



SEE ASIA DIFFERENTLY
CAMBODIA LAOS VIETNAM BORNEO BURMA INDONESIA



CAMBODIA
HOLIDAY INFORMATION PACK

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Thank you for choosing to travel with See Asia Differently. We hope that you have a fabulous holiday and return home with some wonderful memories.

This pack has been designed to help you get even more out of your Cambodian holiday from answering the most common questions, helping you to prepare and offering suggestions once you arrive.

If you still have questions, please contact us or speak to your tour coordinator once you arrive.

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About

Cambodia is a country of incredible beauty, with famous breathtaking temples, fertile plains dotted with rice fields, and a history unlike any other. The dominant religion is Buddhism, which places value on hospitality and kindness. Each year, Cambodia draws millions of tourists who come to enjoy the country's breathtaking sights and enter the walls of Cambodia's Angkor Wat - one of the Seven Manmade Wonders of the World.

The ancient Khmer Empire ruled much of Southeast Asia for centuries and gave Angkor Wat to the world. However, for four years in the late 1970's Cambodia came under the control of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime and fell victim to a failed political ideal that left over two million of the nation's citizens dead from disease, malnutrition and persecution.

Many people only know of Cambodia in terms of these two periods but there is far more to this country than ancient temples and past tragedies. Its topography and climate are as varied as its culture. The Tonle Sap Lake at the heart of Cambodia is one of the richest freshwater fishing grounds in the world and is home to a variety of migratory birds. Cambodia's mountain and jungle areas abound with rare and beautiful fauna. In these regions the indigenous tribal peoples continue to follow a centuries-old way of life. Cambodia has its own unique and much underrated cuisine and produces delicious, organic meat and fruit. This was showcased in Rick Stein's Asian Odyssey cooking programme.

The burgeoning tourist industry has brought relative wealth to some provinces while in others, the life of Cambodia's agricultural workers has changed little in a millennium. The Khmer people have a warmth, strength and spirituality that is a surprise and delight to most visitors. There seems to be an unquenchable spirit, humour and gentle pride in most Cambodians that perhaps explains how they have succeed in surviving years of political experimentation and civil war.

A Brief History

Human settlement in Cambodia dates back at least 7,000 years.

Early Kingdoms

Chinese sources from the first century A.D. describe a powerful kingdom called "Funan" in Cambodia, which was strongly influenced by India. Funan went into decline in the 6th century A.D., and was supplanted by a group of ethnically-Khmer kingdoms that the Chinese refer to as "Chenla."

The Khmer Empire

In 790, Prince Jayavarman II founded a new empire, the first to unite Cambodia as a political entity. This was the Khmer Empire, which lasted until 1431. The crown-jewel of the Khmer Empire was the city of Angkor, centred around the temple of Angkor Wat. Construction began in the 890s, and Angkor served as the seat of power for more than 500 years. At its height Angkor covered more area than modern-day New York City.

Fall of the Khmer Empire

After 1220, the Khmer Empire began to decline. It was attacked repeatedly by the neighbouring Tai (Thai) people, and the beautiful city of Angkor was abandoned by the end of the 16th century.

Thai and Vietnamese Rule

After the fall of the Khmer Empire, Cambodia came under the control of the neighbouring Tai and Vietnamese kingdoms. These two powers competed for influence until 1863, when France took control of Cambodia.

French Rule

The French ruled Cambodia for a century, but viewed it as a subsidiary of the more important colony of Vietnam. During World War II, the Japanese occupied Cambodia but left the Vichy French in charge. The Japanese promoted Khmer nationalism and pan-Asian ideas. After Japan's defeat, the Free French sought renewed control over Indochina. The rise of nationalism during the war, however, forced France to offer increasing self-rule to the Cambodians until independence in 1953.

Independent Cambodia

King Sihanouk ruled newly-free Cambodia until 1970, when he was deposed during the Cambodian Civil War (1967-1975). This war pitted communist forces, called the Khmer Rouge, against the US-backed Cambodian government.

In 1975 the Khmer Rouge won the civil war, and set to work creating an agrarian communist utopia by exterminating political opponents, monks and priests, and educated people in general. Just four years of Khmer Rouge rule left 1 to 2 million Cambodians dead- about 1/5 of the population. Vietnam attacked Cambodia and captured Phnom Penh in 1979, withdrawing only in 1989. The Khmer Rouge fought on as guerrillas until 1999. Today, though, Cambodia is a peaceful and democratic nation.

