

# Streetsmart - Siem Reap: Wat Bo Road & surrounds (South)

This month Streetsmart takes to Siem Reap. Instead of traipsing the busy Old Market area with its backpacker ridden Pub Street, **Liz Ledden** crosses the river to the town's Right Bank.

WAT BO ROAD AND ITS offshoots are home to a diverse and delicious array of restaurants along with some unique places to stay. The area has a greener, more village-like feel than the chaotic centre of town. Its relaxing cafés feel a million miles away from touristville. Wat Bo itself is a tranquil, beautiful temple to explore once you've eaten your way around the area.

■ **ALLIANCE CAFÉ & ART LODGE**

7 Makara Street Tel: 063 964 940  
Featuring French and Eurasian cuisine, Alliance Café is a stylish restaurant set in a large white, airy colonial building. The food is decidedly gourmet, with a mix of Khmer and imported ingredients forming dishes using frogs, snails, duck, red tuna and more. Most entrées average US\$10 while a main course will set you back around US\$15. Desserts (US\$4 to US\$5) include creations such as mint ice cream encased in profiteroles. The extensive wine menu befits a restaurant of this calibre. Smart décor and chic surrounds make Alliance Café one of the best upmarket venues in which to dine in Siem Reap. Curated by Sasha Constable, the Art Lodge at the back of the restaurant has exhibitions by Khmer and French artists. The restaurant's garden also features sculptures made from decommissioned weapons.

■ **LES ORIENTALISTES**

613 Wat Bo Road Tel: 012 894 207, [www.orientalistes.com](http://www.orientalistes.com)  
Quirky, colourful Les Orientalistes is a three-year-old French-run restaurant set in a Khmer wooden house, with some accommodation also available from US\$40 a night. The menu features French dishes from grilled meats to coquilles saint jacques (US\$9) and duck breast (US\$10), to a tajine menu ranging from US\$6 to US\$8. There are



**Singing Tree** Meditate in the relaxing gardens



**Alliance Cafe** A sophisticated restaurant with art to boot

also Thai and Khmer influenced salads and curries (average US\$5). Most of the restaurant's tables are covered, with a new patio out the front providing another option.

■ **SINGING TREE CAFÉ & COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Off Wat Bo Road Tel: 092 635 500, [www.singingtreecafe.com](http://www.singingtreecafe.com)  
An oasis of serenity, Singing Tree Café is located in a spacious and lush green garden. The community centre hosts a multitude of events. Yoga classes, movie nights and 'monk chats' introducing Buddhism take place here

most evenings. The healthy, predominantly vegetarian menu – there are some fish dishes – features Khmer dishes (under US\$3), yoghurt shakes, focaccia, salads and 'fusion rolls' based on sushi. For those with a sweeter tooth, there are also chocolate brownies. A small handicraft shop contains a nice range of basketware made of woven water hyacinth, citronella based mosquito repellent and other made-in-Cambodia products. With free wi-fi, Singing Tree is also a good source of information on Siem Reap based activities and volunteer opportunities.

■ **BUTTERFLIES GARDEN RESTAURANT**

535 Wat Bo Road Tel: 063 761 211, [www.butterfliesofangkor.com](http://www.butterfliesofangkor.com)  
A peaceful and relaxing café with a good cause at its core, what makes Butterflies Garden Restaurant stand out is the collection of around 1,500 butterflies found flitting around the garden. These are purchased from local village children, supported by the café through food donations and literacy programmes. Along with lush plants and myriad butterflies, the café features a menu of tasty meals and drinks inspired by the tropics, fusing Khmer and western ingredients, with mains from US\$6 to US\$9. There's also breakfast, snacks and café fare at reasonable prices. A small shop on the premises has products featuring butterfly motifs such as embroidered Afghan shawls, along with Cambodian souvenirs including textile items from Ratanakiri province that aim to support disadvantaged communities. It is open from 8am to 10pm.

