



Cambodia



Nick Ray, Ashley Harrell

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to Cambodia...	4
Cambodia Map	6
Cambodia's Top 10	8
Need to Know	14
First Time Cambodia	16
What's New	18
If You Like...	19
Month by Month	21
Itineraries	24
Activities	32
Regions at a Glance	37

ON THE ROAD

PHNOM PENH..... 40

Sights	42
Activities	52
Courses	58
Tours	58
Festivals & Events	59
Sleeping	59
Eating	66
Drinking & Nightlife	75
Entertainment	79
Shopping	80
Around Phnom Penh	90
Koh Dach	90
Udong	91
Tonlé Bati	92
Phnom Tamao	
Wildlife Rescue Centre	93
Phnom Chisor	94
Kirirom National Park	94

SIEM REAP 96

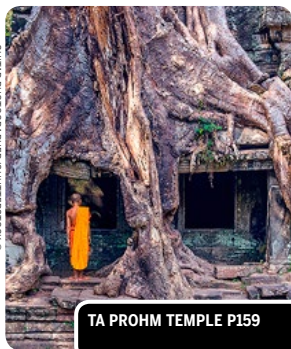
Sights	98
Activities	102
Courses	103
Tours	106
Sleeping	108
Eating	112
Drinking & Nightlife	117
Entertainment	119
Shopping	120
Around Siem Reap	126
Banteay Srei District	126
Prek Toal	
Bird Sanctuary	127
Floating Village of Chong Kneas	129
Kompong Pluk	130
Me Chrey	130
Kompong Khleang	131
Ang Trapeng Thmor	131

TEMPLES OF ANGKOR 132

Angkor Wat	147
Angkor Thom	153
The Gates of Angkor Thom	153
Bayon	155
Baphuon	156
Terrace of the Leper King	157
Terrace of Elephants	158
Preah Palilay	158
Royal Enclosure & Phimeanakas	158
Preah Pithu	158
Kleangs & Prasat Suor Prat	158
Tep Pranam	159
Around Angkor Thom	159
Small Circuit	159
Ta Prohm	159
Banteay Kdei & Sra Srang	160
Phnom Bakheng	160
Ta Keo	161
Ta Nei	161
Chau Say Tevoda	162
Thommanon	162
Spean Thmor	162
Baksei Chamkrong	162
Big Circuit	162
Preah Khan	162
Preah Neak Poan	163
Ta Som	164
Eastern Baray & Eastern Mebon	164
Pre Rup	165
Prasat Kravan	165
Roluos Temples	165
Beyond Angkor	167
Banteay Srei	167
Beng Mealea	168



DANCERS AT ANGKOR WAT P147



TA PROHM TEMPLE P159

Contents

UNDERSTAND

Phnom Kulen	169
Kbal Spean	170
Banteay Samré	170
Chau Srei Vibol	171
Phnom Bok	171
Phnom Krom	171
Western Baray & Western Mebon	172
Remote Angkorian Sites	172
Koh Ker	172

SOUTH COAST

Koh Kong City	177
Koh Kong Conservation Corridor	180
Tatai River & Waterfall ...	181
Koh Kong Island	182
Central Cardamoms Protected Forest	182
Botum Sakor National Park	183
Chi Phat	184
Sihanoukville	186
Ream National Park	200

The Southern

Islands	201
Koh Ta Kiev	201
Koh Russei	202
Koh Thmei	202
Koh Rong	202
Koh Rong Sanloem	207
Koh Sdach Archipelago ...	211
Kampot Province	212
Kampot	212
Around Kampot	220
Kep	223
Around Kep	228
Takeo	228
Around Takeo	230

NORTHWESTERN CAMBODIA

Kompong Chhnang	234
Pursat	235
Kompong Luong	237
Northern Cardamom Mountains	238
Battambang Province ...	239
Battambang	239
Around Battambang	250
Pailin	252
Poipet	253
Sisophon	255
Banteay Chhmar	255
Anlong Veng	257
Preah Vihear Province ...	260
Preah Vihear City	260
Prasat Preah Vihear	262
Preah Khan of Kompong Svay (Prasat Bakan)	265
Kompong Thom Province	267
Kompong Thom	267
Around Kompong Thom	269

EASTERN CAMBODIA

Kompong Cham	274
Kratie	279
Stung Treng	284
Around Stung Treng ...	286
Preah Rumkel	286
Siem Pang	287
Ratanakiri Province ...	288
Ban Lung	288
Veun Sai	294
Virachey National Park	294
Mondulakiri Province ...	295
Sen Monorom	295
Around Sen Monorom	304

Cambodia	
Today	306
History	308
Pol Pot & the Khmer Rouge Trials ...	325
People & Culture	328
Food & Drink	338
Environment	343

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A-Z	350
Transport	359
Health	366
Language	370
Glossary	375
Index	378
Map Legend	383

SPECIAL FEATURES

Phnom Penh Image Gallery	50
Siem Reap Image Gallery	104
Temples of Angkor Illustrated Map	138
Temples of Angkor Image Gallery	150

Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



2
WEEKS

The Best of Cambodia

This is the ultimate journey, via temples, beaches and the capital. It can be run in any direction, but it is best followed to the letter, starting in the capital, exploring the coastline and winding up at the world's most impressive collection of temples, Angkor.

