

## Cambodia April 28<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>

I had a week of holiday for the labor day in China. Because it's national holiday, all flights were getting more expensive day by day. So I was searching somewhere I can go still in a budget. I was surprised that Cambodia Angkor Air still have cheap direct flights between Beijing and Phnom Penh. I booked it immediately which is a mistake. I read Cheryl Antunucci's trip report, so I was only really just looking for the yellow cheeked gibbon and the pileated gibbon. I choosed the gibbon project in Mondulkiri instead of the one Cheryl visited in Veun Sai- Siem Pang because after reading the reviews on tripadvisor, I feel like they had a better success rate especially because May is already the rainy season which is not good for gibbon spotting. I booked a 3 day trip because I want to maximize my chance. Two weeks later, my flight got cancelled so I have to book another flight transfer in Shenzhen and arriving at Phnom Penh at 6pm instead of 8am. As the gibbon trip cannot be refunded or changed. I booked a private transfer from Cambo Taxi arriving Mondulkiri in the midnight.

One day before the trip, there was a huge storm coming in Beijing that got lots of flights cancelled and postponed. I was really worried that I may not make it. But everything went smoothly. I arrived at Phnom Penh on time. And the driver picked me up at the ATM outside the airport. It was a 7 hour drive. So I arrived at Mondulkiri at 1:30 am. I tried to get a room at this hour. But cannot find a hotel that is still open. So I stay with the driver in the car for 3 hours of sleep. And it rained heavily during the night. I truly lost my hope to see the gibbon that day.

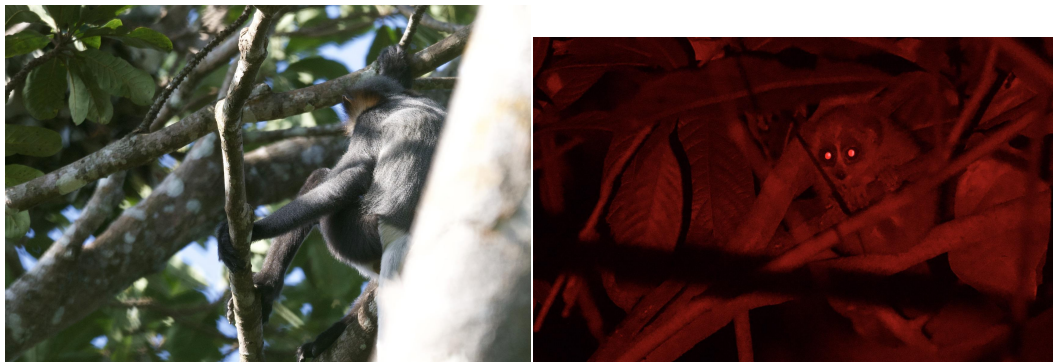


The gibbon tour start at 4:30 am, Kelly from the gibbon camp picked me up on time. It was about half an hour drive to the camp at the edge of a local village. The gibbon trek started right away. Basically, everyday people walk for about 20 minutes to an area at about 5:30am waiting for the gibbon to sing. Two rangers and Kelly accompany the guest to see the gibbon everyday. When we were just waiting for about 5 minutes, the gibbon started to sing. It was truly a magical moment. However, locating the gibbon still requires more effort. So we were always off trail and trying to see the gibbon in the opening. There is only one group that is habituated, so all the guest will see the same group. During the trek we also saw a pit viper, some long tailed macaque and a red giant squirrel which was a very nice surprise. Around 7:30am, we started to walk back to the camp. This is the general schedule

that guest will need to go back and have breakfast even if you are still with the gibbon. On the way back, we had a fleeting view of a monkey that Kelly says it's a black shanked douc langur because of the white tail.

After breakfast, me and two other guides started the day hike to a water fall. The walking is easy although long, no off trail trek. It was two hours hike one way and rest in front of the waterfall. The guides will started a fire and cook some really delicious food in bamboo. The hike was very nice although we didn't see any mammal. There are geckos, lantern bugs, lots of butterflies and a baby cobra.

At night we started our first night trek. I didn't expect anything because my only expectations are the gibbons. The night walk started with the usual lizard, and some insects. But suddenly, the guide says "a loris". Which excited me so much because lorises especially pygmy lorises are my favorite animals (not one of). They only allow red torch for mammals, so it was difficult to see and photograph the animal. The loris wasn't really bothered by us, as it is not very close and it is a baby. It did not react to our presence at all. It was so exciting that I saw the loris here. Later I found out that they are not uncommon here. We continued the night trek for an hour, and only saw a civet that quickly runs away. Nobody knows which species it was as it was quickly gone and we didn't see color because of the red filter on the torch. On the way back, we saw the loris again at the same spot. Yay!



