

Cambodia

The Kingdom of **Cambodia** (កម្ពុជា *kampuciə*) is in Southeast Asia. While the Angkor Wat commemorates Cambodia's glorious history, the country has been ravaged by colonialism, the Indochina Wars, and the Khmer Rouge regime, and remains one of Asia's poorest countries. However, in the 21st century, the country is getting back on its feet, and is today one of Asia's most popular tourist destinations.

Regions

Cardamom and Elephant Mountains

(Battambang, Kampot, Koh Kong, Pailin, Pursat, Sihanoukville, Bokor National Park, Kep) the western mountain ranges, gulf coast beaches and offshore islands

North-western Cambodia

(Angkor Archaeological Park, Anlong Veng, Siem Reap, Sisophon, Koh Ker, Poipet, Tonle Sap Lake, Preah Vihear) Angkor, the main reason most visitors come to Cambodia, plus a huge lake and the northern mountains

Mekong Lowlands and Central Plains (Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kompong Thom, Krek)

the capital city and the central flatlands

Eastern Cambodia (Banlung, Kratie, Sen Monorom, Stung Treng)

remote rural areas and national parks east of the mighty Mekong



Cambodia regions - Color-coded map



Cities

- **1 Phnom Penh** — the rough, drab capital is home to the beautiful Royal Palace, and is a good base for visiting historical sites related to the 1970s genocide
- **2 Banlung** — far northeastern provincial capital near some great waterfalls and national parks
- **3 Battambang** — the second biggest town in Cambodia, with bamboo trains
- **4 Kampot** — riverside town on the way to Sihanoukville, gateway to the Bokor National Park, and the pepper and durian capital of Cambodia
- **5 Koh Kong** — small border crossing town near the Thai border
- **6 Kampong Thom** — access to less well known (and less crowded) ancient temples and other sites
- **7 Kratie** — relaxed river town in the northeast on the Mekong, and an excellent place to get a close look at endangered river dolphins
- **8 Siem Reap** — access point for Angkor Wat and various other attractions in the north
- **9 Sihanoukville** — seaside town in the south, also known as Kompong Som




Royal palace

Other destinations

- **1 Angkor Archaeological Park** — home of the imposing ruins of ancient Khmer civilization
- **2 Bokor National Park** — ghostly former French hill resort
- **3 Kampong Cham** — nice countryside village on the Mekong river and good place to meet real Cambodia
- **4 Kep** — a seaside area which pre-dates Sihanoukville as the main beach resort in Cambodia; slowly being re-discovered by international travellers
- **5 Koh Ker** — more ancient ruins, north of Angkor
- **6 Poipet** — gritty border town that most overland visitors to Angkor pass through
- **7 Preah Vihear** — cliff-top temple pre-dating Angkor
- **8 Tonle Sap Lake** — huge lake with floating villages and SE Asia's premier bird sanctuary

Understand

Cambodia has had a pretty bad run of luck for the last half-millennium or so. Ever since the fall of Angkor in 1431, the once mighty **Khmer Empire** was plundered by all its neighbours. Cambodia was colonised by the French in the 19th century, and during the 1970s suffered heavy carpet bombing by the USA. After a false dawn of independence in 1953, Cambodia promptly plunged back into the horrors of civil war in 1970 to suffer the **Khmer Rouge's** incredibly brutal reign of terror followed by

	
Capital	Phnom Penh
Currency	riel (KHR)
Population	16 million (2017)
Electricity	230 volt / 50 hertz (NEMA 1-15, Europlug, BS 1363)

occupation by Vietnamese forces, and only after UN-sponsored elections in 1993 did the country begin to struggle back onto its feet.

In 2011, 10% of the population lived on less than US\$1.25 per day, down from 31% in 2007. However, 41% of the population still lived on less than US\$2 per day, and 72% lived on less than US\$3 per day. The provision of even basic services remains spotty. Short power outages are not uncommon—stay calm, the power will probably come back on in a few minutes. Political intrigue remains as complex and opaque as ever; but the security situation has improved immeasurably, and increasing numbers of visitors are rediscovering Cambodia's temples and beaches. Siem Reap, the gateway to Angkor, now sports luxury hotels, chic nightspots, ATMs, and an airport fielding flights from all over the region, while several beach destinations are increasingly well-trafficked. However, travel beyond the most popular tourist destinations is still an adventure.

Country code	+855
Time zone	UTC+07:00, Asia/Phnom_Penh
Emergencies	119 (emergency medical services), 117 (police), 118 (fire department)
Driving side	right
edit on Wikidata	

History

See also: [Indochina Wars](#)

The elaborate urban culture of Angkor and other sites can attest to the fact that the Khmer Empire was once wealthy and powerful. Its zenith came under Jayavarman VII (1181-c.1218), when the Empire made significant territorial gains. The Angkorian civilization harnessed Cambodia's water for agriculture through elaborate systems of canals and dams. Crops surplus permitted a sophisticated urban civilization, based on Hindu and Buddhist beliefs.

The period following the fall of the Khmer Empire has been described as Cambodia's Dark Ages. Climatic factors precipitated this fall, but eventually the Khmer Empire never recovered from the sacking by its neighbours, based in Ayutthaya (in modern day Thailand). Cambodia spent much of the next four hundred years squeezed and threatened by the rivalries of the expanding Siamese and Vietnamese Empires to the west and east. On the eve of French colonisation it was claimed that Cambodia was likely to cease to exist as an independent kingdom entirely, with the historian John Tully claiming "...there can be little doubt that their [the French] intervention prevented the political disappearance of the kingdom".



Relief battle at [Angkor](#)

The French came to dominate Cambodia as a protectorate from the 1860s, part of a wider ambition to control the area then termed Indochina (modern day Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos). The French were always more concerned with their possessions in Vietnam. Education of Cambodians was neglected for all but the established elite. Paradoxically, it was from this privileged colonial elite that many "Red Khmers" would later emerge. Japan's hold on Southeast Asia during the Second World War undermined French prestige, and following the Allied victory Prince Sihanouk declared independence. This was a relatively peaceful transition, and Sihanouk is today regarded by most Cambodians to be their father of independence.

Prince Sihanouk was noted for making very strange movies which he wrote, starred in, and directed. His rule was characterized at this point by a Buddhist revival and an emphasis on education. He succeeded in helping create an educated elite who became increasingly disenchanted with the lack of available jobs. As the economic situation in Cambodia deteriorated, many young people were attracted to the Indochinese Communist Party, and later the Khmer Rouge.

As the Second Indochina War spread to Cambodia's border (an important part of the "Ho Chi Minh trail"), the USA became increasingly concerned with events in the country. The US Air Force bombed Cambodia from 1964 to 1973, with the period from March 1969 to May 1970 being particularly intense. During this campaign, which was code-named Operation Menu, 540,000 tonnes of bombs were dropped. Estimates of the civilian death toll range from 150,000 to 500,000. In total, from 1964 to 1973 the US dropped 2.7 million tonnes of bombs on Cambodia, more than the combined amount dropped by all the Allies in all theatres during World War II.

In March 1970, while overseas visiting Moscow and Beijing, Sihanouk was overthrown by Lon Nol and other generals who were looked upon favourably by the United States. Sihanouk then put his support behind the Khmer Rouge. This change influenced many to follow suit. Meanwhile the Khmer Rouge followed the Vietnamese example and began to endear themselves to the rural poor.



Face at Prasat Bayon

Following a five-year struggle, Communist Khmer Rouge forces captured Phnom Penh in 1975 and ordered the evacuation of all cities and towns. Over one million people (and possibly many more) died from execution or enforced hardships. Those from the cities were known as "new" people and suffered worst at first. The rural peasantry were regarded as "base" people and fared better. However, the Khmer Rouge cruelty was inflicted on both groups. It also depended much upon where one was from. For example, people in the east generally suffered worse. It is debated whether or not the Khmer Rouge committed crimes against humanity or a protracted genocide. There are claims there was a disproportionate number of ethnic Chams killed, while the ethnic Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese also suffered persecution, with many of the ethnic Chinese fleeing to Western countries such as the United States and Australia by sea as refugees. Nonetheless, the Khmer also suffered often indiscriminate mass killings.

A 1978 Vietnamese invasion drove the Khmer Rouge forces into the countryside and ended many years of fighting, although the fighting would continue for some time in border areas. Cold War politics meant that despite the horrendous

Sorry, but this song is nothing about Pol Pot

Music lovers may have heard of *Sat Tee Touy* (Look at the Owl), an electronic music that was frequently described as Khmer Rouge propaganda music, with lyrics that *purports* to praise Pol Pot and Mao Zedong. The song is Cambodian... except it has *nothing* to do with Pol Pot or Khmer Rouge.

Originally a folk song about animals, the song was later remixed and filled with new lyrics to describe endemic drug and alcohol abuse in the 1970s. After the remixed version was discovered, a Czech YouTuber appended fake lyrics and translations to

crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge, they were the recognised government long after the liberation of the country by the Vietnamese. Indeed they continued to receive covert support and financing by the USA. Due to the devastating politics of the Khmer Rouge regime, there was virtually no infrastructure left. Institutions of higher education, money, and all forms of industry were destroyed in 1978, so the country had to be built up from scratch.

UN-sponsored elections in 1993 helped restore some semblance and sense of normalcy, as did the rapid diminution of the Khmer Rouge militia in the mid-1990s. The monarchy was restored, albeit as a constitutional monarchy, with Sihanouk becoming King of Cambodia. A coalition government, formed after national elections in 1998, brought renewed political stability and the surrender of remaining Khmer Rouge forces.

In the first two decades of the 21st century, as Cambodia's government has become more authoritarian, it has also pivoted from American and European support to forging closer ties with China. Amid increased Chinese investment, Cambodia has seen tremendous economic growth and a transition from agriculture to manufacturing, with more than 80% of Cambodians now above the poverty line.

the song in 2020, which makes the song a fairly well-known Internet meme. The prank was almost perfect (as Khmer is a small language with limited speakers worldwide), until Cambodian netizens found out the "lyrics" were totally nonsense. Since then MVs with the correct lyrics were rolled out. Perhaps the only relation between the Khmer Rouge and the song is that the band members were quite likely to be massacred by Khmer Rouge, given by the regime's enmity against intellectuals.

