

# Overview of Cambodia

For many adventurous travellers, the allure of an unspoilt and little-explored country is irresistible. Emerging from a violent past of human rights atrocities, war and political instability, Cambodia is steadily recovering and slowly emerging as a top destination on the Southeast Asian travel trail. The magnificent Lost City of Angkor is undoubtedly one of the most magical tourist attractions in the world and a bucket-list destination for many, drawing hordes of travellers to Cambodia.

Modern day Cambodia is the successor kingdom of the powerful Khmer Empire which ruled most of what is today Vietnam, Laos and Thailand from the 9th to 14th centuries. Although the country might not boast the same volume of famous attractions as some of its neighbours, the Cambodian people are incredibly friendly, providing a warm welcome for travellers and authentic glimpses into their culture.

This magnanimous national spirit is astonishing, given the suffering Cambodians endured during the three-and-a-half year reign of Pol Pot, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated two million people. The Khmer Rouge, under Pol Pot's leadership, altered the face of the country. Overnight, cities were emptied and property destroyed, the economy was left in tatters, and so were the lives of countless families. This period between 1975 and 1979 represents a particularly dark spell in the nation's history.

The horrors of the Khmer Rouge are commemorated by fascinating museums and sites that are an important part of the Cambodian itinerary. Those who understandably may want to avoid the infamous and solemn Killing Fields will find that the country offers many more peaceful and cheerful diversions. Beautiful moments can be had in the tranquillity ushered in by Buddhist prayer, or while enjoying the charms of the French-flavoured capital city Phnom Penh. Travellers can drift past sleepy riverside locations on a traditional boat and or explore the illustrious ancient history at sites such as Angkor Wat.

The scenery is breathtaking, shaped by landscapes of lush green forests, jungles, banana plantations, agricultural fields and mighty rivers. People here live modest and simple, uncluttered lives, and the populace is largely rural. Visitors seeking fast and efficient transport, luxurious hotels or resort pleasures may want to look elsewhere. Infrastructure is basic and travelling between destinations can be quite an experience, which is part of the country's allure.

The country's world-class attractions, golden beaches and virtually untouched islands beckon the enterprising traveller, and make Cambodia a unique off-the-beaten-track travel destination.

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## Key Facts

**Language:**

Khmer is the official language. French is also spoken, but English is fast becoming popular with the younger generation.

**Passport/Visa:**

All visitors must have sufficient funds to cover their stay and documentation for onward travel. A visa can be issued on arrival for 30 days. For a visa to be issued on arrival one passport photo is required and an empty page in the passport is required, along with US\$30 for a tourist visa or US\$35 for a business visa. E-visas can be obtained before departure at <https://www.evisa.gov.kh/>. Extensions of visas are usually possible.

**Currency:**

Riel (KHR) is the official currency and is divided into 100 sen. Foreign currency can be difficult to exchange, with the exception of US Dollars. Most transactions require cash but credit card use is on the rise, especially in tourist-orientated hotels and restaurants in larger cities and towns. US Dollars and Thai Baht are accepted, although smaller transactions are usually done in Riel. A torn US Dollar note is useless. There are ATMs in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville but they shouldn't be relied upon as a source of money.

**Electricity:**

Local electrical current is 230 volts, 50Hz. The European round two-pin plug is standard. Travellers should be aware that power cuts are frequent and, outside the capital, electricity is generally only available in the evenings.

# Travel to Cambodia

## Overview

Cambodian attractions are unique, moulded by the country's culture and history, making sightseeing a real Khmer experience. The fact that Cambodia has only recently emerged as a popular tourist destination has ensured that visitors can still get an authentic experience of this ancient culture. Most people who holiday in Cambodia are enticed by the impressive ancient temple city of Angkor in Siem Riep. Once hooked by the ancient attractions however, tourists will discover that the more recent history of the Khmer Rouge, though tragic and frightening, is intriguing in its own way. The more sombre Phnom Penh attractions, such as the Killing Fields and Tuel Sleng Prison Museum, are contrasted to the vibrant Central Market and to the peacefulness of the river front and lake side, not to mention the habitually friendly local population. For even more relaxation, the beach towns of Kep and Sihanoukville on the Cambodian coast are well worth a visits, if only to catch a glimpse of the rare Irrawaddy river dolphins of the northeast.

Getting around Cambodia can be challenging. Visitors should bear in mind that in monsoon season - June to October - the roads can get really muddy, making travel outside of the main centres more difficult. The rest of the year travel can be dusty but is more manageable.

