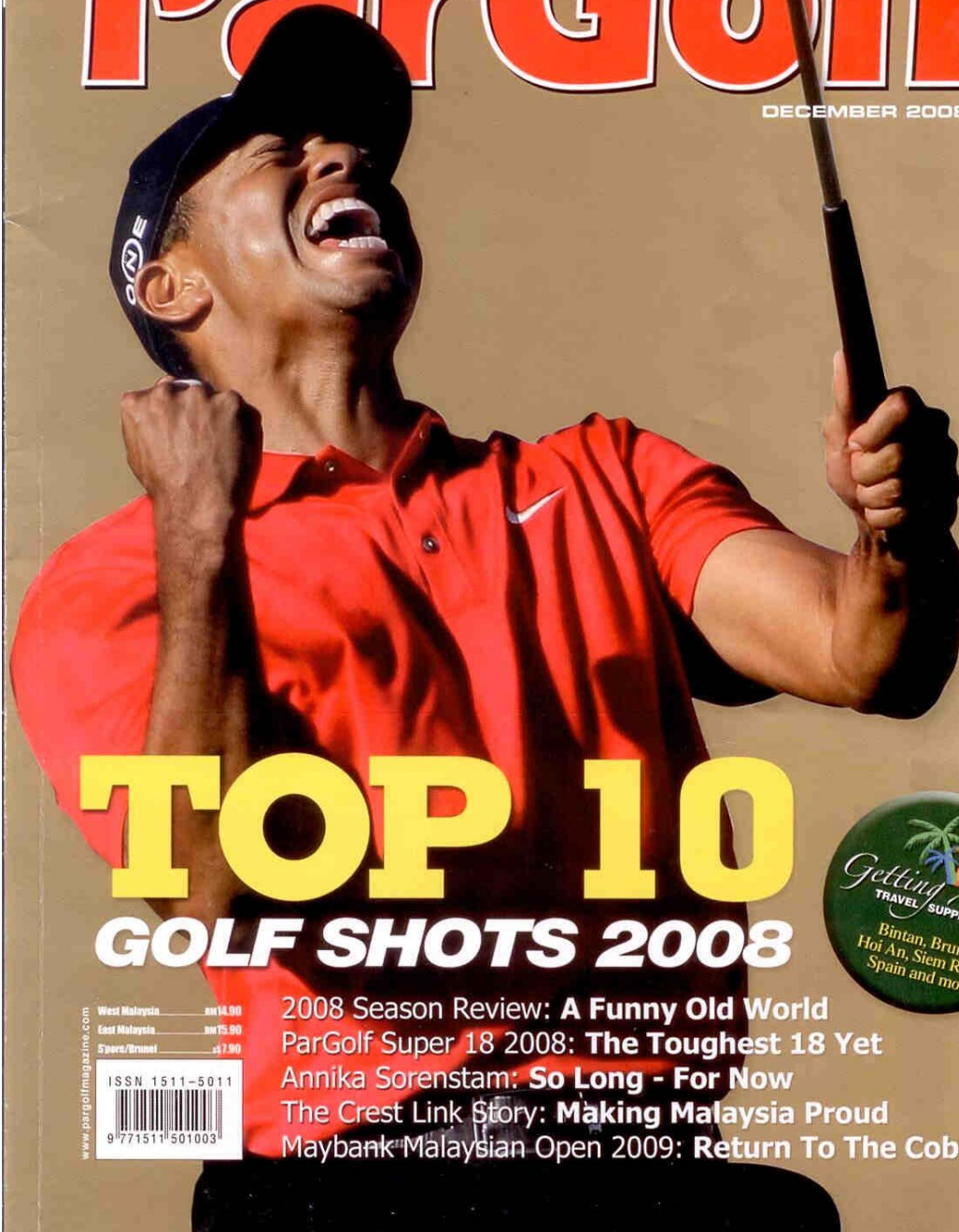


WIN a golf holiday for two to Swiss-Garden Damai Laut!

