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ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Cambodia has improved immensely during the past decade and everything is available, from the classic budget crash pad to the plush palace. Most hotels quote in US dollars, but some places in the provinces quote in riel, while those near the Thai border quote in baht. We provide prices based on the currency quoted to us at the time of research. In Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville and Kep there are options to suit all wallets. Elsewhere around Cambodia, the choice is limited to budget and midrange options, but these places provide great value for money.

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

In this guide, budget accommodation refers to guesthouses where the majority of rooms are within the US\$2 to US\$15 range, midrange generally runs from US\$15 up to US\$75 and top end is considered US\$75 and up, up, up.

Budget guesthouses used to be restricted to Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville, but as tourism takes off in the provinces, they are turning up in most other provincial capitals such as Kampot, Kratie and Stung Treng. Costs hover around US\$2 to US\$5 for a bed. In many rural parts of Cambodia, the standard rate for cheap hotels is US\$5, usually with bathroom and satellite TV. There may be a few places starting at 10,000r, but they tend to make more by the hour than they do by the night – don't count on much sleep!

In Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville and Siem Reap, which see a steady flow of tourist traffic, hotels improve significantly once you start spending more than US\$10 a night. For US\$15 or less it is usually possible to find an air-con room with satellite TV and attached bathroom. If you spend between US\$20 and US\$50 it is possible to arrange something very comfortable with the possible lure of a swimming pool. Most smaller provincial cities also offer air-conditioned comfort in the US\$10 to US\$20 range.

There are now a host of international-standard hotels in Siem Reap, several in Phnom Penh and a couple on the coast in Sihanoukville and Kep. Some are operated by familiar international brands such as Le Meridien, Raffles and Sofitel. Most quote hefty walk-in rates and whack 10% tax and 10% service on as well. Book through a travel agent for a lower rate including taxes and service.

PRACTICALITIES

- The usual voltage is 220V, 50 cycles, but power surges and power cuts are common, particularly in the provinces. Electrical sockets are usually two-prong, flat or round pin.
- Most guesthouses and hotels have cheap laundry services, but check they have a dryer if it's the wet season. There are laundry shops in every town.
- The *Cambodia Daily* is a popular English-language newspaper, while the *Phnom Penh Post* offers in-depth analysis every two weeks. *AsiaLife* is a free monthly listings magazine (a sort of *Time Out: Phnom Penh*). The *Globe* is a features magazine that focuses on Cambodia and the Asia region.
- BBC World Service broadcasts on 100.00FM. Cambodian radio and TV stations are mainly government-controlled and specialise in karaoke videos and soap operas. TV5 broadcasts in French.
- Cambodians use the metric system for everything except precious metals and gems, where they prefer the Chinese system.

Some guesthouses in Cambodia do not have hot water, but most places have at least a few more-expensive rooms where it is available. Smaller places in remote areas may have bathrooms where a large jar or cement trough is filled with water for bathing purposes. Don't climb into it – just sluice the water with the plastic scoop or metal bowl. However, most guesthouses have cold showers these days.

While many of the swish new hotels have lifts, older hotels often don't and the cheapest rooms are at the end of several flights of stairs. It's a win-win-win situation: cheaper rooms, a bit of exercise and better views!

There is often confusion over the terms 'singles', 'doubles', 'double occupancy' and 'twins'. A single contains one bed, even if two people sleep in it. If there are two beds in the room, that is a twin, even if only one person occupies it. If two people stay in the same room, that is double occupancy. In some hotels 'doubles' means twin beds, while in others it means double occupancy.

Homestays

Homestays are popping up in the provinces and offer a good way to meet the local people and learn about the Cambodian lifestyle. There are several organised homestays around the country in provinces like Kompong Cham and Kompong Thom, as well as lots of informal homestays in out-of-the-way places such as Preah Vihear. In the minority areas of Mondulakiri and Ratanakiri, it is often possible to stay with tribal villagers.

ACTIVITIES

Tourism in Cambodia is catching up fast and there are now more activities than ever to get that adrenaline buzz. Phnom Penh and Siem Reap remain the places with most of the action, but Sihanoukville and Kep are making a name for themselves for fun in the sun with water sports.

Bird-watching

Bird-watching is a big draw, as Cambodia is home to some of the region's rarest large water birds including adjutants, storks and pelicans. For more on the birds of Cambodia see p58, and for the low-down on bird sanctuaries and birding opportunities around Siem Reap, see p138.

