



Catherine's Trip to Poi Pet, Cambodia

"It saddens the human heart to even conceptualize that human beings can live under these types of conditions. It's a vicious circle that will never end. No body dreams or hopes for anything more than their next meal, health and safety. Despite these sad and true facts, Cambodia has a majestically special and tranquil karma.

A country filled with ancient ruins and historical temples. Its people wear a smile and carry a happy heart inside of them as they fight for their basic survival, day in and day out!

As we crossed the Thai border I was told of the 'border children'. These are kids who live on the skirts of the Cambodian and Thai border, under the bridge and on the streets. They smuggle everything and anything across this border and will beg you for \$1. It broke my heart to see three and five year olds with their baby siblings clinging to them as they walk the border area, wearing the only outfit they own.

As distraught as I am to see the inhumane way of life, I am aware that these are a happy people. They take nothing for granted, live each day for what it is and expect nothing more than respect, a smile and kindness from others.

We met up with Andrea, whom is now based in Cambodia. She is a volunteer for the Millennium World Peace Foundation and heads up the 'Carpets for Communities' project in Cambodia. We spent a day with her and met four women who are a part of this incredible project.

Their homes are so beautifully simple; we drove along a long stretch of muddy trail and passed lush miles of land. These Cambodian homes are nestled in amongst the grass and trees. Most of the homes are made of long grass and wood and are built on stilts. Nobody speaks English but their eyes and smiles speak a thousand words. This project started in order to give mothers an income on the premise that they would send their children to school. School attendance here is very low. Kids are put to work, sent to beg and are victims of child labour and prostitution as a means of survival.

We stopped over at a house which was just a dark room with a concrete floor and a mattress. They offered us food and I wanted to cry. They have nothing, no money, no food, never mind luxuries and they insist we have the only food they have. Some families live in absolute squalor but take so much pride in their little piece of land called home.

When they live under these sorts of conditions, how could I expect for them to want more for themselves and their children when they only live to survive from day to day. It is not about seeking a western education and the dream of a top career path or a better lifestyle. It is ingrained that this is the way of life.

I think we will always have 3rd world countries who will always be in need of the financial assistance and the infrastructural support of the 1st world countries. Politics and corruption will always find a place to dwell amongst the rich and poor. It is the way of the world and the cycle of life!!!"

Catherine Constantinides
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