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Treeline Urban Resort joins forces with like-minded hotels to help combat the impact of COVID-19, donating more than 16,000 meals to struggling communities

SIEM REAP— A new community-based fundraising appeal to help Cambodians struggling to financially survive the COVID-19 pandemic has raised more than \$28,000 and donated more than 16,000 meals to vulnerable communities in Siem Reap, making a huge difference to those that have been hit hardest by the virus and the devastation it has caused to the city's tourism industry.

[Treeline Urban Resort](#) has joined forces with two other like-minded hotels – [Jaya House River Park](#) and [Mulberry Boutique Hotel](#) – as well as the [Cambodia Landmine Museum](#) to form the [Hotels Joining Hands](#) partnership. The group's central aim is to deliver more 400 nutritious meals a day in eco-friendly packaging to impoverished villages around the majestic Angkor temples, the Tonle Sap lake and rural communities on the fringes of the city for the coming months.

The initiative has already struck a cord with locals, expats, agents and guests abroad that have previously visited and fallen in love with this magical city, with almost \$30,000 received in donations and an astounding 16,000 meals delivered in just over four weeks.

Home to the incredible, ancient 12th century ruins of Angkor, there is no doubt that Siem Reap is the cultural heart of Cambodia. The spectacular temples have been Cambodia's biggest tourism drawcard for decades; last year, a whopping 2.2 million tickets into the Angkor Archaeological Park were sold to foreign tourists. A creative and exciting city blossomed over the last 10 years, with an array of diverse restaurants, cafés, cocktail bars, boutiques, design hotels and art galleries enticing travellers to stay even longer in Siem Reap.

With tourism numbers now obliterated, many of these enterprises have closed or been put to sleep until the pandemic subsides. Most worrying, however, are the thousands of Cambodians that hold up the country's tourism industry – from tuk-tuk and taxi drivers to chefs, waiters, temple guides, musicians and security guards. These are the people that have now, cruelly, been the hardest hit by COVID-19. A vast amount of Siem Reap workers have now lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

“This pandemic has shaken all corners of the globe, and we’re all reeling from the impacts of it. Many are struggling to pay mortgages, keep business afloat and keep kids entertained at home – all of our lifestyles have been dramatically altered,” says Treeline General Manager Joni Aker.

“But the truth is, while we are all trying to ride out the same storm, we’re not all in the same boat. Cambodia is still a lower-income country, and for many in our community it is now a struggle to simply survive, put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads.”

Teams from the three hotels are now whipping up nutritious meals in their kitchens and distributing these to some of the poorest communities that relied heavily on tourism, working with local authorities and commune chiefs to ensure those that need the most help receive it. These include the villages laced around the temple complex, those in Banteay Srei district, Phnom Krom and the Tonle Sap lake, as well as provincial hospitals, community clinics and NGOs that are now struggling for funding.

Ingredients are all sourced locally to ensure local suppliers benefit, while the Treeline Urban Resort team have created reusable, biodegradable banana leaf parcels to wrap the food parcels in. Hotel staff are weaving traditional woven baskets and mats for those in need and are donating second hand clothing. Some of the more remote villages have requested bags of rice rather than cooked meals, which is also being provided by Hotels Joining Hands.

“The close-knit Siem Reap community – so rich in local traditions and creativity – is really at the heart of our hotel. Our ultimate goal is helping our people, our community get through this difficult time,” says Aker.

“About 50% of Siem Reap province lives below the poverty line which is just 79 cents a day. Many of these people live day-to-day and they rely on the tourism industry to survive,” she adds.

“While we’re all doing it tough right now, just a small donation can go such a long way here and easily feed a family for a week. You can make such a huge difference just by forsaking a couple of coffees.”

Unlike many places in the world, Cambodia does not have any safety nets and no social support structure. Many people are facing an uncertain future. But you have the power to help. Hotel Joining Hands is a collaboration between Treeline Urban Resort, Jaya House River Park, Mulberry Boutique Hotel and the Cambodia Landmine Museum in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim to raise money and provide food and other necessities for the communities in Siem Reap that have lost their livelihoods. The initiative now has a fundraising goal of \$40,000, with 100% of funds going directly towards meal preparation and distribution. Learn more and donate here: <http://www.hotelsjoininghands.com>

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