# ParGolf®

DECEMBER 2008



## TOP 10 GOLF SHOTS 2008



www.pargolfmagazine.com

West Malaysia RM14.90  
East Malaysia RM15.90  
Sports/Brunei RM7.90

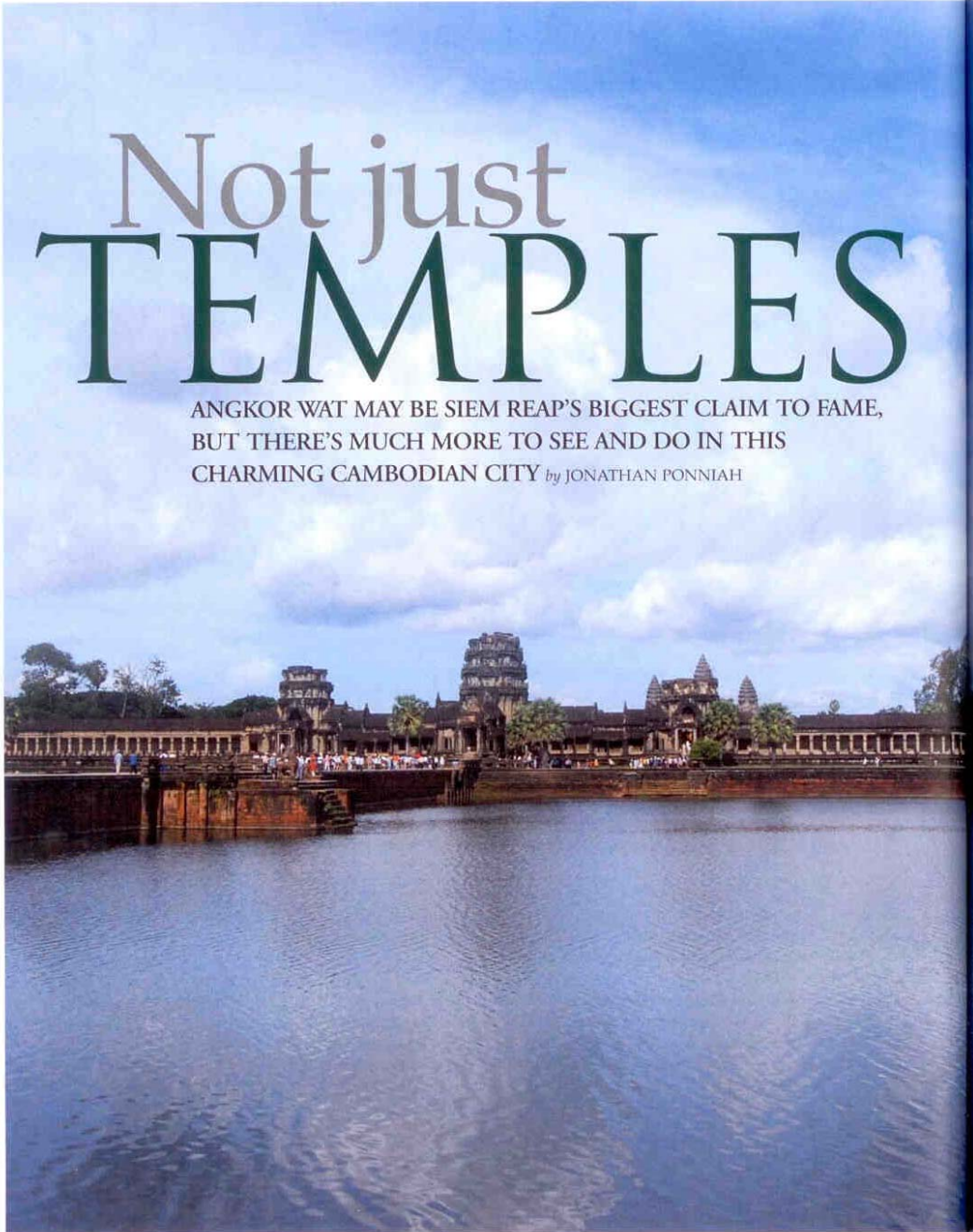
ISSN 1511-5011  
9 771511 501003

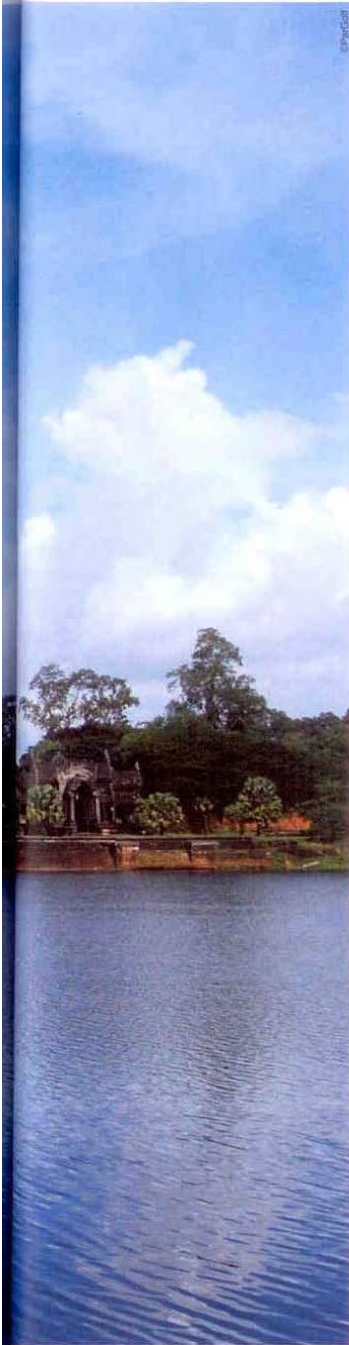
2008 Season Review: **A Funny Old World**  
ParGolf Super 18 2008: **The Toughest 18 Yet**  
Annika Sorenstam: **So Long - For Now**  
The Crest Link Story: **Making Malaysia Proud**  
Maybank Malaysian Open 2009: **Return To The Cobra**

• SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

# Not just TEMPLES

ANGKOR WAT MAY BE SIEM REAP'S BIGGEST CLAIM TO FAME,  
BUT THERE'S MUCH MORE TO SEE AND DO IN THIS  
CHARMING CAMBODIAN CITY *by* JONATHAN PONNIAH





Trendy Indian restaurant along Pub Street

Angkor. The very name evokes wonder and awe; such is the fame and allure of Cambodia's biggest tourist attraction.

With ancient temple and palace complexes spread over a 400-square kilometre site, the Angkor Archaeological Park ranks right up there with the Giza Pyramids and China's Great Wall on the list of must-see man-made wonders. One can spend a full week exploring the numerous relics of the once-mighty Khmer civilization, including of course the iconic central temple complex, Angkor Wat, the giant stone faces of Bayon, and the forest-shrouded remains of Ta Phnom, made famous by the Angelina Jolie adventure flick, 'Tomb Raider'.

The gateway to Angkor is the charming

town of Siem Reap, located along the banks of the river from which it gets its name. Siem Reap thrived after the Western world 'discovered' the lost city of Angkor in the early 20th century and, today, it is Cambodia's second largest city after Phnom Penh with a population of just under 150,000; many of whom are involved in some facet of the tourist trade.

While Siem Reap owes its relative prosperity to the famous temple ruins about 20 minutes' drive away, to brand the city a one-hit wonder is being a little unfair. There's quite a fair bit to see and do apart from temple-gazing in and around Siem Reap, augmented by its vibrant restaurant and pub culture.



Some of Siem Reap's street vendors are land-mine victims

◆ SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA



Local fare including 'Amok' and Angkor Beer.

Despite its city designation, Siem Reap is not very big and it's easy to get your bearings right after one or two visits. Most of the trendy restaurants and pubs are located along and around a road near the P'sar Chas (Old Market), popularly known as 'Pub Street' or 'Bar Street'. Many of these establishments are owned by western visitors who fell in love with the Cambodian people and their laidback way of life, and decided to stay.

