

CAMBODIA

Land of the Khmer



Cambodia is a **South East Asian** country, bordering Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. Cambodia. This country has started from scratch, rebuilt its traditions, culture, laws, government and economy, leaving its tragic history far behind. The only thing unchanged over centuries is **Angkor Wat** - the symbol of this beautiful kingdom, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Besides, it also boasts the stunning scenery of tropical sunny beaches, or waterfalls and rain forests, twilight and sunset on **Mekong River**, or monuments and museums with historical relics....



Capital city: Phnom Penh

Population: 15.2 million (2019)

People: Khmers (90%)

Language: Khmer

Currency: Riel and US dollars

Time zone: GMT+7





HISTORY

To have a peaceful life today, the Cambodian have been through years of harsh and tragic history. From **1975 to 1979**, under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime led by the infamous Pol Pot Cambodia was later turned into a graveyard for nearly two million people. They killed an estimated one and a half million educated Cambodians in an effort to create an agrarian society. Thousands more were either tortured, lost their family and became homeless, including Khmer Rouge's members and senior leaders.

After the tragedy of the 20th century, the Cambodian rebuilt their life out of the ruins of the traumatic history. Even though poverty hasn't been eradicated from Cambodia, they can still welcome tourists with a friendly smile.

CLIMATE

Cambodia is a tropical country with warm temperatures throughout the year. It has 2 seasons: **dry and rainy**.

The dry season lasts from December to April, usually sunny and dry, especially in January and February. The rest of the year (from May to November) is **rainy season**, the temperatures remain high, the southwest monsoon brings humidity to the land especially in May and June.

The rainiest region is the southwest, towards the coast of the Gulf of Thailand, and the coolest region is the highlands, such as Cardamom Mountains. So the best time of the year to visit Cambodia is December and January when the weather is dry and cool. Luckily, typhoons - the most common natural disasters in Southeast Asian country, don't often cause serious effect to Cambodia since they are generally weakened when they passed Philippine and Vietnam. However, they can still bring heavy rains and cause flooding so the tourists are advised to avoid coming in October and November so that the bad weather will not interrupt their plans.



HISTORICAL SITES

Cambodia is the land of historical and sacred sites. Here are some of the top places to visit when you come to Cambodia.

1. **Angkor Wat (Siem Reap):** one of the world heritage sites declared by UNESCO in 1992, this massive Hindu temple that was built in early 12th century by king Suryavarman. It has become a symbol of Cambodia, appearing on its national flag.
2. **Prasat Preah Vihear (Preah Vihear province):** listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, this is an ancient Hindu temple built during the period of the Khmer Empire. The temple located on the top of Poy Tadi, a steep cliff in the Dângrêk Mountain range
3. **Koh Ker (Preah Vihear province):** a pyramid-shaped temple known as the capital of Khmer kingdom from 928 to 941 under kings Jayavarman IV and Harshavarman II's dynasties. Today, only a part of this masterpiece can be visited by tourists because most of the sanctuaries are hidden in the forest.

4. **Bayon Temple (Angkor Thom):** Built toward the end of the 12th century as the state temple of the Mahayana Buddhist King Jayavarman VII, Bayon is famous for its 216 huge smiling faces carved in the stone.

5. **Ta Prohm (Siam Riep province):** originally called Rajavihara, it was built in the late 12th century as a Mahayana Buddhist monastery and university. The photogenic sight of the ruins swallowed by the ancient trees' roots has made it one of the most popular temples to visitors.

6. **Banteay Srei (Angkor):** a Cambodian temple dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, this red sandstone structure is famous for its multitude of elaborately decorated walls

7. **Wat Langka (Phnom Penh):** founded in 1442 by king Ponhea Yat, it was considered a meeting place for Cambodian and Sri Lankan monks. Today it's one of the most sacred landmark in the capital city.



DESTINATIONS

Despite being a small country, Cambodia has everything you expect for your trip: from forests to beaches, from plains to mountains, from cities to countryside.

Temples and pagodas are one of the most attractive destinations for tourists because of their elaborate religious architecture and historical value. Among thousands of pagodas and temples in Cambodia, these are some great places to visit: Angkor Wat, Preah Vihear, Bayon, Koh Ker.

