

CAMBODIA



CAMBODIA - THE COUNTRY

FAST FACTS



Cambodia boasts a rich culture with its many ancient temples and impressive natural scenery. These include, empty beaches, mighty rivers and remote forests. Nevertheless, the temples of Angkor literally rise out of the jungle and are a magnet for visitors to Cambodia.

Angkor Wat is the largest and most famous of the temples, visitors can quite easily spend a week exploring the hundreds of other exquisite structures. Phnom Penh is a bustling city, often overshadowed by glamorous Angkor. It is a city of contrasts with fine colonial architecture side by side with ramshackle street. Elsewhere, few visitors take the time to discover the hill tribes around Banlung (Ratanakiri province), the unspoiled countryside around sleepy Sen Monorom (Mondolkiri province) and the charming riverside town of Battambang with its faded colonial architecture. Those looking for relaxation make their way to Sihanoukville with its lovely sandy beaches and laid-back lifestyle. With the road network little by little improving, so much more of this delightful country is opening up to visitors who take the time to discover Cambodia beyond the temples.

HIGHLIGHTS

Cambodia boasts a rich culture with its many ancient temples and impressive natural scenery. These include, empty beaches, mighty rivers and remote forests. Nevertheless, the temples of Angkor literally rise out of the jungle and are a magnet for visitors...



SIEM REAP

literally means the “Defeat of Siam”, is the most prosperous region of contemporary Cambodia. Its close proximity to the Angkor Wat temple complex has turned the city into one of the world’s premier travel destinations. More than one million travellers visit Siem Reap every year to explore over a thousand years of Khmer heritage built near Tonle Sap Lake, the foundation of the economic power of the ancient Cambodian empire.

Siem Reap is nestled between rice paddies and stretched along the Siem Reap river; this small provincial capital serves as the gateway to the millennium-old temple ruins of the Khmer empire. The town is where you will stay during your visit to Angkor; it is actually a cluster of old villages which originally developed around individual pagodas. Nowadays, Siem Reap offers a wide range of hotels, restaurants, pubs and shops including several upscale hotels and numerous of budget guesthouses. Often missed are the opportunities to experience traditional “apsara” dance performances, craft shops and silk farms. Road tours are available through rice paddies in the countryside; boat trips on Tonle Sap lake to fishing villages and trips to nearby bird sanctuaries.

Angkor Archaeological Park

The Angkor Archaeological Park designated a World heritage Site by UNESCO, is the spiritual heart and identity of the Khmer people. It encompasses dozens of temple ruins including Bayon, Banteay Srey and legendary Angkor Wat whose artistic and archeological significance and visual impact is on par with the pyramids of Egypt. Temples of Angkor were built between the 7th and

12th centuries when Khmer civilization was at its height in extraordinary creativity. It is still the cultural home of the Khmer people and one of the ancient Wonders of the World.

Its magnificent architecture reveals the Khmer's strong belief in Hinduism and Buddhism. Unlike many other world-class monuments, the ruins of Angkor are unspoiled by over-development. This may not be true in a couple of years. Without witnessing them first hand, it is impossible to gauge the enormity of task faced by the builders of the time. The fact the structures at Angkor are so complete after all this time is a further testament to the advanced construction techniques employed more than a millennium ago.

Most people recommend visiting these sites several times to appreciate their grandeur. Angkor Wat is best visited in the afternoon when the sun sets highlighting the west-facing main gate. Many tourists also come just before dawn to see the first light bounce off the magnificent temple when the sun emerges above the horizon. Those who have seen it in the moonlight say it is a magical experience, but tight security has since been imposed to prevent looting and tourists are now allowed to stay after dark. To visit the park, two circuits are proposed: the Small Circuit takes you in several of the major and minor temples in the area. It begins at Angkor Wat and runs 17km (11 miles) taking you to the major elements of Angkor Thom, Ta Prohm, and Banteay Kdei, and some of the minor but interesting temples such as Baphoun, the Terrace of the Leper King, the Terrace of the Elephants, the Twelve Prasats, Spean Thma and Sras Srang. The Grand Circuit is a 26km (16mile) tour recommended for anyone spending three or more days in the complex. This circuit includes the sites of the former but extends into other appealing monuments such as Preah Khan, Preah Neak Pean, Ta Som and Preah Rup. The Grand Circuit encompasses a good presentation of the rich variety of architecture found in Angkor.

