

## House-building in Cambodia

### Volunteering to support Tabitha Cambodia

What is a house-building trip? A team of “builders” – no prior experience required – gathers in Cambodia. As a team, they build houses for Cambodian families who otherwise could not afford them. This is an incredibly moving experience, both humbling and exhilarating. Builders are responsible for their own travel, lodging and meal expenses. In addition, adult builders are asked to donate toward the cost of building materials (\$1,000 per house) and Tabitha Cambodia’s community development program.

Volunteer trip leaders form their groups independently (usually 12 to 20 people), and then contact Tabitha Cambodia well in advance to arrange trip dates. The volunteers are supported in Cambodia by Tabitha staff who help coordinate logistics for building, hotel reservations outside Phnom Penh and transportation. Tabitha hires contractors to construct the foundation and frame out the basic structure for the new houses; volunteers install floors and walls over the course of two or three days’ work.

A typical house-building trip begins with a cultural orientation session by Tabitha staff in Phnom Penh, and includes visits to some of Cambodia’s important historic sites in the city. The team then travels to a project site to carry out the work. Builders often choose to spend another three to four days in Cambodia to explore on their own.

**Tabitha Cambodia** has been active since 1994, focusing on projects that contribute to the sustained economic advancement of Cambodian families. **Tabitha USA** is an IRS 501(c)(3) organization, created to raise funds and support for Tabitha Cambodia. Tabitha USA provides general advice about house-building trips but does not organize or sponsor trips. Tabitha USA issues acknowledgement letters (tax receipts) to recognize that donations are fully tax-exempt. Read more at [www.TabithaUSA.org](http://www.TabithaUSA.org).

Through this volunteer experience, you can:

- Partner with Tabitha to provide assistance directly to people who need it most.
- Experience an in-depth, meaningful connection with Cambodia and its people.
- Learn the skills of house-building, and offer not just your physical effort, but also a symbolic gesture of support and encouragement as families reach the milestone of owning a home.
- Gain a deeper understanding of poverty: the causes and results, and some solutions that work.

### Sample Six-Day Itinerary

#### **Day 1**

- Team members arrive in Phnom Penh by 5:00 pm for a welcome dinner, team “meet and greet”

#### **Day 2**

- Lighter activities as team adjusts to time zone  
- Visit and learn about other effective nonprofit organizations in Phnom Penh  
- Visit Tuol Sleng prison (S-21) and the Killing Fields

#### **Day 3**

- Morning orientation at Tabitha headquarters; learn about Tabitha’s history, economic development model, and integrated programs; time to shop at Tabitha’s showroom of silk products  
- Depart for house-building site  
- Check into hotel near site  
- Team dinner

#### **Day 4**

- House-building (picnic lunch on site)  
- Evening dinner with the team

### Day 5

- House-building (picnic lunch on site)
- Evening dinner with the team

### Day 6

- Finish house-building
- Dedication ceremony for families moving in
- Visit to some local villages participating in Tabitha's community development projects
- Farewell lunch or dinner
- Travel back to Phnom Penh or on to Siem Reap to tour Angkor temples

### **Rough Estimate of Personal Expenses** (based on a **6-day trip** & a group of 15)

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| \$ 250  | HOTEL: usually \$35-40 per room per night (will be less if sharing a room)  |
| \$ 150  | FOOD/DRINKS: about \$25 per day   |
| \$ 150  | TRANSPORTATION: travel by van to build site; tuk tuks to and from airport and around town in Phnom Penh   |
| \$ 20   | MUSEUM FEES: Tuol Sleng prison and the Killing Fields   |
| \$1,200 | AIRFARE: estimate of round-trip airfare from the U.S.   |
| \$1,500 | DONATION: adult builders typically donate the materials cost of one house (\$1,000) and one water well (\$250), as well as a portion of the building team's group donation toward the Savings Program (\$1,500 for the group), but trip leaders are in charge of raising funds and will recommend a donation amount per builder |
| \$ 50   | MISCELLANEOUS: cost of Visa to enter Cambodia; airport departure tax; etc.  |
| <hr/>   |   |
| \$3,320 | ESTIMATE OF COSTS per adult volunteer   |

NOTE: *Donations and travel expenses are tax deductible. Volunteers typically spend additional funds for personal travel added on after the build trip; sight-seeing and souvenirs; purchasing some of Tabitha's silk goods (handbags, scarves, accessories).*

### **Other Background Information**

Cambodia is a very poor, developing country. Building teams expose themselves to certain health and safety risks and should be aware that they will be working in unfamiliar circumstances and conditions. Builders should be fit and prepared to undertake two days of manual labor in hot and humid conditions.

It is recommended that builders contact a doctor several months before traveling, and check the Centers for Disease Control website for recommended vaccines (such as malaria pills and a typhoid vaccine). Travel insurance or emergency health insurance, which is inexpensive to purchase for a single trip, is also recommended to cover an emergency evacuation.

Each team of builders is expected to raise funds to support the cost of building and the overall community development program. Tabitha requires a minimum of six houses to be built per team, plus at least a \$1,500 donation toward the community development program. The number of houses that can be built depends on the size and fitness of the group, the funds raised, and the time available. A team of 10 might build 10-15 houses; a team of 20 might build 25-35. Any funds raised in excess of housing materials and the \$1,500 donation are used to help even more families in the community development program. Each Cambodian family receiving a home contributes a portion of the cost, usually between \$25 and \$100. It may take nearly four years for a family to save this amount, and it is a huge effort for them.

## House-building Packing List

### CLOTHING

House-building attire: Long shorts, t-shirts (not sleeveless), and closed-toe shoes (sneakers)  
Long pants and sweatshirt/sweater (for plane)  
Swimsuit  
Hat or baseball cap for sun  
Casual clothes and sandals for touring in Phnom Penh and team dinners

*Important note:* At the build site, it's appropriate to have covered shoulders and long shorts to knees

### PERSONAL ITEMS

Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher  
Insect repellent  
Camera and batteries/charger  
Notebook / journal  
Books for plane and rest periods  
Sunglasses  
Work gloves  
Water bottle  
Bandana (to wet and tie around neck while working)  
Small travel daypack  
Snacks for plane

### ESSENTIALS

Passport  
Xerox of passport  
Extra passport photos and \$25 for Cambodian Visa  
Cash in good condition, and small bills - \$1's, \$5's, \$10's – for spending money

### CONSIDER

Travel insurance (bring paperwork along)  
Travel health insurance (through a company like International SOS)  
Mini first aid/medicine kit: Neosporin, bandaids, Benadryl, ibuprofen, Pepto Bismol, Immodium  
Gatorade/electrolyte powder to add to water bottle

*Tabitha discourages volunteers from bringing any clothing or other goods to donate to villagers*

***Pack Light!***

**From this....**



***Typical family home before  
Tabitha team arrives***

**...to this**



***House-building team, recipient  
families and completed houses***