

Rest and relaxation along the Mekong

Before heading out of Laos and on to Cambodia I decided to devote a little time to the river I had been more or less following since Jinghong in southern China, the Mekong. My first stop on the banks of the Mekong was the town of Champasak. The town is most famous for the nearby Angkor period site of Wat Phou. While its no Angkor Wat its an enjoyable place to spend a couple hours. The town itself is nice as well, if a little sleepy and quiet, especially after I had just come from the *Pee Mai* celebrations in Pakse. Champasak isn't a big place its more or less confined to a single road which runs along the Mekong. The riverside of the road is home to handful of guesthouses all of them "same, same, but different" as they say around here, with restaurants overlooking the Mekong. Despite the fact that the town seemed fairly quite I managed to get invited to several *Pee Mai* parties, at least one per day. The holiday never seems to end. Included in those parties was a 3 hour session of Thai

karaoke with one of the guys that worked at my guesthouse and his friends, the same 2 songs for three hours. By the end of the session I at least had the chorus down pretty well.

After two and a half days in Champasak, I moved on to the "Backpacker resort" of Don Det one of many islands near the boarder with Cambodia. So many islands in tact the area is call *See Phan Don*, in English, four thousand islands. Budget travelers are drawn here by the chance to waste away the days in a place where a mere \$2 a night gets you a bungalow and hammock overlooking a very pretty section of the Mekong. The other "attractions" include waterfalls along the Mekong, it's this stretch rapids and falls which prevents navigation all the way from Laos to the delta. But Don Det is essentially a place to



Ferry crossing the Mekong to Champasak.



Wat Phou.



Gril at Wat Phou, (if you make a wish and are able to pick up the rock the wish is supposed to come true). So hit the weight room if you want good fortune.



Offerings in incense sticks for sale at Wat Phou.

relax. Of course it would have been a little easier if it was little cooler at night. It's the hot season in Southeast Asia, which means very hot. On Don Det there is limited electricity so the bungalows are without fans. The first night I lay awake just sweating. The next two nights I took sleeping pills which made the dead still hot and humid night pass much easier. The days were not as bad since there was often at least some breeze coming off the Mekong. I probably would have stayed longer if I just had a fan but after three nights of sweat it was time to head to the boarder.



Stone carved lentil at Wat Phou.



Colonial era house, Champasak.



Washing in the Mekong, Don Det.



The Mekong near Don Det.



Relaxing in the hammock in Don Det, 4000 islands.



I ran into yet another Pee Mai party outside of a temple on Don Det. The man on the right is holding a jug of banana infused Lao Lao which was actually pretty good while the guy on the left played a mouth organ accompaniment of two others who played drums and a guitar.



Monks on the Mekong, Don Det.



Man getting a “good luck” water blessing from monks, Don Det.



A water buffalo that got tangled up with the laundry, Don Det.