■ **VIROTH'S HOTEL**

Off Wat Bo Road Tel: 016 951 800, [www.viroth-hotel.com](http://www.viroth-hotel.com)  
Contemporary, sophisticated, chic and boutique Viroth's Hotel is a beautifully designed establishment reflecting the 'New Khmer' architecture style of the 1960s. Managed by Fabien of Viroth's Restaurant, the hotel opened in April 2007. It has seven tastefully decked out rooms combining modern furniture and décor with some Khmer accessories. The rooms cost US\$60 a night in the low season, climbing to US\$60 to US\$80 in the high season. The hotel also features a blue mosaic tiled swimming pool, a rooftop spa area, open air rooftop Jacuzzi and a stylish bar and restaurant featuring Khmer cuisine.





**Paris Saigon** Vietnamese and French cuisines collide

**La Residence** A cool, serene pool and setting

**D'WAU RESTAURANT**

*Wat Bo Road Tel: 063 966 955*  
Specialising in Malaysian cuisine d'Wau Restaurant opened in mid-2007. A 100 percent halal establishment with a Malaysian chef, it features dishes such as nasi lemak, coconut rice with chicken or beef, (US\$3.50), laksa Penang (US\$3) and five chicken satay sticks with rice and accompaniments (US\$3). In typical Siem Reap style an extensive range of Cambodian dishes are also available, though why anyone would visit an authentic Malaysian eatery for the ubiquitous amok or lok lak is a mystery. The restaurant is open from 10am to midnight each day.

**LE CAFÉ & FRENCH CULTURAL CENTRE**

*Off Wat Bo Road Tel: 092 271 392*  
Run by students from Siem Reap's Paul Dubrule hotel and

tourism school, Le Café adjoins the town's French Cultural Centre. Set in a small garden, an open air hut covers the café's counter, where pastries and desserts made by the school's students are enticingly displayed. These include lemon tarts and brownies (US\$1 to US\$1.50). The coffees average US\$1, while a tempting selection of French influenced salads are from US\$2.50 to US\$3.50. Sandwiches are US\$3 while the plat du jour and quiche du jour are US\$3 each. Along with friendly efficient service, Le Café is a relaxing hideaway in which to enjoy a snack or coffee off the beaten track. The adjoining French Cultural Centre features art exhibits and has movie screenings in French.

**WAT BO**

*Off Wat Bo Road, behind Viroth's Restaurant*

Reputed to be one of the oldest temples in Siem Reap – outside of the Angkor complex – Wat Bo dates back to the 18th century. A tranquil place to wander around, large frangipani trees, gravestones and stupas dot the spacious temple surrounds. The temple itself, though not always open, has interesting wall paintings inside. Ask a monk or student in the grounds to open the doors if closed. Invariably devoid of westerners, Wat Bo is a respite from the increasingly busy pace of Siem Reap, ideal if looking for some peace and quiet.

**VIROTH'S RESTAURANT**

*246 Wat Bo Street Tel: 016 951 800*  
One of the more popular Khmer restaurants in town, Viroth's is becoming frequented by a growing number of tour groups. Stylish and contemporary, the restaurant has a more appealing aesthetic than many other Khmer restaurants. Best seen

when lit up at night, the restaurant has covered seating on a wooden platform or in the garden. Tables are partitioned with elegant hanging fabric dividers. All the usual Khmer favourites can be found here (amok et al.) at around US\$4 to US\$6 per dish, though with refined presentation and gourmet flair less easy to unearth elsewhere in town.

