

Discovery Deep in the Mekong - Cambodia

Highlights

- ✚ Mekong River boat cruise delta to Phnom Penh
- ✚ Dance of Apsara, Silver Pagoda, Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom Ancient City, Bayon Temple, Banteay Kdei, Baphoun, Elephant Terrace, Leper King Terrace, Royal Palace, markets, Preah Vihear Temple and so much more!

Itinerary

Day 1

Depart from North America today on an overnight flight to Vietnam.

Day 2 Ho Chi Minh - Can Tho

Welcome to Ho Chi Minh! Upon arrival at Tan Son Nhat International Airport, your guide will greet and escort you to Can Tho to your hotel for check-in.

Victoria Can Tho Resort

Day 3 Can Tho

Discover the Mekong River, essential to Vietnamese life. Your private guide and car will take you to the remote My Tho. This burgeoning capital of Tien Giang Province, rests in the Mekong Delta and is surrounded by beautiful countryside known as the "rice basket of Vietnam". First you'll visit Vinh Trang Pagoda which is decorated with mosaics made from broken pottery. Overlooked by a tall white Buddha, it is set amongst lovely gardens packed with flowers, shrubs, lotus pools and tombs and ornate gates which provide entry. Next, you'll take a boat ride along the river to view the stilt houses, fruit plantations and fishing villages. You'll stop at the Tortoise Island where you'll enjoy lunch in the orchard. After lunch you'll visit An Khanh, a small village that specializes in fruit orchards and coconut sweets. If time permits, you can take a short cycling trip through the island. Then enjoy seasonal fruit, honey tea, and delicious coconut candies all to the sound of Southern Vietnamese folk music, performed by locals. When the tour is finished, you'll transfer to Chau Doc.

Victoria Can Tho Resort (Breakfast and Lunch included)

Day 4 Can Tho - Chau Doc

Rise early in the morning for breakfast at your hotel where your private guide and driver will meet and escort you to the pier of Can Tho for an adventure on the river. Your motor boat and captain will greet you and help you on board. You'll be taken to the largest floating market in Can Tho where local farmers bring their bulk produce for sale. The trip there will see the banks with various flowers scattered throughout. When you arrive at the market, you'll see boats with colorful fruits and vegetables local to the region being traded in bulk.

After this, you'll venture up narrow canals to find a local fruit farm hidden in the natural landscape of the creek. You'll have the chance to see local fruits such as mango, limes, jack fruit, durian and more being grown. Then you'll have the chance to sit and enjoy fresh cut fruit before returning to town by boat. You'll have lunch at restaurant overlooking the Mekong River. In the afternoon, you'll transfer to your hotel in Chau Doc. You'll begin your approach to the lodge with an ascent up steep roads to the top of the mountain where a breath-taking view awaits. When you arrive at the hotel, you'll be greeted with a welcome drink of sweet lemon tea as you perch yourself for a beautiful evening sunset and dinner looking out over the mix of Chau Doc, surrounding mountains, and Vietnamese countryside. Enjoy an epic symphony of sunlight reflected on the clouds and drawing shadows on the green valley below.

Victoria Nui Sam Lodge (Breakfast and Lunch included)

Day 5 Chau Doc - Phnom Penh

Welcome to the Kingdom of Wonders! Your tour guide and driver will escort you from the hotel to the pier for your boat cruise to Phnom Penh. Start the morning early with breakfast at the hotel. Your private car and chauffeur will escort you to the pier where you'll join a boat cruise on the Mekong River. This scenic route to Vietnam features beautiful terrain along the shore while you enjoy the oxygen filled breeze native to this green-banked river.