Climate

Cambodia has two main seasons the green season and the dry season, with a couple of what could be called sub-seasons in between where it is slightly hotter or cooler.

Cambodia can be visited at any time of the year and has a mild tropical climate. Travellers should not be put off by the myth of Southeast Asia's monsoon period or 'Green Period' as we like to call it.

The 'Green Season' extends from May until October and is an extremely good time to travel. The rain tends to come in short sharp downpours and at this time the country is probably at its most beautiful. The popular sights are also a lot less crowded and Angkor is surrounded by lush foliage and the moats are all full of water, perfect for photography.

The 'Dry Season' is from November to April. The most pleasant time to travel is from November to January when the weather is dry and cool; the days are full of bright crisp autumn-like days. The weather is at its hottest and stickiest in late March and April, where temperatures hover around thirty-five degrees centigrade.

Cambodia is enjoyable at any time of the year and we make sure you get the most out of your trip whatever time of year you travel.

Main Festivals

- 15th February - Meak Bochea Day (death of Buddha)
- 14th to 16th April - Cambodian New Year
- 12th May - Royal Ploughing Day Ceremony
- 18th to 20th September - Pchum Ben Day (Ancestors Day)
- 24th September - Constitution and Coronation Day
- 9th November - Independence Day
- 16th to 18th November - Water Festival

*Please note that dates of some festivals can change slightly from year to year.

Before you Leave

Emergency Contact

See Asia Differently contact

- Cambodian Office Number – +855 (0) 63 966 355
- International Number – +44 208 150 5150
- Cambodian Mobile Number – +855 (0) 16 565 496 / +855 (0) 89 466 715

British Embassy

27-29 Street 75, Sangkat Srah Chak, Khan Daun Pehn, Phnom Penh

Contact Number - +855 (0) 2342 7124 / 428 153

Office Hours: Monday to Thursday (08:15-12:00/13:00-16:45) Friday (08:15-13:45)

*Other embassy details can be supplied if needed.

Visas and Taxes

Your passport must not expire within 6 months of your holiday; you will also require a Cambodian Visa which is issued upon arrival to the country. You will need 2 passport photographs for your visa the cost will vary on the visa.

A tourist visa is \$30 and a business/ordinary visa is \$35. Both will last for a period of 30 days however extensions are available. A tourist visa can only be extended by 1 month, while a business/ordinary visa can be extended indefinitely. For every day you are in the country without a valid visa you will have to pay \$5.

Please note that you are no longer required to pay an airport departure tax as this should now be included in your airline ticket

Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory for anyone travelling on a 'See Asia Differently' tour and you will be asked to supply us with your insurance details before travelling. Travel insurance can be acquired from a multitude of companies but it is vital that your insurance is comprehensive and covers you for all aspects of the trip you are taking.

Health (Vaccinations)

We recommend that you see your doctor or a travel clinic at least 6 weeks before your departure for general advice on travel risks, malaria and vaccinations.

Rather than giving out the wrong advice we have found that www.masta.org offers excellent medical advice about recommended vaccinations and malaria advice. With them you can buy a number of useful products including mosquito repellent, malaria tablets and many other forms of travel related products. An alternative you might like to try the Travelpharm.

If you are currently taking medicine or drugs, whether prescription or not, please make sure that you take a sufficient supply to last through your trip. Also ensure that you have insurance for accident and sickness. If you need a doctor while in Cambodia, you must be prepared to pay for these services and claim it back on your insurance on your return to your home country. Ensure you keep all receipts and it is recommended that you take a copy of your prescription with you.

Money and Expenses

The official currency in Cambodia is the Cambodian Riel with the following notes in circulation; 100, 500, 1000, 2000, 5000 and 10000. Thankfully to keep things simple the US dollar is accepted pretty much everywhere. However please make sure that your dollars aren't torn or marked in any way as this can lead to them being rejected.

The exchange rate for Cambodia Riel to US dollar is around 4000 Riel = \$1 or 6000 Riel = £1.

