

# What's happening?

## Different customs between Cambodia and Japan



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My name is NHOR SOK LANG, a second-year master student in the Department of Information Science and Intelligent Systems, The University of Tokushima, Japan.

Cambodia is located in the equatorial tropical region of Southeast Asia. There are only two seasons in Cambodia, the summer season and the rainy season. It is almost always hot throughout the year, and the highest temperature is 40°C in April and the lowest is just 20°C in December. So Cambodians love to take a bath with cold water as a cultural custom. It gives a very refreshing feeling. As I am now in Japan during winter, it is extremely cold for me and I don't feel so comfortable.

As one of the important differences, there are no places for public bath in Cambodia. So Cambodians never take a bath in a group. They always take a bath alone away from the view of other people. In the bathroom, they have big bath which stores water. When people take a bath, they use a bowl to pour water on their body. But Japanese have a bath where people like to be inside it in the bathroom of their own houses. People especially like going to hot spring "Onsen". My first time to go to Onsen was with my friends; I was very surprised and so shy in seeing many people naked in front of me. However, I felt very good and got to like going to Onsen often as Japanese people, too.

In Cambodia, there are lot of shops and stalls along the sides of the streets. These shops and stalls belong to different owners. They sell foods,



desserts, fruits or juices etc. Many people throng to these stalls to buy their wares and exchange gossip. These make the streets in Cambodia full of life and activity. It makes for a very lively atmosphere. That is quite different from Tokushima where the streets are not so lively and people like to talk inside their own houses. So, I feel a bit lonely sometimes.

I think it is very convenient that Japanese people take the bus or the train to go shopping, to school or somewhere nearby in the local area. There are lot of bus stops and local trains. But in Cambodia, people take buses just for going to other provinces which take several hours to reach. For getting around the local area, people always use rickshaws, motorcycle taxi or their own cars or motorcycle.

On the other hand, Cambodian elementary and middle school students go to school in two shifts. Those who study in the morning shift go to school at 7 am and come back home at 11 am. The students come back home to take a shower and have

lunch at home. Those who study in the afternoon shift go to school at 1 pm and come back home at 5 pm. Besides the normal school hours, most students go to private tutoring sessions conducted by the teachers at their private premises. The students pay money on an hourly basis for the private tutoring sessions. Those are different from Japanese elementary and middle school students who have lunch at school and go to school from 8:40 am till 4 pm without returning home.

There are certain differences between my country and Japan; but it has not been very difficult for me to adapt to my life here. Japanese are very kind and helpful. Many Japanese friends and host families have showed and explained to me many things about Japanese culture and they have also taken me to different places. I am a foreigner living in Japan, but I feel at home here thanks to all the warm-hearted people who live in this wonderful country.