Economy

The two pillars of Cambodia's economy are textiles and tourism. The tourism industry has grown rapidly with over 6 million visitors arriving in 2018, mainly from China and from neighboring countries. The long-term development of the economy after decades of war remains a daunting challenge, as the population lacks education and productive skills, particularly in the poverty-ridden countryside. The government is addressing these issues with assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors. Construction of new roads, irrigation, and agriculture are underway to rejuvenate rural areas.

Climate

Cambodia is tropical and its climate dominated by monsoons, so season are wet or dry, rather than the four seasons of cooler regions of the world. Nov-Mar is relatively windy and cool and is the most popular time to visit. Apr-May is hot and dry, and temperatures may peak at 40 C. Jun-Sep is the wet and green season.

Holidays

Cambodia has a number of public holidays, some traditional ones which change based on the lunar calendar and other memorial holidays that are fixed.

In addition, Chinese New Year is fairly widely celebrated. Bus fares increase and lodging gets booked up around this time as both local residents and visitors from nearby countries move around. Make all your bookings at least a couple of days in advance around this time.

Tourist information

- [Cambodia Tourism \(https://www.tourismcambodia.com/\)](https://www.tourismcambodia.com/) website

Talk

See also: [Khmer phrasebook](#)

The official language of Cambodia is **Khmer** (ភាសាខ្មែរ *phiəsaə khmae*), which unlike most languages in the region is not tonal, but makes up for it with a large assortment of consonant and vowel clusters. It is an Austroasiatic language that is related to Vietnamese, but the two languages are not mutually intelligible. Vietnamese was more influenced by Chinese, while Khmer was more influenced by [Sanskrit](#).



Good advice for learning the language

Most younger Cambodian have learnt **English** in school, but proficiency is generally poor. That said, frontline staff in the tourism industry and business people who deal with international clients are usually able to speak English. In tourist markets, most vendors know enough English to complete a basic transaction, though many also carry calculators into which they punch numbers and show you the screen to indicate the price.

A few educated senior citizens can also speak [French](#), a relic of the colonial period when it was the medium of instruction in schools. Because the Khmer Rouge targeted for extermination anyone capable of speaking a foreign language, actually encountering anyone fluent in French is very rare outside Phnom Penh. [German](#) and other European tongues can be found in the tourist centres (but are even rarer than French). [Korean](#) is also a popular language for tourist industry workers, and [Mandarin](#) is increasingly common due to the large numbers of Chinese tourists who visit Cambodia. Nevertheless, if you cannot speak Khmer, English remains your best bet.

Chinese dialects, Thai and Vietnamese are spoken by some people in Phnom Penh. Thai is spoken by some locals in the northwestern provinces near the border with Thailand, while Vietnamese is spoken by some locals in the southeastern provinces near the border with Vietnam. [Teochew](#) is the main dialect spoken among the Cambodian Chinese community.

Get in

Entry requirements

Citizens of the following countries may enter Cambodia without a visa for tourism provided their stay does not exceed the following number of days:

- 14 days – Brunei, Myanmar, Thailand
- 15 days – Seychelles
- 30 days – Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam

Citizens of all other countries need a visa. The website of the Cambodian embassy in Washington, D.C. (<https://www.embassyofcambodiadc.org/how-to-get-a-visa.html>) has the latest details.

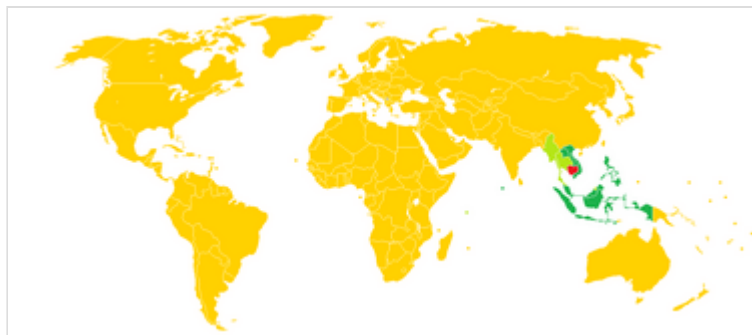
Citizens of most countries can get a visa-on-arrival (VOA). Staff may try to charge more at some border crossings (including airports), but hold out for the official price, especially at major crossings. VOA is available at both international airports, all six international border crossings with Thailand, some international border crossings with Vietnam, and at the main border crossing with Laos.

Members of the crew and passengers of cruise boats can obtain a VOA at the **Sihanoukville Autonomous Port**. Paperwork arrival in the new marina. You must first report data on the boat, the crew and passport copies to the office of the Marina Oceania Harbour Master.

Visas can also be obtained online and at Cambodian embassies and consulates.

- **Tourist visas** – Valid for one stay of up to 30 days. Those issued in advance expire 90 days after issue. In Phnom Penh (or elsewhere via agencies), tourist visas can be extended only once, allowing an additional 30 days at a cost of US\$30.
- **Ordinary visa** or **Type-E** – The best choice for stays over two months and/or multiple entries, as they can be extended indefinitely (approx US\$290 for a one year extension) and have multiple entry status when extended. Most Phnom Penh travel agencies process the extensions. Foreign nationals of some countries (such as India) require prior permission from the Department of Immigration or the Ministry of the Interior to obtain an Ordinary visa. Such visitors can also enter the country on a tourist visa and subsequently apply for said permission at the Department of Immigration near the airport in Phnom Penh, which, if granted, will enable them to leave the country and re-enter on an ordinary visa

To apply for a visa, you may need (depending on where you apply) one or two passport-size (35x45 mm) photos, a passport which is valid for at least 6 months and has at least one completely blank visa page remaining (the visa is a full-page sticker), and clean US dollar notes with which to pay the fee (expect to pay a substantially higher price if paying in a local currency). Passport photocopies may also be required when applying at some embassies/consulates, but not for VOA. Also, you don't need a passport photo for VOA at Phnom Penh airport, Poipet, or Siem Reap. If it is still required elsewhere, you may be able to have them scan the one on your passport for an extra US\$3.



A map showing the visa requirements of Cambodia, with countries in blue and light blue having visa-free access; and countries in gold and striped yellow green having visa on arrival



Cambodian immigration checkpoints which accept e-visa or visa on arrival

At Phnom Penh airport head to the **Visa on Arrival** desk, join the queue to the left, where your application form is reviewed — you should have been given the form on the plane or before boarding. Then move to the right and wait for your name to be called. You then pay and receive your passport with the visa. Officials have difficulties pronouncing Western names so stay alert and listen out for any of your names in your passport, any of your given names or surname may be called. Once reunited with your passport, join the immigration queue.

Visas in advance (online or from an embassy/consulate) save time at the border but are more expensive. However, you do get to skip the queues of people applying for the visa's delivery, although sometimes you may simply spend the saved time waiting at the airport baggage carousel for your suitcase.

In Poipet, several scams abound. A favourite is the Cambodian immigration officers ask tourists to pay 1,200 baht (about US\$35) for a visa on arrival, instead of US\$30. Stand firm but stay friendly and keep smiling, they rarely insist. Most visitors are asked for a mysterious separate 100 baht fee on top of the US\$30 fee. If you insist a few times that this does not exist, you will be grumpily told to have a seat and wait, after which you will receive your visa no problem after just a few minutes (at least, when there's not a long line).

If you are exiting Cambodia to enter Thailand with the aim of getting a visa on arrival there, the Cambodian airline authorities may point out that you need to have a minimum of US\$600 in cash. This guideline seems to be enforced especially for Indian tourists and possibly more stringently for single travellers.

E-Visa

Citizens of most nations can apply for an e-Visa online at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation website (<https://www.evisa.gov.kh/>)**. The *30-days tourist visa* costs US\$36 (Dec 2023). The application requires a digital photograph of yourself (in .jpg format) — you can scan your passport photo or have a passport sized photograph taken with a digital camera. Don't forget to pay, or the application process will be on hold. The visa will be confirmed within 3 business days, but mostly after 1½ days. Email delivery of the visa (PDF) seems not to be working as of 2023, so better check the website regularly to know the status of your application.

Having an e-Visa protects you from various scams at the border, e.g. border agents demanding a small bribe for processing your VOA. While an e-Visa is more expensive at first glance, the stress and extra hassles of obtaining a VOA outweigh this. Bus companies operating the Ho Chi Minh City—Phnom Penh and Bangkok—Siem Reap routes typically demand US\$35-40 for the VOA (already at departure) to "speed up" the border procedures. Not agreeing to the extra charge is almost impossible and attempting to obtain the visa independently may result in you being stranded at the border as immigration officers try to extract bribes from you. Also, if you are not relying on US dollars for travel, an e-Visa is convenient and can be paid for by credit card.

There are other websites pretending to make a Cambodian e-visa. At best, these are just on-line travel agencies which will charge you more and get the same visa for you; at worst, you may end up with a fake e-visa — avoid them!

You need to print **two** copies (one for entry and one for exit) of the PDF visa, cut out the visa parts and keep them with your passport.

E-Visas are only valid for entry by air (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville) and at the following land border crossings:

- Bavet (Svay Rieng)
- Cham Yeam (Koh Kong)
- Poi Pet (Banteay Meanchey)
- Tropaeng Kreal Border Post

You may **exit** the country with an e-visa via **any** border crossing.

Fingerprinting

Cambodian Immigration authorities now **fingerprint** visitors on arrival and departure. This takes place at major entry points, such as airports, Poipet (on the Bangkok-Siem Reap road), Cham Yeam (near Koh Kong), and Bavet (on the Ho Chi Minh City-Phnom Penh road). No fingerprints are taken at the latter crossing when going by (express) bus from Ho Chi Minh City.

Smaller crossings such as Chong Sa-Ngam/Choam (for Anlong Veng) aren't equipped with hand scanners. Ban Pakkard/Pshar Prum (for Pailin) now collects fingerprints. You may not be fingerprinted if you are on a direct bus and your driver has paid to move things along faster (observed at Bavet going to Phnom Penh).

By plane

Cambodia has international airports at Phnom Penh (**PNH**^{IATA}) and Siem Reap (**SAI**^{IATA}).

Direct flights connect Phnom Penh International Airport (previously Pochentong International Airport) with cities all over East and Southeast Asia, and Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport has a slightly more limited range of flights.

Travellers going specifically to visit Angkor and other ruins in North-western Cambodia should try to use Siem Reap as it's the main launching point and only minutes away from the main sites. For the beaches of the southwest and most off-the-beaten-path destinations, Phnom Penh is a better launching point with more extensive domestic bus connections.

