



South Coast

ELEV 0-1800M / POP 1.8 MILLION / AREA 27,817 SQ KM

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Why Go?

Ever wonder what Southern Thailand was like decades ago, before the crowds arrived? The South Coast of Cambodia might provide some clues. The country's coastline is tiny compared with its northern neighbour's, but it remains practically deserted save for a clutch of fabulously diverse coastal towns: Koh Kong (the cowboy border town), Sihanoukville (the brash temptress), Kampot (the suave French colonialist) and Kep (the faded monarch).

Around these cities you won't find much besides jungle, a few truly idyllic islands and long stretches of powdery sand marred only by your footprints. Developers have long been drooling over the potential of this richly ecodiverse area, but most large-scale projects have been slow to materialise. Small resort owners have moved in, establishing little colonies of coolness on patches of paradise along the coastline. Inland, legitimate ecotourism initiatives tempt adventurous and responsible travellers.

When to Go

December, January and February are the coolest months. It starts heating up in March, and temps build to a crescendo in April before the monsoon rains start in May (a little earlier than elsewhere in Cambodia) and end in November (a little later than elsewhere). The rains tend to be steadier and more severe on the South Coast than elsewhere, but don't let this disrupt your travel plans. The scenery is lush and beautiful in the rainy season and the clouds provide welcome respite from the searing sun.

Best Places to Eat

- » Sailing Club (p199)
- » Rikitikitavi (p192)
- » Chez Claude (p183)
- » Kimly Restaurant (p198)
- » Holy Cow (p183)

Best Places to Stay

- » Lazy Beach (p172)
- » Mushroom Point (p181)
- » Vine Retreat (p197)
- » Les Manguiers (p192)
- » Independence Hotel (p180)



South Coast Highlights

- 1 Drifting idly among the magical **southern islands** (p168), home to low-key resorts and lonely white beaches
- 2 Exploring the pristine rainforests, mangrove-lined rivers and remote waterfalls of the **Koh Kong Conservation Corridor** (p164), now opening up to ecotourism
- 3 Chilling on Sihanoukville's mellow **Otres Beach** (p181),

where exertion consists of yet another cocktail run

4 Kicking back in **Kampot** (p189), a charming river town with some of Cambodia's best-preserved French architecture

5 Partying on **Ocheuteal Beach** (p175), one of southeast Asia's top backpacker spots

6 Sampling remote islands and fresh seafood around **Ke...**

7 Visiting fog-enveloped **Bokor National Park** (p194), with its abandoned casino and (sometimes) breathtaking views