Hit **Phnom Penh** for its impressive National Museum and stunning Silver Pagoda. It's home to the most eclectic dining scene in Cambodia, with fine-dining Khmer restaurants, an international array

of eateries and some safe street-food eating. There's also superb shopping at Russian Market, and a night shift that never sleeps.

Take a fast boat to the hilltop temple of **Phnom Da**, dating from the pre-Angkorian time, and then continue south to the colonial-era town of **Kampot**, which makes a good base for this area. From here, visit the seaside town of **Kep** (and Rabbit Island, just off the coast) and nearby cave pagodas. It is also possible to make a side trip to **Bokor Hill Station** or visit a pepper plantation.





Sambor Prei Kuk (p269)

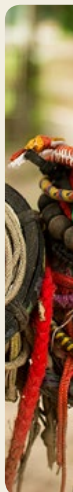
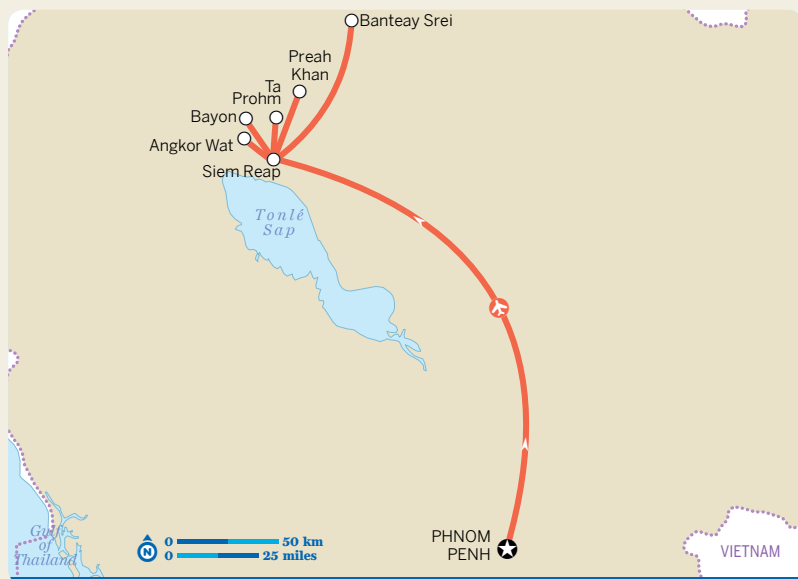
Go west to the beach town of **Sihanoukville**, the jumping-off point to explore Cambodia's idyllic islands, Koh Rong and Koh Rong Sanloem, where you can feast on seafood, dive or snorkel the nearby waters, or just relax in a hammock. Then backtrack via Phnom Penh to **Kompong Thom** and visit the pre-Angkorian brick temples of **Sambor Prei Kuk**.

Finish the trip at Angkor, a mind-blowing experience that few other sights can compare with. See **Angkor Wat**, perfection in stone; **Bayon**, weirdness in stone; and **Ta Prohm**, nature triumphing over

stone – before venturing further afield to **Kbal Spean** or jungle-clad **Beng Mealea**.

Save some time for soaking up **Siem Reap**, one of the most diverse destinations in Cambodia, with a host of activities on tap. Everything from cooking classes to Vespa tours is on offer, and some of these activities are a great way to punctuate the temple tours.

This trip can take two weeks at a steady pace or three weeks at a slow pace. Public transport serves most of this route, although some of the side trips will require chartered transport or a motorbike trip.



1
WEEK

A Tale of Two Cities



ERINRASHUTTERSTOCK ©

If time is tight, focus on the big hitters of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. With two nights in the capital and three or four nights in temple town, discover the best of modern and ancient Cambodia.

Start out in **Phnom Penh** to encounter Cambodia's contrasting history. Relive the glories of the past at the National Museum and the Royal Palace, then discover a darker past with a visit to the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek. Explore the excellent wining-and-dining scene by night.

From the capital, hop the short flight to **Siem Reap**, or opt for the improved overland route to see more of the Cambodian countryside. Spend a couple of days touring the nearby temples of Angkor, including headline names such as **Angkor Wat**, **Bayon** and **Ta Prohm**. Allow some time to catch the support acts, like beautiful **Banteay Srei** and immense **Preah Khan**. Add some activities to the mix with a zipline experience, a quad-bike adventure or some pampering at a sumptuous spa.

If you decide to travel overland between these two cities, the months from July to December are best for this, as the landscape is lush and green.



