



Siem Reap & the Temples of Angkor

Includes ➔

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Best Temples for Sunrise or Sunset

- ➔ Angkor Wat (p408)
- ➔ Bayon (p409)
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Best Temples for Film Buffs

- ➔ Angkor Wat (p408)
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- ➔ Ta Prohm (p413)

Why Go?

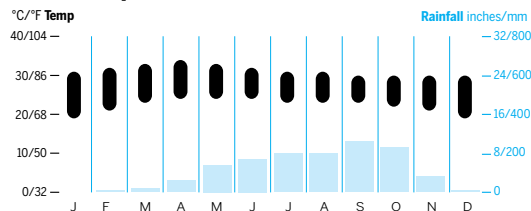
Where to begin with Angkor? There is no greater concentration of architectural riches anywhere on earth. Choose from the world's largest religious building, Angkor Wat, one of the world's weirdest, Bayon, or the riotous jungle of Ta Prohm. All are global icons and have helped put Cambodia on the map as the temple capital of Asia. Today, the monuments are a point of pilgrimage for all Khmers, and no traveller to the region will want to miss their extravagant beauty.

Siem Reap was always destined for great things and offers everything from backpacker party pads to hip hotels, world-class wining and dining and sumptuous spas.

Despite the headline act that is Angkor and the sophistication of Siem Reap, Cambodia's greatest treasure is its people. The Khmers have been to hell and back, but they have prevailed with a smile and no visitor comes away from this kingdom without a measure of admiration and affection for its inhabitants.

When to Go

Siem Reap



Dec-Jan Humidity is low, there are cool breezes and little rain. Peak season for visitors.

Feb-Jun Temperatures rise and in May or June the monsoon brings rain and humidity.

Jun-Oct The wet season: Angkor is surrounded by lush foliage and the moats are full of water.



Siem Reap & the Temples of Angkor Highlights

1 See the sun rise over one of the world's most iconic buildings, the one and only **Angkor Wat** (p408).

2 Contemplate the serenity and splendour of the **Bayon** (p409), its 216

enigmatic faces staring out into the jungle.

3 Witness nature running riot at the mysterious ruin of **Ta Prohm** (p413), the *Tomb Raider* temple.

4 Stare in wonder at the

delicate carvings adorning **Banteay Srei** (p414), the finest seen at Angkor.

5 Trek deep into the jungle to discover the River of a Thousand Lingas at **Kbal Spean** (p414).

SIEM REAP

☎ 063 / POP 119,500

Life-support system for the temples of Angkor, Siem Reap (pronounced see-em ree-ep) is the epicentre of the new Cambodia, a pulsating place that's one of the most popular destinations on the planet right now. At its heart though, Siem Reap – whose name rather undiplomatically means 'Siamese Defeated' – is still a little charmer, with old French shophouses, shady tree-lined boulevards and a slow-flowing river.

👁 Sights

★ Angkor National Museum

MUSEUM

(សាកលវិទ្យាល័យ) ☎ 063-966601; www.angkor-nationalmuseum.com; 968 Charles de Gaulle Blvd; adult/child under 1.2m US\$12/6; ☎ 8.30am-6pm, to 6.30pm 1 Oct-30 Apr) A worthwhile introduction to the glories of the Khmer empire, this state-of-the-art museum helps define Angkor's historic, religious and cultural significance. Displays include 1500 exquisite stone carvings and artefacts.

Les Chantiers Écoles

ARTISANAL SCHOOL

(កម្មវិធីសិក្សា) ☎ www.artisansdangkor.com;

☎ 7.30am-5.30pm, silk farm 7am-5pm) **FREE**

Les Chantiers Écoles is a school specialising in teaching wood- and stone-carving techniques, traditional silk painting, lacquerware and more to impoverished youngsters. Free guided tours are available daily to learn more about traditional techniques. There is also a beautiful shop called Artisans d'Angkor.

Les Chantiers Écoles also maintains a **silk farm**, where all stages of the production process can be seen. Free tours are available daily; a free shuttle bus departs from Les Chantiers Écoles at 9.30am and 1.30pm. The farm is about 16km west of Siem Reap.

Cambodian Cultural Village

CULTURAL VILLAGE

(☎ 063-963836; www.cambodianculturalvillage.com;

Airport Rd; adult/child under 1.1m US\$9/

free; ☎ 8am-7pm) It may be kitsch, it may be

kooky, but it's very popular with Cambodians and provides a diversion for families with children. This place tries to represent all of Cambodia in a whirlwind tour