

## YOU SAY ANGKOR WAT... I SAY ANGKOR PUTT!

"People in town don't understand", says Mr Tee. He holds his arms out wide, looks around at his workplace, and laughs. "They think I'm crazy!" He laughs again - a short, sharp rat-a-tat - and shakes his head ruefully. Crazy? Maybe. What is certain, though, is that this wiry, smiley man has created something not seen anywhere else in Cambodia.

At first glance, there is nothing particularly special about the setting. My girlfriend and I are sitting with Mr Tee at a blue plastic table, battling the early afternoon sun with a few cold cans of Coke and some very welcome shade. Around us is a token South East Asian mix of children and animals - Mr Tee's kids and pets - while beyond the fence behind us a parade of motorbikes, tuk-tuks and cars kick up dust on the incredibly bumpy road into Siem Reap. In other words, the scene is a fairly standard one in these parts.

It is only when we scrape back our chairs, leave the shade and venture out into the glaring sun that we can see why there is nothing ordinary about Mr Tee's business. Stretching out in every direction are beautiful temples. Immaculately detailed, they gleam in the sun, while dragonflies collide overhead. "I did a lot of the building myself", he tells me proudly. "The contractors didn't understand what I wanted so I did most of the work". I am impressed. Not everyone can boast about personally building a dozen temples, even in this wat-strewn country.

Nearby a cat is sprawled over one of the temples, covering nearly all of the roof. I walk over and crouch down to get a better look. The temples, I perhaps should have mentioned, are just two feet tall and made of plastic. Welcome to Angkor Wat Putt, "the only crazy golf course in Cambodia!" It's a bizarre place. The novelty temples, the fluorescent golf balls, the immaculate, wacky courses - it all feels completely alien here. "Most people in town don't even know what crazy golf it". Indeed, even Mr Tee was unaware of the game until recently, when a tourist brought it up in passing. His interest was piqued and he began doing some research. How did he do that in a country with no crazy golf courses? "YouTube and internet games", he says, and smiles at how ridiculous that sounds. Inspired, he quit his job as a taxi driver-cum-tour guide and got to work.

A couple of years have since passed and the course has been built and is in good shape. On most holes there is a beautifully detailed temple (based on those at Angkor) that you must putt your ball around or through - a tiny Ta Phrohms here, a miniature Elephant Terrace there. It's good, old-fashioned, simple fun, and my girlfriend and I spent a very enjoyable couple of hours or so making our way through the course.

For now, though, the course is something of a hidden gem. "I don't have enough money to make posters", Mr Tee says, "I should have done it when we first opened but now we need the money for other things". Because of this the course is not advertised anywhere in the city, and the place is still under the radar. On the afternoon we visited we saw just two other groups. It's a perfect antidote for those who are "temped out" by the crowds and size of the real thing. There are no tour buses or hawkers here.

When we leave we thank Mr Tee and tell him that he should be very proud of what he has achieved. He tells us immediately that he is not done yet. His dream is to save enough money to buy either the land Angkor Wat Putt is built on (he currently rents it) or a completely new plot, to which he could move the course. Then, he says, he will be able to develop the site even further, making it bigger and better. If helping towards this goal doesn't tempt you down for a couple of rounds, then Mr Tee's very generous free-beer-for-every-hole-in-one certainly will!

Angkor Wat Putt is located on the left hand side of Angkor High School Road (7 Makara Road), about 2.5km east of central Siem Reap. If you ring them (012302330) they can arrange for a \$2 tuk-tuk to take you from your accommodation and back again. See [www.angkorwattputt.com](http://www.angkorwattputt.com) for more info.



By Joey Millar