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meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Cambodia – To the Temples and Beyond

Tour Duration - 14 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Pace

Busy

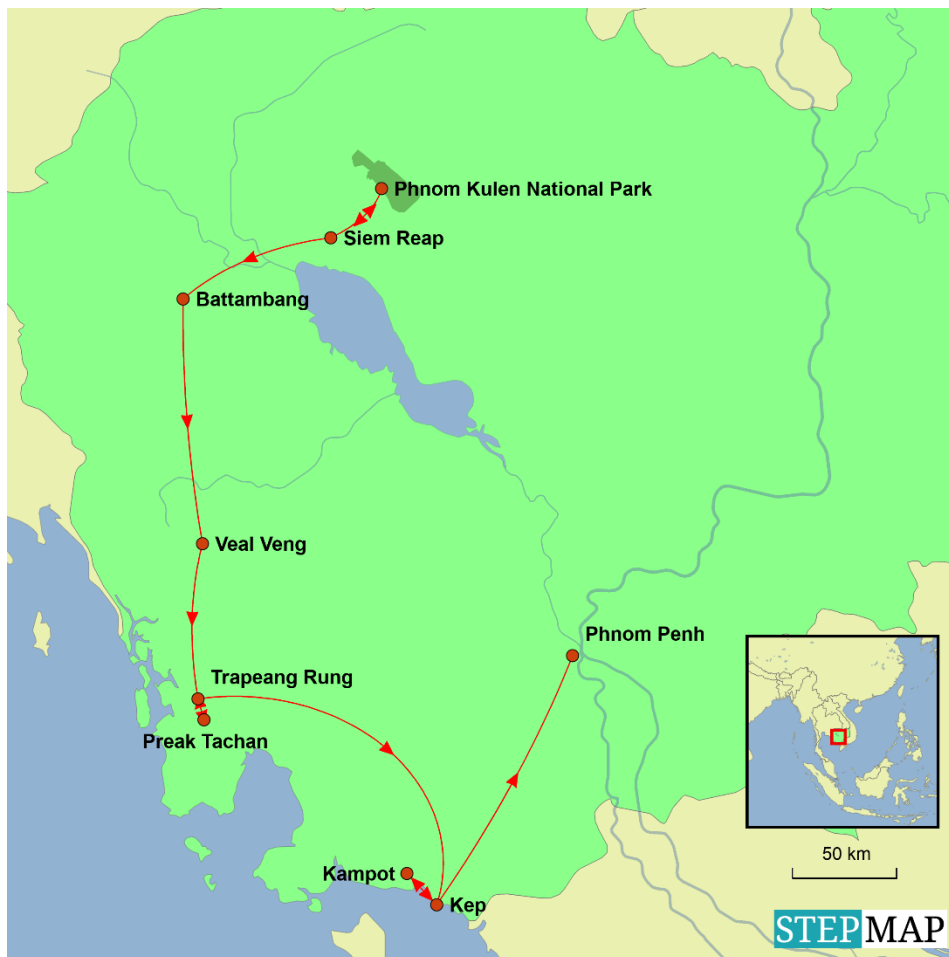
Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore the magnificent temples of Angkor Wat
- ✓ Visit the UNESCO site of Phnom Kulen National Park
- ✓ Spend an evening at the famous Cambodian circus
- ✓ Spend time with the local people, staying in a local homestay
- ✓ Travel through the Cardamom Mountains, staying in a tented camp
- ✓ Discover Phnom Penh and the infamous Killing Fields



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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotels, a tented camp and a local homestay with shared facilities
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum 12
Start Point: Siem Reap – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point: Phnom Penh – you can depart any time on day 14
Transport: Minivan, boat, bicycle, tuk tuk
Countries: Cambodia



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Cambodia - To the Temples and Beyond