Beaches and Islands are improving everyday with more modern accommodation and service. Sok San beach on Koh Rong island Otres beach, Serendipity Beach, ... are one of the top spots to come and enjoy water-based activities

Nature and wildlife areas are good choices because the tropical climate brings Cambodia beautiful natural

sites and rich ecosystem, Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity Kep National park, Kirirom National park... are where tourists can go trekking, walking, and watching wild animals.

Waterfalls and Mountains in Cambodia are gorgeous places to visit and relax. For magnificent natural scenes, check out mountains such as Cardamom Mount, Bokor Mount,... and waterfalls such as: Phnom Kulen, Tatai, Bousra, Kbal Chhay...

Sleepless cities with entertainment spot will show tourists the day-today- development of Cambodia. Now people can also enjoy the overview of Siam Reap, Phnom Penh... from the high buildings.

Rivers and Delta are opposite to the bustle atmosphere of cities. Go on a boat trip or kayak on Mekong River and pass by peaceful fishing villages and local temples to get a glimpse of rural Cambodian's life.



PASSPORT AND VISA

A passport with at least six-month validity from the date of entry into Cambodia is required.

A visa is required for most nationalities. A tourist visa costs US\$30 and is valid for 30 days. There are two types of visa: Upon arrival visa and E-visa.

Upon arrival visa: can be obtained at any international land and water border and two international airports of Phnom Penh and Siam Reap.

E-visa: is only accepted at international airports, and 3 particular land borders:

- Bavet (Svay Rieng): Cambodia & Vietnam land border
- Poi Pet (Banteay Meanchey): Cambodia & Thailand land border
- Cham Yeam (Koh Yong): Cambodia & Thailand land border

To apply E- visa, please visit this website:
<https://www.evisa.gov.kh/>

TRANSPORTATION

Cambodia has a wide variety of transport options.

Taxi: only used to and from the airport with a set price

Bus: A wide private bus network is offered for travelling between cities

Tuk tuk: with a more reasonable price than taxi and bus, is an easy way to travel within cities or towns.

Motorbike taxi: ideal for short journey in cities and towns.

Train: There is a passenger train route from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville, but they don't run quite frequently.

Boat: an important means of transport on rivers.

AIRPORTS & AIRLINES

There are 17 airports with civil flight operations including 3 international airports in Cambodia: Phnom Penh International Airport, Siem Reap International Airport and Sihanoukville International Airport. Phnom Penh Airport is the gateway to Cambodia's capital city. Siem Reap Airport is located near the temples of Angkor, while Sihanoukville Airport only offers international connections to some neighboring countries.

Cambodia Angkor Airways is Cambodian national airline and offer the most international flight connections to destinations around the region.

ELECTRICITY

For Cambodia there are three associated plug types, A, C and G. Cambodia operates on a 230V supply voltage and 50Hz.



CURRENCY

The official currency is Cambodian **Riel** (exchange rate in 12/2019: 4067 riel to the US dollar). However, US dollars are widely accepted or even preferred here, but not US coins. Foreign currencies can be exchanged into Cambodian riel at banks, airports and shops. ATMs can be easily found in cities such as Phnom Penh, Siem Reap so you're able to withdraw dollars or riel. But make sure you always bring the cash with you because credit cards and checks may not be able to be used and ATMs may be unavailable in some parts of the country.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Cambodia country code: 855

International telephone code: +855

International telephone connections are widely available but can be expensive, to make an international call from Cambodia, dial 001 or 007 followed by the country code.

Cambodia emergency numbers: Police 117, Fire 118, Ambulance 199.

Internet access is available in most tourist places such as hotels and restaurants.

LANGUAGE

Cambodian, or **Khmer** is the official language of Cambodia spoken by approximately 13 million people in Cambodia (85% of Cambodians). This language is used in government, education, media and more. Otherwise, there are languages spoken by the ethnic minorities in Cambodia such as: Cham, Vietnamese, Tumpoon, Lao, Yue Chinese, Jarai, Mon-Khmer...

In Cambodia, French and English are foreign languages that are widely taught and spoken. Cambodian French is a French dialect that is spoken on certain occasions in Cambodia. English is now a main subject at elementary schools, so a large number of young people can communicate pretty well in English.



SAFETY

Despite the tragedies in the past, Cambodia is now a much safer place. UL Safety Index has ranked Cambodia is the **143rd** position worldwide according to the risks of natural disasters, crime, terrorism and war. However, numbers are just numbers, the safety levels can't be exactly calculated and are different in each locality and each period of the year.