The morning begins with leaving Chau Doc as you watch a beautiful sunrise open before your eyes, with the light dancing between the lotus plants bobbing on the waters along the shore. Keep your eyes peeled for junks and paddle boats as well as crops of corn, rice, and

produce. Depending on the time of year, you'll spot various flowers which will perfume your journey up the legendary Mekong. When you arrive at the pier in Phnom Penh, your private tour guide and vehicle will greet you and escort you to your hotel. Your private guide will be waiting at the hotel lobby to escort you to discover the National Museum where you will see the large collection of Khmer history, arts and architecture. After that you will visit the Silver Pagoda, which has 5,000 silver tiles on the floor and then the Royal Palace, where the Khmer royal family lives.

Green Palace Hotel (Breakfast and Lunch included)

Day 6 Phnom Penh - Siem Reap

After breakfast you will be picked up by your driver and escorted to the airport for your flight onward to Siem Reap. Upon arrival you will be welcome by our local guide at the airport then escorted to your hotel.

Be prepared to enjoy a beautiful traditional dance performed by a team trained in the Dance of Apsara. This unique cultural experience highlights the mysterious civilization and heritage of Khmer spoken through choreography and music. Colorful costumes and playful activities will give you insights into the Khmer daily life and wedding traditions while you enjoy a delicious meal to welcome you to the Kingdom of Wonders.

Siem Reap Hotel (Breakfast and Dinner included)

Day 7 Siem Reap

After breakfast, you can rest until your tour guide and private vehicle pick you up at the hotel

to begin your explorations of Angkor Thom Ancient City. On your way to Angkor Thom, you'll catch a glimpse of the front of Angkor Wat as you pass by, which will leave you with a tingling feeling on the back of your neck as you take your first glance of the enormity and wonder of the largest religious complex to ever exist.

However, we'll be saving dessert for last as you go on today to see some other equally impressive structures of Ta Prohm Temple, Bayon Temple, Banteay Kdei, Baphoun, Elephant Terrace, Leper King Terrace, and the Royal Palace. First on the agenda is Ta Prohm. Worn by time, rain, and overpowered by the jungle, this immaculate structure hidden under canopy will leave you feeling like you've stepped into the movie set of a treasure hunt adventure. Your private tour guide will give you the history and stories

passed through oral tradition.

After you've had lunch, your exploits will continue as you visit Banteay Kdei, Citadel of Chambers. You'll also visit Victory Gate, Terrace of the Leper King, the Royal Palace, Baphuon and Bayon.

Bayon sets itself apart with its almost 200 smiling faces, sure to make you feel welcomed on your second day to the Kingdom of Wonders. With its winding tunnels, chambers, and daring climbs, Bayon will give you many picturesque moments to keep your camera busy. As the sun approaches the horizon, we'll take you by private car to a lesser known temple perched on top of Krom Mountain just 10 miles away. This mountain rests at one of the northern most points of Tonle Sap Lake, allowing you to look out over an out stretch of bio-diverse lake and marshes whilst you watch the golden disc descend and play a colorful symphony in the sky. If you're fortunate, the villages in the shade of the mountain may have festive wedding music echoing in the distance.

Siem Reap Hotel (Breakfast and Lunch included)

Day 8 Siem Reap

Today you'll wake early to visit Beng Melea while the morning dew and fog still cover this Indiana Jonesesque temple. Wind through maze-like tunnels, swing on ancient tree vines, and chart your own adventure while you climb through this amazing complex hidden in the jungle.

As the day begins to unfold, we'll take your adventure to new heights into the Kulen Mountain National Park (Mountain of Lychees). Explore the jungles brimming with wildlife and tropical fruit. Discover stone carvings under the streams that predate Angkor Wat. See the 16th century temple on the mountain where Buddhists and Hindus pilgrimage frequently. For lunch, enjoy a picnic next to Kulen Waterfall where Angelina Jolie was filmed for the movie Tomb Raider. Take a swim if you like before we continue to the rice fields and countryside below the mountain. From there you'll take an ox-cart ride through the rice fields and give Palm Sugar and Palm

Wine a try if you fancy. Then you'll return to the hotel to relax at your own leisure or stop at a local souvenir market on the way back.