Whatever your culinary preferences, there is bound to be something that suits your pallet (and wallet), from fine French and fusion Italian to Indian curries and even TexMex. Vegetarian fare is available in most of the Indian eateries and some of the Khmer restaurants.

If you're looking for authentic local dishes such as 'Amok' (a fish or meat-based pasty dish similar to our 'Nyonya Otak-Otak'), Khmer Beef and local curries, the choice of restaurants is endless – it all depends on your budget and sense of adventure. You can opt to dine where the locals do, in the backstreet 'karaoke' restaurants, or try the more upmarket joints where a meal will still only set you back around US\$10. Khmer food is similar to Thai food, always leaning towards sweet but generally less spicy. Dried snake salad and grilled frog are two more exotic options for those who dare.

And beer is cheap! You can get a bottle of the local brew, Angkor (surprised?) for less than US\$1, or opt to pay a little more for a familiar name – Anchor. The Malaysian beer is quite popular here, which – with all due respect to Guinness Anchor Breweries (Anchor is a great beer) – could have something with the similarity of its name to Siem Reap's main claim to fame.

After-dinner entertainment is as varied as the dining options, and range from lively



Antique shop near P'sar Chas (Old Market)

themed bars and rustic pubs, boasting catchy names such as 'Angkor What?', 'Giddy Gecko' and 'Dead Fish Tower', to raunchy nightclubs and karaokes in less touristy parts of town. Most tourists stick to Pub Street and its surrounds, which is more than enough to keep one occupied for a whole fortnight of wine and dining.

There are also many massage joints in this part of town, offering traditional Khmer massage as well as Thai and other treatments. Most are bona-fide and it's only about US\$10 for an hour-long massage. The Khmer massage is similar to its Thai counterpart but with less body contortions, which makes it more relaxing.

If you're looking for something a little more cultured, get in a dinner show at the Apsara



Massage shops are plentiful

Theatre of the Angkor Village Resort ([www.angkorvillage.com](http://www.angkorvillage.com)), which is about 10 minutes' from town on the way to Angkor Wat. The theatre's ballet troupe performs classical as well as modern dances twice a night, at 6.30pm and 8pm.

If your hotel is close to town, a great way to move around is by bicycle, which is easily rented either from your hotel or outside. Otherwise, 'tuk-tuks' are plentiful and good value for money, as are 'motodops' (motorbike taxis). You can hire a tuk-tuk for the day for between S\$15 to US\$25; the usual practice is for the driver to drop you off at one spot and then pick you up from the same spot at a predetermined time, and so on until the day's agreed itinerary is done.

#### WHERE TO GOLF

There are two golf courses in Siem Reap, the Nick Faldo-designed Angkor Golf Resort ([www.angkor-golf.com](http://www.angkor-golf.com)) and the Thai-owned Phokeethra Country Club ([www.phokeethra-golf.com](http://www.phokeethra-golf.com)) and both are well-worth playing.

Angkor Golf Resort only opened for play in December of 2007 but is already being heralded as one of the best new courses in South East Asia. The par 72, 7297-yard layout weaves its way through scenic wetlands and huge lakes, with no less than 82 bunkers adding to its challenge and aesthetic value. The seashore paspalum fairways and Tifdwarf greens are in excellent condition, and putting speeds can reach up to 9.5 on the Stimpmeter.

Phokeethra was completed in early 2007 and is well-known in the region as the venue for the Asian Tour's Johnnie Walker Cambodian Open in 2007 and 2008. Designed by Thai Major-General Weerayudth Phetbuasak, the par 72, 7224-yard course also has a wetland fee



Angkor Palace Resort & Spa

#### WHERE TO STAY

There's a huge buffet of hotels to choose from in Siem Reap, from backpacker B&B's at just US\$5 a night to five-star hotels with all the luxurious trappings.

One of the best hotels is the Angkor Palace Resort & Spa ([www.angkorpalace.com](http://www.angkorpalace.com)), the first Cambodian-owned five-star resort hotel in Siem Reap. The spacious hotel sprawls over 11 hectares of landscaped grounds and is a wonderful enclave to escape to after a day-long temple trek or a night out on Pub Street.