Boat Trips

With so much water around the country, it is hardly surprising that boat trips are popular with tourists. Some of these are functional, such as travelling up the Tonlé Sap River from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap (p137), or along the Sangker River from Siem Reap to Battambang (p245). Others are the traditional tourist trips, such as those available in Phnom Penh (p88), Siem Reap (p139) and Sihanoukville (p211), or dolphin-spotting in Kratie (p288).

Cycling

As Cambodia's roads continue to improve, cycling tourists are an increasingly common sight. It's an adrenaline-packed adventure and brings visitors that much closer to the

uber-friendly locals. Local kids will race you at any opportunity and families will beckon cyclists in for some fruit or hot tea. Some of the main roads are getting busier and others remain dusty, but there are some great routes for those willing to put in the effort. The south coast of Cambodia remains a rewarding region for cyclists, while the northeast holds future promise for serious mountain-bikers. The most popular place for cycling is around the majestic temples of Angkor where the roads are paved and the forest thick. Bikes are available for hire in most towns in Cambodia for US\$1 to US\$2 a day, but serious tourers need to bring their own wheels.

Dirt Biking

For experienced riders, Cambodia is one of the most rewarding off-road biking destinations in the world. The roads are generally considered some of the worst in Asia (or best in Asia for die-hard biking enthusiasts). There are incredible rides all over the country, particularly in the north and northeast, but it is best to stay away from the main highways as traffic and dust make it a choking experience. For more on dirt biking, see p327, including recommended motorcycle touring companies.

Diving & Snorkelling

Snorkelling and diving are available off the coast of Sihanoukville. The jury is still out about the dive sites, as much is still to be explored, but while it may not be as spectacular as Indonesia or the Philippines, there is plenty in the deep blue yonder. It is best to venture further afield to dive sites such as Koh Tang (p198) and Koh Prins (p198), staying overnight on a boat. There are many unexplored areas off the coast between Koh Kong and Sihanoukville that could one day put Cambodia on the dive map of Asia.

Golf

Cambodia is an up-and-coming golfing destination thanks to two new courses in Siem Reap (p125), one of which now hosts an annual PGA event on the Asian tour. There are also a couple of courses in Phnom Penh (p88).

Trekking

Trekking is not the first thing you associate with Cambodia due to the presence of land mines, but there are several relatively safe areas of the country, including the nascent

national parks. The northeastern provinces of Mondulakiri (p298) and Ratanakiri (p291) were never mined and with their wild, natural scenery, abundant waterfalls and ethnic minority populations, they are emerging as the country's leading trekking destinations. Always take a guide, however, as there are some unexploded bombs in these areas from the American bombing campaign of the early 1970s. Elephant treks are also possible in these northeastern provinces.

Cambodia is steadily establishing a network of national parks with visitor facilities; Bokor National Park (p219), Kirirrom National Park (p116) and Ream National Park (p213) all promise trekking potential.

Angkor is emerging as a good place for gentle walks between the temples – one way to experience peace and solitude as visitor numbers skyrocket.

Watersports

As the Cambodian coast takes off, there are more adrenaline buzzes available including boating, windsurfing and kite surfing off the beaches of Sihanoukville (p196).

BUSINESS HOURS

Most Cambodians get up very early and it is not unusual to see people out and about exercising at 5.30am if you are heading home – ahem, sorry, getting up – at that time. Government offices, which are open from Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings, theoretically begin the working day at 7.30am, break for a siesta from 11.30am to 2pm, and end the day at 5pm. However, it is a safe bet that few people will be around early in the morning or after 4pm, as their real income is earned elsewhere.

Banking hours vary slightly according to the bank, but most keep core hours of 8am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday, plus Saturday morning. Attractions such as museums are normally open seven days a week and these days staff have had their arms twisted to stay open through lunch.

Local restaurants are generally open from about 6.30am until 9pm and international restaurants until a little later. Local restaurants may stay open throughout, while international restaurants sometimes close between sittings. Many bars are open all day, but some open only for the night shift, especially if they don't serve food.

Local markets operate seven days a week and usually open and close with the sun, running from 6.30am to 5.30pm. Markets shut up shop for a few days during the major holidays of Chaul Chnam Khmer (Khmer New Year), P'chum Ben (Festival of the Dead) and Chaul Chnam Chen (Chinese New Year). Shops tend to open from about 8am until 6pm, sometimes later.

