



Vlad Linder

**THE CHRONICLES
OF CAMBODIA**

Vlad Linder

The Chronicles of Cambodia

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Аннотация

One can travel in different ways: observe the surroundings comfortably through a car window; or blend into the local people's life, experiencing and going through their pain and joy, troubles and concern, just like the author of The Chronicles of Cambodia did. In this book Vlad Linder described in detail his journey to the land of The Khmer Rouge, which took place in April 2012...

Содержание

The Chronicles of Cambodia	5
1	5
2	7
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	8

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The Chronicles of Cambodia

1

A week after my arrival in Sihanoukville, I was rather tired of the predictable life of a settled tourist. Staying at a snug little house right on the shore of the Gulf of Siam, I kept feeling I was looking at the world through a well-polished, barely visible glass. I set off to a place, where you could hardly hear a foreign tongue and where you wouldn't have pancakes with strawberry jam for breakfast.

After roaming several miles away from popular tourist places, I found myself on a plain narrow cobblestone street packed with small hair salons, bars and various street food stalls. I turned from the main street onto one of the numerous side streets, walked several yards along a high brick wall and was happy to discover a cozy courtyard surrounded by three houses. On one of the porches several middle-aged women were sitting absorbed in a cash card game. At the same time they were giving instructions to the pedicurists almost lying on the ground at the women's feet. I addressed one of the players with a question, if she had a room for rent in this wonderful and peaceful nook. Her card partner gave an affirmative answer at once and invited me

to see the place.

Having negotiated the price for a while, I paid several tens of dollars and became a rightful tenant of a tiny room located on the ground floor of one of the three houses, overlooking a piece of a brick wall and a narrow strip of the sky as a perk. The delighted landlady handed me a heavy padlock and a small key, hurried back to the game and placed all the rental income on a bet then and there. At any time of the day or evening she could be seen at the same place with the same people and engaged in the same fascinating pastime. However, it was rather convenient, especially when I needed her to solve some household issues.

2

The next day I was walking back from a nearby market in a cheerful mood, when I saw the usual company, but the atmosphere was completely different. Instead of lively amusement usually accompanying the thrill of the game, I saw everybody with cards put aside, their heads shaking from time to time. They were all ears, listening to a woman from the neighborhood, who was telling something and sobbed violently. Her red tearful eyes searching for support said it all. I offered the girl some water and asked what had happened and how I could help. Weeping and trembling in emotions, she answered in a rather good English, as far as I could judge, that she needed badly to get to her family house situated 236 miles away from here as soon as possible. The locals couldn't help – they mentioned lack of time or 'important' gambling affairs. I decided not to go deep into the story, but asked her to stay there a few minutes. I took the stuff I'd bought out of my backpack and filled it with the essentials we would need for a trip. A few minutes later our tuk-tuk rattled down the cobblestone road to the nearest bus station, bouncing and swinging, bumping every pebble and pothole.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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