Located just 10 minutes from Siem Reap town and 20 minutes from the Angkor

Archaeological Park, the resort offers 259 luxuriously-appointed rooms with traditional Khmer fittings, private balconies and modern amenities. There are also eight villas for those willing to spurge on a more private retreat.

The hotel prides itself on its F&B outlets and for good reason. The Sunset Café is a great place for a fine-dining experience, while the Sariya Restaurant serves up some tasty Khmer dishes. Come sundown, the Lobby Lounge offers a relaxing environment to unwind with a beer or cocktail, while enjoying the in-house band.

If you need more proactive rejuvenation, spend a few hours at the Kaimmont Spa which has a wide range of treatments including the must-try Khmer massage. For golfers, a full-fledged driving range complete with a proshop and shaded bays awaits.

#### WHEN TO GO

This is the tropics, which means that Siem Reap is a year-round destination. However, you may want to avoid the months of May and June, when the south-western monsoon can bring the humidity level way up. December and January are considered the best months to visit, as the humidity is at its lowest and one usually enjoys clear blue skies and a refreshing breeze.

#### GETTING THERE

Malaysia Airlines and Air Asia fly regularly to Siem Reap from Kuala Lumpur. Flight time is around two hours and planes land at the Angkor International Airport, which is only seven kilometres from Siem Reap.

Siem Reap is also accessible by road from Phnom Penh, a journey through rustic countryside that takes anywhere between five to seven hours.

#### Useful Cambodian words and phrases

ENGLISH	KHMER
Hello	<i>fun-reap soo-a</i>
How are you?	<i>tau neak sok saphary teh?</i>
Good morning	<i>arin sour sdei</i>
Good night	<i>tivash sour sdei</i>
Good afternoon	<i>reah-try sour sdei</i>
My name is....	<i>k'nyom tchmouh...</i>
Yes	<i>baat</i>
No	<i>dteh</i>
Thank You	<i>or-koon</i>
Excuse me	<i>salm dteh</i>
Goodbye	<i>joom-reap leah</i>
I don't understand	<i>k'nyom men yoo-ul tee</i>
Water	<i>teuk</i>
Tea	<i>tai</i>
Restaurant	<i>huang bai</i>
Market	<i>p'sah</i>
Bank	<i>tho neea kear</i>
Post Office	<i>bpnai sa nee</i>
Turn left	<i>bot day ch'waryng</i>
Turn right	<i>bot day s'dum</i>
Go straight	<i>day drong</i>

Source:

[www.tourismcambodia.com](http://www.tourismcambodia.com)

and is a great test of golf. Golfers enjoy the added attraction of an ancient Khmer monument, the remains of an 11th century 'Roluh' bridge, near the clubhouse.

#### WHAT ELSE TO DO

If time permits for other excursions apart from temple trekking and golfing, try and work in a visit to the Angkor National Museum in town for an intriguing insight into the history of Angkor and the Khmer culture. And try to verify if the museum's claim of having 1,000 Buddha figures is true! The entry fee of US\$12 may be a bit steep but is worth spending.

The well-documented atrocities of the Khmer Rouge may be buried in the past but grim reminders of Cambodia's darkest era can be found all over the country. One of these is the Wat Thmei temple just outside of town on the way to Angkor, which houses an orphanage and a bone stupa about to mark the Khmer Rouge 'killing fields' in this area. There's no entry fee, but visitors are asked to make a donation.

About 30 kilometres from town is the small but interesting Landmine Museum, a private

Angkor National Museum



venture set up by local deminer Aki Ra to educate people about the perils of the booby traps. It's hard not to be moved during a visit here, as the guides are mainly teenagers who were orphaned or injured by mines. Only US\$1 per entry, but you may want to top that up with a donation as all money received is used to help

land mine victims.

A day-long excursion worth considering is a visit to the northern banks of the great Tonle Sap Lake, where you can take a boat ride past the floating village near the ferry harbour and ogle at the sheer size of South East Asia's largest freshwater body. ■