We recommend you allow around £10 to £25 a day for basic day to day expenses such as drinks and meals. To give an idea a beer will set you back £1, a 2 course lunch £5 and a 2 course dinner £8.

Also please be aware that it can be hard to break big notes (\$100, \$50) in some parts of the country, when you get a big note try to exchange it for smaller denominations at your hotel or before you arrive, as in some places they simply won't be able to provide enough change.

There are several national banks where you can change or withdraw money and most towns in Cambodia now have ATM's. Visa, JCB, Master Card and American Express credit cards are accepted in major stores, however you will sometimes need to present identification when using your credit card.

What to Pack

Wear light, airy, covering clothing to protect yourself from the sun during the day and mosquitoes at night. The sun can be quite intense at times so bring a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. Consider buying a traditional Khmer scarf (krama) or a sarong to keep the sun off your neck. Carry a lightweight rain coat during the green season, though you will probably only need it in the afternoon. Lightweight throw away poncho's can be bought almost everywhere locally. You should have mosquito repellent for sunrise and sunset hours. Wear practical shoes when visiting the temples for climbing narrow steps and walking on uneven surfaces.

As in all warm climates you can pack quite light and if you do forget something you can easily pick up anything you need once you are here.

Here is our list of essentials to bring with you on your holiday:

- Passport (with photocopies)
- Travel insurance (with photocopies)
- Airline tickets (with photocopies)
- 2 Passport photographs for visa on entry (bring 4 to 6 as backup)
- USD cash and travellers checks
- Credit or debit card
- Flashlight
- Sun hat, sun block, sunglasses and after sun (just in case)
- Walking shoes/sport sandals
- Waterproof jacket (just in case)
- Camera, additional memory cards and camera charger
- Travel power adapters
- Insect repellent
- First-aid kit (should contain lip salve, aspirin, bandaids, anti-histamine, Imodium or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhoea, re-hydration powder, extra prescription drugs)

Recommended Reading and Films

We are aware that you may want to do some background reading into Cambodia before coming on your trip, there are a many books available but here are the top 3 that we have read:

Survival in the Killing Fields by Haing Ngor(Author) and Roger Warner(Contributor). Is a compelling, fascinating and sometimes harrowing autobiographical account of one man's struggle through the horrors of the Khmer Rouge era. His story is told with remarkable frankness and provides a stark insight into the depths which Pol Pot and his genocide regime.

Cambodia: Year Zero by Francois Ponchaud is one of the best accounts of giving the reader an understanding the origins of how it all came to be.

The Rough Guide to Cambodia by Beverley Palmer, is a great way to research more of Cambodia before you come out. With interesting facts, do's and don'ts and great recommendations of bars and restaurants.

We also recommend watching these films before coming to Cambodia:

The Killing Fields (1984) tells the chilling tale of a photographer trapped in Cambodia during Pol Pot's bloody "Year Zero" cleansing campaign, which claimed the life of around 2 million civilians.

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001) the easiest way to describe Tomb Raider is to say, imagine a female Indiana Jones. Tomb Raider sees Angelina Jolie running around some of the Siem Reap temples. A more family friendly film to watch before visiting Cambodia.

During your stay

Responsible Travel

Cambodia is a relatively safe country in which to travel and it is most unlikely that you will find yourself with any problems during your holiday. Just be as careful as you would be in your home country and use your common sense. For example: Don't make it easy for thieves by putting your passport or cash in your back pocket and don't take expensive jewellery with you.

You will be seen as a role model here and you're also an ambassador for yourself and your home country. Set a good example at all times in the way your dress, your behaviour, and your time keeping.

Be aware that whilst the vast majority of people and organisations are genuine, there are some known instances where this is not the case. Be aware of mothers asking you to buy them milk powder for their babies. The babies are not receiving the milk and are being exploited so the older children and adults can make money by returning the milk powder to the shop after the donor has left.

Orphanage tourism is not what it seems and does more harm than good. Since it has become popular amongst tourists to visit orphanages more and more families are abandoning their children to these institutions instead of keeping them in the family home. No child should be institutionalised, as such we strongly advise against visiting such organisations during your visit.

We are committed to responsible and sustainable tourism and all of our trips are designed with the local people and the culture of the country in mind.

We try and help to make a difference wherever we can from supporting various charitable organizations to making the conscious effort of being as green as we can by running all of our vehicles on Bio Diesel supplied by 'Naga Bio Diesel'.