For flights between Bangkok and Siem Reap, AirAsia is mostly a lot cheaper than Bangkok Airways. When looking for those flights, make sure to check for Bangkok's second airport Don Mueang (**DMK**^{IATA}).

Low-cost carrier Air Asia (<http://www.airasia.com>) has flights from Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok to Phnom Penh and Kuala Lumpur to Siem Reap, while Jetstar Asia (<http://www.jetstarasia.com>) has begun flying from Singapore to Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. HK Express (<http://www.hkexpress.com>) flies to Siem Reap every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday from Hong Kong.



Phnom Penh international airport



Kampuchea Airlines at Phnom Penh airport

Other airlines operating flights to/from Cambodia include Asiana Airlines (<http://flyasiana.com/>), Bangkok Airways (<http://www.bangkokair.com>), China Southern Airlines (<http://www.csair.com/en>), Eva Airways (<http://www.evaair.com>), Korean Air (<http://www.koreanair.com>), Lao Airlines (<http://www.laoairlines.com>), Malaysia Airlines (<http://www.malaysiaairlines.com>) (MAS), Siem Reap Airways (<http://www.siemreapairways.com>) (a subsidiary of Bangkok Airways), Singapore Airlines (<http://www.singaporeair.com>), Thai Airways International (<https://thaiairways.com/>), and Vietnam Airlines (<http://www.vietnamairlines.com>).

By road

In the list of borders below, the Cambodian town comes second; eg: Aranyaprathet is the border town in Thailand, while Poipet is in Cambodia.

If travelling across the border by bus, make sure you only use reputable bus companies, as it is common for unscrupulous companies to advertise a "VIP service", only for them to leave you stranded at the border, with no onward transportation into the interior of Cambodia. The main crossings with Thailand and Vietnam are also hotbeds for scams and corruption. **Giant Ibis** is one of the more reliable and popular bus companies on the Bangkok-Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City-Phnom Penh routes, but they consequently charge a premium for this. Most bus companies charge a \$5-10 border crossing fee on top of the bus fare and the price of the visa-on-arrival, and you will be asked to wait on board the bus or at the duty-free shop while staff take your passport and process you through immigration. Attempting to process yourself through immigration might mean getting stranded at the border as immigration officers attempt to extract bribes from you.

Thailand

All six border crossings with Thailand are open 07:00-20:00. Each offers Cambodian visas on arrival. All the crossings are served by paved roads in both countries.

Most Thai buses run to *but not across* each of the crossings, though there are direct bus services from Bangkok to Siem Reap and Phnom Penh.

In Cambodia, four of the six border towns (Poipet, Koh Kong, Daun Lem and O'Smach) are directly served by buses. Pailin, Anlong Veng and Samraong (each less than 20 km from a border) are each served by buses; motorbikes and shared taxis connect each of the towns with their respective border crossings.

Cambodia's **busiest land crossing** is at Aranyaprathet—Poipet on the Bangkok—Siem Reap road in North-western Cambodia. Long the stuff of nightmares, the roads are now paved all the way from Poipet to Siem Reap, Battambang, Phnom Penh and the main border crossing with Vietnam. However, it is also notorious for being a hotbed of scams and

Scam alert

Beware of scams when entering Cambodia overland. Most common is the inflation of the visa fee from the official US\$30 to 1,200 baht (US\$35) charged by Cambodian custom officers but it is easy to deal with. In Poipet which is a visa-free zone, you can always change your Thai baht into U.S. dollars with cigarette vendors or restaurants. Insist on paying for your visa with US dollars. When dealing with custom officers, standing firm and keeping smiling will give you a long way to go. If you don't have an ID photo for the visa application, don't let them charge you more than US\$2.

corruption, and officers in the Cambodian visa office will usually demand bribes of at least US\$5 in order to process your visa-on-arrival.

Coastal Cambodia and the southern part of the Cardamom and Elephant Mountains region is served by the Hat Lek/Koh Kong border. The road goes all the way to Sihanoukville. From Trat in Thailand, there are minibuses to the border. In Cambodia, minibuses or taxis connect the border to Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh. The Koh Kong - Sihanoukville boat service no longer runs.

The former **Khmer Rouge** stronghold of Anlong Veng is close to the Chong Sa-Ngam (in Si Saket Province)/Choam border. Pol Pot was killed and burned within walking distance of immigration.

Improving roads in **Northwestern Cambodia** are making Samraong emerge as a transport hub. It is close to the Chong Jom (in Surin Province)/O'Smach border and well linked with Siem Reap.

Eastern Thailand is connected to Battambang and Siem Reap by the Ban Pakard (in Chanthaburi Province)/ Phra Prom (near Pailin) crossing, which offers a less stressful and more scenic alternative to the more northerly major crossing at Poipet.

The **geographically closest crossing to Battambang** is that at Ban Leam (in Chanthaburi Province)/Damrieng. **Paramount Angkor** run buses to Battambang.

Vietnam

See also: Entry requirements and visa for Cambodia

See also: Vietnam#Cambodia

All land border crossings into Cambodia provide visa-on-arrival (VOA), but only a few will accept e-Visa — see above.

The **main crossing** is the **Moc Bai—Bavet crossing** on the Ho Chi Minh City—Phnom Penh road.

If travelling on foot or individually the expected bribe is US\$5. Also, Vietnamese and Cambodian border procedures don't bother if you cross by motorbike, meaning you could just continue travelling from Vietnam into Cambodia with your Vietnamese licence plate.

If traveling by bus, you vacate the vehicle at both countries' checkpoints and walk by or through it. Afterwards you are usually brought to the bus company's restaurant or duty-free shop for lunch. Here you will wait while the bus company's staff takes care of your passport and the immigration procedures back

You can also get your visa in advance - either from a Cambodian embassy/consulate (via an agency if necessary) or from the e-Visa website. See the Visas section for full details.

Past scams have included telling travellers they have to get visas from a consulate at inflated prices before going to the border (not true), fines for not presenting a vaccination certificate (even though this is not mandatory), charging 50 baht for a (bogus) SARS health form, and enforcing an imaginary US\$100 to Cambodian riel exchange requirement (at lousy rates).

at the border. Make sure to use a reputable bus company, to avoid problems at the border — see online rating and reviews. Most bus companies can be found along *Pham Ngu Lao Street* south of *September 23 Park* in HCMC.

Buses between Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh cost US\$22–25 and take around 6–7 hr. All bus companies in Ho Chi Minh City charge US\$40 for the Cambodian VOA, i.e. an extra US\$10, to "speed up" the border crossing process. This will be collected in Ho Chi Minh City already, when entering the bus. Not agreeing to the extra charge is almost impossible and attempting to obtain the visa independently may result in being stranded at the border.

You can avoid the whole ordeal by getting your visa in advance online (<https://www.evisa.gov.kh>) (T e-Visa US\$36), or through a consulate/embassy. In case of the e-Visa, this is actually cheaper, considering the US\$10 extra bus companies demand for the VOA in Ho Chi Minh City. And it is especially convenient for travelers not relying on US dollars, but on their credit card or other currencies. No bribe is demanded in case of e-Visas and bus companies can also print your e-Visa.

Through tickets to Siem Reap are also available, but it is cheaper to buy a ticket to Phnom Penh and then arrange onward transport on one of the many connecting buses.

Close to the coast is the **Prek Chak–Xa Xia crossing**. Buses run between Ha Tien in Vietnam to Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh in Cambodia.

Coastal areas are also served by the **Tinh Bien–Phnom Den crossing** near Chau Doc in Vietnam.

The **Xa Mat–Tro Peang Plong crossing** on the Ho Chi Minh City–Kampong Cham road is not well served by public transport but may be useful for accessing Kampong Cham and Eastern Cambodia.

The **Le Thanh–Oyadav crossing** connects Pleiku in the Central Highlands of Vietnam and Banlung in North Eastern Cambodia. The Vietnamese entry checkpoint closes to foreigners at 17:30.

Laos

Stung Treng in Cambodia is connected to Pakse and the Four Thousand Islands region of Laos by the Voeung Kam/Dom Kralor border. Onward transportation is not always available. Cambodian and Lao visas can be obtained at the border. Travel agencies on both sides offer border crossing packages.

If you're buying a ticket from a destination in Laos to one in Cambodia (one of the most common being Don Det to Siem Reap) and you want the border crossing to be as trouble-free as possible, accept that you will have to pay an additional US\$10 on top of the US\$30 visa-on-arrival fee (as of 2019). The US\$10 are made up of:

- US\$5 Visa processing fee (visa price declared as \$35)
- \$2 Stamp fee on the Lao side

Scam alert

Operators for buses going from Southern Laos to Cambodia will ask passengers for an additional US\$10 on top of the visa-on-arrival fee to facilitate the border crossing. Not agreeing to the extra charge and attempting to obtain the visa independently more often than not results in being abandoned at the border; all bus companies are involved since non-cooperation would likely see them being denied to cross and thus hurt their

- \$2 Stamp fee on the Cambodian side
- \$1 Assistance fee for the facilitator as he gets the Lao exit stamp and Cambodian visa for you

business. See further below for more information and instructions how to avoid paying these unofficial fees, requiring a lot of patience and endurance from you.

The following is what roughly to expect if you choose to go down this way.

A random guy will enter your bus once near the border, demanding passports and US\$40; other times, you will get off the bus at the Laos immigration checkpoint, and said guy will sit on a table, with another facilitator directing everyone to go there and hand over your passport and money. You will be asked to fill out the visa-on-arrival application form, sometimes this already happens on the bus. The form is handed in alongside with your passport.

Walk over from the Lao to the Cambodian checkpoint once being told so to receive your entry stamp after providing fingerprints and having a photo of you taken. Your passport, now having a new Cambodian visa in it, will be returned some time between crossing the two checkpoints or in the building on the Cambodian side, depending on the speed of the facilitators and the immigration officials.

Once you receive your entry stamp, you'll exit the building and walk to the makeshift restaurants five minutes from the border building, where your bus/minivan will depart (in theory) after all your fellow passengers have arrived. Often, you will end up waiting one to two hours. **Warning:** People booked on VIP buses to Siem Reap or Phnom Penh will often find that they have to take a crammed minivan rather than the booked bus, and that several transfers may occur on the way. Protest is fruitless as there are only tourist buses around; this border is used by comparatively few locals.