CHILDREN

Children can live it up in Cambodia as they are always the centre of attention and almost everybody wants to play with them. For the full picture on surviving and thriving on the road with kids, check out Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan for a rundown on health precautions for kids and advice on travel during pregnancy.

Practicalities

When it comes to feeding and caring for babies, pretty much everything you'll need is available in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, but supplies dry up quickly elsewhere. Cot beds are available in international-standard mid-range and top-end hotels, but not elsewhere. Consider investing in a sturdy hammock or two if travelling to lesser-known destinations. There are no safety seats in rented cars or taxis. Some restaurants can supply a high chair when it comes to eating.

Breastfeeding in public is very common in Cambodia, so there is no need to worry about crossing a cultural boundary. But there are few facilities for changing babies other than the usual bathrooms, so take a baby bag everywhere you go. For kiddies too young to handle chopsticks, most restaurants also have cutlery.

The main worry throughout Cambodia is keeping an eye on what strange things infants are putting in their mouths. Their natural curiosity can be a lot more costly in a country where dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis are commonplace. Keeping their hydration levels up and insisting they use sunscreen is also important.

Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and other urban areas of Cambodia are pretty straightforward these days, although be very aware of the chaotic traffic conditions in the capital – better to restrict your child's movements than have them wander into danger. Rural Cambodia is not a good travel destination for children as

there are still many land mines littering the countryside. No matter how many warnings a child is given, can you be certain they won't stray from the path?

Sights & Activities

There is plenty to keep kids happy in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and the South Coast, but in the smaller provincial towns the boredom factor might creep in. Phnom Penh has a good selection of swimming pools (p89) and even a go-cart track (p88). Boat trips on the river should be a hit, but best of all is the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Sanctuary (p115), about 45km south of the city, with tigers, sun bears and elephants.

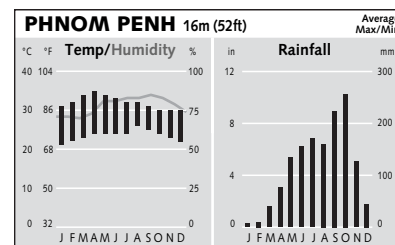
At Angkor, the temples may be too much for younger children but will be appreciated by inquisitive older children. Younger ones might prefer crumbling ruins like Ta Prohm (p166) or Beng Mealea (p178) to the more museumlike renovated temples. *Remorque-motos* (motorbikes with a cute little hooded trailer hitched to the back) are a fun way for families to get around the Angkor area (p154). Cambodian Cultural Village (p124) may be kitsch, but it is the right tonic after the temples. Hot-air balloons and helicopter rides round off some action-packed options in Siem Reap.

The national parks don't have enough visible wildlife to deliver, but some have waterfalls, including Kirirom National Park (p116) and Bokor National Park (p219). Another area for attractive waterfalls is the northeast and the provinces of Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri, where kids can also ride elephants (p301 and p292). The air is clean, at least when cars aren't kicking up red dust, and there are wide open spaces.

Cambodia has a long coastline, and Sihanoukville (p193) is the number one beach spot. There are plenty of local children hanging out on the beach, many of them trying to make a living, and this can be an interesting bonding experience for kids. Pay close attention to any playtime in the sea, as there are some deceptively strong currents in the wet season.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Life in Cambodia is fairly steamy in the lowlands, with a classic tropical climate. It gets a little cooler up in the hills of the northeast, but even there it rarely gets cold.



Average daily temperatures range from the high 20s in the 'cool' season of December and January, to the high 30s and beyond in the hot months of April and May. The rain kicks in around June and falls thick and fast throughout August and September, bringing the landscape back to life ready for a new harvest.

COURSES

Cooking

For the full story on cooking courses in Cambodia, see p69.

Language

The only language courses available in Cambodia at present are in Khmer and are aimed at expat residents of Phnom Penh rather than travellers. If you are going to be based in Phnom Penh for some time, however, it would be well worth learning basic Khmer. Ring the **Cambodia Development Research Institute** (☎023-368053; 56 St 315) for information about classes or try the Institute of Foreign Languages at the **Royal University of Phnom Penh** (Map pp74-5; ☎012 866826; Russian Blvd). Also check out the notice board at the Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC; p101), where one-hour lessons are often advertised by private tutors.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

If Cambodia has customs allowances, it is close-lipped about them. A 'reasonable amount' of duty-free items are allowed into the country. Travellers arriving by air might bear in mind that alcohol and cigarettes are on sale at prices well below duty-free prices on the streets of Phnom Penh – a branded box of 200 cigarettes costs just US\$9 and international spirits start as low as US\$7 a litre.

Like any other country, Cambodia does not allow travellers to import weapons, explosives or narcotics – there are enough in

the country already. It is illegal to take ancient stone sculptures from the Angkor period out of the country.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

As memories of war grow ever more distant, Cambodia has become a much safer country in which to travel. Remembering the golden rule – stick to the marked paths in remote areas – means you'd be very unlucky to have any problems. But it doesn't hurt to check on the latest situation before making a trip few other travellers undertake, particularly if travelling by motorcycle.

The **Cambodia Daily** (www.cambodiadaily.com) and the **Phnom Penh Post** (www.phnompenhpost.com) newspapers are both good sources for breaking news on Cambodia – check out their websites before you hit the road.

Begging

Begging is common throughout Cambodia, although much more evident in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap than elsewhere. There are many reasons for begging in a society as poor as Cambodia, some more visually evident than others, such as amputees who have lost their limbs to land mines. It is entirely up to individual visitors whether to give or not, and to decide how much to offer, but remember that it is common practice for Buddhists to give to those more needy than themselves.

Big brown eyes, runny noses and grubby hands...the sight of children begging is familiar throughout the developing world, and Cambodia is no exception. There are many child beggars around Phnom Penh and the temples of Angkor, and with their angelic faces it is often difficult to resist giving them some money. However, there are a number of issues to consider: giving to child beggars may create a cycle of dependency that can continue into adulthood; the children may not benefit directly from the money, as they are often made to beg by a 'pimp' or their family; and some child beggars, particularly around central Phnom Penh, may use the money to buy glue to feed their sniffing habit. One way to help these impoverished children is to buy them some food or drink, or give them some of your time and attention – it is amazing how quickly they will forget about begging once they are being taught something simple like a whistle, a trick or a game.

The most common beggars around the country are land-mine victims. Many of them sustained their injuries fighting, while others have had their legs blown off while working or playing innocently in the fields. You may tire of their attention after a few days in Cambodia, but try to remember that in a country with no social security network, begging is often all they can do to survive.

When giving to beggars, try to offer smaller denominations to avoid making foreigners more of a target than they already are.

Checkpoints

During the long years of civil war there were checkpoints on roads throughout the country, but these days they are a rare sight. Where there are checkpoints on major roads, spot checks may be carried out to make sure drivers have paid their road tax or are not carrying illegal guns.

If you are travelling in a taxi or pick-up truck in remote areas of Cambodia and come across a checkpoint, the driver should take care of the payment. If you are on a motorbike, you are unlikely to be stopped. However, should you ever find money being demanded of you, try to negotiate the sum to an acceptable level. Do not under any circumstances attempt to take photos of the individuals concerned as things could turn nasty in a hurry.

Scams

There are fewer scams in Cambodia than neighbouring countries, but now that tourism is really taking off this might change. Most current scams are fairly harmless, involving a bit of commission here and there for taxi or *moto* drivers, particularly in Siem Reap. More annoying are the 'cheap' buses from Bangkok to Siem Reap, deservedly nicknamed the 'The Scam Buses' for using the wrong border crossings, driving slowly and selling passengers to guesthouses (p330), but thankfully these are a dying breed.

There have been one or two reports of police set-ups in Phnom Penh, involving planted drugs. This seems to be very rare, but if you fall victim to the ploy, it will require patience and persistence to sort out, inevitably involving embassies and the like. It may be best to pay them off before more police get involved at the local station, as the price will only rise when there are more people to pay off.

Cambodia is renowned for its precious stones, particularly the rubies and sapphires that are mined around the Pailin area in western Cambodia. However, there are lots of chemically treated copies around, as much of the high-quality stuff is snapped up by international buyers. The long and the short of it is: don't buy unless you really know your stones.

On the subject of fakes, there is quite a lot of fake medication floating about the region. Safeguard yourself by only buying prescription drugs from reliable pharmacies or clinics. Similarly, there are a lot of dodgy recreational drugs around, some of which could seriously damage your health: see the boxed text Yaba Daba Do? Yaba Daba Don't! (p315) for more on this.

Security

Cambodia is a pretty safe country in which to travel these days. Once again, remember the golden rule – *stick to marked paths in remote areas*. It is now possible to travel throughout Cambodia with no more difficulty than in neighbouring Thailand or Vietnam. Politically, Cambodia has proven an unpredictable country and this makes it hard to guarantee safety of travel at any given time. Suffice to say that you are no longer a target just because you are a tourist.

Cambodia is something of a lawless society in which arms are often preferred to eloquence when settling a dispute. This 'Wild East' atmosphere rarely affects tourists, but it is worth knowing about as you can expect to hear gunshots from time to time (usually someone firing into the air when drunk). Phnom Penh (p81) is arguably one of the more dangerous places; it is here that the most guns are concentrated and the most robberies take place. This is closely followed by Sihanoukville (p196), which has sadly de-

PLANET OF THE FAKES

Cambodia is awash with pirated books and poor photocopies, including Lonely Planet titles. We know you wouldn't dream of buying a photocopied Lonely Planet guide, and that's very sensible given that old editions are sometimes wrapped in new covers, pages are bound in the wrong order and the type is so faded as to be almost unreadable. Be warned, if this is a photocopy, it may self-destruct in five seconds.

TRAVEL ADVISORY WEBSITES

Travel advisories on government-run websites update nationals on the latest security situation in any given country, including Cambodia. They are useful to check out for dangerous countries or dangerous times, but they tend to be pretty conservative, stressing dangers where they don't always exist...otherwise known as covering their proverbials.

Australia (www.smarttraveller.gov.au)

Canada (www.voyage.gc.ca)

Germany (www.auswaertiges-amt.de)

Japan (www.anzen.mofa.go.jp)

Netherlands (www.minbuza.nl)

New Zealand (www.safetravel.govt.nz)

UK (www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

USA (www.travel.state.gov)

veloped a reputation for robbery and sneak theft. Elsewhere in the provinces you would be very unlucky to have any incident befall you, as the vast majority of Khmers are immensely hospitable, honest and helpful. More importantly, perhaps, the majority of Khmers are experiencing peace for the first time in more than 30 years and don't want it disturbed.

Trying to pinpoint any lingering areas of concern around the country is always difficult as circumstances change quickly. Pailin and large parts of Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear Provinces were Khmer Rouge controlled until just a few years ago, but are now considered safe. However, as the trial for surviving Khmer Rouge leaders moves forward, it could be a different story – just because the former rebels now wear baseball caps instead of Mao caps, doesn't mean they have forgotten the fight. However, since the trial began, there have been no problems in these areas.

Should anyone be unlucky enough to be robbed, it is important to note that the Cambodian police are the best that money can buy! Any help, such as a police report, is going to cost you. The going rate depends on the size of the claim, but US\$5 to US\$20 is a common charge. However, some tourist police will now provide this service for free.

Snakes

Visitors to Ta Prohm at Angkor and other overgrown archaeological sites should beware of snakes. They are very well camouflaged so keep your eyes peeled. For details of what to do in case of snake bite, see p349.

Theft & Street Crime

Given the number of guns in Cambodia, there is less armed theft than one might expect. Still, hold-ups and motorcycle theft are a potential danger in Phnom Penh (p81) and

Sihanoukville (p196). There is no need to be paranoid, just cautious. Walking or riding alone late at night is not ideal, certainly not in rural areas.

Pickpocketing and theft by stealth is more a problem in Vietnam than in Cambodia, but it pays to be careful. The current hot spots are crowded pick-up trucks on popular tourist routes such as Siem Reap to Poipet or Phnom Penh, and the markets of Phnom Penh. Don't make it any easier for thieves by putting your passport and wads of cash in your back pocket. As a precaution, keep a 'secret' stash of cash separate from the bulk of your funds. There has been bag snatching in Phnom Penh (p78) in the last few years and the motorbike thieves don't let go, dragging passengers off *motos* and endangering lives.

Traffic Accidents

Traffic conditions in Cambodia are chaotic, although no worse than in many other underdeveloped countries. If you are riding a bike in Phnom Penh, stay very alert and take nothing for granted. Traffic moves in all directions on both sides of the road, so don't be surprised to see vehicles bearing down on you. The horn is used to alert other drivers of a vehicle's presence – get out of the way if you hear a car or truck behind you.