There are so many wonderful charities and projects in Cambodia; unfortunately we can't help them all but we have chosen to support HUSK and ConCERT.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Don't** go topless unless you're on a beach - men only. Women should be clothed modestly even on the beach, ideally t-shirt and shorts over your swimsuit.
- **Do** accept food when offered - it's rude not to.
- **Don't** point your feet at any religious statue or shrine.
- **Do** be prepared to be stared at like a zoo animal and be asked personal questions.
- **Don't** touch monks if you're female.
- **Do** be open and talkative - most people are thrilled to welcome and talk to you.
- **Don't** offer food or drinks with your left hand, this is your hygiene hand in the absence of toilet paper.
- **Do** carry your own toilet paper if it matters to you - it's a rare commodity.
- **Do** dress conservatively with your shoulders and knees covered when visiting the temples.

A more recent problem is male tourists taking their shirt off to walk around town and female tourists wearing extremely short shorts. This is considered rude and offensive. Please be respectful on local customs and dress appropriately.

Language

Here are a few words that we have spelt out phonetically to help you on your way:

- Hello – Suez Day
- Excuse me – Som-toe
- Thank you - Or-kun
- Yes – Baat (for him) / DZaa (for her)
- No – Atay
- No thank you – Atay or-kun
- Good morning – Arun Suez-day
- Goodbye – Lee-hi
- Good night – Re-try Suez-Day
- One Beer Please – Som beer moy cow (Please beer one glass)

Numbers

1 – moy	6 – bram-moy
2 – pee	7 – bram-pee
3 – buy	8 – bram-bay
4 – boo-un	9 – bram boo-un
5 – bram	10 – dorp

Food and drink

Cambodian food in general is absolutely delicious and in most restaurants it is pretty good quality. It can be described as mild variations of the tastes of Thailand, but often with some French influence.

Rice and fish are basic ingredients of many Khmer dishes. Local specialties include curries, soup and varieties of dishes prepared with beef, pork, chicken and seafood. Fresh fruit and vegetables are also readily available and used in cooking.

Cambodia offers a good choice of restaurants and eating places and most also offer Western options for the not so adventurous palates.

It is recommended to only drink bottled beverages including water or beverages made with boiled water. However draft beer is usually an exception to this rule. Ice is up to your discretion as it is becoming more common for establishments to make ice from bottled water.

*Please visit 'Hungry Go Where' a restaurant food and review site for Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

www.hungrygowhere.com/siemreap/

www.hungrygowhere.com/phnompenh/

Tipping, Bartering and Tuk Tuk's

Unlike in Europe and America where tipping is done on an expected percentage of the total bill, Cambodia doesn't have a specific rule. It is up to you how much you tip, that is if you decide to tip at all, as it is not expected. Be aware that the average Cambodian earns around \$60 a month so tip if you feel like your experience has been enhanced but don't leave too much as it can be seen as insulting.

When you are in the local markets don't be afraid to barter most of the shop owners will at least double their price initially. While you should be respectful and not try to go from \$10 down to \$1 you should be able to get the item for around \$5. Remember the shop owner isn't going to sell you something at a loss, if you are struggling to get the price down then simply walk away. You will be surprised at how quickly the price shouted after you falls.

Tuk Tuk's and Moto's are the main form of Taxi in Cambodia, again it is important to try and bargain with them. Make sure you agree a price before you get into the Tuk Tuk not agreeing the price at the beginning can be a mistake and a journey that would normally cost \$2 can go up to \$5+ (while this doesn't sound much it is an 150% increase, imagine a taxi at home doing that)!

Electricity

The Electrical current in Cambodia is 220 volts; 50Hz. Electrical sockets take two flat prongs just like in continental Europe so pack a travel adapter. The power supply is relatively stable in the big cities however power outages are quite common.

Communications

The phone code for Cambodia is +855. International calls from Cambodia have to go through an operator making phoning home very expensive. The easiest solution is for you to create a Skype account before you leave home. The best solution is to leave all your worries at home and switch off.

Mobile phone coverage is surprisingly good and Cambodia has introduced a new SIM card which allows you to phone from your own mobile phone as long as you have got your phone unlocked before you travel. To get a SIM visit one of the many phone shops with a photo copy of your passport. The SIM costs 10\$, you will then need to buy phone credit which is valid for 7 days and includes free SMS messages within Cambodia and calls cost around 20 cents per minute.