**PARIS SAIGON**

*Off Wat Bo Road Tel: 063 965 408*  
A recent addition to the Wat Bo area dining scene, Paris Saigon opened its doors in March 2007. The name reflects the owner's French origins and his wife's Vietnamese heritage. The food has the same cultural blend, with Vietnamese dishes such as pho bo (beef noodle soup) served up alongside hearty French fare. The French meals, such as grilled meats are between US\$7 and US\$11.50, while the Vietnamese

**With an Art Nouveau interior, LE MALRAUX offers French food and wine.**

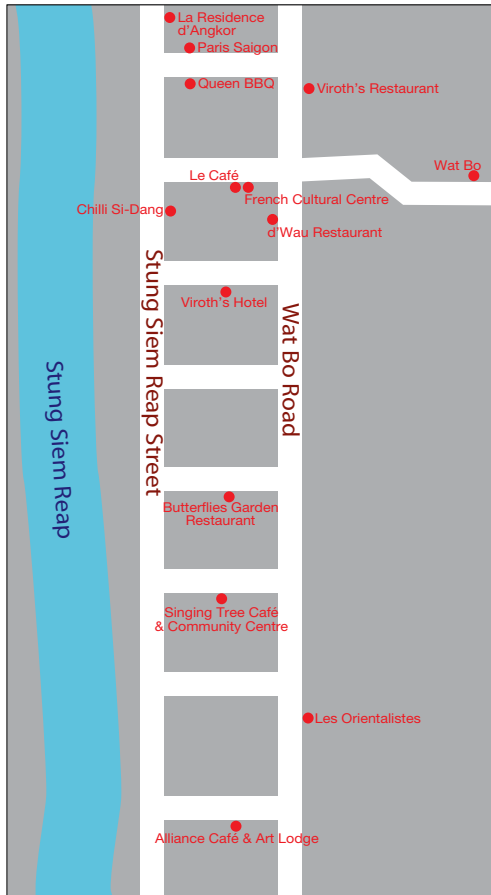
**Home made ice-cream and desserts are also our specialties.**

info@le-malraux-siem-reap.com  
www.le-malraux-siem-reap.com

155 Svutha, Siem Reap

VISA





**Viroth's boutique hotel** *New Khmer architecture meets contemporary style*

dishes average US\$7.50. Desserts range from US\$3 to US\$4.50. The restaurant itself is air-conditioned, small and cosy with bottles of wine lining the back wall creating the feel of a convivial French bistro.

■ **QUEEN BBQ**

*Off Wat Bo Road  
(across from Paris Saigon)*

'All you can eat' is always a tempting prospect, but when it only costs US\$3 per person it's even harder to resist. Formally known as King BBQ, this restaurant is full of local families enjoying a raucous meal. Customers cook their own food on the round charcoal burner in the centre of the table. The outdoor beer garden is the most atmospheric place in which to cook and eat. The restaurant is open from 5pm to 10pm.

■ **LA RESIDENCE D'ANGKOR**

*Stung Siem Reap Street,  
Tel: 063 963 390,  
[www.residencedangkor.com](http://www.residencedangkor.com)*

A beautiful five-star hotel offering a relaxed and discreet atmosphere, La Residence is a sophisticated retreat. The hotel is all dark wood with lush inner grounds featuring a large pool that blends into the surrounds – think dark green instead of aqua blue. The pool also has a few interesting Angkor inspired offshoots including a small area to rest in. The 55 rooms use a blend of wood and stylish Khmer fabrics to create a chic look reminiscent of an upmarket, tropical Asian spa, while the bathrooms are spacious with large tubs. The bar is a perfect place for a pre-dinner cocktail, perched over the pool and gardens in a breezy, all wood pavilion. Rooms are from US\$205 a night.

■ **CHILLI SI-DANG**

*Stung Siem Reap Street  
Tel: 012 723 488*

Set beside the river Chilli Si-Dang is a wine bar with a difference. Along with a good selection of wines with an antipodean bent is an excellent Thai food menu, whipped up by its Thai chef. You can sit around the bar on the ground floor, or in the upstairs restaurant area overlooking the river. 📍

**ANGELINA'S**

**ESPRESSO BAR**

ORIGINALLY BLENDED COFFEE  
**"MEKONG SYMPHONY"**  
FINE ART EXHIBITIONS AND FRIENDLY SPIRIT  
WEST SIDE OF OLD MARKET IN SIEM REAP  
SIMPLY THE BEST - GO TO THE WEST!



**Wat Bo** *A tranquil temple to explore*