



# Northwestern Cambodia

POP 4 MILLION / AREA 71,157 SQ KM

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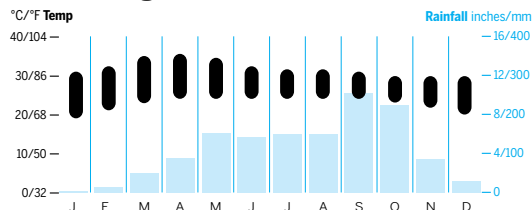
## Why Go?

Looking for temples without the tourist hordes? The remote temples of Northwest Cambodia are a world apart. While hilltop Prasat Preah Vihear is the big-hitter, the other temple complexes – wrapped by vines and half-swallowed by jungle – are all fabulous to explore.

In the region's heart is Tonlé Sap, one of the world's most fish-rich lakes and a birder's paradise. Boat trips from Kompong Chhnang and Krakor (near Pursat) to the rickety floating villages that cluster along this important waterway allow you to dip your toes in lake life.

When forays into the region's far-flung corners are complete, the Northwest has one more surprise up its sleeve. Laid-back Battambang, with its colonial architecture and burgeoning arts scene, is the main city here. There's a wealth of brilliant sights all within day-tripping distance from town – making it a worthy pit stop after all the hard travelling is done.

## When to Go Battambang



**Dec & Jan** Head to remote temples to explore while pleasant temperatures prevail.

**Aug & Sep** Rainy season is in full throttle in lush countryside studied with palms.

**Nov** Best for back-country exploration, with roads neither too muddy nor too dusty.

# KOMPONG CHHNANG PROVINCE

Kompong Chhnang Province (ខេត្តកំពង់ឆ្នាំង) is a relatively wealthy province, thanks to its proximity to the capital, its fishing and agricultural industries and abundant water resources.

## Kompong Chhnang កំពង់ឆ្នាំង

026 / POP 45,000

While nothing much may be happening in the sleepy centre of Kompong Chhnang (Clay Pot Port), the bustling dock on the Tonlé Sap River is the jumping-off point for serene boat rides to two floating villages. Skimming through the watery streets in a tiny wooden paddle-boat as the late afternoon sun sends a shimmer over the river is a gorgeous way to end a day.

Outside of town you'll find a lush landscape of yellow-green rice fields. Here, in the tiny hamlets where cows slumber beside curvaceous hay bales, the area's distinctive pottery is crafted underneath stilted homes, providing another reason to linger.

## Sights

Combining Ondong Rossey and Phnom Santuk for a *moto* (motorcycle taxi) or

bicycle tour makes for a rewarding circuit. There are no road signs, so it's a good idea to go with a local.

## ★ Phoum Kandal & Chong Kos Floating Villages

VILLAGE

Much less visited than other floating villages, the Tonlé Sap River hamlets of Phoum Kandal (ភូមិកណ្តាល) and Chong Kos (ចុងកោះ) are a colourful vision of brightly painted wooden houses, with tiny terraces strung with hammocks, all built on rickety DIY pontoons. To fully explore the villages, hire a wooden boat (with captain) at Kompong Chhnang dock (US\$10 per hour, up to three people) to paddle you through these fully buoyant towns, complete with shops, satellite TV – check out the ingenious bamboo electricity poles! – and mobile vegetable vendors.

A one-hour boat ride will allow you to see one village; with 1½ or two hours, you have enough time to visit both. Bigger, motorised tourist boats are available for river tours for US\$15 per hour, but these only circle the perimeter of the villages. Hiring a paddle-boat is a more tranquil option: you can glide within the maze of watery streets to glimpse how village life functions when everything floats.

Phoum Kandal (directly southeast of the boat dock) is an ethnic Vietnamese village, while Chong Kos (to the north) is Khmer.

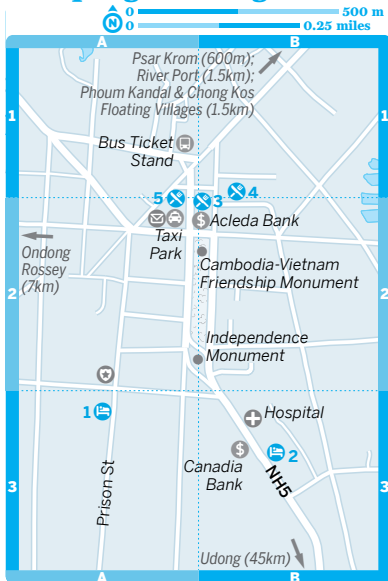
## Ondong Rossey

VILLAGE

(អណ្តូងប្លង់) The quiet village of Ondong Rossey, where the area's famous red pottery is made under every house, is a delightful 7km ride west of town through serene rice fields dotted with sugar palms, many with bamboo ladders running up the trunk. The unpainted pots, decorated with etched or appliqué designs, are either turned with a foot-spun wheel (for small pieces) or banged into shape with a heavy wooden spatula (for large ones).

The golden-hued mud piled up in the yards is quarried at nearby **Phnom Krang Dai Meas** and pounded into fine clay before being shaped and fired; only at the last

## Kompong Chhnang



## Kompong Chhnang

### Sleeping

- 1 Chantrea Borint Hotel.....A3
- 2 Sovann Phum Hotel.....B3

### Eating

- 3 Phnom Mea Bakery .....B2
- 4 Psar Leu .....B1
- 5 Soksan Restaurant.....A2