QUADALUPE POLITO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Top: Preah Khan (p162)

Bottom: Memorial for children at Choeung Ek (p47)

4
WEEKS

The Big One

Cambodia is a small country and even though the roads are sometimes bad and travel can be slow, most of the highlights can be visited in a month.

Setting out from the hip capital that is **Phnom Penh**, pass through the bustling Mekong town of **Kompong Cham** before heading on to **Kratie** for an encounter with the elusive Irrawaddy river dolphins. Then it is time to make a tricky choice to experience the beauty of the northeast. To ensure maximum time elsewhere, choose between **Ratanakiri Province** and the volcanic crater lake of Boeng Yeak Lom, or **Mondulkiri Province** and the original Elephant Valley Project. Both offer primate experiences for those who fancy a bit of monkey business along the way. If you have a bit of extra time up your sleeve, you could combine the two in a grand loop, now that the road between Sen Monorom and Ban Lung is in good shape.

Next up, head to the South Coast. Take your time and consider a few nights in **Kep** or on one of the nearby islands, and a boat trip from **Sihanoukville** to explore the up-and-coming islands off the coast. Turning back inland, check out **Kirirom National Park**, home to pine trees, black bears and some spectacular views of the Cardamom Mountains.

Then it's time to go northwest to charming **Battambang**, one of Cambodia's best-preserved colonial-era towns and a base from which to discover rural life. Take the proverbial slow boat to **Siem Reap**, passing through stunning scenery along the snaking Sangker River, and turn your attention to the **temples of Angkor**.

Visit all the greatest hits in and around Angkor, but set aside some extra time to venture further to the rival capital of **Koh Ker**, which is cloaked in thick jungle, or **Prasat Preah Vihear**, a mountain temple perched precariously atop a cliff on the Thai border.

Overlanders can run this route in reverse, setting out from Siem Reap and exiting Cambodia by river into Vietnam or Laos. Entering from Laos, divert east to Ratanakiri before heading south. Getting around is generally easy, as there are buses on the big roads, taxis on the small roads and buzzing boats on the many rivers.

COCO/BOUNTY/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



NANA/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



Top: Koh Ker (p172)

Bottom: Irrawaddy dolphin (p281)



Off the Beaten Track: Cambodia

THAILAND

PREK TOAL BIRD SANCTUARY

Venture to remote Prek Toal, gateway to a world-class bird sanctuary that provides refuge to some of the world's rarest large water birds, such as the milky stork and spot-billed pelican. (p127)

PREAH VIHEAR PROVINCE

Prasat Preah Vihear is king of the mountain temples with an incredible cliff-top setting. Other Angkorian sights worth an adventurous detour include Koh Ker and Preah Khan. (p260)

CARDAMOM MOUNTAINS

The Cardamom Mountains are great for adventure travel. Engage in community tourism activities across this remote region, including ecotourism initiatives at the Osoam Cardamom Community Centre. (p238)

