

The Walled City

The wall of the city is some five miles in circumference. It has five gates, each with double portals. Two gates pierce the eastern side; the other sides have one gate only. Outside the wall stretches a great moat, across which access to the city is given by massive causeways. Flanking the causeways on each side are fifty-four divinities resembling war-lords in stone, huge and terrifying. All five gates are similar. The parapets of the causeways are of solid stone, carved to represent nine-headed serpents. The fifty-four divinities grasp the serpents with their hands, seemingly to prevent their escape. Above each gate are grouped five gigantic heads of Buddha, four of them facing the four cardinal points of the compass, the fifth head, brilliant with gold, holds a central position. On each side of the gates are elephants, carved in stone.

The walls, about twelve feet in height, are built entirely of cut stone blocks, set close and firm, with no crevices for weeds to grow in, and no crenellations. On the battlements sago palms have been planted at irregular intervals. Let into the wall here and there are casemates. The inner side of the wall resembles a glacis, more than sixty feet wide, at the top of which are huge gates, closed at night and swung open in the morning. Dogs are forbidden entrance, as are criminals whose toes have been cut off.

The wall forms a perfect square, with a stone tower at each face. At the (magical) center of the Kingdom (i.e. the central point of the city) rises a Golden Tower (Bayon) flanked by more than twenty lesser towers and several hundred stone chambers. On the eastern side is a golden bridge guarded by two lions of gold, one on each side, with eight golden Buddhas spaced along the stone chambers. North of the Golden Tower, at a distance of about two hundred yards, rises the Tower of Bronze (Baphuon), higher even than the Golden Tower: a truly astonishing spectacle, with more than ten chambers at its base. A quarter of a mile further north is the residence of the King. Rising above his private apartments is another tower of gold. These are the monuments which have caused merchants from overseas to speak so often of "Cambodia the rich and noble."

About two hundred yards beyond the South Gate rises a mighty stone tower which, it is said, was built in a single night by Lu Pan (a legendary Chinese artisan). Lu Pan's tomb (Angkor Wat) is four hundred yards distant from the South Gate. Two and a half miles in circumference, it contains several hundred stone rooms.

The Eastern Lake lies some two and a half miles east of the Walled City. The distance round it is nearly twenty-five miles. At its center stands a stone tower, with dozens of stone chambers. In it lies a recumbent bronze Buddha, from whose navel flows a steady stream of water.

The Northern Lake lies one and a quarter miles to the north of the Walled City. At its centre stands a square tower of gold (Neak Péan) with several dozen stone rooms. If you are looking for gold lions, gold Buddhas, bronze elephants, bronze oxen, bronze horses, here is where you will find them.