Phom Bakheng Temple: The temple is located on a hill serving as the first city of Angkor long ago. The capital offers panoramic views of Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom and the surrounding areas. It is best visited in the late afternoon for a spectacular sunset or in the early morning for sunrise over Angkor Wat.

Banteay Srei Temple: The temple stands apart for the quality of its construction and decoration. Its pink sandstone walls are decorated with what some consider the best carving in its amazing state of preservation. Built in 967 and dedicated to Brahma, it is located 25km (16 miles) north of Angkor Wat.

Phnom Kulen Site: This site is widely regarded as the birthplace of the ancient Khmer Empire. This hilltop site has the country's largest reclining Buddha. Access to Phnom Kulen can be challenging especially during the rainy season. If you are able to reach the site, make sure you see the stunning river of 100 lingas where over a thousand small carvings are etched into the sandstone riverbed. Further downstream, larger blocks of stone are carved with apsaras, Vishnu, and other figures. All the sandstone used in the construction of Angkor was quarried here.

The Roluos Group: A grouping of temples and capital of Indravarman in (877 – 889), the Roluos Group was first built and made of brick with carved plaster reliefs. The group is made up of the tree temples of Preah Ko, Bakong and Lolei. Many of the later temples in Angkor are based on these earlier structures.

Angkor Thom: The temple was built by Cambodia's great builder, Jayavarman VII. This 10kmsq city is enclosed by an eight meter high wall and encircled by a 100m moat said to have been inhabited by fierce crocodiles. There are five 20m gates located along the city's walls. The moat is flanked with statues of 54 gods on the left and 54 devils on the right, all seemingly engaged in a game of war.

The Bayon Temple: Located in the heart of Angkor Thom, the Bayon Temple is a 54 tower temple that initially seems to be a shapeless mass of gray and brown stone, but as one approaches the structure, the towers are in fact carved with more than 200 huge, enigmatic faces of Avalokiteshvara bearing down on you wherever you turn. Bayon is easily the most popular site after Angkor Wat itself.

The Ta Prohm Monastery: The monastery was built in the late 12th century; it is unforgettable due to the massive trees with thick roots that entangle the walls. They were left here intentionally by the archaeologists working on the site. While clearing back the forest, it was decided to leave them in place to serve as a reminder of how the original discoverers found it and other temples. Many of the trees have grown around and through the walls.

BATTAMBANG

is the main hub of the Northwest connecting the entire region with Phnom Penh and Thailand, and as such it is a vital link for Cambodia. Battambang city is a peaceful and pleasant place these days.

Battambang is Cambodia's second largest city. It is an elegant riverside town, home to some of the best preserved colonial architecture in the country. Battambang was once not listed on the map for road travellers, but facilities have improved and it makes a great base for visiting nearby temples and villages.

KRATIE

located on the east bank of the Mekong River, Kratie attracts a fair share of visitors, many of whom wish to catch a glimpse of the last few Irrawaddy Dolphins left in the world. The town of Kratie offers an authentic rural ambience, and therefore serves as the perfect place to spend a peaceful night or two. It is a nice relief from some of the country's more trafficked areas.

PHNOM PENH

Phnom Penh is the commercial, political and cultural hub of the Kingdom and is home to over one million of the country's estimated 11.4 million people. The city offers several cultural and historical attractions including the Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda and the National Museum.

This modern capital is a vibrant, bustling city nestled majestically on the banks of the confluence of two mighty rivers: The Mekong and The Tonle Sap. These rivers then split again as the Mekong and Tonle Bassac at Chaktomuk, meaning four faces. Phnom Penh is a veritable oasis compared to the modernity of other Asian capitals. With wide, tree-lined boulevards and low-rise

buildings, Phnom Penh harks back to the colonial days of this former French playground. The many older French colonial buildings add to the ambiance.

The Killing Fields: The killing Fields of Cheung ek are situated 15km (9.3 miles) southwest of Phnom Penh. This was the place where more than 17,000 civilians were killed and buried in mass graves; many of them were transported here after their detention and torture in Toul Sleng. This place is a chilling reminder of the brutalities from the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge. In the centre of the area is a 17-story glass memorial housing 8,000 skulls exhumed from the graves.

KAMPOT

Most visitors come here to take a look at the old French colonial architecture, which is still in charming condition and to have a vantage point for visiting the nearby beaches or small islands of Kep. Kampot province is also renowned for the quality of its fruits (durian, coconut, mango, etc), its sea salt and, of course, the famous Kampot Pepper.