In the major festivals, there always be a palpable increase in the number of **robberies**. So if you want to enjoy the bustle atmosphere of the festivals, don't bring too much money and valuable property, be more vigilant in crowded places or markets.

The security camera systems haven't been installed in many localities in Cambodia, especially rural area, so avoid going out alone late at night to get away from danger from the drive-by thefts.

The bars and nightclubs are places where fights are likely to occur because young people often get drunk (or even use drugs) here, so stay alert, be calm and don't get yourself into bad situations.

In the areas where wars have been through, there may still be remnants from the war, if you see strange metal objects, do not touch them. The remaining **rockets, mines, bombs...** may still work and unexpectedly explode.

VACCINATIONS

The **tropical climate** is a favorable condition for diseases and vectors (flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, rats ...) to multiply, especially in rainy season. So it is important to ensure you have adequate protection against diseases when travelling to this part of the world. Book an appointment with your doctor to get the necessary vaccinations before your departure.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel inevitably involves some risks and this should be recognized by holiday-makers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind so that you can entirely enjoy your trip without worry. Please also ensure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.



RELIGION

Cambodia is well-known for thousands of temples and pagodas as approximately 97% of the population follows Theravada Buddhism, the remaining population follow Christian, Islam, Atheism, Animism. The Buddhist monks participate in all formal national festivals, ceremonies, marriages and funerals

FOOD

Don't drink the **tap water** in Cambodia. Water bottles are cheap, convenient and available throughout the country, though it's not environmental-friendly.

Though tasting **street food** is an indispensable experience when coming to Cambodia, street food is often cheap and not of high quality. If you already had digestive problems, we recommended you having meals at high-quality restaurants.

Cambodian or Khmer food has lots of things in common with neighboring Thailand, Vietnam and India.

The most well-known dish in Cambodia is fish amok. Beef lok lak, prahok, kampot pepper crab... are also must-try in this country.

SHOPPING

When shopping in Cambodia, especially at local markets or groceries, check prices before you decide to buy something, bargaining is also necessary. If the seller tries to persuade you to buy an item that you don't want to buy, be politely shake your head to refuse and walk straight ahead. If you suspect that you have purchased counterfeit, poor-quality or overpriced goods, ask your hotel staff to help you contact local authorities.

In addition, you can choose to go shopping in supermarkets or mini mall to avoid above situation. However, supermarkets are difficult to be found in some rural areas.



ETIQUETTE AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Experiencing different cultures is one of the joys of travelling and it is important that these differences are respected. Cambodia has cultural norms and taboos which we encourage visitors to understand and abide by.

- **Try not** to get angry. Showing any frustrations or annoyances by shouting or becoming abusive is extremely impolite and it is unlikely to achieve a positive outcome. The Khmer's don't like to 'lose face'.
- **Refrain** from public displays of affection, they are considered offensive. It is extremely rare to see couples holding hands. However, it is quite common for friends of the same sex.
- It is polite to **remove** your shoes before entering a house – look for shoes at the front door as a clue.
- Cambodians greet each other with a slight bow and a prayer-like gesture, with the younger or lower-ranked person usually initiating the gesture. For foreigners and business, handshakes are acceptable.

Foreigners are always welcome in temples. However, it is important that a few simple rules of etiquette are followed:

- **Dress appropriately** and act with the utmost respect when visiting Wats (pagodas) and other religious sites, including the temples of Angkor.
- **Do not** wear shorts or tank tops and make sure your shoulders and knees are covered.
- **Remove** your shoes and hat before going into a vihara (monastery).
- If you sit down in front of the dais (the platform on which the Buddha's are placed), sit with your feet to the side rather than in the lotus position.
- **Never** point your finger or the soles of your feet towards a person or a figure of the Buddha.
- A woman may accept something from a monk but should never touch a monk.
- **Show respect** and turn off mobile phones, remove headphones, lower your voice and avoid inappropriate conversation.

Please note: The central tower of Angkor Wat is closed to visitors on Buddhist holidays.

