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A video grab of the promotion has cyclists exploring the area. Supplied

A group of Siem Reap tourism-related businesses have banded together to overcome falling revenues by producing a YouTube video campaign to convince more tourists to stay longer in town.

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The campaign, simply called Stay Longer, is spearheaded by local business identity and cafe owner Adam Rodwell, who says the project is the work of seven Siem Reap businesses: The Little Red Fox Espresso, Jaya House Hotels, Treeline Urban Resort, George's Rhumerie, Phare Cambodian Circus, Wild Frontiers Travel and Mulberry Boutique Hotel.

“With all the negative feelings surrounding tourism numbers I worked with a number of businesses in town to produce a series of eight destination videos,” Rodwell said.

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“Two will be released per week, highlighting different aspects of Siem Reap such as dining, drinking, Tonle Sap exploration, Bakong Temple cycling, arts, relaxation, nightlife and performance, and shopping.”

The groundwork for the campaign started in 2019 when it became obvious tourist numbers needed boosting.

“The seven businesses involved all came together last year as a response to the falling numbers of tourists in Siem Reap,” Rodwell says. “We began to strategise on different ideas where we could bring the community together for the benefit of Siem Reap. I proposed a series of short videos themed around different elements of Siem Reap, which everyone ultimately supported and away we went.”

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“These videos are but a small step in highlighting just a taste of what Siem Reap can deliver with regards to experiences.”

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Rodwell adds that the group has received encouragement from the tourism ministry.

“A few of us have spoken to different sections of the Ministry of Tourism. Their response has been most encouraging,” he says.

“ I think the ministry, alongside the rest of us, are looking at the state of tourism, not just in Cambodia but Southeast Asia in general, and trying to do our best to adapt to the new reality. If we can instigate more community-engaged initiatives like this and work together, we will find ourselves in the best position possible to overcome the hardships that we are looking at for 2020.”

Naida Dizdarevic, regional manager of operations at Asia for Wild Frontiers Travel, says it’s vital that would-be tourists understand the full potential of a longer stay in Siem Reap.

“There are several factors as to why tourism is down in Siem Reap, but one of the main reasons is that people are not aware of what this town has available for them,” she said.

“Siem Reap became a destination because of its temples but, as incredible as they are,

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Cambodia, as a standalone destination.”

The campaign is a Siem Reap community-funded project, with creatives such as Rafael Winer, director of Film+Stills, who directed the filming.

“I shot at some 35 venues over three months with just myself and Adam Rodwell producing, handling logistics and scheduling,” Winer said.

“Films like this are made in the edit and the music proved to be a key element; all music is from the late 60s and early 70s with a tongue in cheek nod to old school sensibilities that went against the expectation of using traditional Khmer music or the latest club music,” he said.

He added: “The intention is to highlight the many things to do here and to entertain in a short, direct fashion. Hopefully, a second round of clips will be done soon, with other small businesses signing on to help people stay longer.”

An offshoot of the Stay Longer group, comprising of Grasshopper Adventures and Craig Dodge of Phare Circus, has also produced a video published on YouTube focused on businesses led by or directly benefiting Cambodians.

This group launched its video last week to a good response, according to Claire Wyatt, country manager for Grasshopper Adventures Cambodia.

“The feedback was very encouraging. People loved the video and businesses were very happy to have quality content they could use for their own marketing,” Wyatt said.

“We grabbed attention and built some momentum around the launch of the video and, as a result, our video has received more than 10,000 views across various platforms and accounts in less than a week, all of which happened organically,” she said.