Kampot is a pretty riverside town just 5km (3 miles) from the sea and serves the very popular seaside resort of kep. Once a fashionable haunt of the French elite, it was known as “la Perle de la Cote d’agate” and has stunning offshore islands and a beautiful bay. King Sihanouk owned one of these islands and would often use it for entertaining. The region is famous for its production of durian fruit and reputedly has the best seafood in the country.

KEP

a province-level town famed for its spectacular sunsets and splendid seafood, it was founded as a colonial retreat for the French elite in 1908. In Kep, tourists can enjoy a variety of tourist attractions such as natural mountains, evergreen tropical forest, mangroves, islands, sea grass coral reefs, pure sea air, beaches, and sea food.

SIHANOUKVILLE

located on the coast of Cambodia, about halfway between Thailand and Vietnam, on the Bay of Thailand. A hot tourism spot for both foreigners and locals, three sides of the town are bordered by tropical beaches and islands. Filled with empty beaches, crowded beaches, seafood, restaurants, bars, Buddhist Temples, casinos, hotels, and more beaches.

Sihanoukville, also known as kampong Som, is Cambodia’s most popular beach resort; it can be visited all year round for the cool breezes and clear blue skies. The area has beautiful tropical white sandy beaches, several of which often remain completely deserted with offshore islands ideal for scuba diving. Local fisherman will take visitors to any one of the nearby islands where coral, teeming with tropical fish, is perfect for snorkeling, diving and fishing. There are many restaurants catering to various national tastes but it’s worth trying the freshly caught crab, shrimp and other seafood the region has to offer.

Sihanoukville is also Cambodia's only maritime port and is located 232km (144 miles) from Phnom Penh. It is accessible via one of the best inter-provincial roads in the country.

HISTORY & GOVERNMENT

HISTORY

The State of Funan was situated in southern Cambodia and southern Vietnam and lasted for a period of 600 years. This dynasty gave way to the powerful Angkor Empire that was eventually responsible for establishing the Khmer Kingdom, as we know it today.

The following generation of powerful kings that belonged to the Angkorian dynasty reigned for a period of 650 years. Their empire covered much of Southeast Asia. Their territory stretched from Burma, which lies east, to the South China Sea and further north, right up to southern China. Khmer kings, during this golden period of rule built the most ornate and extensive temples or prasats known to mankind. These spectacular constructions were built throughout the kingdom. Angkor Wat is, of course, the most famous. Besides building the most majestic prasats on earth, Khmer kings were also responsible for huge agricultural feats of engineering which included sophisticated irrigation systems, great water reservoirs, and countless canal systems that guaranteed food transport. Some of these systems are still in use today.

Angkor became the capital of a great kingdom and the centre for government, education, religion, and commerce. However, in 1431 a sudden shift of power took place. Angkor was invaded and eventually, completely ravaged. Mankind's most predominant creation was plunged into total destruction. The entire population and wealth of a once proud civilization was abandoned and covered by tropical forest. Following the abandonment of Angkor, Cambodia's capital population migrated south to Long Vek, then further to Ou Dong, and eventually to Phnom Penh. The destruction of the mighty Angkorian capital also caused a decline, adaptation, and eventual replacement of Hinduism. Theravada Buddhism became the national religion.

As war started to escalate in Vietnam, Cambodia's borders increasingly became the targets of American and Vietnamese aggression. March 18, 1970, General Lon Nol, backed by the Americans, overthrew the Head of State. Consequently, Cambodia became deeply involved in the war, fighting mainly against the Khmer Rouge. Lon Nol's control over Cambodia's government lasted for a period of barely five years, until he was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge, headed by Pol Pot, on April 17, 1975. History repeated itself as soon as Pol Pot invaded. The entire population evacuated the city leaving a once vibrant capital in ruin and decay. The Khmer Rouge then proceeded to implement a "reign of terror" on Cambodia's entire population. People were brutally forced to work as slaves in the rice fields. These people had to endure long periods of hard, painful labour while effectively being starved at the same time.

Pol Pot's Kampuchean forced labour camps tortured, killed or starved to death an estimated two million people, including women and children. In 1979, The People's Republic of Kampuchea, supported by Vietnamese, liberated the capital. This presented the opportunity for the country to become re-established once again. Throughout the 1980s, Cambodia, with the assistance of the

Vietnamese re-built its economy. In 1989, the Vietnamese withdrew from Cambodia and the country was re-named “State of Cambodia.” Today, the Kingdom of Cambodia is once again a peaceful place to visit, the authoritarian, extreme-left Cambodian People’s Party remains in government.