## Climate in Cambodia

Cambodia's climate is tropical with seasonal monsoons. There are two distinct seasons, the rainy and dry. Temperatures during the rainy season, between May and October, average 81°F to 95°F (27°C to 35°C). The dry season can be divided into cool months, from November till February, with temperatures averaging 63°F to 81°F (17°C to 27°C); and hot months, from March till May, with temperatures averaging 84°F to 100°F (29°C to 38°C). The cooler, dry months of November to February are a pleasant time to visit Cambodia, but the best time to visit does vary depending on desired activities.

## Health Notes when travelling to Cambodia

Malaria is common in Cambodia and malaria prophylaxis is recommended for all areas except Phnom Penh and around Lake Tonle Sap. Dengue fever, transmitted by mosquitoes, is also prevalent, especially in the heavily populated areas. Insect protection measures should be taken throughout the day. Travellers staying long-term, or for more than one month, and those who may engage in extensive outdoor activities, should be vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis. Vaccinations for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and typhoid are recommended for all travellers. If you come from a yellow-fever-infected area then a yellow fever vaccination is required. Avoid swimming or paddling in fresh water as Bilharzia is present. Tap water is not suitable for drinking but bottled water is widely available. Avoid uncooked meat, unpeeled fruit, salads and food sold by street vendors, and don't drink beverages containing ice. Medical facilities are very limited in most of Cambodia, except for a few expensive private clinics in Phnom Penh. Treatment must be paid for with cash and health insurance is essential.

## Safety Notes when travelling to Cambodia

Cambodia remains one of the most heavily land-mined countries in the world. When hiking or visiting rural areas, travel with a local guide and never stray off the main paths. It is not advisable to travel in rural areas at night.

Caution should be taken in the capital, Phnom Penh, especially at night, as street crime is a problem, and popular tourist nightspots may be targeted. After dark there is also a risk of crime in Siem Reap and Sihanoukville. Visitors should be aware that bag snatching is becoming an increasing problem on tuk-tuks, motorcycle taxis, and while walking in the main towns. Due to the large numbers of tourists involved in road accidents on motorcycles, police in Siem Reap and other tourist centres have in the past banned rental outlets from hiring motorcycles to tourists - these bans are sporadic and may happen at any time.

There is political tension, tourists should avoid large gatherings, demonstrations, and political meetings. Travellers are also advised to avoid the Cambodian-Thai border areas because of ongoing border disputes; the Preah Vihear temple area has become particularly dangerous.

## Customs in Cambodia

Permission should be sought before taking pictures of people, particularly monks. Avoid touching someone on the head as it is considered the most sacred part of a person's body. When visiting religious sites, shoes should be removed, and shorts avoided; women in particular should dress modestly. A traditional greeting in Cambodia is a bow, bringing together the hands at chest level (similar to hand position for prayer). With foreigners Cambodians sometimes convert to the handshake. The simple rule is to respond with the same greeting you were given.

## Duty Free in Cambodia

Travellers to Cambodia are allowed to enter the country with a reasonable amount of tobacco products and spirits for personal use: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 200g of tobacco; about 350ml of perfume; and two litres of alcohol. Cambodian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations on the import or export of drugs, firearms, antiquities, and ivory.

## Doing Business in Cambodia

Developing a personal relationship in Cambodia is important before any business can be discussed, a process which might include shared meals and plenty of socialising. It is considered rude to cause any business associate to 'lose face' publically, so tact and politeness are important.

On introduction, the most senior in the group will be introduced first, and visitors are advised to do likewise so that the hosts understand the hierarchy of the group; the highest-ranking person on both sides should greet each other first and perform the introductions. A light handshake is appropriate on introduction, after which business cards can be exchanged using both hands; it is considered impolite to put the card away without making a show of studying it for a short while. If men are dealing with women they should wait and see if they extend a hand before doing so. Eye contact should be kept to a minimum.

In Cambodia people are addressed with the honorific title 'Lok' for a man and 'Lok Srey' for a woman followed with the first name or both the first and surname. Dress is conservative, but formal business suits will be out of place in the tropical heat; lightweight suits can be worn for formal meetings. Business hours are generally 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday, often with a long lunch from about 12pm till 2pm.

## Communication in Cambodia

The international access code for Cambodia is +855. The outgoing code is 001 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 00144 for the United Kingdom). Phnom Penh's area code is (0)23; the code for Siem Reap is (0)63. Internet cafes provide a fast and inexpensive service in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and other main towns. Free wifi is available at restaurants, cafes, and hotels in most tourist centred areas. Local prepaid SIM cards can be purchased for a reasonable price to avoid expensive international roaming fees.