In regards to the internet there is wifi almost everywhere so you will have no problem if you decide to bring an i-Pad or laptop.

Recommended Restaurant and Bars

We believe that in parts of your holiday you should follow your instinct as to where to eat, drink and what to do in your spare time as peoples tastes vary dramatically. However in this section we have listed a few of our favourite places to give you a helping hand.

Please visit 'Hungry Go Where' a restaurant food and review site for Phnom Penh and Siem Reap:

- www.hungrygowhere.com/siemreap/
- www.hungrygowhere.com/phnompenh/

Siem Reap

Pub Street

There are far too many bars and restaurants to recommend. We suggest walking around and pick the best table and you won't go far wrong. However the street parallel to Pub Street 'Alley West' also offers a great choice and is well worth checking out.

Cuisine Wat Damnak

If you want to try the best in seasonal and creative Cambodian food and you class yourself as a bit of a foodie then look no further. They offer two tasting menu's that change weekly; closed on Mondays and it's best to make a booking.

Marum

A 'Friends International' teacher/student training restaurant offering tapas style dishes which are great to share. There is inside and outside garden dining and it is perfect for families, groups or a tasting session.

Abacus

This has become the restaurant of choice for special occasions for the Siem Reap expat. With beautifully cooked food and generous portions of quality French and International food.

Phnom Penh

Friends

The original teacher training restaurant offering tapas style dishes in a very pleasant restaurant situated just round the corner from the national museum on St.13.

FCC (Foreign Correspondents Club)

This is the perfect meeting place especially for a happy hour drink. (5pm to 7pm) Situated on the waterfront the food is very good but you will pay a premium.

Little Noodle Shop

Located on St.172 near the national museum this small, great value and perfectly formed locally owned restaurant serves the best noodles in town, always cooked fresh to order.

Cantina

Suggesting a Mexican restaurant is quite strange but the main draw apart from the waterfront location is the array of photographs that cover the walls, depicting the first day of the fall of Phnom Penh.

Battambang

Gecko Cafe/Restaurant

The only real place of note in Battambang, serving good food and really tasty alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails.

Kampot

Rikitikitavi

The best but most pricey restaurant in town, offering the best views of the river. If you are stopping in town just the once then there is no other option.

Rusty Key Hole

A slightly rustic riverside bar that always offers a warm welcome that serves some very hearty food, especially if you go for their dino-rib special.

Bokor Mountain Lodge

Another riverside located restaurant with friendly staff and a good wholesome menu, with a mixture of Western and Khmer dishes.

Kep

Veranda

Boasting the best view in town, situated just up the hill from the roundabout. The restaurant has a great vibe and extensive menu with plenty to choose from and is a must for any stay in Kep.

Breezes

More of a place to go for a sunset cocktail but the food is pretty good too, the Dutch owner offers some good fish and fusion dishes.

Sailing Club

This is a good safe option and good location. Prices are on the high side and unfortunately the service never matches the ambiance, so if you're not eating here just pop down for a drink.

Crab Market

The crab market has flourished over the last couple of years, with over 20 restaurants to choose from. The food is pretty much the same but prices vary, usually the better decor the more expensive.

Sihanoukville

Mick & Craig's

Probably the most extensive menu in town, serving good quality and well priced dishes. Located on the main street .

Kratie

Red Sun Falling

A simple rustic bar/restaurant with a very colourful owner. There are 3 other restaurants of note in town all serving the same menu, however Red Sun Falling is definitely the place where you will get the best welcome.

Le Bungalow

The only other exception of note offering the most extensive menu offering mainly Western dishes but at a premium price.

Ban Lung

Terre Rouge

The best but most pricey restaurant in town but offering the best location too. It's situated by a small lake at the bottom of town. Serving an array of Khmer and Western food.

Rik's Cafe Cambodge

At the time of writing they are relocating but any moto in town will know where to take you. Based on a cooperative idea where local produce is bought and used in some simple Western dishes.

Sen Monorom

Green House

Definitely the best choice in a small town, located halfway up the main street. Offering simple Khmer food with a few Western snacks too.