



SOUSDEY

WELCOME TO CAMBODIA!

Cambodia has many different faces and certainly offers something special for any traveler who views traveling as more than just staying at a beach resort – although that's possible as well! It's a place with a very rich culture, unspoiled nature, and it is also a place with genuinely friendly people, who are open-minded, easy-going and keenly interested in learning about and making contact with visitors to their country.





GEOGRAPHY

As a country, Cambodia is characterized by a low-lying central plain surrounded by uplands and low mountains, combined with the Tonlé Sap, commonly translated as the 'great lake', and the upper reaches of the Mekong River delta. Spreading outward from its central region are transitional plains, which are thinly forested and rise to around 200 meters above sea level.

In northern Cambodia a sandstone escarpment forms a cliff of more than 320 km from west to east and rises to heights of 180 to 550 m. This escarpment runs along a large part of the Cambodian-Thai border and marks the southern limit of the Dangrek Mountains.

Defining the eastern region of the country is the Mekong River, which flows south on its journey to the Mekong delta in Vietnam. Transitional plains that gradually merge with the eastern highlands, forested mountains and high plateaus extending into Vietnam and Laos, are to be found east of the Mekong.

Much of the land area between the Tonlé Sap and the Gulf of Thailand is covered by another highland region that includes the Damrei and the Kravanh Mountains. This remote and largely uninhabited area is also home to Phnom Aural, Cambodia's highest peak, rising to a height of 1,813 meters.

Also sparsely populated is the southern coastal region, which borders the Gulf of Thailand. This area, a narrow lowland strip, is heavily wooded and isolated from the central plain by the southwestern highlands.

Most defining element of Cambodia's geography is the seasonal flooding of the Tonlé Sap lake, a body of water which measures about 2,590 km² during dry season and increases in size to 24,605 km² during rainy season. This is the heartland of Cambodia – a densely populated plain devoted to wet rice cultivation.

Cambodia's climate is similar to the rest of Southeast Asia, dominated by the annual monsoon cycle with its alternating wet and dry seasons. Temperatures range from 22 °C to 35 °C, or sometimes even 40 °C. The country has two distinct seasons: rainy season (May to October) with temperatures that can drop to 22 °C and generally high humidity, and dry season (November to April) with temperatures that can rise up to 40 °C. Daily minimum temperatures are usually no less than 15°C.

PEOPLE

The Khmer are a tolerant people and may choose not to point out improper behavior to visiting foreigners, so it's important to ensure you dress and act with the utmost respect when visiting temples or other religious sites, including the temples of Angkor Archaeological Park, as this is of the highest importance to Cambodians.

Proper etiquette in a temple is mostly a matter of common sense, but here are a few tips that will help you to avoid causing offense:

- Do not wear shorts or tank tops and avoid wearing tops that leave your shoulders bare
- Remove your hat when entering the grounds of a temple
- Remove your shoes before entering the vihara (sanctuary), or prayer hall
- If you sit down in front of the dais – the platform on which the Buddha statue is placed – sit with your feet to one side rather than in the lotus position
- Never point – or use your feet to point – at a Buddha statue or image, or at a person

CAMBODIA DESTINATIONS

We would love to provide you with information about the entire country, but it would probably fill a large book and be rather impractical, so instead, here is a glimpse of the destinations that we cover – many of which are off the regular tourist trails and provide you with a unique opportunity for adventure and insight into the destination and its people.

If you wish to receive information about a place not covered here, please contact our office, either in Phnom Penh or Siem Reap, and we'll be happy to help.



PHNOM PENH

Apart from Siem Reap, Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh is the most popular point of entry by air for visitors arriving in the country. The usual length of stay in the city is two nights as you can see most of the popular sites in Phnom Penh within a day. However, we have plenty of tips about other places to explore in Phnom Penh, which has led to some of our clients choosing to stay even longer.

Popular day tours in Phnom Penh are tours to the Royal Palace, National Museum, Wat Phnom, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and to the Killing Fields. You could also opt for a sunset cruise on the majestic Tonlé Sap River, which forms a confluence with the Mekong River on the city's banks, not far from the Royal Palace. Other options include cycling tours to explore the region's rural countryside and the river islands of the mighty Mekong.

Khiri Travel Cambodia also offers day tours to visit Oudong, about 40 km northwest of Phnom Penh, which was the former royal residence and country's capital for more than 250 years. For those wishing to find out more about the region's wildlife there is also the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center only 40 km southwest of the city that is home to a variety of indigenous species to the region.

Phnom Penh is also a great and safe city for doing things in your own time. If you're more interested in shopping, there's the Russian Market, the Central Market or the Suriya Mall. In the evenings the city's riverside area is a true hotspot for tourists as well as locals, where you can find many restaurants and bars. There is also a night market, which is only open at weekends (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). Restaurants in Phnom Penh offer a broad range of cuisine, from traditional Khmer to international fare like Italian, German, or even Japanese.

In keeping with our aim to provide clients with experiences off the regular tourist trails, Khiri Travel Cambodia also offers a number of unique walking tours that combine the city's highlights with a visit to local markets to sample the large variety of street food, or a walking tour that takes you on a journey to discover the local Khmer architecture. We also offer clients an opportunity to delve into the local culture with alternative performances of classical and folk dance at the Apsara Arts Association, a local NGO which supports poor families and student education in the arts.