On this 14-day tour discover what Cambodia has to offer beyond its spectacular temples. We start the journey in Siem Reap with a visit to the magnificent Angkor Wat and its overwhelming collection of temples. Scattered throughout a huge area of forest, they comprise one of the world's greatest man-made wonders. Travel to Battambang and explore the rural side of Cambodia before taking an exciting journey through the Cardamom mountains, where we spend two nights in the Cambodian jungle. Explore local villages and relax in the coastal province of Kep before ending the tour in Phnom Penh, where we learn about the country's dark history, as well as experiencing the lighter side of the city; it's bustling nightlife.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. On this tour for group size of 3 or more you will be accompanied by an English-speaking tour leader throughout, assisted where necessary by local English-speaking guides. If the group size is 1 or 2 then there will be no accompanying tour leader but you will still have the services of different local guides in each place.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Siem Reap Arrival

Welcome to Cambodia! Upon arrival in Siem Reap you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Depending on your time of arrival, there may be time to explore the city. Overnight at The Sanctuary Residence or similar. No meals.

Day 2 – Siem Reap

This morning we visit a Buddhist pagoda for a special monk water blessing ceremony. This ceremony is believed to cleanse and keep bad spirits away while bringing good luck for the coming years. The offering of a Sadok (traditional gift of sugar, milk, tea, amongst other items) for the monk will be provided. After the blessing visit the spectacular jungle temple of Ta Phrom before visiting the main temples of Angkor Wat. This afternoon we explore Angkor by bicycle*. Ride past the King's Siem Reap residence and through the Royal Gardens, and continue up the Siem Reap River past private homes and small riverside markets. Crossing the river we wind our way along red clay roads and small dirt trails, through a series of local villages, crossing small farms and passing school children on their way home. We make our way towards the west edge of the Angkor Park. After a brief stop we bypass the crush of visitors exiting the park and instead follow single track lanes, past stunning rice fields and small, historic family parcels where life appears unchanged for generations. As the temples close to visitors, we will access park roads and trails to view this remarkable historic site in twilight, and poise ourselves for a glimpse of sunset as the day comes to a close. We then take a peaceful Dragon Boat ride on the moat of Angkor Thom, with local delicacies including soft drink and champagne on-board. After the boat ride you will be transferred back to your hotel. Overnight at The Sanctuary Residence or similar (BL)





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Note: Visiting temples or other religious sites in Cambodia, visitors are advised to follow a dress code consisting of long trousers or skirt which covers the knees as well as covered shoulders. Skirts, short shorts, tank tops and revealing clothing are culturally insensitive and not allowed.

**The cycle ride is flat and approximately 20km in total.*

If you do not wish to explore Angkor by bicycle, a tuk tuk can be arranged. However, this may make following the smaller trails more difficult. Please advise us at the time of booking.

Angkor Wat

Prepare for divine inspiration! The temples of Angkor, capital of Cambodia's ancient Khmer empire, are a perfect fusion of creative ambition and spiritual devotion. The Cambodian god-kings of old each strove to top their ancestors in size, scale and symmetry, culminating in the world's largest religious building, Angkor Wat, and one of its weirdest, the Bayon. The hundreds of temples surviving today are the sacred skeleton of the vast political, religious and social centre of an empire that stretched from Burma to Vietnam and which, at its zenith, boasted a population of one million. The temples of Angkor are the heart and soul of the Kingdom of Cambodia, a source of inspiration and national pride to all Khmers as they struggle to rebuild their lives after years of terror and trauma. Today, they are a point of pilgrimage for all Cambodians, and no traveller to the region will want to miss their extravagant beauty.