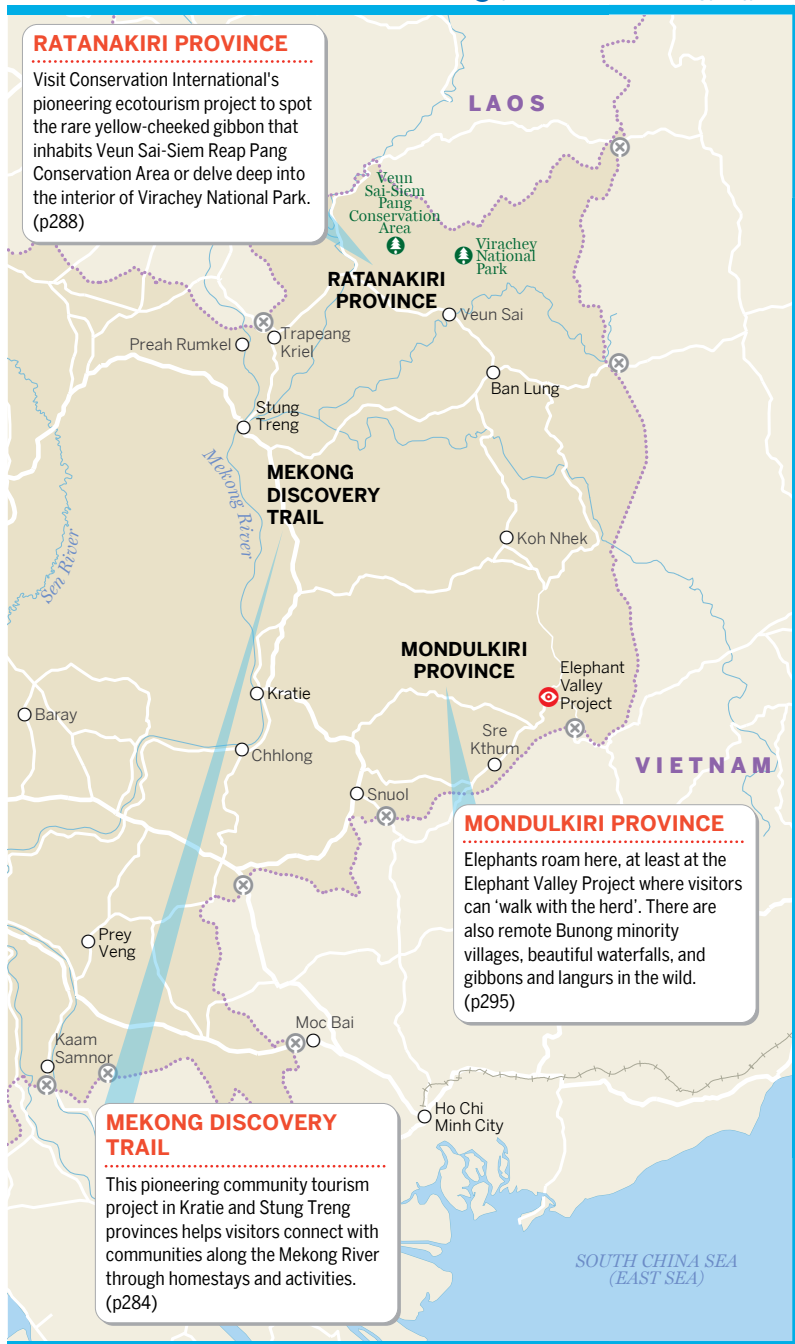
KOH SDACH ARCHIPELAGO

Cambodia is behind Thailand when it comes to offshore island development. Use this to your advantage and explore some remote islands midway between Sihanoukville and Koh Kong. (p211)



RATANAKIRI PROVINCE

Visit Conservation International's pioneering ecotourism project to spot the rare yellow-cheeked gibbon that inhabits Veun Sai-Siem Reap Pang Conservation Area or delve deep into the interior of Virachey National Park. (p288)



RATANAKIRI PROVINCE

MEKONG DISCOVERY TRAIL

MONDULKIRI PROVINCE

MONDULKIRI PROVINCE

Elephants roam here, at least at the Elephant Valley Project where visitors can 'walk with the herd'. There are also remote Bunong minority villages, beautiful waterfalls, and gibbons and langurs in the wild. (p295)

MEKONG DISCOVERY TRAIL

This pioneering community tourism project in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces helps visitors connect with communities along the Mekong River through homestays and activities. (p284)

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to your submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition – the most useful submissions are rewarded with a selection of digital PDF chapters.

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OUR READERS

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Nick Ray

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Ashley Harrell

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THIS BOOK

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Index

A

accommodation 16, 350, 351, *see also individual locations*
 Angkor temples 145, 166-7
 booking 350
 homestays 18, 130
 language 371
 activities 32-6, *see also individual activities*
 aerobics 52
 AIDS 367
 air travel 18, 359-60, 362
 airlines 362
 airports 359-60
 amok 13, **13**
 Angkor Borei 229
 Angkor empire 310-12
 Angkor kings 140, *see also individual kings*
 Angkor temples & structures 9, 132-74, **134-5, 150-1**
 accommodation 145, 166-7
 admission fees 143-4
 Angkor Thom 153-9, **154, 32, 139**
 Angkor Wat 147-53, **148, 149, 8-9, 138**
 architecture 141-2
 Bakong 165-6
 Baksei Chamkrong 162
 Banteay Chhmarr 256
 Banteay Kdei 160
 Banteay Samré 170-1
 Banteay Srei 167-8, **151**
 Banteay Top 256-7
 Baphuon 156-7
 Bayon 155-6, **155, 138, 150**
 Beng Mealea 168-9, **168**

books 311
 Chau Say Tevoda 162
 Chau Srei Vibol 171
 conservation 141
 crowds 146
 Eastern Baray 164-5
 Eastern Mebon 164-5
 etiquette 142
 food 166-7
 getting there & around 145-7
 guidebooks 147
 hiking 157
 history 133-41
 itineraries 142-3
 Kbal Spean 170
 Kleangs 158-9
 Koh Ker 172-4, **173, 28-9**
 Lolei 166
 Phnom Bakheng 160-1, **161**
 Phnom Bok 171
 Phnom Chisor 94
 Phnom Krom 171
 Prasat Banan 251
 Prasat Kravan 165
 Prasat Kuha Nokor 271
 Prasat Preah Vihear 12, 262-7, **262, 12**
 Prasat Suor Prat 158-9
 Pre Rup 165
 Preah Khan 162, **163, 26, 139**
 Preah Khan of Kompong Svay 265-7
 Preah Ko 166
 Preah Neak Poan 163-4, **164, 139**
 Preah Palilay 158
 Roluons temples 165-7
 Sambor Prei Kuk 18, 269-71, **25**
 Spean Thmor 162
 Sra Srang 160, **139, 151**
 symbols 144
 Ta Keo 161