TIMELINE

- First Century AD
Establishment of a State called Funan
- 600AD
The State of Funan gave way to the powerful Angkor Empire
- 1431
Angkor was invaded and eventually, completely ravaged
- 1970
General Lon Nol, backed by the Americans, overthrew the Head of State
- 1979
The People’s Republic of Kampuchea, supported by Vietnamese, liberated the capital
- 1980s
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- 1989
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Government

Constitutional monarchy since 1993.

GEOGRAPHY



Cambodia shares borders in the north with Laos and Thailand, in the east with Vietnam and the southwest with the Gulf of Thailand.

Cambodia shares borders in the north with Laos and Thailand, in the east with Vietnam and the southwest with the Gulf of Thailand. The landscape comprises of tropical rainforests and fertile land intersected with many rivers. In the northeast and southeast are Cambodia's highlands. The capital is located at the confluence of the Mekong, Bassac and Tonle Sap rivers. The latter flows from a large inland lake, also called Tonle Sap, situated in the centre of the country. There are numerous offshore islands along the southwest coast.



Population
14.86 million



Time
GMT + 7



Coordinates
11.55°N, 104.90°E



Population Density
82.74 per sq km



Area
181,035 sq km

CULTURE

Approximately 90 % of the inhabitants of Cambodia are members of the Khmer people. There are several smaller ethnic groups such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Cham and mountain people, such as the Khmer Loeu and crossings between different groups.

The Khmer people have lived in the Greater Region since around the 2nd century BC and probably originate from a combination of Mongolian and Melanesian peoples. The most important cultural influence comes from India and was noticeable from the 2nd century AD.

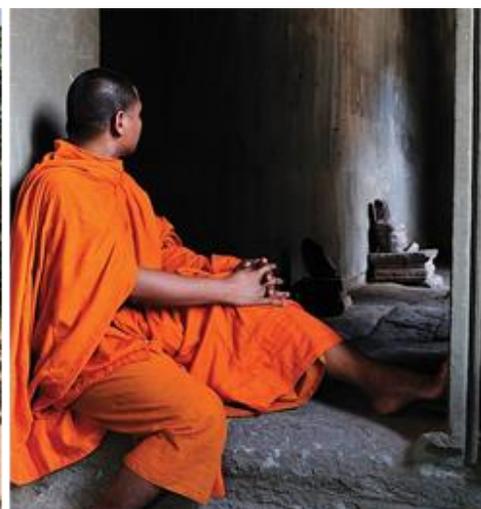
The hill tribes mainly live in forested mountain regions of the Northeast. They were former semi-nomadic and practiced an agriculture based on slash and burn. Their number increased in recent years, so that they had to change to an intensified agriculture and had to adopt the habits of the lowland Khmer.

There are about 500,000 Cham people, originating from the Cham established in the 16th century in what is now Central Vietnam. They now constitute the largest minority in Cambodia. The Pol Pot regime pursued the Cham intensively and reduced their number by half. Originally the Cham were Hindu oriented, later they became Muslims. Their spiritual centre is located in Chur-Changvra near Phnom Penh. The Cham are traditionally cattle traders, butchers and silk weavers.

In the 18th and 19th century larger groups of Chinese migrated into the Khmer Kingdom. In modern times they faced political persecution and expulsion. Many escaped, leaving around 100,000 people remaining today. Approximately 200,000 Vietnamese are currently living in Cambodia. The southern part of the country and the region of Phnom Penh have a substantial proportion of Vietnamese settlers..

HINTS

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Dos in Cambodia

1. Ask for permission before taking photographs of any Cambodian people or monks.
2. It is customary to remove your shoes when entering a place of worship such as a pagoda or temple. Additionally, visitors should dress appropriately when inside a religious site (upper arms and legs should be covered, hats removed).
3. It is respectful to remove your shoes when entering someone's home.
4. Though not always expected, a respectful way of greeting another individual is to bow the head slightly with hands pressed together at the chest (known as "Sampeah").
5. If invited to dine in a Cambodian family's home, it is polite to bring a small gift for the host such as fruit, dessert, or flowers.
6. If invited to attend a Cambodian wedding, it is customary to bring cash as a wedding gift.
7. When using a toothpick at the table, use one hand to cover your mouth.
8. Keep business cards ready, and present them with both hands. Accept business cards with both hands.