Day 3 - Phnom Kulen National Park

After breakfast we leave Siem Reap through the stunning countryside for a visit to the mysterious waterfall at UNESCO World Heritage Site of Phnom Kulen. Explore the area and visit Preah Ang Thom, which houses a large Buddha statue, as well as the Terrace of Sdach Kum Ling, a small brick-built ruined temple which was covered by lava for hundreds of years. We end at the waterfall where you can take a refreshing swim before a local Khmer lunch. After lunch we take a scenic drive to Banteay Srei, loosely translated as "Citadel of Women", which houses some of the finest and best-preserved examples of classical Khmer bas-relief. Continue to the Cambodia Land Mine Museum. This is part museum, but also an orphanage, school and clinic to victims ran by Aki Ra, who was forced by the Khmer Rouge to lay thousands of mines as a child, and has now devoted his life to clearing them and has so far removed over 50,000. We finish our tour with sunset at Pre Rup Temple. This evening enjoy a night at the Cambodian circus. You will be picked up from your hotel at 7.30 pm by Remok (tuk tuk) to the Phare circus tent, located just outside of town. The show starts at 8:00 PM and lasts about an hour. Overnight at The Sanctuary Residence or similar (BL)

Phnom Kulen

Phnom Kulen (or Kulen Mountain) translates as "Mountain of Lychees". It is located in Svay Leu District roughly 48km north of Siem Reap. Phnom Kulen is an isolated chain of small mountain plateau of moderate height lying south of the Dângrêk Mountains and appears as a long silhouette on the horizon. Geologically Phnom Kulen is formed of sandstone and it was important as a quarry in Angkorian times. Kulen is now a protected area and as of 1992 has acquired World Heritage status from UNESCO. The Samré tribe was formerly living at the edge of Phnom Kulen, quarrying sandstone and transporting it to the royal sites at Angkor and beyond. The area is also easily defended as the infamous Khmer Rouge used the location as a final stronghold as their regime came to an end in 1979. Recently archaeologists have located some 30 temples on Phnom Kulen using helicopter-mounted lasers to measure variations in ground height through dense vegetation. Phnom Kulen is widely regarded as the birthplace of the ancient Khmer Empire. During the constructional period of the ancient temples in the ninth century, sand stones were brought from this sacred mountain to Angkor. It was here at Phnom Kulen that King Jayavarman II proclaimed independence from Java in 802 A.D. The site is known for its carvings representing fertility and its waters hold special significance to the people of Cambodia. Just a few inches under the surface of the water, over 1000 carvings of Yoni and Linga are etched into the sandstone riverbed. The waters are regarded as holy, given the sacred carvings which also include a stone representation of the Hindu god Vishnu lying on his serpent Ananta, with his wife Lakshmi at his feet. A lotus flower protrudes from Vishnu's navel bearing the god Brahma.



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Cambodian Circus

Phare Ponleu Selpak means "Brightness of the Arts". This is a circus like none other and it's very different to a western style circus. Phare is a Cambodian non-profit art organization founded in 1994 by eight young Cambodians returning from refugee camps along the Thai border. The purpose is to improve the development of local communities by providing education and professional artistic training. The circus performers are very talented, passionate and have travelled all of the world giving performances. The shows are constantly rotating depending on the time you visit. All of their shows are fantastic and focus on both traditional and contemporary themes. Some people credit Phare with the rebirth of Cambodian dance and culture.

Day 4 - Siem Reap – Battambang (165km, approx. 3.5 hours)

This morning you will be picked up from your hotel and drive to Battambang (approx. 3 hours, with a driver only). Upon the arrival in Battambang you will be transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure. Overnight at Bambu Hotel or similar (B)

Day 5 - Battambang

This morning take your private remok and ride for about 5km to the Bamboo train where you have the opportunity to ride this unique contraption on train tracks that were initially built for the French to transport goods. Continue to Ek Phnom, an ancient temple 15km north of the town. This temple is stunning and seldom visited by tourists. Along the way, you will pass many small villages and encounter various village activities such as making bamboo sticky rice (korlan), fish paste, rice paper and banana paper. Afterwards we return to town and visit the campus of Phare Ponleu Selpak. The campus lets you experience the vibrant energy of Phare first-hand. Take a stroll through the campus with one of our guides to see circus students learning new tricks, music students practicing beneath shady trees, and watch an animation film made by our students. After lunch at a local restaurant visit the site of the "Killing Caves" at Phnom Sampeou. There is a Khmer Rouge memorial as well as an interesting temple on top of this hill. When at the top, you will have a commanding view over the Cambodian countryside. If you choose to stay until sunset you will see countless bats exit from the cave down below, while enjoying a cold drink from a comfortable chair set up by enterprising locals. After sunset, you will be transferred back to your hotel. Overnight at Bambu Hotel or similar (BL)

Day 6 - Battambang – Smiling Gecko Farm

This morning meet your guide and drive to Smiling Gecko farm (approx. 4 hours). On arrival you have the remainder of the day to enjoy the farm at your leisure. Overnight Smiling Gecko Farmhouse (B)

Day 7 – Smiling Gecko Farm - Trapeang Rung, Koh Kong (175km, approx. 5 and a half hours)

After breakfast say goodbye to the farm and drive to Koh Kong province where you can relax at the lodge's lounge in Trapeang Rung before embarking for the hour's trip over the Preak Tachan River to Cardamom Tented Camp. Settle into your comfortable safari-style tent. This afternoon, go on an exploratory hike in the jungle around the camp. The diversity of the fauna will amaze you! Overnight Cardamom Tented Camp (BD)

Day 8 - Preak Tachan

After early breakfast, Wildlife Alliance Rangers will meet us and together with an English-speaking guide embark on patrol over a network of abandoned poaching and logging trails through the dense forest. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife. The half-day hike will stop by the Ranger Station, where confiscated snares, traps and improvised hunting rifles are on display. Enjoy a local Khmer lunch and swimming in the river. Later this afternoon, kayak along Prek Tachan back to camp. Dinner and overnight at Cardamom Tented Camp (BLD)

Note – the kayaking will be done yourself. If you do not wish to kayak back to camp, there is a motorboat option available.



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Day 9 - Cardamom Departure – Kep (200km, approx. 4 hours)

If you are an early riser, you can go on a self-guided hike on the trails around the camp. At around 10am we head back to Trapeang Rung and travel to Kep. Upon arrival you will be transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure. Overnight at Raingsey Bungalow or similar (B)

Day 10 – Kep – Kampot - Kep

Today explore Kampot by bicycle*. The journey will take you through rice fields, durian and rambutan orchards against the scenic backdrop of the mysterious 'Elephant Mountains'. Stop at local villages along the way to meet and speak with the local people. Your guide will help translate and if you are feeling adventurous try out a few words in Khmer, they are always delighted to hear you try! Our final destination will be the rapids on the Kampot River. This is where we will stop for a swim and enjoy a local picnic lunch. After a leisurely lunch and a swim in the cool waters you will be picked up and transferred back to your hotel. Overnight at Raingsey Bungalow or similar (BL)

**this can be done by car instead of bicycle. A small supplement will apply. Please let us know at the time of booking.*

Day 11 - Kep

Spend the day at leisure. Overnight at Raingsey Bungalow or similar (B)

Day 12 - Kep – Phnom Penh (160km, approx. 4 hours)

Today travel to Phnom Penh (approx. 4 hours, not including stops). Upon arrival check-in to your hotel and spend the afternoon at leisure. This evening transfer to Phnom Penh's river front for a sunset boat trip on Tonle Sap and the Mekong River. Whilst on board observe the past meeting with the present through old Buddhist pagodas and new commercial buildings both visible. Pass local villages nestled on the banks of the river and see the traditional floating houses and markets of the Mekong. Overnight at Rambutan Resort or similar (B)

Phnom Penh

The name of this city cannot help but conjure up an image of the exotic. The glimmering spires of the Royal Palace, the fluttering saffron of the monks' robes and the luscious location on the banks of the mighty Mekong – this is the Asia many dreamed of when first imagining their adventures overseas. Cambodia's capital can be an assault on the senses. Motorbikes whiz through laneways without a thought for pedestrians; markets exude pungent scents; and all the while the sounds of life, of commerce, of survival, reverberate through the streets. But this is all part of the attraction. Once the 'Pearl of Asia', Phnom Penh's shine was tarnished by the impact of war and revolution. But the city has since risen from the ashes to take its place among the hip capitals of the region, with an alluring cafe culture, bustling bars and a world-class food scene.

Day 13 - Phnom Penh

Today we take a city tour. We start with a visit to Wat Phnom, where a 14th century stupa and small pagoda stands. It is the tallest religious structure in the city and the oldest building in Phnom Penh. Continue to the Royal Palace, built in 1866 under King Norodom. Adjacent is the Silver Pagoda, which is named after its floor which is covered with 5000 silver tiles. Later visit the National Museum, which houses an important collection of Angkorian artefacts. Lunch will be taken at the Friends Restaurant, which provides under privileged street children with the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the hospitality business. All profits are reinvested into the Training Centre activities. This afternoon visit Choeng Ek, the location of the infamous Killing Fields. Continue to Tuol Sleng prison, the notorious Khmer prison where thousands of Cambodians perished in the darkest hours of Cambodian history. Overnight at Rambutan Resort or similar (B)



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Note: When visiting the Royal Palace, visitors are advised to follow a dress code consisting of "long trousers or skirt which cover the knees, and covered shoulders". Skirts, small shorts, tank tops and other items of revealing clothing are not allowed.

Day 14 - Phnom Penh Departure

Transfer to the airport for your departure flight. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers

All accommodation

Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader (please note local 'station guides' will be used for each location when the group size is 1-2 travellers. The same guide/tour leader will be used throughout when the group is 3 or more travellers)

Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Transport, including travel by minivan and river

Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights

Any airport taxes

Tips

Travel Insurance

Visas

Drinks

Important Information

Foreign Government Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to any of the areas we visit in Cambodia. It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation. Rooms on this tour usually come with private bathrooms. When necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar. Some smaller guesthouses and the tented camp will not have these facilities.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have



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designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £6

Dinner £10-£12

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Water £0.60

Beer £1.30

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practice in Asia. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. As a rough guide, drivers can be tipped between \$2-4 per day and guides between \$7-15 per day – these figures are per group, not per person.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: There is a reasonable network of ATMs across the region in larger towns and cities which accept internationally issued cards.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Larger hotels take Visa or Mastercard

Local Currency: Cambodia Riel (KHR)

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollar

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.



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Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Cambodia. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages for each country visited, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations.



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication will also be required and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The climate in Cambodia can, roughly said, be divided into two different seasons: the monsoon (rainy) season (June to October) and the dry season (November to May). There are four different periods throughout the year:

November – February: Cool and dry

March – May: Hot and dry

June – August: Hot and wet

September – October: Cool and wet

Maximum daily temperatures range from the high 20°C in January to more than 40°C in April. Daily minimum temperatures are usually no less than 15° C except in the mountain areas in north Laos where temperatures can be lower than this.

Most people will want to travel during the dry season, with November to February being the peak tourist period, but we believe there is a lot to be said for travelling off season. If travellers visit between July - September, although there is a chance it will rain (likely only once per day and for a short time), the country will be at its greenest and even in the more touristy places (Angkor Wat, Luang Prabang etc.) there will be far fewer visitors, making it a much more authentic experience.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. The temperature can be cold at night, especially from November to February, so please bring some warm clothing with you. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please bring a torch or head torch for this tour as electricity outages can occur.

Footwear

Comfortable and sturdy walking shoes are recommended. When travelling lighter sandals are a good option.



Rediscover the
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Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack or soft type bag, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V and plugs generally have two-prong round or flat pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 5 September 2023.