Ta Nei 161-2
 Ta Prohm 151, 159-60, **160, 2, 139, 151**
 Ta Som 164
 Tep Pranam 159
 Terrace of Elephants 158
 Terrace of the Leper King 157-8
 Thommanon 162
 travel times 142
 websites 144-5
 Western Baray 172
 Western Mebon 172
 Angkor Thom 153-9, **154, 32, 139**
 Angkor Wat 147-53, **148, 149, 8-9, 138**
 admission 18
 animals 344-5, *see also individual species*
 animism 332
 Anlong Veng 257-60
 apsaras 152
 architecture 333
 art galleries 248, *see also museums*
 arts 333-7
 ATMs 353

B

bag snatching 85
 Ban Lung 288-94, **289**
 Banteay Chhmarr 255-7
 Banteay Srei 167-8, **151**
 Banteay Srei District 126-7
 bargaining 17, 353
 Bassac lane bars 77
 Battambang 11, 239-50, **240-1**
 accommodation 243-5
 activities 241-3
 art galleries 248
 courses 243
 drinking 247
 entertainment 247
 food 245-7
 information 248-9
 nightlife 247
 shopping 247-8
 sights 239-41
 tours 243
 travel to/from 249-50
 travel within 250
 walking tours 241-2
 Battambang Province 239-52
 Bayon 151, 155-6, **155, 138, 150**
 beaches 19
 Coconut Beach 203
 etiquette 188
 Independence Beach 188
 Kep Beach 224-5
 Koh Tuch Beach 203
 Koh Yor 178
 Lazy Beach 208
 Long Beach 203
 Long Set Beach 203
 Ochheuteal Beach 188
 Otres Beach 186-7
 Police Beach 203
 Ream National Park 200
 Saracen Bay 208
 Serendipity Beach 187
 Sihanoukville 186-8
 Sokha Beach 187-8
 Sunset Beach 208
 Victory Beach 188
 beer 18, 339-40
 beer gardens 118
 Beng Mealea 168-9, **168**
 BeTreed Adventures 269
 bicycle travel 362
 birds 345
 birdwatching 264, 287
 Ang Trapeng Thmor 131
 Prek Toal Bird Sanctuary 127-9
 bites 369
 blood donations 58
 boat travel 362-3, 365
 boat trips 33, 52-3, 184-5

babor 339
 Boeng Yeak Lom 288
 Bokheo 291
 Bokor Hill Station 221-3, **11**
 books 316, 326, 327, 332, 333
 Angkor temples 311
 food 340, 342
 history 311, 316, 318, 319, 321
 border crossings 360
 Laos 286
 Thailand 181, 253, 254, 255, 259
 Vietnam 86, 228, 230, 278, 283, 294
 boxing, see kickboxing
 Bronze Lake 271
 Buddhism 332
 budgeting 15
 bus travel 18, 363, 365
 business hours 15, 354
 butterflies
 Banteay Srei Butterfly Centre 127, **105**
 Kep Butterfly Garden 224

C

car hire 363
 car travel 361, 363-5
 Cardamom Mountains 182-3, 237, 238-9
 carts 365
 cell phones 14, 356
 Cham people 331
 Chenla 309-10
 Chhlong 280
 Chi Phat 184-6
 child abuse 84
 children, travel with 350-1
 Chinese people 331
 Choeng Ek 47
 Chong Kneas floating village 129-30
 Chou Ta Kuan 311
 Christianity 332-3
 cinema, see film industry, films
 civil war 316-17
 climate 14, 21-3, **14**
 climate change 359
 Comrade Duch, see Kaing Guek Eav
 conservation 141
 consulates 352
 contact lenses 367
 cooking courses 58, 106, 189, 214, 243, 270, 338

courses
 cooking 58, 106, 189, 214, 243, 270, 338
 language 58, 352
 martial arts 58, 80, 103
 credit cards 354
 crocodiles 238
 culture 17, 328-37
 currency 14
 customs 17
 cycling 33-4, 53-6
cyclo 365

D

dance 334-5
 Dangrek Mountains 258
 dengue fever 367
 departure tax 360
 diarrhoea 368
 dirt biking 34
 disabilities, travellers with 357
 diving 35-6, 212
 dolphin watching 28, 281, 284-5
 dolphins 28, 345
 doucs 302
 drinking, see also individual locations
 Bassac Lane 77
 beer gardens 118
 language 372-3
 drinks 339-40
 driving, see car travel
 driving licenses 363
 drugs 355

E

Eastern Cambodia 272-304, **273**
 accommodation 272
 climate 272
 food 272
 highlights 273
 travel seasons 272
 weather 272
 economy 307
 electricity 351-2
 elephant encounters 296-9, 301
 elephants 145, 301, **12**
 embassies 352
 emergencies
 language 373
 environmental issues 307, 345, 346-8
 climate change 359
 etiquette 17, 188, 341-2

