discovered that crickets taste a lot like honey-soy chicken chips if you close your eyes and ignore the texture. Although we had bumps along the way like walking for 30mims in torrential rain searching for a lunch place, that I still maintain moved location and that's why we couldn't find it. Only to discover that we couldn't of chosen a more hipster Melbourne place to eat at, in all of Cambodia.

After some time in Phnom Phen we traveled to Kampot and Kep. Where our leadership group at the time took us to rabbit island for a day of beach fun. We ate crab fresh from the ocean and q

Our time for relaxing was over and it was time to get to work. We traveled to our local home-stay in Kampong Kleang. Where we stayed in a stilt house on the river and traveled 20mins on a boat each day to a local school which was the basis for our community project. The children at the school were very impressed by the soccer balls that we brought over, however they were less impressed with our soccer skills. We learned from local tradesmen how to build a brick wall, and eagerly lent our hands rebuilding part of the schools wall. We learnt the complex art of mixing cement without a cement mixer, which required a lot of hard labour, sweating in the heat stirring concrete with shovels and hoes on the ground. Using the cement we put a floor into a kindergarten and hired some local tradesmen to replace the room. Some more artistic members of the group painted murals on the school, watched on by dozens of exited children. Every morning we woke up and crawled out of our mosquito nets and mattresses on the floor and ate breakfast together on the deck overlooking the lake. We returned to the home stay for lunch and dinner, eating local food made by the home stay family. We even got to visit a crocodile farm.

Sadly the project came to an end, although we enjoyed our time there we were excite des to move on to the next part of our trip. We moved to Siem Riep where we wandered through markets and were given free time most nights to wonder the town and find local places to eat.

After a couple days in Siem Riep we left to begin our trek. Our trek turned out to be less of a trek and more of a "two hour walk". But we didn't let that dampen our spirits and were all very exited to be staying in another home stay on a stilt house on the lake. We were so exited that our spirits couldn't be crushed even when that night multiple members of our group got sick. We passed our time playing card games and trying to avoid Mosquitos. The second day of the hike was a day of bike riding through the countryside, followed closely by a Tuk-Tuk carrying all the sickies who were more that happy to provide us with constructive criticism as we rode along. That night we slept outside under the stars, (and with the copious amounts of crickets and frogs), and went swimming in the lake.

Our trek finished off with biking through the countryside again before we hopped on a bus and traveled back to Siem Riep. In Siem Riep we saw that sights, even if that meant waking up at 3:30am to be at Angkor Watt at 4:00 to watch the sunrise. Never unprepared we brought bread rolls and jam for breakfast and were all busily beginning breakfast when we were invaded by local monkeys who are not at all as cute as the look. Our jams were stolen and most shattering of all, our bananas. Oddly enough they didn't seem to want our Vegemite. Despite the trauma of being attacked, spirits were high and we spent the day mountain biking between temples. We explored Angkor Watt and the "Tomb Raider" temple amongst others (keeping a careful eye out for monkeys). The day after that we all traveled to a waterfall in the mountain and spent the day swimming and relaxing as a group.

Our last few days were spend visiting a local artisan market and going to the circus. As well as trying to convince Mr Lethborge to sing some karaoke.

By the end of our trip all of us were experts at booking accommodation, transport, finding places to eat as a group and finding meals under $5. The Cambodia trip was such an amazing experience it had a few hardships but we got through them together and bonded as team. I couldn't of asked for a more amazing time and I thank all the people on the trip, the teachers and Antipodeans abroad for making it possible.