



Welcome to Cambodia

"Even with the excitement of frequent big cat sightings, nothing beats rolling out of my hammock in the bright morning sun to the alarm calls of gibbons and macaques, as Oriental hornbills passing low swoop over our camp."

The remote tropical forests of Cambodia have lain inaccessible to outsiders for much of the country's fraught political history. Peace has revealed that these threatened forests harbour many of the world's most fascinating endangered wildlife, including elephants, tigers, leopards, sun-bears, and gibbons. Cambodia's ancient cultural heritage is today typified in ancient, weather-worn temples, vibrant, colourful cities, and warm, friendly people.

Know your History

The Khmer Civilisation

The Khmer or Angkor civilisation came into existence during the period from 802 to 1431 A.D., and was the first civilisation in Southeast Asia to adopt religious ideas and political institutions from India, and to establish centralised kingdoms encompassing large territories. The earliest known kingdom in the area, Funan, flourished from around the 1st to the 6th Century A.D. It was succeeded by Chenla, which controlled large areas of modern Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. The golden age of the Khmer civilisation, however, was the period from the 9th to the 13th Centuries, when the kingdom of Kambuja, which gave Kampuchea (or Cambodia) its name, ruled large territories from its capital in the region of Angkor in western Cambodia.

French rule

In 1863, King Norodom signed an agreement with the French to establish a protectorate over his kingdom. The country gradually came under French colonial domination. During World War Two, the Japanese allowed the Vichy French Government (who collaborated with the Nazis) to continue administering Cambodia and the other Indochinese territories, but they also fostered Khmer nationalism. Cambodia enjoyed a brief period of independence in 1945 before Allied troops restored French control.

Vietnam and Communism

By the mid-1960s, parts of Cambodia's eastern provinces were serving as bases for the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong (NVA/VC) forces operating against South Vietnam. As NVA/VC activity grew, the United States and South Vietnam became concerned, and in 1969, the United

States began a series of bombing raids targeted at NVA/VC elements, contributing to destabilisation. The United States claims that the bombing campaign took place no further than ten, and later, twenty miles inside the Cambodian border, areas where the Cambodian population had been evicted by the NVA. In October, 40,000 North Vietnamese soldiers entered Central Cambodia with King Sihanouk's approval.

The communist insurgency inside Cambodia continued to grow, with supplies and military support provided by North Vietnam. Pol Pot and Ieng Sary asserted their dominance over the Vietnamese-trained communists, many of whom were purged. At the same time, the Communist Party of Kampuchea's forces became stronger and more independent of their Vietnamese patrons. By 1973, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) were fighting battles against government forces with little or no North Vietnamese troop support, and they controlled nearly 60% of Cambodia's territory and 25% of its population.

Pol Pot

On New Year's Day 1975, Communist troops launched an offensive which collapsed the Khmer Republic. A US-funded airlift of ammunition and rice ended when Congress refused additional aid for Cambodia. Phnom Penh and other cities were subjected to daily rocket attacks causing thousands of civilian casualties. The Lon Nol government in Phnom Penh surrendered on 17th April 1975, five days after the US mission evacuated Cambodia.

Immediately after its victory, the CPK under the rule of Pol Pot ordered the evacuation of all cities and towns, sending the complete urban population out into the countryside to work as farmers, as the CPK were trying to reshape society into Pol Pot's vision of a utopian communist society based on a militant system of agricultural reform. Anything considered Western – including libraries and medicines – as well as temples were destroyed.

Thousands had been starving and dying of disease prior to the CPK takeover. Thousands starved or died of disease during the evacuation and its aftermath. Many of those forced to evacuate the cities were resettled in newly created villages, which lacked food, agricultural implements, and medical care. Many who lived in cities had lost the skills necessary for survival in an agrarian environment. Of the 8 million people in Cambodia, it is estimated that between 1 and 3 million were killed under the Khmer Rouge regime, giving rise to the term "Killing Fields".

Ethnic minorities and certain professions were particularly targeted; most notably, around half of the Cham Muslim population were executed, and of the 425,000 ethnic Chinese living in Cambodia in the 1960s, only around 61,400 remained in 1984, due to the genocide and emigration. American journalist Robert D. Kaplan once announced that "eyeglasses were as deadly as the yellow star" as doctors, lawyers and teachers were also targeted, spectacles being seen as a sign of intellectualism.

The end of the Khmer Rouge

In December 1978, Vietnam announced the formation of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS). It was composed of Khmer communists who had remained in Vietnam after 1975 and officials from the eastern sector who had fled to Vietnam from Cambodia in 1978. In late December 1978, Vietnamese forces launched a full invasion of Cambodia in an attempt to stop the genocide, capturing Phnom Penh on 7th January 1979 and driving the remnants of the Cambodian army westward toward Thailand.

