

Monday March 30th, 2025.

Temple Day : Outer gopuras of Banteay K'Dei.

Banteay K'Dei is a large temple and part of the mini circuit here in Siem Reap. It was built by Jayavarman VII, the King who built so many of the temples in the Park.

Banteay KDei means Citadel of Chambers (or Monks cells). It was built in 1181. It lies corner to corner with Ta Promh.

It has two walls surrounding a range of inner buildings (including the cells of the monks). The outer wall has four gopuras. Today, we visited all four gopuras.

The west gopura has been shut off due to restoration works. Some of those works are easily seen and some are from earlier attempts to repair them. Banteay KDei was built of poor quality sandstone which hastened its fall into ruins.

In this photo of the west gopura, you can see where concrete was simply put between the stone tiles of the roof covering the small rooms either side of the gateway.





Some obvious repairs on this devapala.



Here you can see replaced blocks. You can also see part of Jayavarmin's face, what is left of the four images in the tower of the gate.

It is hard to be critical of repairs which stabilise and preserve these buildings, because anything is better than losing them completely. Yet, I can't help but think there are better ways to do these repairs.

The north gopura opens onto the tourist road (opposite a range of cafes). It has no facility for parking. I have only ever seen the green garden maintenance workers and their bikes here (and us!).



There are Garudas each side of the gateway. This one is still impressive, even when missing his head.



Here you can see the gopura, the Garuda and the faces of the King in the tower over the actual walkway. These are made of sandstone. The wall around the complex is made of laterite.



This is the east gopura, the main entrance to the temple. This lies directly opposite the Srah Srang (the King's swimming pool). Most tourists enter Banteay KDei through this gate.



Although there is some wearing away of the sandstone, this gopura is in much better condition than the west gopura.

To get to the south gopura, you ride over a ditch (via a bridge) and along a bike path, which then becomes a single dirt path winding its way along the outer wall of the temple. The south gopura almost feels like it is in the jungle.



Impressive carvings and repairs.



You can see the carved feathers of this Garuda. He is holding the tails of the Naga and his lion's feet are holding the bodies of the (7 headed) Nagas.

Quite surprisingly, there were two other sets of tourists at this gate (both groups came by bicycle!).

While it was interesting to see the temples, I also found some caterpillars.



This one (above) reminds me of a monarch butterfly (but I can't trace this one).

And this one below is a Clipper butterfly (*harthenos Scylla apicalis*). Despite its threatening colours and obvious spikes (and prickly hairs) it is completely harmless (thanks for the ID Dani Jump).