FESTIVAL WARNING

In the run-up to major festivals such as P'chum Ben or Chaul Chnam Khmer, there is a palpable increase in the number of robberies, particularly in Phnom Penh. Cambodians need money to buy gifts for relatives or to pay off debts, and for some individuals theft is the quick way to get this money. Be more vigilant at night at these times and don't take valuables out with you unnecessarily.

Few *moto* drivers in Cambodia use or provide safety helmets. Fortunately most of them drive at sensible speeds. If you encounter a reckless driver, ask them to slow down or pay them and find another *moto*.

Having a major traffic accident in Phnom Penh would be bad enough, but if you have one in rural Cambodia, you are in big trouble. Somehow you will have to get back to Phnom Penh for medical treatment.

The basic rule is to drive carefully – there have already been too many shattered dreams in Cambodia, and there's no need for more. See p327 for safety tips.

Undetonated Mines, Mortars & Bombs

Never touch any rockets, artillery shells, mortars, mines, bombs or other war material you may come across. A tactic of the Khmer Rouge was to lay mines along roads and in rice fields in an effort to maim and kill civilians. The only concrete results of this policy are the many limbless people you see all over Cambodia.

The most heavily mined part of the country is the Battambang and Pailin area, but mines are a problem all over Cambodia. In short: *do not stray from well-marked paths under any circumstances*. If you are planning any walks, even in safer areas such as the remote northeast, it is imperative you take a guide as there may be unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the American bombing campaign of the early 1970s.

Violence

Violence against foreigners is extremely rare and is not something you should waste much time worrying about, but it pays to take care in crowded bars or nightclubs in Phnom Penh. If you get into a stand-off with rich young Khmers in a bar or club, swallow your pride and back down. Still think you can 'ave 'em? Many carry guns: enough said.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Senior travellers and students are not eligible for discounts in Cambodia – all foreigners who are rich enough to make it to Cambodia are rich enough to pay as far as Cambodians are concerned.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Cambodian Embassies & Consulates

Cambodian diplomatic representation abroad is still thin on the ground, though the situation is slowly improving. However, as e-visas

are available over the internet and visas are issued on arrival at airports and at land borders, most visitors don't really need to call at a Cambodian embassy in advance.

Cambodian diplomatic missions abroad include the following:

Australia (☎02-6273 1259; 5 Canterbury Cres, Deakin, ACT 2600)

China (☎010-6532 1889; 9 Dongzhimenwai Dajie, Beijing 100600)

France (☎01-45 03 47 20; 4 Rue Adolphe Yvon, 75116 Paris)

Germany (☎030-48 63 79 01; Arnold Zweig Strasse, 1013189 Berlin)

Hong Kong (☎2546 0718; Unit 616, 6th fl, 3 Salisbury Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon)

India (☎011-649 5091; N-14 Pansheel Park, New Delhi 110017)

Indonesia (☎021-919 2895; 4th fl, Panin Bank Plaza, Jalan 52 Palmerah Utara, Jakarta 11480)

Japan (☎03-5412 8521; 8-6-9 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 1070052)

Laos (☎21-314952; Tha Deau, Bon That Khao, Vientiane)

Malaysia (☎02-818 9918; 83/JKR 2809 Lingkungan, U Thant, 55000, Kuala Lumpur)

Singapore (☎299 3028; 152 Beach Rd, Gateway East, 189721, Singapore)

Thailand (☎02-254 6630; 185 Rajadamri Rd, Bangkok 10330)

UK (☎020-8451 7850; 64 Brondesbury Park, London, NW6 7AT)

USA (☎202-726 7742; 4500 16th St, NW, Washington DC 20011)

Vietnam Hanoi (☎04-825 3788; 71 Tran Hung Dao St); Ho Chi Minh City (☎08-829 2751; 41 Phung Khac Khoan St)

Embassies & Consulates in Cambodia

Quite a few countries have embassies in Phnom Penh, though some travellers will find that their nearest embassy is in Bangkok. It's important to realise what your country's embassy can and can't do to help if you get into trouble. Generally speaking, it won't be much help if the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. Remember that you are bound by the laws of the country you are in. Your embassy won't be sympathetic if you end up in jail after committing a crime, even if such actions are legal in your own country.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if all other channels have been exhausted. If you have all your money and documents stolen, it might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is out of the question.