It is possible to circumvent all these unofficial fees – but only if you don't get intimidated easily and possess a high frustration tolerance. One crucial component to greatly increase your chances to reach your destination in Cambodia on the same day is getting your visa in advance. Also, to avoid being abandoned by your bus, it is best to *not* book any transport from the border; read the whole instructions to understand why. The following is only feasible if staying on one of the 4000 Islands or in the immediate surroundings.

First, arrange your transport *to* (but not from) the border. This can be booked with any agency on Don Det, Don Khon or in Ban Nakasang. Since denying to pay the unofficial fees will result in your crossing being delayed for an unknown amount of time and because you will need to find onward transportation, it is sensible to get to the border as early as possible. As boats only start to leave the islands from 08:00, a tuk-tuk (70,000 kip for two people after bargaining) is likely the best choice; you can find many at Ban Nakasang's market. Choosing a shared minivan instead will be cheaper (60,000 kip for two people) but you'll almost certainly have to wait, and coming with other travellers who are likely to pay the fees will weaken your case.

Once at the border, proceed to the immigration counters (past an official-looking sign stipulating various fees) and hand over your passport; you'll now be asked to pay US\$2 to receive the exit stamp. If it's a weekend, you will hear that this is an "overtime fee", while on weekdays, they might say anything from "ink fee" to "administration fee" to giving no explanation whatsoever. **Politely and tactfully refuse to pay** if they cannot provide an official receipt (which they won't). Now wait, and insist on not taking your passport back before it's stamped. Do not leave without exit stamp, as the Cambodian officials will refuse to process you without it. The Lao officials may ask you to go back to Laos, ignore you and play on their

phones, and/or they will shut the counter and pretend to finish up for the day. Stand your ground, the stamp will come – the waiting time might be anything between 15 minutes to several hours though. Bring water, some food, determination, patience, and do not lose your temper or get angry at the officials; they are collecting the money by order from above, and bad behaviour will not speed up things.

The third step is proceeding to and dealing with the Cambodian immigration police. When walking over to the other side, you might see a tent and people asking you to come over for a "health check" that costs US\$1. Reports on the net suggest that you can simply walk past, but a probably better, less confronting way is to show a medical/travel insurance certificate, a vaccination record booklet or anything resembling the two former, as they will then waive the check for you. Cambodian officials will not require this once you enter the building.

Hopefully you already have a Cambodian visa; if not, you will now have to go to the visa-on-arrival counter, where the officer in charge will demand US\$35 for a tourist visa (type "T" – the official price published by the Cambodian government being US\$30). Unlike their Lao counterparts, the Cambodian officials are quick to raise their voice and yell at you if you don't give in to their demands. Different reports on the net suggest that standing your ground will also get you the visa for the official price eventually, again with the waiting time totally depending on the officer and how diplomatic your behaviour is.

At last, you'll have to get your entry stamp. If you obtained your visa in advance, you will be asked for US\$2 after providing your fingerprints and having your photo taken. Refusing to pay will once more result in short tempers, but according to a number of reports the Cambodian officials are quick to give in, saving you another possibly hour-long wait. It is unknown whether they will still ask for this fee if they relented earlier by giving you the visa on arrival for US\$30.

If you managed to get through without paying: Congratulations. Your last job for the day is to find onward transport to your destination, which shouldn't prove too difficult if you arrived before mid-afternoon; just don't expect a comfortable seat (but rather sitting in the aisle), as travellers who pre-booked their transport have priority. If you had a bus booked already, chances are that it's gone. It may be a lot less stressful to just go as far as Stung Treng, spend the night there and continue your journey the following morning. Tickets to all major destinations can be booked at any guesthouse in town.

By boat

From **Laos** - Since the reopening of the land border, it's no longer possible to take a boat from Laos to reach Cambodia.

From **Thailand** - There are no ferry services between Cambodia and Thailand. The Sihanoukville-Koh Kong ferry no longer runs.

From **Vietnam** it's possible to travel between Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh on a road and boat combination tour. Also, fast boats leave daily from Chau Doc in Vietnam's Mekong Delta and take 5 hr to reach Phnom Penh. Both options use the so called **Song Tien landport** border crossing on the banks of the Mekong River. Chau Doc is a 4-hr drive from Ho Chi Minh City. See Phnom Penh#By boat and Vietnam#By boat for more details.

By train

There are no trains to Cambodia, but you can get very close. Thai trains run from Hua Lamphong terminus in Bangkok to Ban Klong Luk right next to the border crossing to Poipet in Cambodia. There is a train station in Poipet but Cambodian trains do not go all the way there (2024) and terminate at Battambang. Several companies operate regular minibuses to Battambang from opposite Poipet station. In Battambang you can continue your journey to Phnom Penh by train.

Get around

By plane

The domestic aviation scene in Cambodia has improved. Three airports operate scheduled passenger flights: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville.

The main operator is Cambodia Angkor Air (<http://www.cambodiaangkorair.com>), a joint venture between the government and Vietnam Airlines, which flies between Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, and airports in China, Thailand, and Vietnam.

A charter service, Aero Cambodia (<http://www.aerocambodia.com>), operates from Phnom Penh to Cambodia's other 16 airports using twin engine 10-70 seat aircraft.

By bus

Longer journeys in Cambodia can be taken by **bus**, **pickup truck** or **shared taxi**. In many towns, whichever of these are available will be found at the local market square. Larger towns and cities will have bus stations. Buses may also serve their companies' offices, which may be more convenient than the bus station: this is particularly true in Siem Reap.

Giant Ibis and **Mekong Express** have the best reputation for comfort, safety, and reliability and consequently charge a premium. **Sorya** (formerly *Ho Wah Genting*) and **GST** offer a slightly cheaper no-frills service. **Capitol** runs between its central offices, making for city centre-to-city centre travel. Ramshackled peasant mover **Paramount Angkor Transport** is great for accessing more remote places but low on comfort and safety. Check their rating and reviews on Google Maps when going with any of them.

Guesthouses and travel agents will be able to arrange tickets for a US\$1–2 commission. You can also use your preferred booking website, like 12Go.Asia (<https://12go.asia/>), Baolau (<https://www.baolau.com/>), BookMeBus (<https://www.bookmebus.com/>), or Camboticket (<https://www.camboticket.com/>). Generally bus travel is cheap, but after COVID prices have gone up with journeys between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap or Sihanoukville now costing at least US\$10.

Bus safety is a big problem in Cambodia. On Hwy 5, between Phnom Penh and Battambang, there are dozens of bus crashes annually, many of them horrendous, with multiple fatalities. There are even bus-on-bus crashes. Drivers are untrained, impatient, and (according to those working in roadside gas stations) sometimes drunk. Most of these accidents go unreported, but frequent travellers on Highway 5 can typically observe half a dozen bus crashes in a month. Night buses are particularly risky — again, Giant Ibis and Mekong Express have the best reputations.

Bring along something warm if you don't like freezing air conditioning and earplugs if you don't like Khmer karaoke. There are a few night-time services but most buses leave in the morning and the last ones leave in the afternoon. Among night buses Giant Ibis and Mekong Express are the most comfortable, with nearly flat bunks (though if you're taller than 1.65 m or so you'll have to sleep with your knees bent).

Buses do not generally have an on-board toilet, but do usually have a 15-minute rest stop at the half-way point or every 1½-2 hr.

By taxi

For short distances, the once-ubiquitous motorcycle taxis have been replaced by **tuk-tuks**, motorized three-wheeled rickshaws. Anywhere remotely touristy will have plenty of drivers hanging around offering you a tuk-tuk ride. Agree on a fare and make sure the driver knows your destination *before* you get in the vehicle. Many drivers speak very little English, and some are illiterate even in Khmer, so communicating your destination can sometimes be a challenge. If you want to avoid all that, consider a ride hailing app like PassApp, which can be used to call rickshaws or regular taxis and determines the price automatically (you pay in cash). Even with PassApp, though, pay attention to where your driver is going because sometimes they get confused about the directions. Try to learn the Khmer words for "left" and "right". And if you plan to ride more than 10–15 minutes in a tuk-tuk, consider buying a paper dust mask like a fair number of locals do, to protect you from dirt, dust, and traffic exhaust.

Some believe taxis are safer for inter-city travel, but taxis also often go way too fast, and so are involved in numerous fatal accidents. The front seat in a taxi from Phnom Penh to Battambang should cost you about US\$25.

The main ride-hailing apps in Cambodia are **Grab** (<https://www.grab.com/kh/en/>) and **PassApp** (<https://www.passapptaxis.com/>). Of the two, PassApp is available in more cities and is usually slightly cheaper, but requires you to pay the driver in cash, while Grab gives you the option of paying the driver by credit card.

By boat

Ferries operate seasonally along many of the major rivers. Major routes include Phnom Penh to Siem Reap and Siem Reap to Battambang. The Sihanoukville to Koh Kong ferry no longer runs. Boats are slower than road transport, charge higher prices for foreigners, and are sometimes overcrowded and unsafe. Then again, Cambodia's highways are also dangerous, and boats are probably the safer of the two options. The high speed boat from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap costs US\$33 and takes about 6 hours, departing at 07:30, and offers a spectacular view of rural life along the Tonle Sap River.

There are also a few luxury boats operating between Siem Reap, Phnom Penh and Saigon. For something around US\$150/day including accommodation, food and excursions, it's a good alternative to regular boat service.

The boat trip between Siem Reap and Battambang takes longer (especially in the dry season), and is less comfortable and more expensive than taking a seat in a share taxi, but is favoured by some travellers for its up-close view of subsistence farming (and hundreds of waving children) along the river. Taking the boat late in the dry season (Apr-May) is not advisable as low water levels mean that you must transfer to smaller vessels in mid-river.