## Tipping in Cambodia

Tips are not necessarily expected, but are welcomed in restaurants and hotels. Hotels often add a 10 percent service charge to the bill, but small amounts for personal services are appreciated, as salaries in the country are low. Tour guides should be tipped.

## Passport/Visa Note

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## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

US travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively, US nationals can obtain an e-visa before departure at [www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively, a visa can be obtained online before departure at [www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively a visa can be obtained online before departure at [www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

### Entry requirements for Australians:

Australian travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively an e-visa can be obtained online before departure at [/www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

### Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

Irish travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be

obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively visitors can obtain an e-visa online before departure from [www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

**Entry requirements for New Zealanders:**

New Zealand travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively visitors can obtain an e-visa online before departure from [www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

**Entry requirements for South Africans:**

South African travellers must have a passport valid for at least six months from date of arrival, and a visa, which can be obtained on arrival for stays of up to 30 days. Alternatively visitors can obtain an e-visa online before departure from [www.evisa.gov.kh](http://www.evisa.gov.kh)

## **Tourist Offices**

Ministry of Tourism, Phnom Penh +855 (0)23 884 974 or <http://www.tourismcambodia.org>.

## Cambodia Embassies

### **In the United States:**

Embassy of Cambodia, Washington DC, United States (also responsible for Canada): +1 206 726 7742.

### **In the United Kingdom:**

Embassy of Cambodia, London, United Kingdom (also responsible for Ireland): +44 20 8451 7850.

### **In Australia:**

Embassy of Cambodia, Canberra, Australia (also responsible for New Zealand): +61 (0)2 6273 5867.

## Foreign Embassies in Cambodia

### **American Embassy**

United States Embassy, Phnom Penh: +855 (0)23 728 000.

### **Canadian Embassy**

Canadian Embassy, Bangkok (also responsible for Cambodia): (66) 0 2646 4300.

### **British Embassy**

British Embassy, Phnom Penh: +855 (0)23 427 124.

### **Australian Embassy**

Australian Embassy, Phnom Penh: +855 (0)23 213 470.

### **Irish Embassy**

Irish Embassy, Hanoi, Vietnam (also responsible for Cambodia): +84 (0)4 974 3291.

### **New Zealand Embassy**

New Zealand Embassy, Bangkok, Thailand (also responsible for Cambodia): +66 (0)2 254 2530.

### **South African Embassy**

South African Embassy, Bangkok, Thailand (also responsible for Cambodia): + 66 (0)2 659 2900

## Currency

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## Overview of the Attractions in Cambodia

Cambodian attractions are unique, moulded by the country's culture and history, making sightseeing a real Khmer experience. The fact that Cambodia has only recently emerged as a popular tourist destination has ensured that visitors can still get an authentic experience of this ancient culture. Most people who holiday in Cambodia are enticed by the impressive ancient temple city of Angkor in Siem Riep. Once hooked by the ancient attractions however, tourists will discover that the more recent history of the Khmer Rouge, though tragic and frightening, is intriguing in its own way. The more sombre Phnom Penh attractions, such as the Killing Fields and Tuel Sleng Prison Museum, are contrasted to the vibrant Central Market and to the peacefulness of the river front and lake side, not to mention the habitually friendly local population. For even more relaxation, the beach towns of Kep and Sihanoukville on the Cambodian coast are well worth a visits, if only to catch a glimpse of the rare Irrawaddy river dolphins of the northeast.

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# Public Holidays in Cambodia

	2023	2024
Royal Plowing Day	Wed. May 8	Sun. May 26
International New Year's Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
Victory over Genocide Day	Sun. January 7	Sun. January 7
Meak Bochea	Mon. February 5	Sat. February 24
International Women's Day	Fri. March 8	Fri. March 8
Khmer New Year	Sat. April 13 to Tue. April 16	Sun. April 14 to Tue. Apr
Labour Day	Wed. May 1	Wed. May 1
Visakh Bochea	Sat. May 4	Wed. May 22
King Sihamoni's Birthday	Mon. May 13 to Wed. May 15	Mon. May 13 to Wed. Ma
International Childrens' Day	Sat. June 1	Sat. June 1
Bonn Pchum Ben	Sun. October 13 to Wed. October 16	Tue. October 1 to Thu. C
Constitution Day	Tue. September 24	Tue. September 24
King Sihamoni Coronation Day	Tue. October 29	Tue. October 29
Former King Norodom Sihanouk Commemoration Day	Tue. October 15	Tue. October 15
Water Festival	Tue. November 26 to Thu. November 28	Thu. November 14 to Sa
Independence Day	Sat. November 9	Sat. November 9
Human Rights Day	Tue. December 10	Tue. December 10