The morning rush hour traffic of motorcycles, cycles and Japanese Sedans with horns blaring shows the country's on the road to recovery, the economy is booming once again. Phnom Penh, with its flourishing tourism industry surprisingly does not have a commercial taxi service , I get on a locally made transport that is run by an old Honda 50 cc with an attachment like a horse carriage on its back, sits 6 people easy, a locally made Tuk Tuk and it's a pleasant drive up four blocks on Monivong street. The buildings are mostly all old French architecture with some being pulled down for high rise skyscrapers, the French presence is everywhere, signboards written in Cambodge and French , very interesting. I find the office and head into the meeting with Mahtini, an Indian lady who is in Phnom Penh with her husband who works in an Indian pharmaceutical company. My first request to her is to change my hotel immediately, I beg her to get me out of Holiday Villa. She is surprised, she says to me "Oh so sorry Mr. Farhan, we thought you are a Muslim so we selected a Muslim hotel with *halal* food and a mosque nearby". Speechless I ask her to get her staff on the phones to find me a good hotel. We start on our meeting with the Managing Director of the company and he looks content with the huge traffic he gets from Malaysia, China, Thailand and Korea, not to mention the French and the Americans, he is surprised to learn from me that Bangladeshis are adventurous tourists and the growth for outbound tours is steadily rising.



In between the early morning meeting, I ask Mahtani to check with the hotel issue. Phnom Penh has a decent share of hotels within the small city limits, good dozen or so properties are operating and new hotels are sprouting up as tourism goes into high gear. After a good one hour search, not a single room comes up available, much to my disappointment. Mahtani and I hit the road after the meeting to inspect the top hotels in the city. Mahtani is an excellent guide and having stayed in Phnom Penh for over two years she has the city map drawn on her palm. She explains to me that Phnom Penh is a small city with a handful of major thoroughfares ; getting lost in this city is a difficult task. We cruise down the open boulevards of the main city and I am in love with the sheer beauty of the palaces, pagodas, monuments and the greenery of this town. Our first stop is the Phnom Penh Hotel, an old and lovely property that has been renovated, five star all the way (checked if they had rooms Nada ). The Royal Raffles is a class affair and the most prestigious in town along with the Intercontinental , the location is great and the property is pristine, no rooms available again. I am like a typical tourist , looking out of the window and documenting everything I see, the pretty streets lined by trees, flourishing construction business , with new investments from Korea, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Phnom Penh is becoming a happening city.

We turn on the road leading to the heavily fortified US Embassy and just opposite the Embassy separated by an immaculate trimmed garden space is the Sunway Hotel, another great looking property, I am thinking with all these hotels in the city, I have to go back to my two bedroom nightmare? More hotel spotting and this time Saron drives us to the famous riverfront area . The drive takes us through some of the city's prettiest avenues and boulevards, beautiful roundabouts with statues and pristine gardens and playgrounds; we pass by the Royal Palace which is a gorgeous monument from the Khmer dynasty and very close to the waterfront.

Our next stop , The Hotel Cambodiana with its back to the Ton Le Sap River is beautiful, one of the oldest hotels in Cambodia , the Cambodiana has maintained her self well, graceful and elegant are the words that come to mind. No use asking for rooms, already tried ! We drive down to the main waterfront area where some of the best hotels, bars, cafes are located, Sisowath Quay used to be a potholed dusty road only a few years ago says Saron to Mahtani and I but now has been transformed into a world class promenade, with the gentle river on the one side and renovated old buildings turned into restaurants, cafes, bistros and small boutique Inns on the other . A big tourist hangout , here you will see people sitting outside cafes sipping on drinks, enjoying lunch and the breeze from the river, this is where you want to be actually. We decide to stop by the famous landmark in the promenade, the FCC (Foreign Correspondent Club) which opened its doors in 1993 , tastefully decorated in the old French colonial architecture, this plush club