Three years after the Vietnamese invasion, in 1981, Cambodia was divided between three factions; the Khmer Rouge, a royalist faction led by Sihanouk, and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF). During the 1980s, the Khmer Rouge continued to control the larger part of the

country, and attacked territory not under their rule; supplied by Thailand, the United States and the United Kingdom meant that they had the power to do this. However, these attacks, as well as total economic sanctions from the US and its allies, meant that reconstruction of the country was nearly impossible, and Cambodia was left deeply impoverished.

Violence reigned for the next decade, until in 1989 representatives of 18 countries, the four Cambodian parties, and the UN Secretary General met in Paris in an effort to negotiate a comprehensive settlement. They hoped to achieve those objectives seen as crucial to the future of post-occupation Cambodia: a verified withdrawal of the remaining Vietnamese occupation troops, the prevention of the return to power of the Khmer Rouge, and genuine self-determination for the Cambodian people. Although the conference made some progress, a complete agreement among all parties on a comprehensive settlement remained elusive until after eight months of negotiation, a framework was agreed on 28th August 1990.

Political stability

In 1993, Norodom Sihanouk was restored as King of Cambodia, and the 1990s saw huge reconstruction efforts and some political stability in the of multiparty democracy. This was shaken somewhat by a coup d'état in 1997. Thanks to help from nations such as Japan, France, Germany, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, the US and the UK, multiparty democracy has remained.

Cambodia's first commune elections were held in February 2002. These elections to select chiefs and members of 1,621 commune (municipality) councils were marred by political violence and fell short of being free and fair by international standards. The election results were largely acceptable to the major parties, though procedures for the new local councils were not fully implemented.

In 2004, King Norodom Sihanouk was quickly replaced by King Norodom Sihamoni after a surprise abdication; selected by a nine-member throne council and endorsed by Prime Minister Hun Sen and National Assembly Speaker Prince Norodom Ranariddh (the king's half brother and current chief advisor), Sihamoni was enthroned in Phnom Penh on 29th October 2004.

Money Talks

Despite Cambodia's rapid progress, the economy is still trailing behind its neighbouring countries. Due to the years of war and the dramatic scale of poverty, especially in rural areas, it will take many years to improve the Cambodian economy.

Exports

Cambodia's main exports are: rice, rubber, corn, tapioca, vegetables, cashews, and silk.

Money

Most of Cambodia deals in US Dollars (USD), though the country does have its own non-convertible currency, the Cambodian Riel (CR). There are plenty of banks in Phnom Penh, most open regular working hours. It is best to bring US Dollars and US Dollar traveller cheques and get these changed in Phnom Penh on arrival. There are limited places that will change UK Sterling in Cambodia and Scottish notes are not accepted.

ATM machines are now becoming more widespread in Cambodia and can be found in Phnom Penh – withdrawals may have a small surplus charge although this is likely to be similar to traveller's cheque commission rates. As yet, ATM machines are still rare in the smaller towns and villages, so it's always worth keeping enough cash on hand. Credit and debit cards (MasterCard and Visa) are accepted for cash withdrawal at most banks but rarely for general payments. However a credit card will come in useful in the event of an emergency.

Get Culture Savvy

Since ancient times, the Khmer had accepted the two great religions from India, i.e. Hinduism and Buddhism, the former being more popular. Hinduism had played an important role in Khmer civilisation as the Angkor monarchs adopted its concept of deva-rajā, or "god-king", by which the king was revered as an incarnation of the god Shiva, a supreme Hindu deity who was regarded as a protector.

Most temples in the Angkor Empire were dedicated to either the god Shiva or the god Vishnu. Believed to be the holy house of the supreme gods, the temples were carefully built with fine arts, and the materials used were those of everlasting stones. Many impressive sculptures of great craftsmanship were enshrined.

The second religion revered by the Khmer was the Buddhism of the Mahayana sect which came into the region at the same time as Hinduism. However, Buddhism was less prominent.

Both Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism played important roles as the political, religious and philosophical pillars of Khmer Civilisation, by which the king was revered as the god-king or deva-rajā. This ideology enabled the king to rule over the country as an absolute monarch with sovereign spirituality over his people, and thus enhanced the unity of the kingdom. Successive kings were able to mobilise large manpower to serve the army, to maintain extensive irrigation systems and to build numerous massive temples.

Clothing

The most distinct Cambodian dress is the krama scarf, most worn by rural Cambodians. Traditionally red or blue, with a gingham pattern, krama are worn as scarves or bandannas, to carry children, to cover the face, and for decorative purposes.