Donts in Cambodia

1. Don't use your feet to point at someone.
2. Don't touch a Cambodian person on the head.
3. Don't begin eating if you are a guest at a dinner and the host has yet to take a bite.
4. Women should never touch male monks or hand something directly to them.
5. Keep public displays of affection to a respectful minimum.

RELIGION

Ninety-five percent of the population is Buddhist (Theravada), the remainder being Muslim and Christian. Buddhism was reinstated as the national religion in 1989 after a ban on religious activity in 1975.

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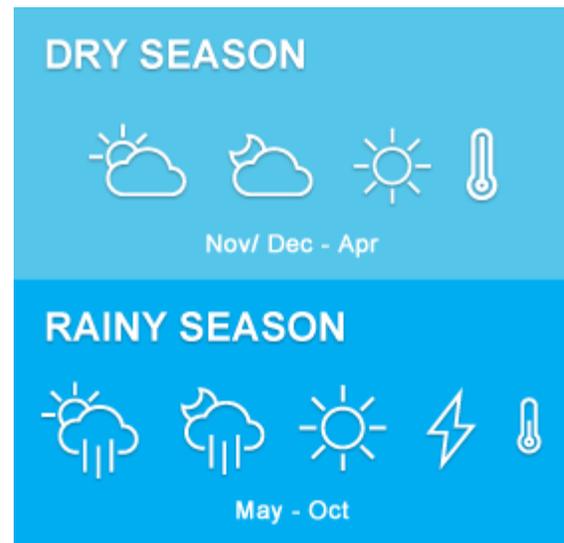
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CLIMATE

The country has a tropical climate: warm and humid. In the monsoon season from May to November, abundant rain allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops. The most pleasant season is the dry season, from November/December to April.

In the north, winters can be colder, while throughout most of the country temperatures remain fairly constant.

There is often seasonal flooding in Phnom Penh and the rest of Cambodia in late July and early August so travel may be disrupted. Overall, travellers need not fear of natural disasters such as erupting volcanoes or earthquakes and the country is not directly affected by tropical storms.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Useful, practical information regarding money, credit cards, ATMs, health & safety, food & drink, transportation, communication, and much more...

MONEY

Currency

Riel (KHR; symbol CR). Notes are in denominations of CR100,000, 50,000, 20,000, 10,000, 5000, 2000, 1000, 500, 200 and 100.

Currency Exchange

The US dollar is the most favoured foreign currency and is widely accepted and exchanged as are Thai baht close to the Thai border. Other currencies are generally only recognized at banks. There is no need to change dollars into Riel as they are accepted almost everywhere.

Credit / Debit Cards and ATMs:

Credit cards are now more widely accepted in up-market hotels, shops and restaurants catering to visitors. There are ATMs in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville. It is always best to carry cash in small denominations. Locate ATMs accepting VISA cards here (Place link – <http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/searchpage.jsp>). Locate ATMs accepting MasterCard here (Place link - <http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>).



Traveller's Cheques

Traveller's cheques in US Dollars can be changed at banks and some hotels, but can be difficult to change outside major cities.

Banking Hours

Mon-Fri 0800-1500. Some banks are open on Saturdays until 1200.

Exchange Rate Indicators (Feb 2014)

\$1.00 = 3,983 Riel

€1.00 = 5,528 Riel

£1.00 = 6,625 Riel

For up-to-date exchange rates, please visit e.g. www.oanda.com

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health care

Health insurance, including emergency evacuation, is absolutely essential. Doctors and hospitals expect cash payments for any medical treatment. The cost of medical evacuation is high. It is suggested that any visitors bring adequate supplies of any essential personal medication, since that medication may not be available in Cambodia.

Vaccinations

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required by travellers arriving from infected areas. A cholera vaccination certificate is no longer a condition of entry to Cambodia. However, cholera is a serious risk in this country and precautions are essential. Immunization against typhoid is recommended. Polio vaccination should be up-to-date. Malaria risk exists all year outside the capital and close around Tonle Sap. Malaria does occur in the tourist areas of Angkor Wat. The malignant falciparum strain predominates and is reported to be highly resistant to chloroquine and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine. Resistance to mefloquine has been reported from the western provinces. The recommended prophylaxis is mefloquine (including within the Angkor Wat area) but doxycycline in the western provinces.

Food and drink

All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Milk is not pasteurized and should be boiled. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from un-boiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.



Other Risks

Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present. Giardiasis, dysentery, typhoid fever and dengue fever are common throughout Cambodia. Hepatitis A occurs, hepatitis B is hyper endemic. Japanese encephalitis occurs in rural areas from May to October and is relatively common in the highlands. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. HIV/AIDS is endemic and safe sex practices are essential.