Angkor temples 142
 events, see festivals & events
 exchange rates 15

F

ferry travel 207
 festivals & events 21-3
 safety 355
 film industry 333-4
 films 161, 306, 326, 333, 347
 floating villages 234
 Chong Kneas 129-30
 Kompong Pluk 130, **105**
 Me Chrey 130-1
 flower sellers 78
 food 13, 17, 19, 338-42, 352, **51, 105** see also individual locations
 books 340, 342
 cooking courses 58, 106, 243, 338
 good-cause dining 68, 115
 hazards 368
 insects 339
 Khmer barbecue 73
 language 372-3
 street food 73
 fuel 363
 Funan 309
 Funinpec 321, 323, 324
 fungal infections 367

G

gardens, see parks & gardens
 gay travellers 353
 genocide 46-7
 giant ibis 264
 gibbons 290, 302
 golf 102-3
 guesthouses 350
 guidebooks 147

H

health 366-9
 healthcare costs 367
 heat exhaustion 369
 helicopter flights 145
 hepatitis 367
 hiking 34-5
 Angkor temples 157
 Chi Phat 184
 Ratanakiri Province 292
 Ream National Park 201
 Tmatboey 264

Virachey National Park 295
 Hinduism 332
 history 308-24
 Angkorian period 133-41
 books 311, 316, 318, 319, 321
 French presence 313-14
 Khmer Rouge 316-20
 Phnom Penh 41-2
 pre-Angkor kingdoms 308-10
 Vietnamese intervention 319
 websites 310
 HIV 367
 holidays 355
 homestays 18, 130, 350
 hornbills 184
 horse riding 103
 hostels 350
 hot-air ballooning 145
 hotels 350
 Hun Sen 321, 323

I

ibis 36, 264, 287, 295, 345
 ice cream 113
 Ieng Sary 317, 327
 Indravarman I 133
 insurance 352, 366
 vehicle 364
 internet access 352
 internet resources, see websites
 Islam 332
 islands 9, 19, see also Koh information 203
 itineraries 24-31, **24, 26, 29, 30-1**
 Angkor temples 142-3
 Phnom Penh 43

J

Jayavarman II 133, 310
 Jayavarman VII 136-7, 311

K

Kaing Guek Eav 325, 327
 Kakaoh 270
 Kambuja 322
 Kamping Puoy 251
 Kampot 18, 212-20, **216**
 accommodation 214-17
 activities 213-14
 courses 214
 drinking 219
 entertainment 219

Kampot *continued*
 food 217-18
 information 219-20
 nightlife 219
 shopping 219
 sights 213
 travel to/from 220
 travel within 220

