

# CAMBODIA



- ✓ From laid-back beaches and lush jungles to ancient structures and pristine mountains, Cambodia is a land waiting to be rediscovered.
- ✓ Visit Siem Reap’s magnificent temples, abandoned centuries ago by the Khmer kingdom and now surrounded by its lush forests. Most famous is the awe-inspiring Angkor Wat – only now starting to reveal its hidden secrets. Ready your camera for the mysterious Ta Phrom, now engulfed by huge tree roots, as well as the giant smiling stone faces of the Bayon temple. With untouched jungles spanning the heart of the country, lush flora and fauna, and a culture untouched by the western world, we have only scratched the surface.
- ✓ Cambodia is much more than temples. The history of Cambodia is both inspiring and sobering, uplifting and heartbreaking. In Phnom Penh, witness stark reminders of the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. This country of 15 million people is still recovering from the Khmer Rouge, which left it in devastation 30 years ago. Be prepared for an emotional journey which will stay with you for years to come.



### Capital

Phnom Penh



### Population

15.76 million



### Language

Khmer



### Time Zone

GMT+07:00  
(Indochina Time Zone)



### Electricity

220v, 50Hz.



### Currency

Riel

## When to Go

### SEASONS

Cambodia, like its neighbours, is influenced by the tropical mainland southeast Asian monsoon and has three definable seasons: the dry cool season lasting from November to February; the dry hot season lasting from March to May; and the wet rainy season which lasts from June to October with the rainiest months in September and October, which in turn are also cooler than the previous months.

The best time to experience Cambodia’s splendid tropical beauty and world heritage temples and ruins is in the cool dry months between November and January.



## WEATHER

In Cambodia's cool season, weather is warm yet balmy and during the evenings and nights the temperature drops pleasantly. The cool season is perfect for exploring Cambodia's numerous cultural and world heritage sites. The hot season arrives in March and brings with it humid high temperatures which last until May or early June when the seasons begin to change and rain arrives. The rainy season is characterised by heavy afternoon rain showers which comes to head in September and October, the months that receive the most rain. The rainy season nourishes Cambodia's rural life and livelihood as the country's massive inland lake, Tonle Sap, actually influences the directional flow of the Mekong in the rainy season.

## WHAT TO BRING

Walking shoes for exploring Cambodia's vast temple complexes is a must and don't forget a sweatshirt for cool nights as the temperature shift between the heat of the day and the evening can feel quite drastic. Because of Cambodia's humid tropical climate, plenty of changes of socks and undergarments are encouraged.

## ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Cambodia's off season in the rainy months between May and October can also be a nice time to go as prices are lower and there are fewer travellers; not to mention the forest and canals near Angkor Wat are full and brimming with life, however be wary of flooding in the rural areas. The hot season may be too hot for some, however the splendid and jovial atmosphere of Khmer New Year or Cambodia's version of Theravada Buddhist New Year in April aren't to be missed

## Customs & Traditions

### ART & ARCHITECTURE

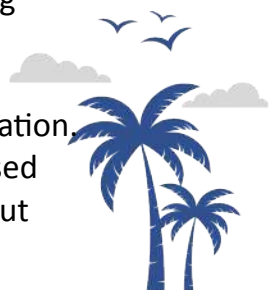
The majority of Khmer art and architecture date from the Angkor period when decoration was influenced by mystical and religious beliefs. All the surviving monuments are built of stone or brick, and all are religious buildings. Common motifs in Khmer sculpture are apsaras, or celestial nymphs who represent the ultimate ideal of feminine beauty at that time. Other motifs are nagas, or sacred aquatic snakes, which play an important part in Hindu mythology.

Temples were designed to represent the cosmic Mount Meru, the home of the gods of Indian cosmology, surrounded by oceans. Angkor Wat, the Cambodian architectural masterpiece

### DANCE & THEATRE

There is a strong tradition of dance in Cambodia, which has its origins in the sacred dances of the apsaras, the mythological seductresses of ancient Cambodia. Dance also became a religious tradition esigned to bring divine blessings to the king and his people.

During the Angkor period classical ballet dancers were central to the royal court and followed a very structured form. Folk dancing is less structured, with dancers responding to the rhythm of drums while they act out tales from Cambodian folk stories. The drummer has the most important role in folk music as he sets the rhythm. There is no system of written notation so the tunes are transmitted orally from generation to generation. Shadow plays are also a popular form of entertainment in the countryside. They are based on stories from the Ramayana, embroidered with local legends and the characters are cut out of leather and often painted.



## ETIQUETTE

- In Cambodian culture it is unseemly to show too much emotion so avoid losing your temper over problems and delays.
- You should always take your shoes off when entering a temple or when visiting private houses.
- You should never touch anybody's head intentionally as it is regarded as a particularly holy part of the body.
- Accordingly, the feet are literally the lowest part of the body so do not point your feet at anybody or at a Buddha image.
- Sensitivity to politically related subjects in conversation is advisable.
- It is polite to ask permission before taking photographs of Cambodians, particularly monks.

## PEOPLE

Cambodia has a total of approximately 12 million people, 90 percent of whom are Khmers. The Khmer are believed to have lived in the region from about the 2nd century AD and have been influenced over the centuries by the powerful Indian and Javanese kingdoms.

Other ethnic backgrounds include Chinese, Vietnamese, Chams and hilltribes called Khmer Loeu that live in the forested mountain zones, mainly in the north-east. Traditionally they were semi-nomadic and practiced slash and burn agriculture. In recent years increasing numbers have turned to settled agriculture and adopted many of the customs of the lowland Khmer.

## RELIGION

Cambodian religions are strongly influenced by early Indian and Chinese cultures. As early as the beginning of the Christian era, most Funan people were followers of Brahmanism (a forerunner of Hinduism). Theravada Buddhism entered the country in the 13th century and was reintroduced as the national religion in 1989.

Today almost 90 percent of the population is Theravada Buddhist and the faith has a large influence on everyday life. At some point during their lives most Cambodian males spend some time in a monastery, and almost every village has a Buddhist temple around which village life centres. Cambodian Buddhism appears an easygoing faith and tolerates the ancestor and territorial spirit worship that is widely practiced.