SAFETY

Cambodia is a relatively safe country to visit. As a global rule, we recommend you never leave your belongings unattended and always maintain eye contact or a firm grip on cameras and shoulder bags. Valuables should be stored in the safety box in your room, if available, or at the reception. Avoid mopeds late at night. With regard to landmines, there are still many thousands of land-mines and unexploded ordnance in more remote areas of Cambodia. The chances of approaching these areas unknown to you are very small. In rural areas, always seek local advice and don't stray from that.

TRANSPORTATION

Travelling within Cambodia

<h4>BY AIR</h4>  <p>Internal flights operate between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap</p>	<h4>BY RAIL</h4>  <p>There are only two lines from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville and to Battambang. Visitors are not encouraged to use the trains.</p>	<h4>BY WATER</h4>  <p>From Phnom Penh there are public ferries going to Siem Reap.</p>
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Getting around by air

Internal flights operate between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap (45 minutes flight). The main domestic carriers are Siem Reap Airways International and PMT Air. Battambang, Sihanoukville, Banlung, Sen Monorom and Stung Treng all have airports, but at the time of writing there are only flights to Banlung from Phnom Penh.

Domestic airports

Phnom Penh International Airport (PNH) is 10km (6 miles) from Phnom Penh. Taxis and motorbike taxis to the city are available (journey time – 10 minutes). Facilities: Left luggage, bureau de change, shops, duty-free, post office and light refreshments. Siem Reap International Airport (REP) is 8 km (5 miles) from Siem Reap. Taxis and motorbike taxis to Siem Reap are available (journey time – 7 to 10 minutes). Facilities: Left luggage, bureau de change, shops and light refreshments.

Getting around by road

Indonesia's transport system has been shaped over time by the economic resource base of an archipelago with thousands of islands, and the distribution of its more than 200 million people highly concentrated on a single island which is Java.



Getting around by water

From Phnom Penh there are public ferries going to Siem Reap. Travel can be difficult in the dry season when the water level is very low and often boat services are suspended.

Getting around by train

There are only two lines from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville and to Battambang. Visitors are not encouraged to use the trains, they take much longer than the buses. Currently, there is only a weekly train from Phnom Penh to Battambang on Saturdays (journey time – 12 hours) and none to Sihanoukville. Tickets can only be bought in person on the day of travel.

Getting around by Road

Traffic drives on the right side and road quality can vary from excellent to very poor. There are numbered routes from Phnom Penh with Route 1 leading to the Vietnamese border. Care should

be taken while driving as accidents are relatively frequent. Other vehicles cannot always be relied on to use headlights at night. Given the predominant use of motorcycles for urban public transportation, travellers should ensure that any insurance policies provide coverage for riding as a driver or passenger.

Cattle often stray onto the roads. In Siem Reap, the local police have banned rental outlets from hiring (renting) motorcycles to tourists because of the high number of accidents.

Coach/bus: Long-distance buses travel to destinations such as Kampot, Sihanoukville, Battambang and Siem Reap.

Car hire: It is really only possible to hire a car with a driver. Car hire can be arranged by private negotiation with a taxi waiting outside the hotels or through tour operators.

Taxi: They can be hired in main cities, although they are not metered so the price has to be fixed in advance. Tips are appreciated.

Regulations: The wearing of seat belts is not compulsory.

Documentation: An International Driving Permit is not recognized in Cambodia, and as car hire does not exist, visitors are advised to hire a car with a driver.

Getting around in the City

There are no public buses in Phnom Penh or Siem Reap. Taxis wait outside hotels and restaurants, the fare should be fixed before leaving. Cyclos (tricycles) or motodops (motorcycle taxis) are an efficient and inexpensive way to get around and some of the drivers, especially those found outside main hotels, speak a little French or English. Siem Reap also has motorized tuk tuks.

FOOD & DRINK

In major cities a wide range of culinary fare is on offer including Chinese, Thai, French, Korean, Japanese, Indian, Vietnamese and Middle Eastern. Food stalls are also common in Phnom Penh and can usually be found in and around the Central Market.

Khmer cuisine is very similar to Thai food, but with fewer spices involved. Popular dishes include fish, soup and salad, almost always incorporating Cambodia's favourite flavours of coriander, lemongrass and mint. There is also a plethora of sweet dishes. Common ingredients used in Cambodian cuisine include nuts, bananas, coconut, the durian fruit (known for its distinctive odour), jackfruit, longan fruit, lychee, pineapple and rambutan fruit, to name just a few.