By train

Two daily passenger train connections exist with the following schedule and prices:

■ Phnom Penh–Sihanoukville (6 hr):


- Phnom Penh (07:00) – Takeo (08:40, US\$6) – Kep (10:20, US\$8) – Kampot (10:40, US\$9) – Sihanoukville (13:00, US\$10)
- Sihanoukville (14:00) – Kampot (16:00, US\$6) – Kep (16:20) – Takeo (18:00, US\$8) – Phnom Penh (20:00, US\$10)



Bamboo Train near Battambang 

■ Phnom Penh–Battambang (6½–7 hr):

- Phnom Penh (06:40) – Pursat (10:40, US\$7) – Maung Russey (12:00) – Battambang (13:00, US\$8)
- Battambang (15:00) – Maung Russey (16:00) – Pursat (17:30, US\$4) – Phnom Penh (22:00, US\$8)

The train is also supposed to stop at Broteas Lang, Komareachea, Tani, Toukmeas, Kompong Trach, Veal Renh, Holy Hill, and Preak Treng Beach (Sihanoukville leg), and at Batdeung, Tbeng Khpos, Romeas, Kdol, Bom Nak, Beung Khna, and Osalao (Battambang leg) according to the timetable, but it's not clear whether it will actually stop there. A leaflet of all stops is available at the ticket office. All information on schedule, travel times, and prices are available on the official ticket website (<http://royalrailway.easybook.com>) ( +855 78888582, +855 78888583). (The website is not encrypted, so it's better to buy train tickets in the station.)

The carriages have fans and windows that can open, but no air conditioning. Toilets are also available. The first stretch west passes through ramshackle camps built along the rail line, and sprawling suburban construction, then a non-descript countryside. The return trip to Phnom Penh gets in very late, and it's difficult to find a tuktuk or taxi. You will probably be exhausted from hours of riding on the train, and worse with a tuktuk driver going in circles at night trying to find your hotel. Probably easier to just walk if you have little luggage and a good map.

By thumb

While Cambodians do not consider this a reasonable way forward, you will find many interested locals that pickup the odd foreigner at the side of the road for a ride.

While in Vietnam you will be having troubles to even find a car, many well-off people in Cambodia possess a car and seem to identify with the fortunate Westerners and thus invite them for a ride. However, it could also just be the Buddhist mentality that brings people to help out.

Thus, major roads are easy to get forward on. In super remote areas you may have issues, but there even a motorbike driver might stop.

By car

The Cambodian government has upgraded roads throughout the country. Finding an unpaved road is actually quite a challenge and most travellers will not have any horror stories of car-swallowing ruts or wet-season quagmires. For the time being, notable **unpaved** roads that would be of use to travellers are: Battambang-Koh Kong (a great dirt bike adventure across the mountains or a long detour by bus via Phnom Penh), access to the Banteay Chhmar temples (a high-quality unsealed road, as good as a sealed road during the dry season) and the road between Sen Monorom and Banlung (if there's any remote jungle left in Cambodia, it'll be here). The borders, coast and major cities are all well-connected with good roads.

Roads between the capital Phnom Penh and the tourist resorts of Sihanoukville and Siem Reap are busy and in reasonable condition. Most of the smaller roads are in poor condition. Road safety is particularly affected by unpredictable driving, poor car maintenance and overloaded vehicles. Accidents are frequent. Travel by road only during the day.

A foreigner needs a local driving licence to drive a vehicle, and without it, insurance may not cover damage in the event of an accident. An international driving licence is not officially sufficient to drive a vehicle in Cambodia. The competent authority for driving licences is the Cambodian Ministry of Transport and Public Works.

By motorcycle

Motorcycle rentals are available in many towns, with the notable exception of Siem Reap, which has outlawed the practice. Be careful if driving yourself: driving practices are vastly different from developed countries. Local road 'rules' will also differ from city to city. Moreover, to drive in Cambodia you're required to have a Cambodian driver's license; international driving permits are not accepted. If you consider traveling alone, it's worth remembering that English is rarely spoken outside of main towns and cities, and hazards are numerous, including the possibility of land mines. For this reason, guided tours are worth considering.

See

Cambodia's main sight is so famous and grand, it's also one of the prime destinations in all of Asia. The magnificent and awe-inspiring temples of the Angkor Archaeological Park draw huge and diverse crowds, who come to admire their enormous symbolism and sheer magnitude. It's a place not to be missed on any trip to the region, worth every bit of the often sweltering heat. Finding a somewhat private

spot for **sundown over the temples** can be a challenge, but the colours are wonderful. Start early to beat the crowds at the mysterious **Ta Prohm** complex. Made extra famous as a filming location for Tomb Raider, the ruins overgrown by huge jungle trees make for one of the most atmospheric sites at Angkor.

Close to the capital city of Phnom Penh, the **Choeung Ek Memorial**, better known as the **Killing fields** — while shocking and sad — leaves a long-lasting impression. Excellent tours are available, providing an insight into the outrageous atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. For further insights, the **Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum** is the main place to visit.



A small part of Angkor Wat



- Go on a boat party in Phnom Penh
- Go hiking in Bokor National Park
- See endangered river dolphins in Kratie
- Boat through to the floating village and have lunch aboard the floating restaurant near Siem Reap

Do

- **Beaches** – Abundant in the southwest of Cambodia and on the various islands. Also Sihanoukville is considered a beach city.
- **Meditation** – Cambodia is predominantly Buddhist and there are at least three of the in India famous Dhamma Vipassana centers around the country. Courses start at 10 days and are not as overrun as in Thailand or India but equally trust worthy.
- **Motorbike** – A convenient and recommended way to explore the towns surrounding an area is by motorbike. They can be rented from as little as US\$5.
- **Shooting ranges** – Due to its military history and violent past, but also due to rich elites in the country, there exit several shooting ranges in Cambodia where regular people can shot guns and rifles like an AK-47 or the M16 without further certification. At least three ranges exist around Phnom Penh, one in Sihanoukville and one in Siem Reap, even though the reputation and prices of the latter one are debatable. A regular rifle with 30 rounds goes for around US\$60, but there are also sniper rifles, UZIs, rocket launcher, grenates, and hand guns available for up to US\$200.

Buy

Money

The **Cambodian riel**, denoted by the symbol "៛" (ISO code: **KHR**), and the **United States dollar (USD)** are both official currencies. The riel is used for regular transactions and payments. For large purchases however, even locals will prefer U.S. dollars. The Cambodian Central Bank is attempting to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar and increase the use of the riel in local transactions; U.S. dollar

Exchange rates for Cambodian riel

As of Dec 2023:

- US\$1 ≈ 4,097 riel
- €1 ≈ 4,517 riel
- UK£1 ≈ 5,204 riel
- Japanese ¥100 ≈ 2,877 riel

coins are not accepted, and U.S. dollar bills of under \$10 in value are no longer legal tender. As of 2024 though, US\$1 and US\$5 are still widely accepted and handed out everywhere.

Banknotes of Cambodia are issued in denominations of 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000 and 100,000 riel. There are also banknotes in denominations of 15,000 and 30,000 riel, but are valued more as collector's pieces than as circulating currency.

The National Bank of Cambodia maintains the riel at around 4,100 riel to the U.S. dollar. In day-to-day commerce, 4,000 riel per dollar is ubiquitous. So, a US\$1.50 amount can be paid with one dollar and 2,000 riel, or with 6,000 riel. Riel don't have value outside of Cambodia; get rid of them before leaving. But don't worry, they can be easily be changed into U.S. dollars everywhere in Cambodia.

Near the Thai border (for example Battambang, Koh Kong, and Poipet), the Thai baht is commonly accepted but locals use an unfavourable 30 baht to the U.S. dollar as a rule of thumb. Try to change any baht rather than spend them as banks and money changers will give you a much better rate.

Banks sometimes operate as Western Union money transfer agents.

Riel vs. U.S. dollar

On a day to day basis, you should use riel rather than U.S. dollars as your main means of payment for the following reasons:

1. You will avoid getting a headache about receiving or spending torn, ripped or unfavourable U.S. dollar notes. Due to counterfeiting, especially large bills not in excellent condition are often met with suspicion.
2. Small purchases with notes of US\$20 and above can be a problem — merchants will generally not have that much change.
3. Since the dollar is trading at around 4,100 riel/US dollar, but prices quoted in US dollars are actually converted at 4,000 riel/US dollar, still paying in U.S. dollars is disadvantageous, losing 100 riel for each U.S. dollar spent.
4. When paying in U.S. dollars and getting change in riel, the 4,000 riel/U.S. dollar rate is likewise disadvantageous.
5. Whenever dealing with U.S. dollar prices in Cambodia, you are generally paying more than when aiming for shops and places that only quote prices in riel, because places with U.S. dollar prices are usually aimed at tourists and rich elites.

Money exchange

- Chinese ¥1 ≈ 572 riel
- Thai ฿10 ≈ 1,186 riel
- Vietnamese ₫10,000 ≈ 1,683 riel

Exchange rates fluctuate. Current rates for these and other currencies are available from XE.com (<https://www.xe.com/currency/khr-cambodian-riel>)



Dry fish in Russian market, Phnom Penh

Exchanging between riel and U.S. dollar is straight forward and rates are ridiculously competitive with buy-sell spreads as low as 0.1–0.5%, making any shopping around for best rates uselessly inefficient. E.g. in Dec 2023 with the riel at around 4,100 riel/U.S. dollar, exchange agents near the Central Market in Phnom Penh were advertising US dollar buy/sell rates of 4,095/4,100 riel, and most *Wing* agents advertised 4,090/4,110 riel.

The green *Wing Bank* exchange agents are available in many places, and it is hard not to find them. But also independent money exchange agents and offices exist. Also regular banks exchange money.

Other major currencies (euro, UK pound, Japanese yen) can mostly only be exchanged with larger banks like ABA Bank and Canadia Bank. (Thai baht are an exception though, and more regularly accepted.) For strong currencies the offered exchange rates are at least 3% off the interbank exchange rates, but for less strong currencies more. As of 2023/2024, banks were hesitant to accept any denominations below €50 or £50 notes. Shop around for the best rate or if you also have 20s.

Torn or old series foreign currency notes may be difficult to exchange or simply not be accepted, except US\$1 bills which change hands often. Cambodian banks will refuse US\$2 bills and notes without the security strip. Refusing imperfect notes is normal. Merchants may try to take advantage of tourists' naïveté and try to get rid of them — just smile and hand them back.

ATMs

ATMs are available in most place, but they might not always be the bank you are looking for. Thus, if you are heading into a more rural area, make sure you stacked up enough money in case you want to avoid expensive withdrawal fees. Cash advances on credit cards are also possible at most banks.

Visa, MasterCard, and JCB are most widely accepted; American Express are slowly becoming more widely accepted. The debit alternatives Maestro, Cirrus, and VPay may be less available.

