TSF
UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM
2024
LIFE IS ABOUT
CLIMBING MOUNTAIN
LET'S GO TO KHNORNG PHASR
WE CAN DO IT!
LIVE LEARN WORK PLAY
CAMPING
"LEAVE NO TRACE"

25 Jan 2025

Dear Korey Lee and all Board Directors:

My name is Sou Mohasambath. I have 3 siblings, and from 2004 to 2013, we lived in Roteang orphanage. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship from an organization that funded my education from high school through university. Currently, I am a dorm leader and pursuing a master's degree with a scholarship from the The Sharing Foundation.

Hiking Trip to Khnorng Phsar Mountain

On December 21–22, 2024, I organized a hiking trip to Khnorng Phsar Mountain in Kampong Speu province. A total of 24 youth volunteers (Dorm members) participated in the journey, traveling on 12 motorcycles, with two people per motorcycle.

About Khnorng Phsar Mountain

Khnorng Phsar is a beautiful natural tourist destination, located on a high peak that offers a 360-degree panoramic view, making it an ideal spot for hiking enthusiasts. The mountain is situated in Tang Bompong Village, Ta Sal Commune, Oral District, Kampong Speu Province. It stands at approximately 1,017 meters in elevation and is 165 kilometers from Phnom Penh.

In recent years, Hiking is becoming very popular among Cambodian youth. I have participated in many hiking programs and firmly believe that hiking is more than just a sport—it strengthens mental resilience, perseverance, and physical health, fosters teamwork and friendships, and promotes environmental conservation. Additionally, it plays a role in boosting eco-tourism and supporting local communities in mountainous regions.

The Meaning of Hiking Khnorng Phsar

I strongly resonate with the idea that "**Life Is About Climbing Mountain**." People often seek comfort and convenience, avoiding challenges whenever possible. However, in reality, life is full of obstacles, and overcoming them requires effort, patience, and perseverance. Just like in hiking, we must face difficulties head-on, strategize solutions, and keep pushing forward regardless of the challenges.

Similarly, in education, students must stay dedicated to learning, even when faced with hardships. Instead of comparing oneself to others, it is essential to compare oneself to their past self, striving for continuous self-improvement. Growth in the present leads to success in the future.

For the youth who joined this hiking trip, I wanted them to experience firsthand the breathtaking beauty of Khnorng Phsar Mountain beauty that cannot be fully captured through media but must be witnessed in person. The sense of achievement upon reaching the summit is a result of dedication, effort, and perseverance, from the base of the mountain to its peak.

The Journey to Khnorng Phsar

We left Phnom Penh at 5:00 AM, traveling along National Road No. 4 towards Kampong Speu province. Upon arrival at Tang Bompong Village, Ta Sal Commune, Oral District, we proceeded to register at the National Park Headquarters, locally known as the "Environmental Office."

During registration, we provided personal contact details and home addresses, and each participant paid an entrance fee of 4,000 riels. After registration, we parked our motorcycles at a local community house and continued the journey by tractor. Two tractors were

arranged, with 12 participants per vehicle, covering a 12-kilometer off-road stretch in approximately 1.5 hours from the village to the mountain's base.

We reached the base of Khnorng Phsar at 11:00 AM, took a one-hour lunch break, and commenced the hike at 12:00 PM.

Team Organization & Hiking Strategy

To ensure safety and efficiency, we divided participants into three groups:

Group 1 (Pathfinders): Responsible for scouting the trail, assessing road conditions, and identifying suitable camping sites.

Group 2 (General Hikers): Primarily composed of female participants carrying lighter supplies.

Group 3 (Support & First Aid): Monitored and assisted the team, ensuring everyone's well-being during the hike.

Each participant carried personal gear and essential food supplies. Our hiking method involved 30–40 minutes of continuous trekking, followed by a 15-minute break to maintain stamina.

Before the trip, I encouraged all participants to prepare themselves physically by engaging in regular exercise at least one week in advance, ensuring proper rest, maintaining a healthy diet, and staying hydrated to avoid health issues during the hike. The team showed great discipline and commitment, conducting morning training sessions, including long-distance running.

Throughout the hike, we encountered unique plant species not commonly found in urban areas, picturesque landscapes, and the melodic sounds of birds. The trail led us through waterfalls, rocky gorges, and dense forested areas, adding to the adventure.

After a five-hour trek, we reached our campsite at Knong Sompov Ridge at 5:00 PM, successfully completing the first leg of our journey.

The Camping

When we arrived, we divided the sleeping areas based on the size of each tent. The boy slept with other boys, and the girl slept with other girls. We camped close to each other so that we could look after one another. We shared food, exchanged many good stories along the way, and found different solutions to the challenges we faced while climbing, making it easier for the descent.

After enjoying dinner, I shared the purpose of our mountain journey, encouraging everyone to reflect on the experience and understand that "**Life Is About Climbing Mountain**." They also exchanged their own lessons and experiences with one another. Before going to sleep, we roasted sweet potatoes, chatted, and sang together joyfully. By 11 PM, everyone went to sleep.

Reaching the summit and watching the sunrise

The next morning, at 4 AM, we woke up and prepared to continue climbing another 2 kilometers from our campsite to reach the peak, where we could enjoy a 360-degree view of Khnorng Phsar Mountain, especially the breathtaking sunrise. When we woke up, the weather was extremely cold, but as we hiked for an hour to our destination, we warmed up thanks to our winter clothing.

There were over 100 other tourists who also hiked up to watch the sunrise like us. The view was truly astonishing and exciting. We had no regrets about the effort and energy we spent climbing up here. In fact, we wanted to return again during the rainy season, when the scenery would be even more spectacular. Next time, we planned to be even better prepared.

At 7:00 AM, after admiring the view, drinking coffee, and taking many memorable photos together, we descended back to the campsite for breakfast. After that, we packed our belongings and prepared to leave the mountain. Before heading down, we sat together to discuss how to plan for our study lives in 2025.

After our discussion, we cleaned up our resting area, picked up trash, and disposed of it properly. **“Leave No Trace”**

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We descended with courage and hope. The descent only took three hours since we didn't take as many breaks as we did while climbing up.

When we returned to Phnom Penh, I noticed some remarkable changes in our group:

- They became more responsible.
- They dedicated themselves more earnestly to their studies.
- They developed greater respect and love for one another.
- They understood that every person has value.
- They realized that unity is the key to overcoming any challenge.
- They learned that perseverance leads to success and achieving goals.
- They were inspired to care for the environment and plant trees around their homes.

Acknowledgements

On this occasion, I would like to express my gratitude to all the supporters, especially director Mr. **Chan Kimleng** and university supervisor Ms. **Leng Chita**, for allowing us to organize this program. Their guidance and reminders helped us prepare thoroughly, stay cautious, and receive the necessary resources and financial support.

As the dorm leader, on behalf of all members, I can say that their support gave us strong motivation, which contributed to the success of our program. I sincerely thank them for supporting university programs and for believing in our potential.

We are proud to have such loyal and generous supporters. I will continue to be committed and actively contribute to making this university program even better, ensuring it remains valuable for the growth and development of young people.

With deepest gratitude,

Sou Mohasambath