



Vegan Sushi at Peace Cafe. Photo supplied

## Siem Reap becomes vegan-vegetarian eating destination

Fri, 9 September 2016 Kezia Parkins

In January 2014, a pair of devout vegans from Britain hit the road on a mission to "find, eat and write about the best vegan food in the world". They dubbed it Vegan Food Quest.

A year later, Caryl and Paul Eyers settled in Siem Reap, where they opened a vegan guesthouse. Since then, they say, there has been a noticeable increase of vegan and vegetarian restaurants, as well as vegan menu options, all over town.

"There is quite a vibe here in Siem Reap that really complements veganism," Caryl says. "I feel like this place is a little vegan hub."

Siem Reap is home to more than 300 NGOs, and attracts activists, volunteers, environmentalists and yoga-aficionados from all over the world. The growing expatriate population has brought new ideas – and new requirements – when it comes to dining.

It's something that's been a boon for the plant-based power couple, who are known around town for spearheading the vegan movement. Vegan Food Quest, their website, publishes vegan-dining destination guides for travellers; it's often described as the bible for conscious consumption in Southeast Asia. In Cambodia, they have guides for Battambang and Siem Reap, and they're working on one for the coast.

"When we left the UK, we were not sure what we were doing. We wanted to travel and write about being vegan, so we started the blog for fun," Paul says. "All of a sudden, we had a blossoming business."

Caryl and Paul are also regular contributors to award-winning travel site A Luxury Travel Blog, and often invited to lavish resorts to review and consult on menus.

"People all over the world contact us asking for tips," Paul says.



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Devout vegans: Caryl and Paul Eyers. Photo supplied

This week, the pair offered *Post Weekend* a few recommendations for Siem Reap.

**Cham Kar**

A charming 100 per cent vegetarian restaurant tucked into the backstreets of the Old Market, Cham Kar specialises in veggie takes on classic Khmer dishes, most of which are vegan. Vegan Food Quest highly recommends the warm, creamy coconut-and-peanut Wedding Day Dip.

**Haven**

Caryl and Paul’s go-to place to eat good food while supporting a great local cause is Haven, a training restaurant that supports vulnerable young people – either from orphanages or poor rural areas. The duo describe the food and service as “excellent” and say that the kitchen is very willing to make vegan adaptations to the menu. “We love the rosti with creamy mushroom and tofu but also the more traditional Khmer curries,” Paul says.

**Peace Cafe**

Peace Café is one of Caryl and Paul’s regular dinner spots. It is another 100 per cent veggie restaurant with a big menu of international cuisines, from brown rice vegan sushi to a selection of burgers and traditional Khmer curries. Peace Café also provides daily yoga classes, offers free Khmer lessons and is home to a trendy fair-trade shop.

**Sister Srey**

There are many reasons why this chic daytime café is one of Vegan Food Quest’s all-time favourites.

Located in a beautiful spot overlooking the river, Sister Srey is known for its delicious brunch, organic coffee and the friendliest staff in town. The vision is to support young Khmer students struggling to balance school and support for their families.

Each staff member is trained in hospitality, English-language skills, personal development, health and banking. The café, run by Australian sisters Lauren and Cassie Gravett, donates 20 per cent of profits to their foundation Hearts to Harmony.

Caryl and Paul’s most ordered item on the menu is the raw vegan passion fruit cheesecake.

**Veg G Table Café**

Where to find the tastiest vegan burger in town? Without hesitation, the couple reply: “Veg G Table”. A mixed vegetable and beetroot patty with pickles, homemade ketchup, caramelised onions and salad is served with a heap of sweet potato fries.

The French chef and owner, Goulven Lego (aka “G”), makes a point of providing big portions and weekly specials.

The menu of perfectly balanced but simple food is mainly vegetarian (most items can be veganised), barring a few options for the carnivorous.



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