The ATMs of most common and regional banks (ABA, BRED, Hattha, PPC, Sathapana, Vathanak) dispense riel, but in general ATMs always dispense US dollars (in varying denominations of US\$10–100, but mostly larger notes if it can). A fee of US\$4–5 (16–20,000 riel) is charged for each withdrawal — Vietnamese *Sacombank* (US dollars only) being the exception, with a 1.5% fee (US\$2–4). Withdrawals of at least US\$400 are no issue.

Withdrawal fees as of 2023/2024:

- **ABA Bank** – 20,000 riel (US\$5)
- **BRED Bank** – 16,000 riel (US\$4)
- **Hattha Bank** – 20,000 riel
- **PPC Bank** – 20,000 riel
- **Sacombank** – 1.5%, min/max US\$2–4 (ATMs state min US\$1.50 but actually charge min US\$2)
- **Sathapana Bank** – 2%, min US\$5
- **Vathanac Bank** – US\$4
- **Woori Bank** – 20,000 riel

Supposedly, ATMs of **MB Bank** don't charge, but the situation is unclear as of 2023/2024. (*If you have updated information, please edit this paragraph or leave a remark on the discussion page here.*)

If you rely mostly on ATMs for money, the most **cost-effective strategy** is to withdraw US dollars with Sacombank and then changing them into riel. However, Sacombank seems to be only available in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

If you receive bills in poor condition (especially US\$50 or US\$100) from an ATM attached directly to a bank, try to change them there immediately as they may be difficult to change later.

Most Cambodian ATMs only accept 4-digit PINs. Canadia Bank ATMs will accept up to 6 digits to accommodate bank cards from China (where 6-digit PINs are mandatory). If your PIN is more than 6 digits, it is best to take care of that at home before you need cash and find yourself out of luck.

For safety reasons, it's a good idea to use ATMs at actual bank branches during opening hours. There is often a security guard on duty then, and any problems can immediately be reported with the bank. It also gives the opportunity to ask for smaller notes, such as 20s or 10s which are easier to spend and get change back from, as well as little risk of picking up counterfeit notes.

Credit cards

Only upmarket places, supermarkets, restaurants, and ho(s)tels will accept credit cards, normally at a 3% or US\$0.50 surcharge.

Costs

Cambodia is generally more expensive than its neighbouring countries; Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos. As a rule of thumb, you will pay about 50% more on a daily basis than in Vietnam — while accommodation can be similarly priced, food is definitely more expensive in Cambodia.

Anything aimed at international tourists will be expensive by local standards and sometimes even as expensive as the U.S. or Europe. Whenever being presented with a price in U.S. dollars, that's an indication of that you will be paying too much — most locals use riel not U.S. dollars.

That said, if you avoid the main tourist haunts, haggle skillfully (see below), and aren't too picky, prices can go down considerably. For a serious budget traveler, US\$5 per night for lodging and US\$5 for meals and drinks is possible — but better reserve at least US\$15 daily for a budget trip.

Haggling

You can get away with pretty much haggling for anything in Cambodia. Restaurants, outdoor food stalls, even rates for guesthouses. The Khmer are notoriously quiet up to a point of no return. They do not lose face, they lose their temper. However, there are a few guidelines:

- Many products, especially those not aimed at tourists, are fixed price, and while it is possible to get a minor discount if you ask, you cannot get things significantly cheaper than this. Many markets have the prices of goods painted on the walls (in Khmer).



Flower Market in Phnom Penh



- Products and services aimed at tourists are usually marked up, and you *must* haggle (and shop around to compare prices) if you don't want to get ripped off. In markets with no listed prices, expect to be quoted the "tourist price".
- In Cambodia where dining out isn't really common among local people, most restaurants cater almost entirely to foreigners and tend to be a little bit more expensive than neighbouring countries. However in Siem Reap, it is, *sometimes* if not always, possible to haggle with street food vendors over the portion of a dish, free side dish, and get 20-30% discount.
- The US dollar is widely used in Cambodia but no circulation of coins will end up giving you a lot of Cambodian riels as small change. This gives a chance for short-changing, which is particularly popular in several grocery stores in Siem Reap. For example, you give US\$1 for buying a bottle of water which is US\$0.60, the staff should return the amount of riel equivalent to US\$0.40, but they may keep some of them. The money cheated is usually minimal. Just be quick at mental arithmetic.
- Haggle in groups. Having two other friends will make it much easier to convince Cambodians to give a discount: one person can play bad cop, the other good cop.
- Ask to speak with the manager/owner (this applies to guesthouse and restaurants). Usually if you try to haggle at a restaurant or guesthouse the employee will say that the boss needs to be there. If so, then just ask to speak with him or ask the employee to speak with him. You would be surprised at how easy it is to haggle down once you speak to the boss, many times he doesn't even want to be bothered and will give the discount to you.
- Never pay the asking price for anything near the temples of Angkor. This includes books, souvenirs, paintings, water and food. During the off-season, the food stalls near the temples will have a separate menu, ask for it. You can even bargain on top of that too. It's much harder to bargain at the food stalls at Angkor Wat and especially at the breakfast restaurants across the street from Angkor Wat.
- Try not to haggle too harshly with the motorbike drivers and tuk-tuks that work near where you stay. Most are honest, but they will look after your safety more if you are seen as a good customer. Some will decide they will get the money from you another way, and could take you to be mugged. Agree upon the fare before your ride or you may get into a very uncomfortable situation.
- If haggling isn't your strong point the easiest way to get a good price at a market is to pick up an item, ask how much it is, look disappointed and start to walk away. The price will usually drop as you walk away with vendors unlikely to go below this second price.

Siem Reap is the easiest place to bargain, since prices here are widely inflated. Phnom Penh may be a little harder, but still worth trying. Just be polite and persistent.

Eat

Main article: [Cambodian cuisine](#)

While not the strongest link in [Southeast Asia's](#) chain of delightful cuisines, Khmer food is tasty and cheap. Rice and occasionally noodles are the staples. Unlike in Thailand or Laos, spicy hot food is not the mainstay; black pepper is preferred over chilli peppers, though chillis are usually served on the side. Similarities with Thai and Vietnamese cuisines can be noted in Khmer food, although Cambodians love strong sour tastes in their dishes. **Prahok**, a fermented fish paste, is common in Khmer cooking, but may not always please Western palates. Indian and Chinese restaurants have a healthy representation in [Phnom Penh](#) and the larger towns. Western food can be readily found in most restaurants in any of the tourist areas of Cambodia and Cambodia offers some of the best budget western meals in Southeast Asia. However, while still inexpensive, a western meal will often be double the price of a Khmer meal.

Typical Khmer dishes include:

- **Amok** - a Khmer steamed curry served in banana leaves or a hollowed-out coconut and often considered one of the national dishes of Cambodia. Although traditionally made with certain kinds of fish, modern renditions may also include chicken, beef or even tofu. A proper amok's texture should resemble that of a mousse or a souffle.
- **Kuytheav** - A noodle soup generally served for breakfast. Can be made with pork, beef or seafood. Flavourings are added to the customers taste in the form of lime juice, chilli powder, sugar and fish sauce.
- **Somlah Machou Khmae** - A sweet and sour soup made with pineapple, tomatoes and fish.
- **Bai Sarch Ch'rouk** - Another breakfast staple. Rice (*bai*) with pork meat (*sarch chrouk*) often barbequed. Very tasty and served with some pickled vegetables.
- **Saik Ch'rouk Cha Kn'yei** - Pork fried with ginger. Ginger is commonly used as a vegetable. This tasty dish is available just about everywhere.
- **Lok lak** - Chopped up beef cooked quickly. Probably a holdover from the French colonial period. Served with a simple dipping sauce made from lime juice and black pepper, lettuce, onion, and often with chips.
- **Mi/Bai Chaa** - Fried noodles or rice. Never particularly inspiring, but a good traveller's staple.
- **Trey Ch'ien Chou 'Ayme** - Fish (*trey*) fried with a sweet chilli sauce and vegetables. Chou 'ayme is the phrase for "sweet and sour".
- **K'dam** - Crab. Kampot in the south is famous for its crab cooked in locally sourced black pepper. A very tasty meal.



Fried noodles, sour soup and a Khmer-style curry

Don't forget Khmer desserts - **Pong Aime** (sweets). These are available from stalls in most Khmer towns and can be excellent. Choose from a variety of sweetmeats and have them served with ice, condensed milk and sugar water. A must-try is the **Tuk-a-loc**, a blended drink of fruits, raw egg, sweetened condensed milk and ice. Also, keep an eye out for waffle street vendors. The farther you are from hotel row, the better the coconut waffle batter. On the south edge of town the coconut waffles are so good they make your feet dance.

As a legacy of French colonial period, **baguettes** are very popular in Cambodia, and are known as *num pang* (នំបង) in Khmer. Similar to the Vietnamese banh mi, it is usually stuffed with meat (usually pork) and/or pâté, as well as some local herbs.

Perhaps the tastiest treat is the wide variety of **fresh fruit** available from markets. The prices vary according to which fruit is in the season but **mangoes** (around Khmer New Year, with up to 9 varieties on sale) and **mangosteen** (May/June) are both superb. **Dragonfruit** has pink and green-tinged skin. Inside is either white with tiny black seeds, or if you can find it, florescent juicy-red inside. A prized treat in August is **durian**, a large spiky green fruit like a rounded football. Stop at a few vendors to watch and learn what is fresh and what is older. It comes and goes quickly so don't overthink it. And definitely haggle, the price is very high. Durian is considered almost a ceremonial dish if you have a Cambodian friend you would like to treat. The trick is to not open the fruit until right when you eat it. Just opened, it's



A fruit dessert at a guesthouse

fragrant and ambrosial if truly ripe. After some time it gets the famous 'stink' you won't forget. Restaurants will not let you eat it on their premises for this reason. **Jackfruit** is similar but without the 'stink', and can be found sliced, rather like pineapple in appearance. And don't miss the delicious local **bananas**, ripe **guavas**, green **coconuts**, and hairy **rambutans**. Although not a fruit **sugar cane** juice is sold from street carts that crush it while you watch, a very inexpensive and safe way to replenish fluids and an energy boost.

Other popular Khmer foods which may be less palatable to foreigners include **balut** (ពងទាប្លូន *paung tea kaun*, duck eggs with the embryo still inside), and almost every variety of creepy or crawly animal (spiders, crickets, water beetles) as well as barbecued rats, frogs, snakes, bats and small birds.