TEMPLE VISIT ETIQUETTE



HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Cambodian observes many public holidays and festivals a year including:

Holiday:

- ❖ King's Birthday
- ❖ King's Mother/Father's Birthday
- ❖ King's Coronation Day
- ❖ New Year's Eve (January 1)
- ❖ Victory over Genocide Day (January 7)
- ❖ Khmer New Year (April 14-17)
- ❖ International Labor Day (May 1)
- ❖ Day of Remembrance (May 20)

- ❖ Royal Plowing Ceremony (Khmer calendar June 4)
- ❖ Constitutional Day (September 24)
- ❖ Independence Day (November 29)

Festivals:

- ❖ Meak Bochea (Khmer calendar full moon of the March)
- ❖ Visak Bochea Day (Khmer calendar full moon of the June)
- ❖ Ancestors' Day (Khmer calendar October)
- ❖ Water Festival Ceremony (late October or November).



TIPPING

Travelers are recommended to tip for the service if you feel satisfied. Though it isn't compulsory, the staffs will be appreciated, so you can tip any amount you feel is appropriate.

- **Bellboy:** \$1
- **Chambermaid:** \$1 per day
- **Guides:** \$5-\$10 per day for guides (depending on group size and performance)
- **Drivers:** \$2-\$5 per day, per person
- **Restaurants:** In smart establishments you may find that the tip is already included in the bill. In local restaurants tips are not expected but you may wish to leave loose change on the table.

PRICE GUIDE

Restaurants

- **Khmer food:** from \$3
- **Western food:** from \$4

Drinks

- **Soft drinks:** \$1
- **Local beer:** \$1
- **Bottled water:** Small \$0.50, large \$1
- **Juice:** \$2

Other Items

- **SIM card:** \$3
- **Mobile phone:** \$15-\$20
- **Books:** \$10-\$15
- **DVDs:** \$2.50- \$3

DONATIONS AND GIFT GIVING

Poverty is still rife in Cambodia, especially in rural areas. It's common to see children begging for money or selling souvenirs on the street. Please keep the following advice in mind so as not to fall into the trap of buying from them.

- Don't give money to the beggars, or buy goods from them, especially children. This encourages more families to send their children onto the street to earn money. By this way, many children in Cambodia are taken advantage of to earn money for their family instead of going to school.
- Don't give sweets to children in villages you visit.
- If you want to help or donate, there are many charities and organizations, but first make sure they are legal.
- For more information go to www.thinkchildsafe.org.



CLOTHING

1. The weather is hot in Cambodia, so bring lightweight clothes, don't forget to bring hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and cover clothes.
2. Dress up appropriately when visiting religious and historical sites, showing too much your legs and shoulders is considered disrespect, so don't wear shorts, skirts, or tank tops.
3. In many temples or pagodas, you'll have to take shoes off, so slip-on shoes or sandals are useful.

HOT TIPS

1. Keep in mind the telephone number of your country's embassy in Cambodia
2. Don't put your passport or visa anywhere that's easily reached. Record images of your passport and visa in case of loss or theft.
3. Insect repellent is necessary when exploring forests and national parks, especially during rainy season.

4. The sunlight may be intense. Avoid outdoor activities during hottest hours (about 11am to 2pm).

USEFUL WEBSITES

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travelling to Cambodia:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/cambodia>

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advice on travelling to Cambodia:

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/cambodia/index.html>

The official tourism website for Cambodia:

<http://www.tourismcambodia.org/>

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



❖ Documents

- ☐ Passport (at least six months validity from date of entry)
- ☐ Photocopy of passport
- ☐ Visa or a passport photo and US\$20 for visa on arrival
- ☐ Travel insurance
- ☐ All relevant tickets
- ☐ Reconfirmed flights

❖ Clothes

- ☐ Lightweight clothing
- ☐ Long-sleeved shirts and trousers (to religious sites)

- ☐ Shoes, sneakers for trekking, cycling and walking
- ☐ Sunglasses, sunscreen

❖ Travel aids

- ☐ Suitcases, backpack
- ☐ Foreign currency (US\$) and/or ATM card
- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Pocket knife
- ☐ Language guide
- ☐ Medications, first aid kit
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Electrical adaptor: 220V, 50Hz; 2 pin plugs

Please note: domestic airlines impose baggage weight restrictions of around 20kg maximum, so travel lightly where possible.

Authentic Asia wish you a safe and pleasant journey.

In case of an emergency, please contact us at:

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