SIEM REAP

Siem Reap is by far the most visited destination in Cambodia, because of its proximity to the Angkor Wat temple complex and other ancient temple ruins. The usual length of stay is a minimum of three nights, but many clients stay longer to explore temples ruins further afield. The most popular day tours are those to the spectacular temple ruins of Angkor Wat, Bayon, Baphoun, Phimean Akas, The Royal Enclosure, Terrace of Elephants and Leper King, and Ta Prohm. Visitors can also go on tours to other temples in the region, such as Banteay Srey and Beng Mealea. Other popular day tours in Siem Reap include visits to the floating fishing villages on Tonlé Sap Lake, for example, Kampong Khlaeng and Mechrey floating villages, and tours to communities in the countryside with visits to NGO's that work on community development projects.

Siem Reap also offers a very lively night market, where for example, you can find handicrafts, souvenirs and silks. Shopping at night is a great way to avoid the heat, plus there is the Island Bar at the back of the market with a great open-air set-up, where you can stop for some well-deserve drinks. Also, Les Artisans D'Angkor is a great place to visit on your shopping spree. It provides real insight into the remarkably skilled workmanship of traditional handicrafts made in Cambodia. After a day of temple viewing, the mood in Siem Reap becomes more relaxed and the focus shifts to Pub Street – the place to go for a night out on the town.

However, while Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are by far the most popular destinations in Cambodia, the country still has many other stunning destinations to offer.

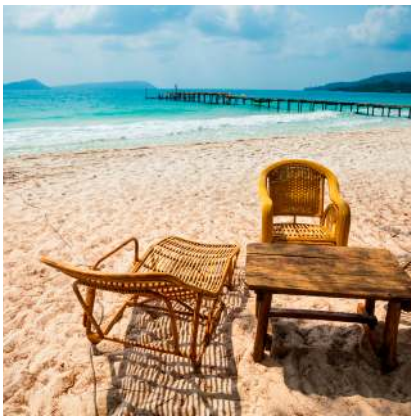
SIHANOUKVILLE

Sihanoukville is Cambodia's main beach destination and a good spot to relax and unwind after exploring Phnom Penh, or visiting the temples of Angkor Wat. A popular day tour in Sihanoukville is a boat trip to Ream National Park, which is home to an abundant range of rare birds and other indigenous wildlife. Other popular day tours include boat trips to Koh Rong Samloem, a protected island off the coast of Sihanoukville, which has a number of bungalows and villa resorts, and a visit to the three Islands: Bamboo, Chalus and Ta Kiev islands. Visitors can also go on fishing trips with local fishermen. One of the island's we recommend is Song Saa Private Island, only a 35-minute boat ride from Sihanoukville where you can find a high-end resort.

KAMPOT AND KEP

Kampot is a hidden gem in Cambodia that tends to be overlooked. It is one of the most naturally beautiful provinces and offers a scenic coastline, offshore islands, mountains, a national park, and a picturesque provincial capital, Kampot city. Close to Kampot you'll find the small resort town of Kep; a seaside destination surrounded by tree-covered hills, famous for its delicious seafood.

Popular day tours in this region include visiting Kep's Crab Market, boat trips to Koh Tongsay (Rabbit Island), visits to Bokor National Park, Bokor Mountain, and day tours to the Phnom Kampong Trach Cave in the east of Kampot town. It's also easy to rent a bike and head out to explore the coastline by yourself.



CHI PHAT

Chi Phat is mainland Southeast Asia's largest remaining tract of rainforest situated directly in the heart of the Cardamom Mountains, Koh Kong Province. The Chi Phat Ecotourism Site was established in 2007 by an environmental NGO, and is home to the Chi Phat Commune, made up of 2,500 people – around 550 families. Popular day tours around this area include a boat trip and bird watching on the Stoeng Prat River, biking to the post-Angkorian burial jar site, visits to caves and waterfalls, and exploring Pre Chi Phat by kayak.

BATTAMBANG

Located in the northwest of Cambodia, Battambang has a diverse range of attractions, including Angkor-period temples, mountain viewpoints, wetlands and beautiful rural scenery. Despite its wealth of attractions, Battambang Province makes it on to the itineraries of relatively few travelers, ensuring that it's a fabulous off-the-beaten-track destination.

There are some great day tours that visitors can join in Battambang, including a ride on the bamboo train to visit Wat Bannan temple, biking through the Battambang countryside, or alternatively, a rural road trip that takes you to temples and the killing caves of Phnom Sampeau.



KRATIE & STUNG TRENG

The river towns of Kratie and Stung Treng are situated along the Mekong River in the northeast of Cambodia and are often visited by those traveling overland from southern Laos on their way to Phnom Penh. While Stung Treng is only 56 km from the Lao-Cambodian border, Kratie is another 145 kilometers further south.

In Kratie, visitors can go on day tours to visit Koh Phdao island; the 100-Pillar Pagoda, or boat trips along the Mekong River to catch a glimpse of the extremely rare freshwater Irrawaddy dolphin. You can also take bike tours in Kratie to explore the island of Koh Trong, which is an almighty sand bar in the middle of the Mekong, with several floating villages. Stung Treng town is another option to see the ancient ruins of Thala Barivat.

MONDULKIRI & RATANAKIRI

These two isolated provinces in the east of the country are a paradise for nature lovers with stunning natural beauty that includes thickly forested regions, large rivers, extinct volcanoes and waterfalls. Add to this, the communities of ethnic hill tribes and you have an area that is perfect for adventure travel. In Mondulkiri, visitors can join elephant treks, while in Ratanakiri, popular day tours include discovering the Gem Mountains by boat or car, and visiting the ethnic villages and Tampuan Cemetery.



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