Tra leaf

Tra leaf books are traditional method of recording information. Books record information on legends of the Khmer people, the Ramayana, the origin of Buddhism and a variety of prayer book series. Tra leaf books are kept wrapped in cloth to protect them from moisture and the jungle climate. Tra leaves are palm-like leaves taken from the sach tra tree.

Food

As with other Southeast Asian countries, rice is a staple food for Cambodia. Cambodians are also estimated to eat around two ounces per day per person of fish, mainly from the Mekong and Tonle Sap. Much of the fish is also made into prahok (crushed, salted and fermented fish paste).

The cuisine of Cambodia usually consists of tropical fruits, soups and noodles. The main ingredients

on most dishes are: kaffir lime, lemon grass, garlic, fish sauce, soy sauce, curry, tamarind, ginger, oyster sauce, coconut milk and black pepper. French influences can still be seen – Cambodian red curry is often eaten with toasted baguette! One of the more popular dishes is ka tieu; pork broth rice noodle soup, made with fried garlic, scallions and green onions. Ka tieu is sometimes topped with beef balls, shrimp, pork liver or lettuce.

Festivals

Cambodian New Year

The Cambodian New Year takes place from 13th to 15th April, during the dry season when farmers do not work in the fields. Astrologers determine the exact time and date by calculating the exact moment the new animal protector (tiger, dragon, or snake) arrives. During the first three days, everyone travels to the pagodas to offer food to the monks.

Pchum Ben

Pchum Ben is a religious ceremony in September when everyone remembers the spirit of dead relatives. For 15 days, people in Cambodian villages take turns bringing food to the temples or pagodas. On the 15th and final day, everyone dresses in their finest clothing to travel together to the pagodas. Families bring overflowing baskets of flowers, and children offer food and presents to the monks.

Water Festival

Another very colourful festival is the Water Festival, or the Festival of the Reversing Current. It takes place in late October or early November and marks the reversal of the Tonle Sap River so that it once again flows south from the Tonle Sap Lake into the Mekong River. The highlight of the three-day festival is the boat races that are held in Phnom Penh. Individual villages build their own boats by hollowing out a log to make a dugout canoe that can be rowed by as many as 40 people!

Day of Hatred

Cambodia must be one of the only countries in the world which has a holiday called the "Day of Hatred"! This was a holiday in May which was created by the People's Republic of Kampuchea and the State of Cambodia as a national holiday to remember the crimes of Pol Pot and his regime.

Holidays

1st January - New Years Day

7th January - Victory from Genocide Day

February - Meak Bochea (commemorates the spontaneous gathering of monks to listen to the Buddha's preaching)

8th March - International Women's Day

13th-15th/14th-16th April - Cambodian New Year

April/May - Visaka Bochea (commemorating the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha)

1st May - Labour Day

May - Royal Ploughing Day

13th-15th May - HM the King's birthday

18th June - HM the Queen Mother's birthday

24th September - Constitution Day

September/October - Pchum Ben (Ancestor's Day)
 29th October - Coronation Day
 31st October - HM the King Father's birthday
 9th November - Independence Day
 November - Bon Om Thook (Water Festival)
 10th December - Human Rights Day

Learn the Lingo

The main language spoken in Cambodia is Khmer. It's always good to know a few phrases before you visit a country, so here are a few to get you started.

ENGLISH	KHMER	ENGLISH	KHMER
Greetings		Numbers	
Hello (informal)	Sues'day	1	Muoi
I'm fine, how are you?	Kh'nyohm soks abay, joh lork/lork srey?	2	Pii
How are you?	Soks abay jhe te?	3	Bay
I'm fine thank you	Knyom soks abay awkun	4	Beun
Good morning	Arun sour sdei	5	Pram
Good afternoon	Tiveah sour sdei	6	Pram muoi
Good night	Reah-trey sour sdei	7	Pram pii
Goodbye	Joom-reap leah	8	Pram bay
9	Pram beun		
About Yourself		10	Dop
What is your name?	Niak ch'muah ei?	11	Dahp moo ay
My name is...	Kh'nyohm ch'muah...	20	M'pay
Where are you from?	Niak mao pii prateh naa?	50	Ha seup
I'm from...	Kh'nyohm mao pii...	100	Moo-ay roy
1000	Moo-ay bpoan		
Useful Phrases		1 million	Moo-ay lee-un
Thank you	Awkun		
Thank you very much	Awkun ch'ran		
Please	Suom mehta		
Yes (male)	Baat		
Yes (female)	Chaa		
No (male)	Baat Tei		
No (female)	Chaa Tei		
Excuse me/I'm sorry	Sohm toh		
I'm staying at...	Kh'nyohm snahk neuv...		