Drink

The tap water supply in Phnom Penh has undergone some serious changes at the hands of a "water revolutionary" in the government, Ek Sonn Chan. So, in Phnom Penh you can drink the tap water without problem, although it's highly chlorinated and you may not like the taste. Additionally, there are some concerns about the bottle water vendors. The US Embassy website says that "In 2008, Cambodia's Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy reported that more than 100 bottled water companies in Cambodia were being considered for closure for failing to meet minimum production quality standards. Only 24 of the 130 bottled water companies are compliant with the ministry's Department of Industrial Standards." That page seems to be down on bottled water generally, so take it with a grain of salt.

Outside of Phnom Penh (and perhaps Siem Reap) you should assume that tap water is not potable. Khmer brand water in blue plastic bottles sell for 1,000 riel or less (although prices are often marked up for tourists, to 50 cents or a US dollar).



Sugarcane juice



Soft drinks

Iced coffee is ubiquitous in Cambodia. It's made Vietnamese-style, freshly brewed and mixed with sweetened condensed milk. Walk past a local eatery any time of the day and you are bound to see at least a table of locals drinking them. One glass costs 1,500-2,000 riel. **Iced tea** made with lemon and sugar is also refreshing and ubiquitous.

Fresh coconut can be found everywhere, you could say it is ubiquitous, and is healthy and sanitary if drunk straight from the fruit.


Sugarcane juice is freshly made and deliciously sweet.

Alcohol

In general, Khmers are not what could be described as casual drinkers: their main objective is to get hammered as quickly as possible. Know your limits if invited to join in!

The two most popular domestic Cambodian beers are **Anchor** — pronounced "an-CHOR" with a *ch* sound! — and **Angkor**, both of which can be found in bottles, cans, and on draft, and generally for no more than US\$1 each. New beers include the cheap **Klang** and **Cambodia** (<http://www.khmerbrewery.com/>), while **Beerlao** and **Tiger** are popular beers with foreigners. A plethora of other beers include **ABC Stout**, which is dark and not so bad, in addition to the standard **Heineken** and **Carlsberg**. Cheaper beers include **Crown** and **Leo**, whilst **Kingdom Beer** aims for the premium market with a pilsener and a dark lager.



Hand-painted bottles of Sombai infused rice wine 

Cambodia and **Angkor** are running a lottery where you can win an extra beer or even a car depending on what it shows on your can's lid. The determined likelihood of getting another beer is about 37%, so it pays to buy those cans with the removable lid and to recheck their backs. It is not unlikely to buy one can and end up with two more. Note that shops charge for the "free" can for storage and cooling — while some try to extort 1,000 riel from tourists, the going rate seems to be 500 riel.

Palm wine and **rice wine** are available in villages and can be OK at 500-1,000 riel for a 1 L bottle. However, some safety concerns have been raised with regard to sanitation, so the local wines may be best avoided.

For a truly Khmer experience, hunt down a bottle of **Golden Muscle Wine**. Advertised on tuk-tuks everywhere, this pitch-black concoction made from deer antlers and assorted herbs packs a 35% punch and tastes vile when drunk straight, but can be made reasonably palatable, if not exactly tasty, by the addition of tonic water or cola. At US\$2 for a 350 mL flask of the original and US\$3 for the "X.O." version, it's the cheapest legitimate tipple around.

Sleep

Western-style accommodation is available in most major towns the country over; even less-visited places such as Kampong Chhnang have a number of affordable guesthouses or hotels. Basic guesthouses can go as low as US\$5 a night in the countryside but prices in the cities are usually around the US\$5-10. At the budget end, expect to provide your own towels etc. If you want air-con and hot water and cable TV the price creeps up to close to US\$10-20, you can have a dorm bed in a backpacker's hotel in most places from US\$2 up to US\$5. Some budget places don't have hot showers, especially outside big cities, so check before booking if you can't stand a cold shower.

Learn

Cambodia has fewer opportunities for language and cultural studies for the short-term traveller, though there are many language schools and private teachers advertising for those who are hanging around a bit longer. There are also meditation groups which meet at some of the Buddhist Pagodas in Phnom Penh. There are Khmer cooking classes available in Battambang, Sihanoukville, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

Work



WARNING: Overseas job scams are rampant in Cambodia, particularly Sihanoukville. People are lured in by offers of a high-paid job with little to no experience or work visa needed, then held hostage under threats of violence and forced to work in call centers, online gambling, etc. See Human trafficking for details. **Chinese speakers** are most frequently targeted, but others have been trapped as well. If you or somebody you know have been caught in this scam, contact your country's diplomatic mission, or local authorities at:

- **Cambodia National Police:** ☎ +8550312012345, ☎ +8550316012345
- **Cambodia National Police, Sihanoukville Branch:** ☎ +855011 506 677, ☎ +855011 516 677, ☎ +855011 526 677
- Official WeChat account of Minister of the Interior Sar Kheng (who was in charge of dealing with the problem): ☎ +855 092 686 969

Government travel advisories

Hong Kong (<https://www.sb.gov.hk/eng/ota/info-overseasjobscam.html>)

One of the most interesting ways to get to know a country, and which has become increasingly popular, is to volunteer.

Finding a paid job teaching English in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap is easy for English speakers, even if you have no other qualifications. If you're interested, print out some resumes and start handing them out to various schools.

Many bars and guesthouses in Siem Reap and Sihanoukville advertise the need for Western employees or volunteers and will generally provide free lodging and meals, but low pay, if any.

If considering volunteering at an orphanage, do be aware that many, if not all, are exploitative and poorly run. Very few so called children in orphanages in Cambodia are actually orphans, i.e. have no living parents. Your money is more likely to go the owner rather than the children. There are few legitimate orphanages in Cambodia. Accepting visits from unscreened foreigners is often a sign of a substandard orphanage, which does not have the children's best interests at heart. There are several good articles on the Internet that further explain the reality of modern day orphanages, such as What's the big deal with orphanages in Cambodia? (<http://www.movetocambodia.com/health-safety/whats-the-big-deal-with-orphanages-in-cambodia/>).

Stay safe

Theft

Cambodia is a reasonably safe country, with the usual exception for large cities late at night, particularly Phnom Penh, and with unobserved luggage or wallets. Bag and phone snatching along the road or when riding on a bicycles and motorbike is a problem in Phnom Penh. Never stand at the side of the road/traffic reading stuff on your phone — that's an invitation for thieves. Or sometimes people or drivers might follow you unnoticed and snatch your phone or belongings when it's the right time — so, it doesn't hurt to look behind or around you from time to time to observe if someone is following you. Be discreet with your possessions, especially cash and cameras, and take extra care in all poorly lit or more remote areas. Also, never leave money in your room, even if you just go to the toilet for a brief moment — this seems to be the most common case when money gets stolen.



Land mine warning sign

Crime and corruption

The rule of law in Cambodia is inconsistently applied. Crimes usually require bribes to be investigated, and if perpetrators are wealthy or connected to the government they will often be untouchable by police and courts. You should also be aware that the courts are corrupt, so contracts are hard to enforce without some political leverage. All this being said, the violent crime rate is fairly low, the police are generally friendly and non-threatening, and those with common sense have little to fear besides a scam or two and perhaps some petty theft.

Scams

Scams of all sorts are plentiful in Cambodia. Most notorious are the border officials looking for bribes, but in general tourists should expect prices to be marked up and tours to be not quite as advertised. Practice usual precautions for scams: negotiate everything clearly before you get into a taxi, check that the restaurant bill has been added up correctly before paying, etc. Any restaurant, hotel, or activity recommended by a tuk-tuk driver is likely paying him a commission.

Land mines

Cambodia suffers from a legacy of millions of **land mines** left during the war years. However, to tourists, land mines present a minimal to non-existent threat, as most areas near tourist areas have been thoroughly de-mined. Many tourists mistake electric or sewage warning signs along national highways for land mine signs. HALO Trust, a leading mine removal organization in Cambodia, asserts that you would have to drive through the jungle for at least an hour north of Angkor Wat to come across any mines. The threat is to locals in extremely rural areas who rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods.

In remote areas such as Preah Vihear (near the border) and Pailin, a former Khmer Rouge stronghold, exercise caution: ask for local advice and heed warning signs, red paint and red rope, which may indicate mined areas. Do not venture beyond well established roads and paths. Most landmine signs in the country are red with Khmer text on the top, with English text on the bottom, with a Skull and Crossbones with large eye sockets in the middle. If you see this, do not go past it under any circumstance.

Prostitution

The age of consent in Cambodia is 15. Prostitution is illegal but widespread, although generally not overtly aimed at tourists (there are no go-go bars). Many bars and clubs, however, do have working girls wandering the premises, especially in Phnom Penh.



WARNING: Sexual Abuse against children is a serious crime that is punishable in Cambodia. Those who engage in child sex offenses abroad can be subject to criminal prosecution in their home country. Cambodian authorities work with foreign law enforcement agencies around the world to combat child sex offences.

Drugs

Drugs, including cannabis, are illegal in Cambodia, and penalties can be very severe. Both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are full of **Happy Herb** pizzerias; the effects of this illegal snack comes on only slowly and you may end up biting off more than you can chew, so if you choose to indulge, exercise caution. Many such restaurants advertising "happy pizza" do not actually serve drug-laced pizza. Heroin is very high grade in SE Asia and foreigners requesting cocaine are sometimes provided with it instead, regularly leading to deaths. Over-the-counter pharmaceuticals said to be similar to heroin are readily and legally available, and have also led to tourist deaths.

Stay healthy


Cambodia lacks reliable medical facilities, doctors, clinics, hospitals and medication, especially in rural areas. The only hospitals run to Western standards in Cambodia are the **Royal Phnom Penh Hospital** in Phnom Penh, and the **Royal Angkor International Hospital** in Siem Reap, but because they are both private hospitals, you will be paying a steep premium for their services. Any **serious problem** should be dealt with in Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City or Singapore, which boast first rate services (at least to those who can afford them). Repatriation is also more easily arranged from either of those cities. Make sure your insurance covers medical evacuation. The private and pricey **Royal Rattanak Hospital** in Phnom Penh can be trusted for emergency medical care and can treat most diseases and injuries common to the region. **Naga Clinic** has branches in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. It is also clean, safe and useful for minor conditions.

Local hospitals and clinics vary from mediocre to frightening. Expect dirt, poor equipment, expired medicines and placebos of flour and sugar.

In local clinics don't let them put anything in your blood: treat dehydration orally and not with a drip, as there is a risk of septicaemia (i.e. bacterial blood poisoning). The same goes for blood transfusions.