Kampot Province 11, 212-23

Kaundinya legend 309

Kbal Spean 170

Kep 223-8, **224**

Khieu Samphan 327

Khmer barbecue 73

Khmer Krom people 331

Khmer language 370-5

Khmer Leu people 331-2

Khmer people 330

Khmer Rouge 316-20,
 325-7

Khnar Po 130

kickboxing 80, 103, 335

Killing Fields
 of Choeng Ek 47, **27**
Killing Fields, The 320

King's Road 116

Kirirom National Park 94-5

Koh Dach 90-1

Koh Ker 172-4, **173, 28-9**

Koh Kong City 177-80, **177**

Koh Kong Conservation
 Corridor 180-6

Koh Kong Island 182

Koh Nhek 304

Koh Rong 202-7, **204, 20**

Koh Rong Sanloem 9, 18,
 207-11, **208, 9**

Koh Russei 202

Koh Sdach Archipelago 18,
 211-12

Koh Ta Kiev 201-2

Koh Thmei 202

Koh Tonsay 223-4

Koh Trong 282

Kompong Cham 274-9, **275**

Kompong Chhnang 234-5,
234

Kompong Khleang 131

Kompong Luong 237-8

Kompong Pluk 105, 130,
104

Kompong Thom 267-9, **268**

Kompong Thom Province
 267-71

krama 280

Kratie 12, 279-84, **279**
kyteow 339

L

landmines 126, 172, 253,
 257, 260, 356

language 14, 370-5

Lara Croft:
Tomb Raider 161

legal matters 352-3

lesbian travellers 353

LGBT travellers 353

linga 171

Lon Nol 316, 317

Lumkut 291

Lumphat 290

M

magazines 351

Mahendraparvata 169

malaria 368

maps 353

markets 20, 73, **20**

Night Market (Phnom
 Penh) 81

Psar Chaa 120, **104**

Psar O Russei 81

Psar Thmei 80-1

Russian Market 81

massage 57-8, 103, 188,
 214, 243

Me Chrey 130-1

measures 351

media 307

meditation 58, 92, 103

Mekong Discovery Trail 284

Mekong River 348

mobile phones 14, 356

Mondulakiri Province 12,
 295-304

money 14, 353-4

costs 15

exchange rates 15

monkeys 302, **35**

moto commissions 200

motorcycle hire 363-4

motorcycle travel 361, 363-
 5, *see also* dirt biking

motos 365

Mouhot, Henri 137-8

museums

Angkor Borei 229

Angkor National
 Museum 98

Angkor Panorama
 Museum 99-101

Battambang
 Museum 241

Cambodia Landmine
 Museum 126

Kampot Provincial
 Museum 213

Kompong Thom
 Museum 267

MGC Asian Traditional
 Textiles Museum 99

National Museum of
 Cambodia 43-6, **10**

Tuol Sleng Genocide
 Museum 46-7

War Museum 99

music 335-6

N

National Museum of
 Cambodia 43-6, **10**

national parks & nature
 reserves 346

Bokor National Park 222

Botum Sakor National
 Park 183

Central Cardamoms
 Protected Forest
 182-3, 237

Kep National Park 223

Kirirom National Park
 94-5

Prek Toal Bird
 Sanctuary 127-9

Ream National
 Park 200-1

Samlaut Multiple Use
 Area 251

Seima Protected
 Forest 302

Virachey National
 Park 294-5

newspapers 351

nightlife 20, *see also*
individual locations

Northwestern Cambodia
 231-71, **232-3**

accommodation 231

climate 231

food 231

highlights 232

travel seasons 231

weather 231

Nuon Chea 325, 326-7

O

Ondong Rossey 234

opening hours 15, 354

ordnance 356

orphanages 330

Osoam Cardamom
 Community Centre 238

P

Pailin 252-3

parks & gardens

Keop Butterfly
 Garden 224

Koh Sampovmeas 235-6

Senteurs d'Angkor
 Botanic Garde 99

passports 359

people 328-37

pepper 222

Pheam Ek 245

Phnom Bakheng 160-1, **161**

Phnom Bayong 230

Phnom Bokor 222, **11**

Phnom Chhnork 221

Phnom Chisor 94

Phnom Da 229

Phnom Kulen 169-70

Phnom Penh 10, 40-90, **41,**
44-5, 48, 54-5, 60-1,
74, 50-1

accommodation 40,
 59-66

activities 52-8

children, travel with 53

courses 58

drinking 75-9

emergencies 83

entertainment 79-80

festivals & events 59

food 40

highlights 41

history 41-2

internet services 83

itineraries 43

media 83-4

medical services 84-5

money 85

nightlife 75-9

postal services 85

safety 83

shopping 80-3

sights 42-52

tourist information 85

tours 58

travel seasons 40

travel to/from 85-7

travel within 87-90

Phnom Pros &
 Phnom Sre 276

Phnom Sampeau 250, **11**

Phnom Santuk 234, 271

Phnom Sombok 279, **13**

Phnom Sorsia 221

Phnom Tamao Wildlife
 Rescue Centre 93-4

photography 354

planning 16-17
 budgeting 15
 calendar of events 21-3
 Cambodia basics 14-15
 Cambodia's regions 37-8
 checklist 16
 itineraries 24-31, **24, 26, 29, 30-1**
 packing 16
 repeat visitors 18
 travel seasons 14, 21-3

plants 345-6
 Poipet 253-5
 Pol Pot 317, 326
 politics 306
 population 307, 328
Pos Keng Kong 333
 postal services 355
pradal serey, see kick-boxing
prahoc 338
 Prahoc Factory 245
 Prasat Phnom
 Banon Winery 251
 Prasat Preah Vihear 12, 262-7, **262, 12**
 history 263-4
 travel to/from 263
 Preah Khan 162-3, **163, 26, 139**
 Preah Khan of Kompong Svay 265-7
 Preah Neak Poan 163-4, **164, 139**
 Preah Rumkel 286-7
 Preah Vihear City 260-2, **261**
 Preah Vihear Province 18, 260-7
 Prek Toal Bird Sanctuary 129
 Prey Chung Kran 276
 prickly heat 369
 public holidays 355
 Puppet Parade 21, **22**
 Pursat 235-7, **236**
 Pursat Province 235-9

Q
 quad biking 34, 103

R
 radio 351
 Ratanakiri Province 288-95
 Ream National Park 200-1
 religion 332-3
remarks 365
 responsible tourism 292, 298, 301

road rules 364-5
 road safety 364
 rock climbing 36
 Roluos temples 165-7
 Royal Palace (Phnom Penh) 42-3, **50**

S
 safety 355-8, 368-9
 bag snatching 85
 festivals 355
 road 364
 Sam Veasna Center 299
 Sambor Prei Kuk 18, 269-71, **25**
 Samlaut 251
 Santuk Silk Farm 271
 scams 356
 sculpture 336-7
 sea travel 361-2
 Seima Protected Forest 302
 Sen Monorom 295-304, **297**
 sexually transmitted infections 368
 share taxis 365
 shopping 20, 354, see also markets
 good-cause shopping 82, 121, 166
 language 373
 Siem Pang 287
 Siem Reap 10, 96, **97, 100, 109, 10, 104-5**
 accommodation 96, 108-12
 activities 102-3
 children, travel with 102
 climate 96
 courses 103-6
 drinking 117-19
 emergencies 122
 entertainment 119-20
 food 96, 112-17
 highlights 97
 history 97-8
 internet services 122
 medical services 122-3
 money 123
 nightlife 117-19
 orientation 122
 postal services 123
 safety 122
 shopping 120-2
 sights 98-102
 tourist information 123
 tours 106-8
 travel seasons 96