May I take your photo?	Kh'nyohm aa-it thawt ruup niak baan te?		
Finding Places		In the Restaurant	
Where is the...?	Noev eah nah...?	Restaurant	Haang bai
Market	P'sah	Water	Teuk
Bank	Tho neea kear	Tea	Tai
Post Office	Bprai sa nee	Rice (cooked)	Bia
Doctor	Peth	Rice (uncooked)	Angkoh
Bus	Laan ch'noul	Meat	Saich
Train	Ra dteah plerng	Fish	T'ray
Cycle	See kloa	Chicken	Moan
Bread	Num Pung		
I'd like a bottle of Angkor Beer	Som Angkor biyea moi dohp		
...one more	...moi diet		

Lay of the Land

Cambodia, also known as Kampuchea, is a country located in Southeast Asia that is bordered by Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. Covering an area of about 181,035 km², Cambodia is about half the size of Vietnam. The capital of Cambodia is Phnom Penh which is also its largest city.

A low-lying alluvial plain in the centre of Cambodia makes up most of the country, although in the south there is the Mekong Delta. There are several mountainous regions, one of which forms a border along the coastline, with another separating Cambodia from Thailand.

The 10th largest river in the world, the Mekong River, is the longest river in Southeast Asia and the most important river in Cambodia. One of its important uses is that it is navigable for most of its "run" through the country, as is Mekong delta in the south.

Cambodia is also home to the largest lake in Southeast Asia, the Tonle Sap (Great Lake), which connects with the Mekong River in Phnom Penh. The Tonle Sap enlarges to four times its normal size when the Mekong rises during the monsoon season, thus causing the Tonle Sap River to flow northward into the Lake.

During the dry season it reverses its flow and goes back into the Mekong River. As a result, the Tonle Sap is one of the richest sources of freshwater fish in the world.

What's the Weather like?

Cambodia has two monsoons: a cool, dry, north-eastern one from November to March and a south-western one which brings with it heavy rain, high winds and high humidity from May to early October. However, even during the rainy season, downpours are limited to one or two a day, generally for 2 to 3 hours in the afternoon.

December and January are considered to be the coolest months and fall in the dry monsoon season. The average minimum temperature is 20°C and the coldest ever recorded is 14°C. Annually, Cambodia gets about 1400 mm of rainfall and the temperature averages 27°C.

Biodiversity

Cambodia's most notable ecosystems are the wetlands; streams, ponds, freshwater swamps and marshes, mudflats and sea grass beds make up over a third of the country's landmass.

Around 456 species of fish have been found in the Lower Mekong Basin, 40% of which have been proved to be endemic, and out of the 435 species of bird, 106 are water birds. Cambodia is also a safe haven for the critically endangered Irawaddy Dolphin and Siamese Crocodile. The last of the Irawaddy Dolphin is believed to be the 100 found between Phnom Penh and the Khone Falls, and the crocodile, once widespread in the Lower Mekong basin, is now confined to southern Lao PDR and Cambodia, and are of extreme global importance as the last wild populations.

Much of Cambodia's 212 mammal species are endangered, and the national animal, the Kouprey, is already thought to be extinct. Deforestation and poaching have decimated Cambodia's population of tigers, Eld's Deer, Wild Water Buffalos and Hog Deer. Elephants, panthers and bears can also be found in Cambodia's vast forests, and many conservation organisations are working hard to make sure that the country's precious wildlife is saved.

Good Books

Guidebooks

- Lonely Planet Phrasebooks: South-East Asia. L. Callan. ISBN 9780864424358 (1997)
- Lonely Planet Travel Guides: Cambodia. N. Ray. ISBN 9781741043174 (2002)

Wildlife

- A Primer of Conservation Biology. R.B. Primack. Sinauer, 2000. ISBN 9780878936922
- Measuring and monitoring biological diversity: Standard methods for mammals. D. Wilson, R. Cole, J. Nichols, R. Rudram & M. Fosters. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996. ISBN 9781560986379
- An Introduction to Tropical Rain Forests, 2nd edition. T.C. Whitmore. 1999. ISBN 9780198501473

Fiction

- Stay Alive, My Son. P. Yathay. 1987. ISBN 9780747500070
- The Gate. François Bizot, Euan Cameron (Trans). 2003. ISBN 9781843430018

Teaching Guides

- Essential Grammar in Use with Answers: A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Elementary Students of English 2nd Edition. Raymond Murphy. Cambridge University Press,

2002. ISBN 9780521529327

- Essential Grammar in Use with Answers: A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Students of English 3rd Edition. Raymond Murphy. Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 9780521532891
- Lessons from Nothing: Activities for Language Teaching with Limited Time and Resources (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers). Bruce Marsland. Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN 9780521627658
- Games for Children (Resource Books for Teachers). Gordon Lewis & Gunther Benson. Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 9780194372244
- Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching 2nd Edition. Diane Larsen-Freeman. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 9780194355742

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