DRINKS

Tea is one of the most refreshing drinks in the tropics as is fresh lemon/lime juice mixed with water. Tea and coffee are found everywhere and sugar-cane juice or coconut water are popular street-side drinks.

HINTS

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2. Fresh seafood is plentiful in Sihanoukville
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EVENTS

February

The Meak Bochea is a Buddhist Ceremony held during the full moon of the month of Meak Bochea in commemoration of the spontaneous gathering of the monks to listen to the Buddha's preaching.

April

The New Year festival takes place in the fifth solar month, known as Khè Chèt.

April 13th or 14th, The auspicious occasion of the Khmer New Year is detailed in the astrological almanac and extends over three days. During the Khmer New Year Festival, youths gather to play popular traditional games such as Chaol Chhoung (throwing a ball) and Bas Angkunh (throwing brown seeds). The youths are normally divided into female and male teams to play these games. The Khmer people will gather together and visit pagodas and temples on the occasion of the Khmer New Year. Each year many residents from other provinces visit Angkor Wat to worship the powerful gods and trace their ancestors' heritage.

March

Balinese New Year (Hari Raya Nyepi): known as the 'Day of Silence' in English, this is a day for quiet meditation and reflection. Lasting 24 hours, observers of Hari Raya Nyepi must abstain from all pleasure-giving activities including talking and eating. Travelling is not permitted on this day, even by visitors, who are restricted to their hotels.

April

Ibu Kartini Day: this day marks the birthday of Raden Ajeng Kartini, a Javanese leader in the women's rights movement in Indonesia. On this day, activities created by women's groups are enjoyed and schools host national dress competitions.

May

The Royal Ploughing Ceremony is used by Cambodians to foretell the future. Cambodians believe that it helps to predict a range of events including epidemics, floods, good harvests and excessive rainfall. This year, the Royal Ploughing Ceremony was held at the Veal Preahmein Square, situated across the road from the northern perimeter of the Royal Palace. Every year, Cambodian farmers anxiously await the predictions at the end of this ritualistic ceremony, which they observe with strong faith and belief. The Royal Ploughing Ceremony has been observed for many centuries at the initiative of an earlier Khmer king who had paid great attention to farming conditions of the people.

October

The Bonn Pchum Ben Festival is held to commemorate the spirits of the dead. The highlight is on the 15th day of the waxing moon during the tenth month of the Khmer calendar, called Pheaktrobotr. The festival lasts 15 days, each of which is called a day of Kan Ben. A Ben is an offering. The word of Ben is derived from Sanskrit pinda, or balls of rice to be offered to the souls of the dead. During the first 14 days, people take turns offering food to the monks of their local pagoda in the hope that their offering will reach the souls of their ancestors and friends by virtue of the monks' sermons.

November

The Water Festival or the Regatta Festival has been chronicled by the Cambodian people as well as by foreigners for a very long time. In fact, the festival is depicted in stones of the Angkorian period. It is said to be one of the most spectacular traditional events. The festival is held on the full moon in November coinciding with the rainy season and when the Tonle Sap Lake changes direction, leaving behind an abundance of fish. Multitudes mingle on the river banks in Phnom Penh to watch hundreds of brightly coloured boats and their paddlers battle in a competition for top honours. The festival is usually held for three days and festivities take place in front of the Royal Palace.

The Festival of Illuminated Floats consecrates Preah Changkaum Keo (the main parts of Buddha) in the Naga World and the Buddha's footprints in the fire. The Khmer people conduct this festival during the November full moon. It is believed that great merit and prosperity will be provided to the country.



PUBLIC HOLIDAYS IN INDONESIA

1. **January 1**
International New Year Day
2. **January 7**
Victory over Genocide Day
3. **February 14**
Meak Bochea Day
4. **March 8**
International Women Day

5. **April 14, 15, 16**
Khmer New Year Day
6. **May 1**
International Labor Day
7. **May 13**
Visak Bochea Day
8. **May 13, 14, 15**
King's Birthday, Norodom Sihamoni
9. **May 17**
Royal Plowing Ceremony
10. **June 1**
International Children Day
11. **June 18**
King's Mother Birthday, Norodom Monineath Sihanouk
12. **September 22, 23, 24**
Pchum Ben Day
13. **September 24**
Constitutional Day
14. **October 15**
Commemoration Day of King's Father, Norodom Sihanouk
15. **October 23**
Paris Peace Agreements Day
16. **October 29**
King's Coronation Day, Norodom Sihamoni
17. **November 05, 06, 07**
Water Festival Ceremony
18. **November 09**
Independence Day
19. **December 10**
International Human Rights Day

SHOPPING

Excellent quality replicas are available in both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Intricate wooden boxes and other carvings are also used for ornamentation and furniture in Cambodia and are readily available in souvenir shops.