travel to/from 123-5
 travel within 125-6
 weather 96

Siem Reap area 126-31, **128**

Sihanouk, Norodom 314-16, 334

Sihanoukville 186-201, **187, 189, 190, 194**
 accommodation 191-5
 activities 188
 courses 189
 drinking 196-7
 entertainment 197
 food 195-6
 money 197
 nightlife 196-7
 safety 197-200
 shopping 197
 sights 186-8
 tourist information 197
 tours 189-91
 travel to/from 198-200
 travel within 200

Silver Pagoda (Phnom Penh) 43

Sisophon 255
 smoking 351
 snakebites 369
 Sneng 251-2
 snorkelling 35-6

South Coast 175-230, **176**
 accommodation 175
 climate 175
 food 175
 highlights 176
 travel seasons 175
 travel to/from 177
 weather 175

Southern Islands 201-12
 sports 335

Sra Srang 160, **139, 151**

stings 369

stone carving 270

street food 73

Stung Treng 284-6, **285**

Suryavarman I 133, 310
 Suryavarman II 136, 311
 symbols 144

T
 Ta Mok 258
 Ta Mok's House 258
 Ta Prohm 151, 159-60, **160, 2, 139, 151**
 Takeo 228-30
 Tatai Waterfall 181
 taxis 365

telephone services 14, 15, 356

temples 19, see also Angkor temples
 Thala Boravit 284
 Wat Athvea 99
 Wat Bo 98
 Wat Ek Phnom 245
 Wat Hanchey 274
 Wat Khaong Kang 252
 Wat Kiri Sela 228
 Wat Leu 186
 Wat Maha Leap 274
 Wat Moha Montrei 49-52
 Wat Neang Kok 178
 Wat Nokor Bachey 275
 Wat Ounalom 49
 Wat Phnom 47-9
 Wat Phnom Doh Kromom 296
 Wat Phnom Yat 252
 Wat Preah Inkosei 99
 Wat Roka Kandal 280
 Wat Sampov Pram 223
 Wat Somrong Knong 245
 Wat Thmei 99

teuk trey 339
 Throne Hall 51
 time 14, 356
 tipping 354
 Tmatboey 264
Tomb Raider 161
 Tonlé Bati 92-3
 Tonlé Sap 344
 tourist information 357
 tours 362
 Kampot 214
 Koh Kong 178
 traditional medicine 369
 train travel 365
 travel advisories 357
 travel to/from Cambodia 15, 359-62
 travel within Cambodia 15, 362-5
 trekking, see hiking
 TV 351
 typhoid 368

U
 Udong 91-2

V
 vacations 355
 vaccinations 368
 Vamana 165
 Veal Krous Culture Feeding Station 265

vegetarian travellers 342
 Veun Sai 294
 Vietnamese people 330
 Virachey National Park
 294-5
 visas 14, 357-8
 Vishnu 165
 volunteering 358
 vultures 265, 287

W

walking, *see* hiking
 Wat Kor Village 239-41
 water 369
 water features 19
 Water Festival 23, **22**
 waterfalls
 Ban Lung 288-9
 Bei Srok 290

Bou Sraa Waterfall 296
 Dak Dam Waterfall 296
 Kirivong Waterfall 230
 Monorom Falls 296
 Phnom Keu Waterfall
 252
 Popokvil Falls 222
 Romanear Waterfall 296
 Romanear II Waterfall
 296
 Tatai Waterfall 181
 weather 14, 21-3, **14**, *see*
also individual regions
 websites 15
 Angkor temples 144-5
 history 310
 weights & measures 351
 white-shouldered ibis 264
 wildlife 36, *see also*
individual species

Wildlife Alliance 184
 wildlife reserves
 Ang Trapeng Thmor 131
 Crocodile Protection
 Sanctuary 238
 Elephant Valley Project
 297
 Mekong Turtle Conserva-
 tion Centre 280
 Mondulkiri Elephant &
 Wildlife Sanctuary 299
 Peam Krasaop Wildlife
 Sanctuary 177
 Phnom Aural Wildlife
 Sanctuary 238
 Phnom Samkos Wildlife
 Sanctuary 238
 Phnom Tamao Wildlife
 Rescue Centre 93-4
 wildlife watching 36, 93,

184, 281, *see also* bird-
 watching
 Banteay Srei Butterfly
 Centre 127
 gibbon encounters 290
 Sam Veasna Center 299
 wine 251, 340
 women travellers 358
 work 358
 worms 367

Y

yaba 355
 Yasovarman I 133
 yoga 58, 103

Z

ziplining 35, 162, 296

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT/MTR station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Skytrain/Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

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