



Understand Cambodia

CAMBODIA TODAY..... 276

Get up to date on the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and their opposition, the media and the booming economy.

HISTORY 279

Follow the rollercoaster ride that is Cambodian history, from the heady era of glorious empire to the dark days of genocidal madness.

POL POT & THE LEGACY OF THE KHMER ROUGE..... 297

Learn more about the leadership of the Khmer Rouge and keep up to date with the latest developments in the ongoing trial.

THE CULTURE.....300

The low-down on Cambodia's way of life, the ethnic patchwork of its peoples, their religious beliefs and the traditional arts.

FOOD & DRINK..... 311

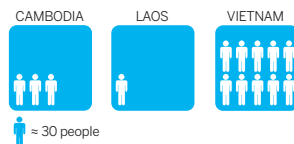
Know your noodles and plan a culinary odyssey through Cambodia with this guide to Khmer cuisine.

ENVIRONMENT..... 319

Mountains high, rivers deep; discover more about Cambodia's varied landscape, protected areas and the wild critters roaming the jungle.



population per sq mile



Cambodia Today

The Khmer Rouge Tribunal

Sidelined by the politics of the Cold War for two decades, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) trial is finally under way after many a dispute between the Cambodian authorities and the international community. However, the wheels of justice may not turn fast enough to keep up with the ageing of the surviving Khmer Rouge leaders. (Military commander Ta Mok died in custody in 2006 and both Ieng Sary and Nuon Chea are in their 80s and suffering from health complications.) For more on the legacy of the Khmer Rouge and the trial, see p297.

» Bombs dropped on Cambodia: 539,000 tonnes

» Unexploded landmines: four to six million

» Number of landmine victims: 40,000

» Cost of victims' rehabilitation: US\$120 million

Politics

The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) is making plans for the future with dynastic alliances between its offspring. Just look at the roll call of marriages in the past decade and it soon becomes apparent that senior leaders have their eyes firmly on a potential handover of power to the children of the party.

At the head of this elite is Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has proven himself a survivor; personally as well as politically, for he lost an eye during the battle for Phnom Penh in 1975. It would appear that, for the time being at least, with a poorly educated electorate and a divided opposition, 'in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king'.

Opposition leader Sam Rainsy continues to berate the country's rulers for their lack of leadership and has made real inroads in urban areas, setting the stage for some spicy showdowns with the CPP in the coming years. Sometimes they get a little too spicy; Rainsy and several of his fellow parliamentarians have been regularly stripped of their immunity from prosecution and charged with defamation. At the time of writing,

Useful Sites

» **Phnom Penh Post** (www.phnompenhpost.com) Recent events in Cambodia.

» **KI-Media** (<http://ki-media.blogspot.com>) Independent blog dedicated to keeping the Cambodian government on its toes.

Top Books

» **Voices from S-21** (David Chandler) A study of the Khmer Rouge's interrogation and torture centre.

» **The Gate** (François Bizot) Bizot was kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge, and later held by them in the French embassy.

» **Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge** (Evan Gottesman) Politics and life in Cambodia during the 1980s.

» **Cambodia Now** (Karen Coates) A no-holds-barred look at contemporary Cambodia through the eyes of its diverse population.