Cambodia has excellent silverware of both classical Khmer and Chinese design which can be bought in the main markets of the capital and hotel shops. Khmer silversmiths craft intricate silver bowls in the shapes of fruits, elephants, deer, wild pigs, fish and goats. Dancer's anklets, decorated with tiny silver bells, are also popular buys.

Precious and semi-precious gemstones are for sale in the markets and shops. Experts might make some good buys, but it is better to be a little careful since guarantees of authenticity are not so



readily available and the cutting of the stones usually is less precise compared to western standards. Beautiful textiles, made from silk and cotton, woven in traditional designs and tie-dyed, are also available. A traditional and popular item, mostly made from cotton, is a krama – a checked scarf.

Silk may be embroidered with gold and silver threads, woven with bold vertical stripes, shimmering contrasting colors, or in ancient patterns of elephant, fish and jasmine flowers. It is made into items like dresses and purses. Other crafts include basketwork and pottery, which comes in traditional designs.

TIPS TO SAVVY SHOPPING

1. Check everything you can check before handing over your money
2. Always ask around to get an idea of basic prices for common necessities. For more important purchases, try and get a local friend to go along with you, or better still, let them do the buying without you
3. Don't feel awkward or rude about bargaining, everyone bargains in Myanmar and you'll look like a green tourist if you don't
4. Don't look happy or resigned about paying what you're asked; always begin by showing your gentle disapproval
5. Walk away if you cannot agree on a price: either they'll come after you or you'll find the same thing on sale somewhere else

TRAVEL TO AND FROM CAMBODIA

Getting there or out by Air

Most tourists choose to fly in and out from Siem Reap's airport. Among the airlines that serve Siem Reap (REP) are Royal Cambodge, Bangkok Airways and Thai Airways International that serve Bangkok, Malaysia Airlines that flies from Kuala Lumpur, Vietnam Airlines from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Silkair from Singapore, and Lao Airlines from Vientiane.

Departure tax

US\$25 levied on international departures at Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Children less than two years of age are exempt.

COMMUNICATION

Telephones

Most hotels now have IDD phones in rooms and it is possible to send faxes from hotels and post offices. Be aware that most hotels charge considerable amounts for these services. Please check with the hotel prior to arrival. It may not always be possible to make international calls in remote areas. If you have worldwide coverage, you can bring your own mobile phone and use it to make

domestic or international calls. Check with your mobile phone provider for the costs before using it abroad; it may be expensive.

Internet

Major hotels have Business Centers with PCs connected to the internet. Some of them have wireless broadband access in rooms or public areas. Cyber cafes are becoming popular and are easily found in major towns and cities. Prices are reasonable, usually below US\$1 per hour. In many Internet cafes, you can buy pre-paid phone cards to dial from a computer to a landline or mobile phone worldwide.

If Internet connections at hotels are vital for you during your visit to Cambodia, please advise your Focus Asia travel consultant.

Mail

Airmail to Europe takes at least a week and longer to the USA. The main post office is in Phnom Penh.

VISA INFORMATION

Most nationalities are eligible for a one-month visa-on-arrival at Phnom Penh airport or Siem Reap airport, and at land borders**. The cost is US\$20 for a tourist visa, with an additional US\$2-6 sometimes charged to cover administration fees.

You will need to pay in US dollars and submit one passport photo. Please be aware that sometimes there can be long queues at the airport when obtaining a visa-on-arrival, however in general the queues move fairly quickly.

Please make sure your passport is valid more than 6 months from the date of departure of each country you are visiting. Also, make sure you have enough blank pages – you may need up to 1.5 pages for each country you visit in Southeast Asia.

** The following countries are not eligible for visa-on-arrival: Afghanistan, Algeria, Arab Saudi, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Nigeria. For these countries, they must arrange the visa in their home countries before arrival.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information supplied here is meant as a guide only and is subject to change without warning. Therefore all travellers should check the visa and immigration details with the local Indonesian Embassy or Consulate.

