

Pictures of the Week Series 2 - #15
A Tiny Island Near Sihanoukville, Cambodia



This tiny speck of an island doesn't have an actual name but locals generally refer to it as "Pagoda Island." It isn't even found on most maps, but to the thirteen tourists and four crew members of our stricken boat it was a life saver. We left the Cambodian coastal town of Sihanoukville at eight o'clock one morning, heading for Koh Rung, a large island two hours away by sea, northwest of the Cambodian coast. The ocean was in a fury from the start. Our boat was about twenty feet long, with a single level, open deck. She was an ancient Cambodian wooden beamed vessel that has surely seen some rough seas, and that day we all got a taste

of a large and dangerous sea. About an hour from the coast the ocean was at its worst. Our captain was highly skilled. Time and again he deftly turned bow-on to the mean, white-capped waves, which were easily six meters high. But the waves continued relentlessly from every direction and three times we were broad-sided, took on water and were almost swamped. Everyone clung on for dear life. And then...our boat's engine sputtered weakly, and smoke billowed from below. The crew scrambled for buckets and pots of water, passing them as quickly as possible to the crew member who'd gone inside the engine compartment. Commands were yelled in Khmer, which I didn't understand, but I *could* see and feel the fear. The waves continued to batter us from all sides. And that's where tiny Pagoda Island saved us. We were able to limp to that little island's lee side and anchor in the shallows there until a rescue boat was able to come and pick us up. So I've featured "Pagoda Island" in these two pictures of the week. The islands off the coast of Cambodia are paradise, as long as you can make it here. I wish you all a very merry Christmas wherever you are.

- Don Mammoser



Above - "Pagoda Island" (between the buildings) as seen from Koh Rung at sunrise.