Black shanked douc / pygmy loris

The second day is pretty much the same except the day hike is through local farm to reach a different waterfall. That hike is really really hot. Only saw a pig tailed macaque. Although this route is said to be better for birds. We didn't really see much, maybe it is the wrong season or it's just too hot. And at night, we find another pygmy loris not so far away from the one on the first day. But this time it was an adult.

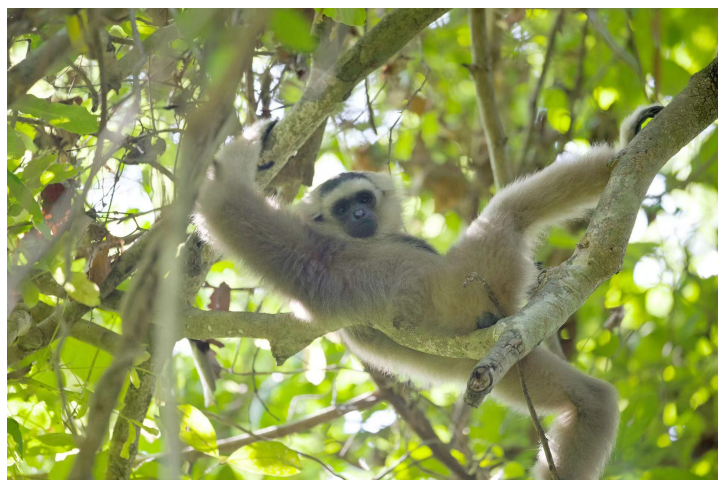


Red Giant Flying Squirrel / Pygmy loris

The third day starts also with the gibbon trek. We followed the gibbon for an hour and watched them play with only their feet hanging on the branches. The day hike was to another part of the forest that is better for the red shanked douc. We did see them very far away in the top of a tree, from the little opening of the lower trees. All the black shanked douc are very skittish here. I would still need to travel to Vietnam to see them. After the hike, Kelly drove me back to Mondulkiri to my hotel.

Overall, the gibbon camp exceeded my expectations. The walking is much more easier comparing to other places that I went to see gibbons. Not a lot of up and downs. But I would suggest to not come here during the rainy season because of the swarms of mosquitos and termites at night. As for the success rate, Kelly told me that there is only one occasion that guests did not see the gibbon because they arrived late and they only had one day, and their walkie-talkie was not working so they cannot contact the ranger that was already with the gibbons.

The next day, I took the 11 hour bus from Mondulkiri to Siem Reap. There were multiple stops for bathroom break and getting cold drinks.



Pileated gibbon

I have only one and a half day here. And I have already visited Angkor Wat before. So my whole purpose here was to see the pileated gibbon. I contacted the Cambodia bird guide

association to book the tour. Only when I already with them, they told me I was the first one to ask to see the gibbons. Although they see them sometimes, they don't really know their routine and how to find them. We waited at the ghost gate for the whole morning and walked around. We didn't hear or see anything other than a variable squirrel. In the afternoon, my guide Srun take me to see two caged gibbons that are waiting to be released. We hanged around that area for a bit because sometimes the other already released gibbon come and see them. Which was how we saw the gibbons. There were 4 Pileated gibbons outside. One male, two females and a juvenile one. We watched them for some time and they started singing in the afternoon. It is wonderful to hear but also very weird because I never knew they also vocalize in the afternoon.

The next day, we go directly to the cage again. The person in charge of that says it is not allowed to come and see the gibbons and his supervisor will visit this morning as well. So we only watched the gibbon for a short period of time and left . We ended the tour early but I'm very pleased with the results.

Mammal list:

Southern Yellow Cheeked Gibbon

Pileated Gibbon

Pygmy Slow Loris

Pig Tailed Macaque

Long Tailed Macaque

Black Shanked Douc

Grey Bellied Squirrel

Variable Squirrel

Red Giant Flying Squirrel

Black Giant Squirrel

Gibbon camp at Mondulkiri: <https://gibbon.life/visit-us/>

Cheryl's

trip

report:

<https://www.mammalwatching.com/2019/01/14/new-trip-report-cambodia/>

More photo:



