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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries

Cambodia Snapshot

This is the ultimate journey, via temples, beaches and the capital. It can be run in any direction, but it is best followed to the letter, starting in the capital, exploring the coastline and winding up at the world’s most impressive collection of temples, Angkor.

Hit Phnom Penh for its impressive National Museum and stunning Silver Pagoda. It’s home to the most eclectic dining scene in Cambodia, with fine-dining Khmer restaurants, an international array of eateries and some safe street food eating. There’s also superb shopping at the Psar Tuol Tom Pong, and a night shift that never sleeps.

Take a fast boat to the hilltop temple of Phnom Da, dating from the pre-Angkorian time, and then continue south to the colonial-era town of Kampot, which makes a good base for this area. From here, visit the seaside town of Kep (and Rabbit Island, just off the coast) and nearby cave pagodas. It is also possible to make a side trip to Bokor Hill Station or visit a pepper plantation.
Go west to Sihanoukville, Cambodia’s beach capital, to sample the seafood, dive or snorkel the nearby waters or just soak up the sun. Choose from party-central Serendipity Beach, chilled-out Otres Beach or the up-and-coming islands of Koh Rong or Koh Rong Sanloem. Backtrack via Phnom Penh to Kompong Thom and visit the pre-Angkorian brick temples of Sambor Prei Kuk.

Finish at Angkor, a mind-blowing experience that few other sights can compare with. See Angkor Wat, perfection in stone; Bayon, weirdness in stone; and Ta Prohm, nature triumphing over stone – before venturing further afield to Kbal Spean or jungle-clad Beng Mealea.

Save some time for soaking up Siem Reap, one of the most diverse destinations in Cambodia, with a host of activities on tap. Everything from cooking classes to Vespa tours is on offer, and some of these activities are a great way to punctuate the temple tours.

This trip can take two weeks at a steady pace or three weeks at a slow pace. Public transport serves most of this route, although some of the side trips will require chartered transport or a motorbike trip.
If time is tight, focus on the big hitters of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, gateway to the temples of Angkor. With two nights in the capital and three or four nights in Siem Reap, discover the best of modern and ancient Cambodia.

Start out in Phnom Penh with a look at Cambodia’s contrasting history. Relive the glories of the past at the National Museum, home to the world’s finest collection of Angkorian sculpture, and the Royal Palace, housing a glittering array of priceless artefacts. Discover a darker past with a visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum and the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek, both profoundly depressing places but essential to understanding the modern political landscape of Cambodia.

History aside, Phnom Penh is cool Cambodia, a dynamic if disorienting city of chic boutique hotels, funky fashion, contemporary cafes, fusion restaurants and hip bars, so spend at least two nights here to relish the scene.

From the capital, take the 30-minute flight northwest to Siem Reap, or take a day-long road trip if you want to see more of the Cambodian countryside. The first order of business is to spend a couple of days touring the nearby temples of Angkor, including the headline names like Angkor Wat, Bayon and Ta Prohm. Make sure you also allow some time to catch some of the support acts, like beautiful Banteay Srei and enormous Preah Khan. Add some activities to the mix with a zipline adventure at Flight of the Gibbon Angkor or a quad-bike ride through the rice fields.

Or you could simply relax and enjoy fine dining and the lively bars in the town of Siem Reap. From authentic Khmer countryside cooking to fine French cuisine, the gastronomic scene in Siem Reap is something to be savoured. Extend your nights out here by exploring the lanes and alleys around Pub St. Visit one of the sumptuous spas in town to round out your stay.

If you decide to travel overland between these two cities, the months from July to December are best for this – during this time the landscape is lush and green.
Cambodia is a small country and even though the roads are sometimes bad and travel can be slow, most of the highlights can be visited in a month.

Setting out from the hip capital that is Phnom Penh, pass through the bustling Mekong town of Kompong Cham before heading on to Kratie for an encounter with the elusive Irrawaddy river dolphins. Then it is time to make a tricky choice to experience the beauty of the northeast. To ensure maximum time elsewhere, choose between Ratanakiri Province and the volcanic crater lake of Boeng Yeak Lom, or Mondulkiri Province and the original Elephant Valley Project. Both offer primate experiences for those who fancy a bit of monkey business along the way. If you have a bit of extra time up your sleeve, you could combine the two in a grand loop, now that the road between Sen Monorom and Ban Lung is in good shape.

Next up, head to the south coast. Take your time and consider a few nights in Kep or on one of the nearby islands, and a boat trip from Sihanoukville to explore the up-and-coming islands off the coast. Turning back inland, check out Kirirom National Park, home to pine trees, black bears and some spectacular views of the Cardamom Mountains.

Then it’s time to go northwest to charming Battambang, one of Cambodia’s best-preserved colonial-era towns and a base from which to discover rural life. Take the proverbial slow boat to Siem Reap, passing through stunning scenery along the snaking Sangker River, and turn your attention to the temples of Angkor.

Visit all the greatest hits in and around Angkor, but set aside some extra time to venture further to the rival capital of Koh Ker, which is cloaked in thick jungle, or Prasat Preah Vihear, a mountain temple perched precariously atop a cliff on the Thai border.

Overlanders can run this route in reverse, setting out from Siem Reap and exiting Cambodia by river into Vietnam or Laos. Entering from Laos, divert east to Ratanakiri before heading south. Getting around is generally easy as there are buses on the big roads, taxis on the small roads and buzzing boats on the many rivers.
Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT/MTR station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Skytrain/Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove