

Christmas in Cambodia

December 22, 2011 to January 2, 2012

December 22nd

Air Asia Flight AK1474

Departs KUL 3:15 pm, arrives PNH 4:00 pm

Phnom Penh

Staying at: **Blue Lime** (www.bluelime.asia)

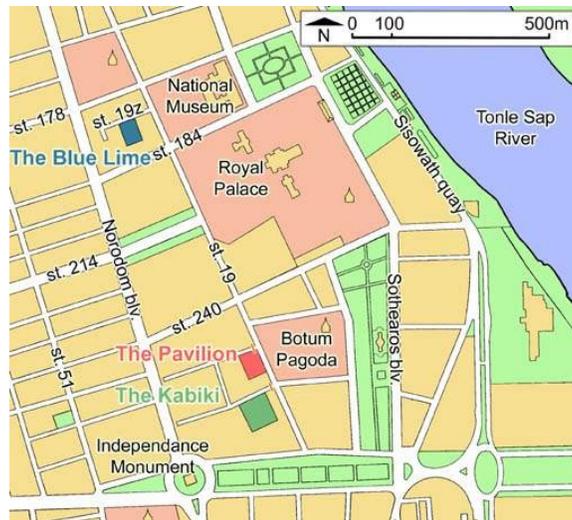
42, street 19z (off street 19)

tel: +855 (0) 23 22 22 60

Confirmed for a superior double room with air conditioning, internet access, and breakfast included daily.

Arriving Dec 22nd and departing Dec 24th. Rate is \$60 per night.

Our alley, street 19z, is off street 19, across from the Royal Institute of Fine Arts, which is at the back of the National Museum.



Taxis can be hired just outside the arrival lobby of the airport, no meters, should cost \$7.

Directions in Khmer for the taxi driver:

ប្តីឡែម

- * សូមមេត្តាទៅសាលារចនាស្ថិតនៅតាមផ្លូវលេខ 19
- * មកដល់មុខសាលារចនាសូមបត់ចូលតាមផ្លូវក្នុងមួយ (19z)
- * តាមច្រកផ្លូវក្នុងនេះ ចូលក្នុងចំងាយ ៥០ម ជាទីតាំង ប្តីឡែម

Phnom Penh

Much of the central city (where we'll be staying) was built while the city was under French colonial control (1863-1953), and it is a mix of old French buildings, Southeast Asian shophouses, and classic Khmer pagodas. The city has been rebuilding, and the last decade has seen lots of changes with skyscrapers starting to rise.

It's supposedly an easy city to navigate, and follows a numbered grid like NYC. Major boulevards run north-south, parallel to the rivers. Generally, even numbered streets run east-west with the numbers increasing as you head south from Chruoy Changvar Bridge, and odd numbered streets run north-south with the numbers increasing as you move west from the river. Note – building numbers may not be helpful, as these numbers are rarely sequential.

We only have one full day here, and will be using it mainly as a gateway to the rest of Cambodia.

Sights to see

- **Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda** (Wat Preah Keo): The official residence of King Sihamoni. The wat has 5000 silver floor tiles and contains an Emerald Buddha (inspired by Bangkok), and was preserved by the Khmer Rouge to demonstrate its concern for the conservation of Cambodia's cultural riches to the outside world. The mural enclosing the compound shows scenes from Ramayana (famous Hindu epic). Open 8-11 am and 2-5 pm, and you must be covered from knee to elbow to enter. Admission including camera privileges is 25,000r. Photography is not permitted inside the pagoda. Up early? Check out the t'ai chi and aerobics sessions in front of the palace.
- **National Museum**: most significant public display of Khmer artifacts in the country, including Angkorian artifacts. Open 8 am to 5 pm, admission \$3, camera \$1 (can only photograph the courtyard, not the collection).
- **Wat Phnom**: Set on the only hill in town, and first built to house four statues of Buddha found by the Mekong River by Madame Penh. Pray here for luck and success, the spirits like bananas. Admission \$1.
- Historical sites from the Khmer Rouge period are often visited by tourists (**Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum** and the **Killing Fields**). Sounds depressing, and we're not sure if this will be on our agenda yet. Tuol Sleng was formerly a high school turned into a security prison (S-21) by the Khmer Rouge. Open 8 am to 5:30 pm, admission \$2. Killing Fields are 15 km outside of town, and are open from 8 am to 5:30 pm, admission \$3.

Markets (moneychangers can be easily found here, also is a good place for breakfast/lunch)

- **Psar Thmei**: domed central market, good cheap food stalls but pricey (overpriced) souvenirs
- **Psar Tuol Tom Pong**: also known as the Russian market, better bet for souvenirs

For art/reproduction sculptures, stroll along St 178 opposite the National Museum and bargain here.

Restaurants

- *54 Langeach Sros*, 15A St 178: Always humming, this is a popular beer garden set in the courtyard of a former residential villa. Menu of nearly 200 dishes and snacks, all delicious, but their speciality is “Fried fish on the fire lake”, a whole fish deep fried and cooked in a coconut curry sauce with fresh vegetables and herbs.
- *Sbov Meas*, St 184 between St 19 and Norodom Blvd (around the corner from Blue Lime): Lively spot to enjoy a beer with the locals in a Khmer-baroque decorated garden after a long day of sightseeing.
- *Rum Chang Restaurant*, on the east bank of the Tonlé Sap River, a little over 1 km north of the Chruoy Changvar Bridge: One of the best places for authentic Khmer food overlooking the river.

December 24th

Mekong Express Limousine Bus to Siem Reap

Free pick up from Blue Lime – be ready in hotel lobby by 7:45 am, pick up will be between 7:45 and 8:15 am. If the pick up is late, call Kimleang (mobile: +855 1296 3438 or +855 1696 3438)

Ticket number: 871064/871065

Seat number: 5A/5B

Departure time: 8:30 am

\$11/ticket, to get on the bus just tell the driver that we are with MotherHome Guesthouse in Siem Reap, and pay MotherHome when we checkout.

Free pick-up at the Siem Reap bus station, look for someone holding a welcome notice showing:

MotherHome Guesthouse & MotherHome Inn

Welcome

Mrs. Christine Blackstone

If we miss the pick-up person, contact Kim Leang (mobile: +855 1296 3438).

Staying at: **MotherHome Inn** (www.motherhomeinn.com)

Confirmed for a deluxe twin room with air conditioning, hot water, and breakfast included daily. Arriving Dec 24th, and departing Dec 28th. Rate is \$29/night.

Wifi is available, and Visa and MasterCard are accepted.



Siem Reap

One of the most popular destinations in Southeast Asia, it has been reinvented as the heart of the new Cambodia, with more guesthouses than temples, as well as world-class dining and spas. The tourist tide has arrived, and this is the gateway to Angkor Wat.

Things to do

- **Cooking classes**

Le Tigre de Papier, +855 (0)12 265 811, located on Pub Street, classes last three hours, and are held at 10 am, 1 pm, and 5 pm every day. They begin with a one hour market visit, followed by two hours to prepare a starter, a main course, and a dessert.

Cooks in Tuk Tuks, +855 (0) 63 963 400, classes last three hours (including market visit) and start at 10 am daily. About \$25/person, held at the River Garden Resort, they can arrange a tuk tuk to pick you up for \$6.

Angkor Palm, +855 12 232 205, classes are held twice a day, and include a 20 minute visit to the Old Market (Psar Chas), and a two hour cooking class with the chef of the restaurant. \$12/person, select your own main course.

- **Angkor National Museum:** put the Angkor/Khmer empire in context. Might be helpful to do? Open 8:30 am to 6:30 pm, at No. 968 Vithei Charles de Gaulle, admission is \$12/person.
- **Artisans d'Angkor:** school teaching silk weaving, silver plating, and wood and stone carving, attached gift shop on Stung Thmey Street near the Old Market

Restaurants

- Pub Street caters to tourists with lots of bars, try the alleys around it for quieter restaurants. Check out *Khmer Kitchen* (two locations on Pub Street Alley “The Passage”) for cheap, good food.
- *Paris Saigon* (French/Vietnamese), on Samdech tep Vong Street in the Wat Bo area, at the back of Residence d'Angkor, highly rated on TripAdvisor and by Canby Publications
- *The Tonich Restaurant*, (Cambodian) outside of town behind Wat Preah Enkosel Pagoda. #1 on TripAdvisor, great atmosphere and food and book ahead for the restaurant to arrange transport as most tuk tuk drivers don't know where it is. 092 80 80 40
- *Au Comptoir d'Asie*, (French/Cambodian) 170 Pir Thnou Street near Pub Street. Little bistro with good food and prices.
- *The Station Wine Bar*, Street 07, Old Market Area, nice place for wine by the glass and some light snacks – Aussie owned.

Angkor Wat

The heart and soul of Cambodia, and it is serving as inspiration as the country rebuilds after years of terror. During the Ankorian period (AD 802-1432), Cambodian “god-kings” tried to better their ancestors in the size, scale and symmetry of the temples they constructed, culminating in the world's largest religious building: Angkor Wat, the “temple that is a city”. There are many temples to explore, mostly made from sandstone, and this has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1992. Reconstruction has taken place to varying degrees, primarily using original materials, and concentrating above ground rather than in archeological digs and surveys. The cities that would have existed around the temples have vanished, as they were made from wood, stone being reserved for the gods.

These temples are the earthly representation of Mount Meru, the Mount Olympus of the Hindu faith, and abode of the ancient gods. Common carvings include apsaras (nymphs) and the seven headed naga (mythical serpent) who represents the rainbow bridge between heaven and earth.

Passes are available for one day (\$20), three days (\$40), or one week (\$60), and can be used for non-consecutive days. We'll be here for four and a half days, so a three day pass is probably what we'll need. Buy the pass near the end of our first day to get a free sunset at the temples. The pass includes most temples near Siem Reap, but not Phnom Kulen or Beng Mealea.

Must sees include:

- Sunrise at Angkor Wat
- Bayon and its 216 enigmatic faces that stare into the jungle
- Ta Prohm which is being reclaimed by the jungle and is where Tomb Raider was filmed
- Banteay Srei for its delicate and intricate carvings
- Angkor Thom
- Beng Mealea, reclaimed by the jungle and not reconstructed – live out your Indiana Jones fantasies

Suggested itinerary from MotherHome Inn:

+ **DAY1** (Dec,24th,2011)

- Check in to our MotherHome by the morning bus from Phnom Penh
- Free pick up to our MotherHome by our tuktuk
- 16:40 leaving to buy 3 days temple pass + sunset at Phnom Bakheng
- Back to MotherHome
- Dinner somewhere (highly recommend to try at least 1 time in our Mother Cafe restaurant)
- >>> US\$5 by tuktuk for Phnom Bankheng & buying ticket

+ **DAY2** (Dec,25th,2011)

MORNING:

- 04:30 wake up
- 05:00 leaving for sunrise at Angkor Wat
- After sunrise leaving for South gate of Angkor Thom,
- Bayon temple and temples around Bayon
- Chao Say Tevoda
- Thamanon
- Ta Keo
- Ta Prohm temple
- Back to MotherHome for lunch and rest / or can have your lunch at the temple somewhere (not recommended because food not good and expensive)

AFTERNOON:

- About 15:00 back to Angkor Wat (you also can stay until sunset)
>>> US\$13 for today touring by tuktuk, today's sunrise will give you for free of charge, but 2nd or 3rd sunrise will charge you US\$3 per 1 sunrise, return to guesthouse at noon time for DAY2 & DAY3 is free of charge,

+ DAY3 (Dec,26th,2011)

MORNING:

- 06:00 wake up
- 06:30 breakfast in our restaurant
- 07:10 leaving for Kravan temple
- Banteay Kdei
- Sras srang
- Pre Roub
- East Mebon
- Ta Som
- Neak Pean
- Lunch somewhere at the temple

AFTERNOON :

- Preah Khan temple
 - Kompong Phluk (Tonle Sap) + boat ride to see the floating village + forest (**Request for** : Entrance ticket+boat ride : US\$15/pax, 2 ways transportation charge to the place will be US\$10)
 - Back to guesthouse
 - Dinner somewhere (highly recommend to go and have buffet dinner at Angkor Mondial Restaurant + Apsara dancing show, walk in price is : US\$12/pax, but if make a reservation with us get only US\$9/pax)
- >>> US\$25 for today touring included with 2 ways to Kompong Pluk & Floating Village
>>> But only US\$15 if you will not go back to the lake and Kompong Pluk today

+ DAY4 (Dec,27th,2011)

MORNING:

- 06:30 wake up
- 07:00 breakfast
- 07:30 leaving for Banteay Samre temple
- Land mind museum (if you wish to see)
- Banteay Srey
- Kbal spean (but not recommended to go because spend more time and will not have enough time to go to Beng Mealea)
- Beng Mealea (**Request for** : Entrance ticket : US\$5/pax)
- Lunch at Beng Mealea

AFTERNOON:

- Back to Rolous group (Bakong, Preah Kor, Lo Lei)
- >>> US\$65 for today's itinerary with 4-seat car,

Important Notice & Tips :

- The above prices given to you is only the transportation charge + toll fee by 1 tuktuk & car for the last day. Meals, tour guide, entrance ticket are not included
- Tuktuk ride between the MotherHome Inn to Old Market/Pub Street/Night Market is US\$1 per trip per tuktuk with the maximum of 4 persons, Please kindly confirm with the tuktuk driver for the price before getting on their tuktuk, otherwise they will charge you over, walking by foot is about 13 to 15 minutes.

December 28th

Night bus to Sihanoukville, leaves Siem Reap at 8 pm, arrives Sihanoukville next day at 6 am. To be arranged with the front desk of MotherHome Inn when we arrive.

Cost for sleeping bed bus is \$18/person, cost for normal seat night bus is \$15/person (this one leaves at 7 pm).

Arrive Sihanoukville on **December 29th**.

Staying at: **Pagoda Rocks** (www.pagodarocks.com)

Situated next to Wat Leu

tel: +855 (0) 67 255 545 or +855 (0) 81 401 000 or +855 (0) 77 524 275 or +855 (0) 34 939 222

Confirmed for a superior double room with air conditioning, internet access, and breakfast included daily.

Arriving Dec 29th and departing Dec 31st. Rate is \$50 per night and includes breakfast.

Sihanoukville

The main beach town in Cambodia, sporting miles of white sand beaches and its fair share of tourists.

Things to do

The main beaches are: Serendipity, Ochheuteal, Victory and Otres (in order of popularity and concentration of tourists). Pagoda Rocks is on Victory Hill, so **Victory Beach** will be the closest beach for us. Expect some of the best sunset views in town, and lining the beach: beachside seafood shacks, vendors, beach chairs and umbrellas. Primary objective here is just relaxing on the beach.

Next door to our hotel, **Wat Leu** (also known as Wat Chotynieng - "upper wat") overlooks town from the top of Sihanoukville Mountain, and can be seen from downtown perched atop the hill near the antennas. Paintings in the vihara (temple sanctuary) at the pagoda depict the life of Buddha.

Fishing: Tradewinds Charters/Sihanoukville Fishing: 54 foot Western-style fishing boat, see Brian at the Fisherman's Den Sports Bar (170 Ekareach Street (the main drag). \$35/person, includes lunch and tea/coffee/water. Also includes dinner: your day's catch fried up back at the bar after the trip and presented as an all you can eat buffet with chips and salad at 7 pm that night. Boat departs at 8 am sharp, and arrives back around 5:30 pm. Minimum \$20 deposit required the day before the trip (refundable in case of weather). Bring a hat, sunscreen and a towel. To contact Brian locally 012702478 (mobile) or 034933997 (landline).

Restaurants

- *Airport Club*: unique dining and drinking venue on Victory Beach, with a hangar-inspired restaurant and a real Antonov AN-24 airplane above the dance floor.
- *Grand Restaurant Kampuchea*: nice little BBQ place on the strip (Golden Lion Circle)
- *Chez Claude*, great French food with seafood specialties and terrific views down over Sokha Beach, get there via a tractor pulled carriage or up a lot of steps on Pi Thnou Beach Road

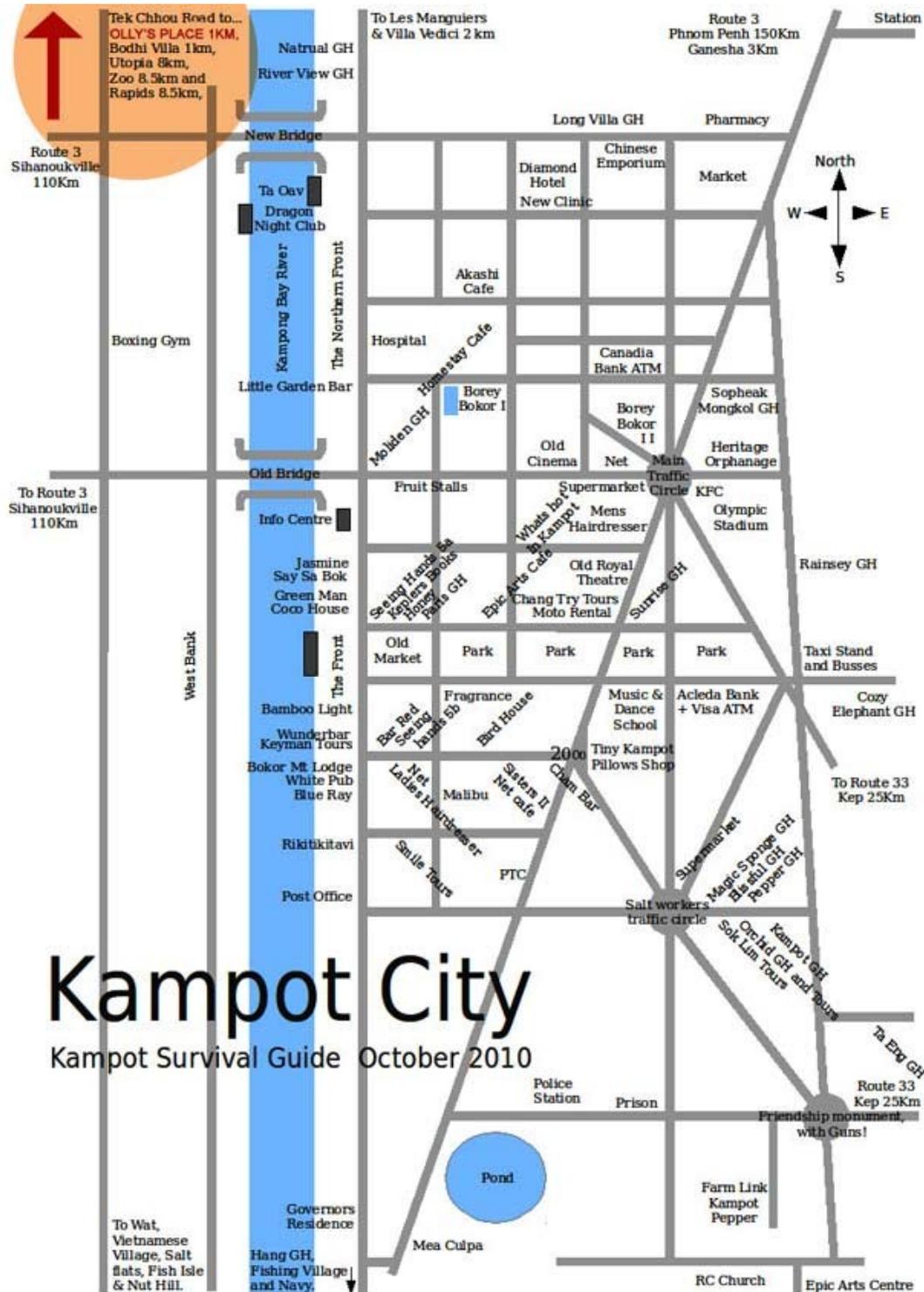
Take either **local bus or minivan to Kampot** on **December 31**. Takes about two hours (110 km).
 Taxis would cost \$4-5/person for a shared taxi or \$20-25 for a private taxi.

Staying at: **Olly's Place** (www.ollysplacekampot.com)

Riverside Kampot, tel: +855 (0) 92 605 837

Confirmed for two nights, arriving December 31st and departing on January 2nd, rate is \$7/night.

Just cross the New Bridge and take the second street on the right. You will see our sign 500 meters after you've passed the railway. If in doubt, ask for the road heading to the Zoo.



Kampot

A French colonial town established in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. Most of the architecture dates from this period, and unlike many other Cambodian cities the shophouses have more individuality in terms of design.

Things to do

Kampot is so close to Kep that they share many of the same sights and attractions. Popular day trips include Kep Beach, Rabbit Island, Bokor Hill Station, and countryside tours.

- **Kampot pepper** is renowned as some of the highest quality pepper in the world (try it in Pepper Crab). It's possible to visit pepper plantations near Phnom Voar, and buy pepper straight from the source.
- Sit by the river and have a drink while watching **sunset**. (See restaurant suggestions below.)
- Visit the **Crab Market** at Kep Beach for crab and beer on the beach. Motodups start at \$3-4 one way and \$8-10 round-trip. Tuk-tuks are about \$8-15 round-trip, depending on how long you spend in Kep. The Crab Market is a dozen oceanfront crab shack restaurants, look for the scruffier ones in the middle for a more authentic (and cheaper) experience.
- Visit **Rabbit Island**, 20-40 minutes south by local boat, mostly undeveloped. Arrange through your guesthouse (prices start around \$7/person) or go to the Koh Tunsay Boat Dock in Kep next to the Long Villa Restaurant, where boats are usually available and round-trip will run \$20 for the whole boat.
- **Bokor Hill Station**: mountaintop resort area built in the 1920s by the French as a complement to the Kep resort area. Previously an elegant retreat, now in ruins and referred to in the 1990s by a travel writer as “the eeriest place in the world”. Still has spectacular views of the coast and brisk mountain air. US\$5 admission for foreigners.
- **Caves** near Kampot: The limestone mountains (phnom) between Kampot and Kep often contain caves, some with exotic rock formations and almost all with Buddhist shrines. Bring a flashlight and wear sneakers.

Restaurants

- *Rikitikitavi*, charming rooftop balcony restaurant and bar with a spectacular view overlooking the river and mountains – great place to enjoy sunset. Western and Khmer dishes, and full bar.
- *Captain Chim's Family Cafe*, family run Cambodian restaurant in the center of town, some of the best value for money in town. Also runs Cambodian cooking classes for foreigners. Opposite the Old Market.
- *Mea Culpa Guesthouse*, serves Khmer and int'l fare including excelled wood-fired pizzas. Closed Mondays.

January 2nd

Return to Phnom Penh

Sorya and Hour Lean provides four buses between Kampot and Phnom Penh per day, and the trip takes about four hours to cover 148 km.

Taxi would take about three hours, departs from the taxi stand in Kampot. \$40-45 for a private taxi or 30,000R/person for a shared taxi.

AirAsia Flight AK1475

Departs PNH at 4:45 pm, arrives KUL 7:35 pm.

Helpful Information

Getting in and out of the country

Visa Requirements: a passport with at least six month validity is required. Visas are available on arrival at Phnom Penh airport, and will take 20-30 minutes to obtain. The fee for a 30 day tourist visa (type T) is US\$20 and you will need to have passport photos.

Airport Tax for foreigners: US\$25

Money

Official currency is Cambodian Riel, but the US Dollar is a functional currency here as well, and often more useful as prices (including visa prices and departure taxes) are usually set in USD. Small transactions (less than a dollar) are often conducted in riel, and small change is usually given in riel.

1 USD = approx 4000 Riel

Inspect your USD carefully, as if there are any tears it will be useless in Cambodia, as banks, moneychangers and most businesses will not accept it. ATMs dispense US dollars.

Fun Facts

Capital: Phnom Penh

Government: Constitutional Monarchy

Language: Khmer

Religion: Theravada Buddhism (97%), Islam, Christianity, Animism

Terrain: Mostly low, flat plains, mountains in southwest and north

Population 14.1 million (2010 estimate)

Land Area: 181,035 square km

Volatage: 220v/50 Hz

Time: GMT +7 hours (one hour behind Kuala Lumpur, so 12 hours ahead of the east coast , 14 hours ahead of SLC, and 15 hours ahead of the west coast)

Current climate: cool and dry, with average mid-day temperatures in the mid-20s, sometimes dipping below 20 at night. Expect comfortably warm days, clear skies, no rain, light breezes and cool evenings.

US Embassy in Phnom Penh

Corner of Street 96/51

+ 855 (0) 2372 8000