



Siem Reap & the Temples of Angkor (Cambodia)

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Best Temples

- Angkor Wat (p426)
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Best Eating & Drinking

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Why Go?

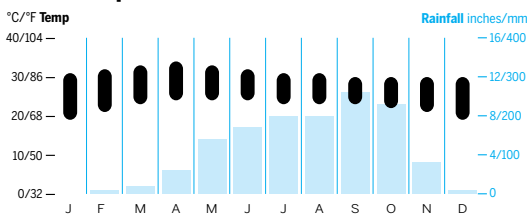
Where to begin with Angkor? There is no greater concentration of architectural riches anywhere on earth. Choose from the world's largest religious building, Angkor Wat; one of the world's weirdest, Bayon; or the riotous jungle of Ta Prohm. All are global icons and have helped put Cambodia on the map 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 expressive architecture.

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



Nov–Feb Humidity is low, there are cool breezes and little rain. Peak season for visitors.

Mar–Jun Temperatures rise and in May or June the monsoon brings rain and humidity.

Jul–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 Seeing the sun rise over one of the world's most iconic buildings, the one and only **Angkor Wat** (p426).

2 Contemplating the serenity and splendour of **Bayon** (p431), with its 216

enigmatic faces staring out into the jungle.

3 Witnessing nature running riot at the mysterious ruin of **Ta Prohm** (p432), the *Tomb Raider* temple.

4 Staring in wonder at the

delicate carvings adorning **Banteay Srei** (p432), the finest seen at Angkor.

5 Exploring the **Psar Chaa** (Old Market) area (p422) of Siem Reap, home to the funkier restaurants and bars in town.

SIEM REAP

☎ 063 / POP 175,000

Life-support system for the temples of Angkor, Siem Reap (pronounced see-em ree-ep) is part of the new, cool 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 'Siamers Defeated' – is still a little charmer, with old French shophouses, shady tree-lined boulevards and a slow-flowing river.

👁 Sights

★ **Angkor National Museum** MUSEUM
(សារមន្ទីរជាតិ; ☎ 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 Oct-Apr) Looming large on the road to Angkor is the Angkor National Museum, a state-of-the-art showpiece on the Khmer civilisation and the majesty of Angkor. Displays are themed by era, religion and royalty as visitors move through the impressive

galleries. After a short presentation, visitors enter the Zen-like 'Gallery of a Thousand Buddhas', which has an excellent collection of images. Other exhibits include the pre-Angkorian periods of Funan and Chena; the Khmer kings; Angkor Wat; Angkor Thom; and the inscriptions.

Artisans Angkor – Les Chantiers Écoles

ARTS CENTRE

(អា ទីស្នាក់ការ; www.artisansdangkor.com; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm) 🆓 Siem Reap is the epicentre of the drive to revitalise Cambodian traditional culture, which was dealt a harsh blow by the Khmer Rouge and the years of instability that followed its rule. Les Chantiers Écoles teaches wood- and stone-carving techniques, traditional silk painting, lacquerware and other artisan skills to impoverished young Cambodians. Free guided tours explaining traditional techniques are available daily from 7.30am to 6.30pm. Tucked down a side road, the school is well signposted from Sivatha St.