Siem Reap Hotel (Breakfast and Lunch included)

Day 9 Siem Reap

You'll get an early start driving by private vehicle up to the northern mountain range where Cambodia borders Thailand. There, your vehicle will stop at the bottom of the mountain where 4-WD pickup trucks await to take you up the mountainside to a gem that has just recently become safe to visit. As you climb the mountain, roll down the window of your cabin and take a deep breath of the clean mountain air before the stunning view takes your breath away again. Perched atop the mountain is the magnificent Preah Vihear Temple, which is among one of the largest complexes in Cambodia. On a clear day, you can see more than 50 km of Cambodia on one side and Thailand on the other. After you've finished exploring this mountaintop wonder, you'll enjoy lunch. In the afternoon, you'll return to Siem Reap by private vehicle.

The evening will be at your own leisure.

Siem Reap Hotel (Breakfast and Lunch included)

Day 10 Siem Reap - Ho Chi Minh

Be prepared today to enjoy one of the Seven Wonders of the World: Angkor Wat. At this point, you most probably have gotten glimpses of the towers over treetops and the gates in front in passing. But now you'll finally get to satiate that curiosity that's grown in the last few days. Enter Angkor Wat and learn about the stories and amazing architecture that has stunned archaeologists leaving more questions than answers.

Angkor Wat possesses some of the most intricate and longest stone carvings in the world. This complex is four times the size of the Vatican City making it the largest religious site in the world. Spend the morning adventuring through the many passages, levels, and exploring chambers that once housed the many treasures of the ancient world. It will be an experience you won't forget. Your tour guide and chauffeur will pick you up at your hotel and take you to the airport for your flight to Ho Chi Minh. Upon arrival in Ho Chi Minh, you will be welcomed by our local guide and driver who will escort you to the hotel for check-in.

Vissai Saigon Hotel (Breakfast Included)

Day 11 Ho Chi Minh - North America

Today you will be taken to Tan Son Nhat International Airport for your international flight to North America. (Breakfast Included)

Price

\$3270.00 (land only) \$2970.00 USD

Price includes \$440.00 tour flights \$400.00 USD

Pricing is an estimate only and is subject to change based on availability and other factors. You can use this tour as the basis for a custom tour if you would like but pricing for custom tours may differ depending on changes made. Please note below what is included and not included below:

Included:

- ✓ All hotel accommodation
- ✓ All meals as per itinerary
- ✓ All sightseeing tours as specified by the itinerary
- ✓ Private, knowledgeable English speaking guides
- ✓ Private air-conditioned transportation with licensed drivers
- ✓ All domestic flights: Phnom Penh - Siam Reap, Siam Reap - Ho Chi Minh including airport taxes
- ✓ All hotel and airport transfers

Not included:

- ⊗ Travel insurance
- ⊗ International flights
- ⊗ Excess baggage charges
- ⊗ Visa fees (if applicable)
- ⊗ Meals and beverages not specified on itinerary
- ⊗ Items of a personal nature such as laundry and gratuities

Map



Ho Chi Minh

Can Tho

Chau Doc

Phnom Penh

Siem Reap

Travel Guide

Kingdom of Cambodia (Kampuchea)



Location: Asia

Status: UN Member Country

Capital City: Phnom Penh

Main Cities: Battambang

Population: 15,000,000

Area: 181,040 km²

Currency: Riel (KHR)

Languages: Khmer

Religions: Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu

Calling code: +855

Drive on the right

Situated in the middle of the mainland of Southeast Asia, Cambodia is a destination like no other. The country is characterized by numerous cultural heritages that have seen it open its doors to many tourists from all around the globe. The country's governance follows a constitutional monarchy where a king is selected by a royal throne council to head the nation. This monarchical kind of government has led to the establishment of many historical palaces dating from the past, which still stand as landmarks in Cambodia.

There is a lot to see and do in this country in particular for an adventurous tourist. There are a series of islands and a long stretched beachfront. Also, there are a couple of ancient temples that date back in 9th and 13th centuries such as Angkor. They feature magnificent architectural designs and are still intact to date. The country has a rich culture and friendly citizens who are very hospitable to tourists.

Best time to go

Cambodia is an all year travel destination. Tourist numbers usually peak during the dry season. This period is from October through April. It is defined by periods of scorching sunshine and a warm breeze that sweeps across the entire country. It is the best time to travel to the remote areas as roads are still in good condition. In addition, it is an excellent time for touring the beach and engaging in various water sports. Rainfall is minimal and temperatures range from around 24 to 27°C.

General Information

History

Cambodia is beginning to be recognised for its beauty and friendly, welcoming people; however it has a tragic history.

From 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge regime, led by the infamous Pol Pot, killed an estimated one and a half million educated Cambodians (about one fifth of the country's population at the time) in an effort to create an agrarian society. Thousands more were either tortured, killed or fled the country. The Khmer Rouge was finally ousted by the Vietnamese in 1978. In 1979 Cambodia was gripped by civil war which lasted until the mid 1990s.

Angkor Wat, of which Cambodians are fiercely proud, is the highlight of any trip to Cambodia. It was the heart of the Khmer Empire which ruled most of the Indochinese peninsula during the 11th and 14th centuries.

Passport and visa

A visa and a valid passport are a must have to for one to gain entry to Cambodia. The passport must be valid for six months before the expiry date. One can obtain a visa upon landing at the airport or in the Cambodia embassies in their home country. To get a visa at any port of entry, you will be required to bring with you, two passport size photos and a filled in application form. This form is offered on flights. There are two types of visas: a tourist visa that goes for \$20 and a business visa that costs \$25. Be sure to specify which one you want. All visas are valid for 30 days and must be used within 60 days after being issued.

Money

The official currency in Cambodia is the Riel denoted as KHR. However, most citizens prefer to use the US dollars over the riel. You can do with the dollars but transacting in riel might expose you to better deals, during your shopping adventure. One US dollar is approximately 4000 Riels. In the remote parts, Riels are largely used but in the city, the shops accept both currencies. ATMs are widely available in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Battambang and Sihanoukville will give out money in US dollar denominations. There are not many ATMs outside these areas. Please note while there are many gem shops in Cambodia, we advise against any purchase as the majority of gems are fake.

Post and telecommunications

Post in Cambodia is routed by air through Bangkok, making the service much more reliable than in the past. Telephone connections to the rest of the world are widely available but can be expensive. Internet access is available in most major tourist places such as hotels and restaurants.

Transportation

Transportation in Cambodia is not a problem. There is an elaborate transport network to get you anywhere you want to go. The roads are in good condition; all-weather, sealed highways and streets. Taxis are generally only used to and from the airport, and are at a set price. Tuk-tuks are used around town and cost approx\$1-3per journey in Siem Reap and around \$2 - \$3 in Phnom Penh. In both cities, short journeys of less than 1km are about \$1 and prices tend to increase at night. Motorbike taxis: Travel by motorbike in Cambodia is not safe and under no circumstances is this sanctioned or recommended.

Health and Safety

Climate

Cambodia has a characteristic tropical monsoon climate. Temperatures can be 21⁰C on the lower range and 35⁰C on the upper limit. In the month of April, highs of 40⁰C are common. The country experiences two seasons. The rainy season starts in May and ends in October. During this time, the weather is basically hot and humid. Heavy rains are encountered during the month of September and October with Tonle Sap and Mekong basins receiving the most rainfall.

The dry season is from November to early April, when the northeast monsoon winds reign. In December and January temperatures fall below 20⁰C. In this period, tourists flock to Cambodian points of interest.

Health and wellbeing

Please be aware that your health can be at risk in Cambodia due to poor sanitation and lack of proper medical facilities. Rural areas have few, if any, pharmacies and hospitals so make sure you travel with a full supply of any prescribed medicine you take. If you need medical assistance, we recommend Royal Angkor International Hospital in Siem Reap, (t: 063761888) and International SOS Medical & Dental Clinic in Phnom Penh (t: 023216911). Each traveller is responsible for his or her own health. First and foremost, make sure that you have travel insurance for your trip. You should also consult your doctor or local travel clinic for the latest information and advice on travelling to Cambodia before departure.

If you have a medical condition or allergy which requires particular attention, carry a doctor's letter with you that describes the nature of the condition and treatment needed. We also recommend you pack a medical kit, including paracetamol and a diarrhoea remedy.

Vaccinations

Before travelling to Cambodia, please ensure you have adequate protection against disease. Contact your doctor for the latest medical advice on the vaccinations you need, no less than two months before your departure.

Travel insurance (compulsory)

We do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, travel inevitably involves some risk and this should be recognised by holiday-makers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind. Please also ensure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.

Culture & Customs

Etiquette and cultural differences

Experiencing different cultures is one of the joys of travelling and it is important that these differences are respected. Cambodia has cultural norms and taboos which we encourage visitors to understand and abide by.

Try not to get angry. Showing any frustrations or annoyances by shouting or becoming abusive is extremely impolite and it is unlikely to achieve a positive outcome. The Khmer's don't like to 'lose face'.

The culture and customs of Khmer people are evident in their way of dressing and music. Their culture draws much from the Buddhism religion that is practiced by most of the population. Everywhere you go in Cambodia, the locals tend to ask you personal questions. You might think that they are being nosy but their intentions are harmless. According to their religion and culture, it is important to understand the rank of a person before embarking on any conversation with them.

Greetings take the form of a bow with hands clasped as if you were saying a prayer. The way you greet a respected person will be different as compared to how you greet other people. Some Cambodians have come to embrace the western form of greeting but the bow remains a significant way of greeting. It is important to learn a few things before you travel to this beautiful country. For instance, 'Lok' is used to address men whereas 'Lok Srey' is an honorific title for women.

Sometimes, you will spot members of the same sex hugging or holding arms walking together. This is not a sexual orientation display but it is a form of showing friendliness, which is largely acceptable in Cambodia. However, if you are traveling with your significant other in this country, never make the mistake of portraying how much you love them in public. Public display of affection is mostly considered offensive. Only maintain eye contact with people whom you share the same social ranking otherwise, always keep an indirect eye contact. Lastly, do not touch anyone on top of their heads, you might just want to show appreciation but not in this country.

Temple visit etiquette

Foreigners are always welcome in temples. However, it is important that a few simple rules of etiquette are followed:

Dress appropriately and act with the utmost respect when visiting Wats (pagodas) and other religious sites, including the temples of Angkor.

Do not wear shorts or tank tops and make sure your shoulders and knees are covered.

Remove your shoes and hat before going into a vihara (monastery).

If you sit down in front of the dais (the platform on which the Buddha's are placed), sit with your feet to the side rather than in the lotus position.

Never point your finger or the soles of your feet towards a person or a figure of the Buddha.

A woman may accept something from a monk but should never touch a monk.

Show respect and turn off mobile phones, remove headphones, lower your voice and avoid inappropriate conversation.

Please note: The central tower of Angkor Wat is closed to visitors on Buddhist holidays.

Food and drink

It is not advisable to drink tap water in Cambodia. Bottled water is cheap and widely available. Khmer food is a blend of a number of nationalities. Being a French colony for some years and with numerous Chinese immigrants, most of its dishes are greatly inspired by the two nations. In the west, the cuisine is influenced largely by Thailand dishes while in the East, Vietnam cuisines are abundant. Seafood is a characteristic dish in coastal towns such as Sihanoukville, cooked in European and Japanese style.

In general, a typical meal will feature a salad, soup, main fish dish, rice and vegetables. Their dessert mostly comprises of fresh fruits and sticky rice. It is hard to not find fish and rice in any Cambodian cuisine may be due to their availability. There are plenty of fresh water bodies and expansive rice fields. To settle the food, Cambodia people take their local brands of beer, which you will really like. Coffee and tea are also available in their cafes and restaurants. Foreign wines and beers can be purchased from any of the restaurants.

The most well-known Cambodian dish is amok. Amok is a coconut based curry traditionally cooked with fish, however it is not uncommon to have it with chicken.

Public holidays

There are many religious public holidays in Cambodia. The main one is the Khmer New Year which takes place from 14 to 16 April every year. The celebrations usually go on for about a week. The second biggest is Pchum Ben. This national holiday was established for Buddhists to pay their respects to deceased relatives. It is also known as Ancestor's Day, and usually celebrated in September or October.

New Year's Day on January 1 to celebrate the Gregorian New Year

Victory Day on January 7 to commemorate the end of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979

Meak Bochea in February for monks

International Woman's Day on March 8

Khmer New Year April 14-16

Visaka Bochea celebrated either in April or May for all Buddhists

Labor Day on May 1

King Sihamoni's Birthday May 13-15

International Children Day on June 1

Queen Mother's Birthday on June 18

Constitutional Day on September 24

The Pchum Ben Festival celebrated in September or October for all Buddhists to pay tributes to their dead loved ones

King Father's Commemoration Day on October 15

Paris Peace Agreement Day on October 23 to commemorate the treaty of Paris of 1991

Independence Day on November 9

Water Festival; Boat Racing Festival in November

Human Rights Day on December 10

Helpful tips

Donations and gift giving

Cambodia is a very poor country with little in the way of social services and you are likely to see poverty. Please read the following advice about donations and gift giving.

Do not give money to people begging, especially children. This reinforces the belief that begging is an acceptable way to make a living. If children make money from begging, their parents are less likely to send them to school. Children working on the streets are also vulnerable to abuse. Giving money and goods to beggars can accentuate an unequal relationship between locals and visitors, with tourists being seen as purely money givers.

Do not give sweets to children in villages that we visit.

Do not feel that you necessarily have to give material things. Sometimes, giving your friendship, time and interest to locals can be the best gift of all.

Tipping

Tipping is a personal matter and travellers are encouraged to tip any amount they feel is appropriate. For your convenience, we have included a suggested tipping guide below:

Bellboy: \$1

Chambermaid: \$1 per day

Guides: \$5-\$10 per day for guides (depending on group size and performance)

Drivers: \$2-\$5 per day, per person

Restaurants: In smart establishments you may find that the tip is already included in the bill. In local restaurants tips are not expected but you may wish to leave loose change on the table.

Price guide

Restaurants

Khmer food: from \$3

Western food: from \$4

Drinks

Soft drinks: \$1

Local beer: \$1

Bottled water: Small \$0.50, large \$1

Juice: \$2

Other Items

SIM card: \$3

Mobile phone: \$15-\$20

Books: \$10-\$15

DVDs: \$2.50- \$3

Pre-departure checklist

Travel insurance

Passport with at least six months validity from date of entry

Photocopy of passport

Visa or a passport photo and US\$20 for visa on arrival

Vaccinations

Foreign currency (US\$) and/or ATM card

All relevant tickets

Reconfirmed flights

Lightweight clothing

Long-sleeved shirts and trousers (recommended for evenings)

Electrical adaptor: 220V, 50Hz; 2 pin plugs

A small bag/backpack for day and overnight trips

Appropriate shoes for trekking, cycling and walking

Insect repellent

Sunscreen

Medication/first aid kit

Please note: Domestic airlines impose baggage weight restrictions of around 20kg maximum, so travel lightly where possible

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