Hygienic standards of food and drinks leave something to be desired. Avoid untreated water, ice made from untreated water and any raw fruit or vegetables that may have been washed in untreated water. **Tap water** is generally not drinkable, so avoid. The Phnom Penh supply is claimed to be potable but few people trust it. Only the seriously immunocompromised will have problems brushing their teeth with it. Cheap bottled water is available in any town or village. Take water purification tablets or iodine to sterilize water if planning to visit more rural areas. Boiling water will also sterilize it without generating piles of waste plastic bottle waste or tainting the taste. The water in the jugs at cafés or restaurants will have been boiled, as obviously will have been the tea. Expats have no problem drinking from the water supply in Phnom Penh, but not elsewhere.



Ice in Cambodia may be made in factories with  treated water but cannot be regarded as safe, since it may have been transported in contaminated bags. Ice cubes are safer than ice that appears to have been chipped from a block.

The most common ailment for travellers is **traveller's diarrhoea**, resulting in dehydration. Stay hydrated by drinking 2-3 litres of water per day. Consider bringing antidiarrhoeals with you. If you do get severe diarrhoea and become badly dehydrated, take an oral rehydration solution and drink plenty of treated water. However, a lot of blood or mucus in the stool can indicate dysentery, which requires a trip to a doctor for antibiotics.

Aggressive dogs can be a problem in Cambodia, especially in rural areas and at night, since they might transmit rabies. They are not so much stray dogs but dogs by owners that let them roam freely outside of their property and sometimes form packs at night. It is best to avoid walking in remote and badly lit places at night. In the dark it is also harder to threaten these dogs with the picking-up-a-rock move. If you get bitten, head to Phnom Penh immediately and get a rabies shot within 24 hr (!) at either the *Pasteur Institute* or *SKM Hospital*. There are rabies vaccinations available, but they require several shots for a few months and well ahead of your journey. And even then, you will still require an immediate rabies shot if bitten, namely within 48 hr.

No health certificates or vaccinations are officially required for entry to Cambodia, unless arriving directly from Africa. However, consult a doctor a few weeks before leaving home for up-to-date advice on inoculations. Generally advised are shots against tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis B and meningitis, a polio booster and especially gamma globulin shots (against hepatitis A). Consider **malaria tablets** for trips to Cambodia of less than 30 days, though the most commonly visited places have minimal risk (see below). Fake antimalarials are a problem in Cambodia, so it's best to stock up before you come. A mosquito net may also help. Mosquitoes swarm Siem Reap at dusk, imported (i.e., trusted) **DEET** based insect repellent is available in Cambodia.

The contents of a **basic medical kit**-such as panadol, antihistamines, antibiotics, kaolin, oral rehydration solution, calamine lotion, bandages and band-aids, scissors and DEET insect repellent-can be acquired in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. The particularly fastidious should put their kits together in Bangkok or Saigon before coming to Cambodia. There's no need to bother doing this before coming to Asia.

Phnom Penh is malaria-free, and Siem Reap and Angkor Wat are virtually malaria-free. Malaria prophylaxis is recommended for most other places in the country. The biggest disease worry is mosquito-borne dengue fever which, although quite unpleasant, to say the least (it's called "break-bone fever" because of how it feels) generally isn't life-threatening for first-time victims. Use mosquito repellent to reduce your risk of dengue.

Mystery disease. Although this disease, mostly striking children under the age of three, was widely reported in the international press as having been identified as enterovirus 71 in July 2012, rumours of deaths continue (Nov 2013). This appears to be a taboo topic in the local press, but expats and locals alike talk about how children continue to die from this mystery respiratory illness, apparently several per week. Expats frequently refuse to eat chicken, even from well-known food chains, citing the conditions of transporting and caging chickens, blaming chicken for the spread of the malady.

April is the cruellest month: the weather is hottest (> 35°C) in March and April, use sunscreen and wear a hat to avoid sunstroke.

Prostitutes of both sexes can carry many STDs. The official **HIV** rate among prostitutes is 34%, compared to a 0.6% rate for the whole population.

Respect

Cambodia is a country at a crossroads. While the more heavily touristed places like Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are well adjusted to tourist behaviour, people in places such as Stung Treng or Banlung are less so. Always ask permission before you take somebody's picture, as many in the more remote areas do not like to be photographed, and some in the urban areas will ask for payment.

Dress for women is more conservative in Cambodia. While shorts are now acceptable in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, it is more respectful to wear knee length shorts or trousers when outside of these areas. While Cambodian women may prefer to dress conservatively in the daytime, covering much skin to prevent tanning which they find unattractive, at night the dress code is more revealing. Do not mistake such local women in nightclubs for prostitutes; they are out for a night on the town like anyone else. **Beachwear** is pretty conservative: speedos and bikinis are not common except among foreigners.

Groups of young children can be found everywhere in Cambodia and many travellers feel 'pestered' by them to purchase their friendship bracelets and other wares. However, it's often the case that children enjoy the chance to practice their English on you- and by asking them their names and ages a conversation is likely to develop where the 'hard sell' is forgotten. Children and adults alike enjoy looking at photographs of your family and home country.

Naming conventions

Cambodians generally follow the naming convention of *patronymic* (or in some case, a family name) + *given name*. Unlike in most Western countries, surnames are almost never used on their own to address others, and the default form address would be to use a title plus one's given name. In Khmer, the default title would be *lok* for men, and *lok srey* for women. So for instance, Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of Cambodia would be addressed as *Lok Sen* in Khmer, or "Mr. Sen" in English.

The *Khmer Rouge* issue is a very delicate one, and one which Cambodians generally prefer not to talk about. However, if you approach it with politeness, they'll gladly respond. People, in general, hold no qualms when talking about the Vietnamese; in fact, they have been widely perceived as liberators when they intervened in Cambodia in 1979 to overthrow the aforementioned brutal regime. The pro-Vietnamese regime gradually rebuilt all the infrastructure that was severely damaged by the Khmer Rouge's policy of de-urbanising the country leading to economic prosperity in the 1980s, with sporadic uprisings.

Swastikas are commonly seen at Buddhist temples. They are regarded as religious symbols and have no connection to Nazism or anti-Semitism whatsoever.

Buddhist Monks

As in neighbouring Thailand and Laos, Cambodia is predominantly Theravada Buddhist. This means that monks are revered and are expected to take their duties seriously. As in Thailand, monks go around in the morning collecting alms from people. Monks must avoid physical contact with females, so women who wish to offer food to a monk should place it on a piece of cloth in front of him so he can pick it up. Monks are not allowed to accept or touch money, and offering money to a monk is considered to be disrespectful in the local culture. Should you wish to donate to a monk, donate food only; monetary donations should be placed in the donations boxes in temples. As monks are not allowed to eat solid food after noon, they will stop collecting alms before then. "Monks" who hang out at tourist spots and solicit donations from tourists are imposters.

Connect

Telephone

Cambodia uses the GSM mobile system and **cellcard** (<https://www.cellcard.com.kh/en/>) is the largest operator, then **Smart** (<https://www.smart.com.kh/>) then **Metfone** (<https://www.metfone.com.kh/en>). Pre-paid SIM cards are widely available (from US\$1). As of 2016, you are officially required to show your passport at a carrier store to get a SIM.

Mobile phone providers are the main exception to the "use riel instead of US dollars" rule stated in the "Buy" section above, as after a short-lived push to start pricing services in riel in 2022-2023, they have all returned to pricing services in US dollars.

The way mobile calls are charged for has created an unusual side effect. Because most phone plan allowances only cover calls within the same network, many companies, hostels, etc. publish two or 3 mobile numbers for different networks and have 2 or 3 mobile phones with different network operator SIMs. Tuk-tuk drivers in Phnom Penh carry around 3 mobiles held as a "stack". Locals know which prefixes are for which network so if you want to call a hotel you'll chose their published number with the prefix indicating the same network as your own SIM.



Mass grave in Choeung Ek, one of the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge

Landline numbers in Cambodia are listed as +855 nk 123-4567 where "855" is the country code for Cambodia, the first digit of the area code, "n", will be a 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7; the second digit of the area code, "k" will be a digit in the range 2-6. (The leading zero seen domestically is stripped off in the international format.) The remaining 6 or 7 digits (conjoined with a hyphen) are the "local" part of the subscriber's number.

Mobile phone numbers begin with a 1, 8 or 9 which is then followed by seven or eight digits. The full number of a mobile phone must always be dialed, for example +855 1 1234 5678.

In addition, Metfone SIMs have cheap data roaming if you would rather stick to using one SIM for your travels around the region; roaming in any country in the ASEAN area except Brunei costs only \$1.25 per day for up to 1 GB of data, and if you go over you won't be charged extra. If that happens you have the option of buying another 2 GB of high-speed data for the day for \$1.25 or continuing to use roaming at a slow speed of 64kbps (only fast enough for messaging apps, e-mail, and receiving push notifications). Alternatively, in the neighboring countries of Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos as well as Malaysia, data roaming is only \$1 per day for unlimited data.

Internet

Internet cafes are cheap (US\$0.50-1/hour) and common, even small towns will have at least one broadband offering. In Kampot, Kratie and Sihanoukville rates are around US\$1/hour. Wi-Fi is increasingly popular, with signals available in some unlikely places, not just in coffee shops, but also fast food restaurants, bars, and even gas stations. Domestic broadband prices range from US\$29.95-89.00.

Fast wireless 3G/4G internet is now available in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville/Kampot/Kep with slower Edge coverage in almost all other areas. Tourists can use the above "exchange" trick to get very cheap local data; for example, on Metfone the smallest exchange of \$1 gets you 5 GB and \$8 would get you up to 133 GB if you use all the resulting credit on data.

Written Khmer does not yet have a big presence in the electronic world, as do Thai or Vietnamese. Phones and computers (and hence Cambodian text messages, email, and online content) tend to be in English, although this is changing.

Post

Once a disaster, a trip to the post office in Cambodia no longer means a final good bye to your consignment. Intercontinental postcards should arrive in 2 weeks; within Asia, 1 week. Rates are cheap.

Go next

- Laos
- The beaches and islands of Eastern Thailand, like Ko Chang, Ko Samet and Pattaya, can easily be reached from Cambodia.
- Vietnam

See Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh City overland for a popular route that passes through Cambodia between Thailand and Vietnam.

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