Those intending to visit Laos should note that Lao visas are available in Phnom Penh for US\$30 to US\$50, depending on nationality, and take two working days. For Vietnam, one-month single-entry visas cost US\$30 to US\$35 and take just one day, faster still at the Vietnamese consulate in Sihanoukville.

Embassies in Phnom Penh (023):

Australia (Map p79; ☎213470; 11 St 254)

Canada (Map p79; ☎213470; 11 St 254)

China (Map pp74-5; ☎720920; 256 Mao Tse Toung Blvd)

France (Map pp74-5; ☎430020; 1 Monivong Blvd)

Germany (Map p79; ☎216381; 76-78 St 214)

India (Map pp74-5; ☎210912; 777 Monivong Blvd)

Indonesia (Map p79; ☎216148; 90 Norodom Blvd)

Japan (Map pp74-5; ☎217161; 194 Norodom Blvd)

Laos (Map pp74-5; ☎982632; 15-17 Mao Tse Toung Blvd)

Malaysia (Map p79; ☎216177; 5 St 242)

Myanmar (Map pp74-5; ☎223761; 181 Norodom Blvd)

Philippines (Map p79; ☎222303; 33 St 294)

Singapore (Map p79; ☎216185; 90 Norodom Blvd)

Thailand (Map pp74-5; ☎726306; 196 Norodom Blvd)

UK (Map p79; ☎427124; 27-29 St 75)

USA (Map p79; ☎728000; 1 St 96)

Vietnam Phnom Penh (Map pp74-5; ☎362531; 436 Monivong Blvd); Sihanoukville (Map p194; ☎012 340495; St Ekareach)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

For the inside story on festivals and events in Cambodia, see the Events Calendar (p19).

FOOD

Cambodian cuisine may be less well known than that of its popular neighbours Thailand and Vietnam, but it is no less tasty. See p63 for the full story on Cambodian cuisine.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

While Cambodian culture is tolerant of homosexuality, the gay and lesbian scene here is certainly nothing like that in Thailand. The former King Norodom Sihanouk was a keen supporter of equal rights for same-sex partners and this seems to have encouraged a more open attitude among younger Cambodians. Both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap have a few gay-friendly bars, but it is a low-key scene compared with some parts of Asia.

With the vast number of same-sex travel partners – gay or otherwise – checking into

hotels across Cambodia, there is little consideration over how travelling foreigners are related. However, it is prudent not to flaunt your sexuality. As with heterosexual couples, passionate public displays of affection are considered a basic no-no.

Utopia (www.utopia-asia.com) features gay travel information and contacts, including detailed sections on the legality of homosexuality in Cambodia (it is legal but gay marriage isn't) and some local gay terminology.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

During public holidays and festivals, banks, ministries and embassies close down, so plan ahead if visiting Cambodia during these times. Cambodians also roll over holidays if they fall on a weekend and take a day or two extra during major festivals (see p19). Add to this the fact that they take a holiday for international days here and there and it soon becomes apparent that Cambodia has more public holidays than any other nation on earth!

International New Year's Day 1 January

Victory over the Genocide 7 January

International Women's Day 8 March

International Workers' Day 1 May

International Children's Day 8 May

King's Birthday 13-15 May

King Mother's Birthday 18 June

Constitution Day 24 September

King Father's Birthday 31 October

Independence Day 9 November

International Human Rights Day 10 December

INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy that covers theft, property loss and medical expenses is more essential for Cambodia than for most other parts of Southeast Asia. There are a wide variety of insurance policies available, and it's wise to check with a reliable travel agent as to which is most suitable for Cambodia.

When buying your travel insurance *always* check the small print:

- Some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities' such as scuba diving and riding a motorcycle. If you are going to be motorbiking in Cambodia, check that you will be covered.
- Check whether the medical coverage is on a pay first, claim later basis; if this is the case, keep all documents relating to any medical treatment.

INSURANCE ALERT!

Do not visit Cambodia without medical insurance. Hospitals are extremely basic in the provinces and even in Phnom Penh the facilities are generally not up to the standards you may be accustomed to. Anyone who has a serious injury or illness while in Cambodia may require emergency evacuation to Bangkok. With an insurance policy costing no more than the equivalent of a bottle of beer a day, this evacuation is free. Without an insurance policy, it will cost between US\$10,000 and US\$20,000 – somewhat more than a six-pack. Don't gamble with your health in Cambodia or you may end up another statistic.

- In the case of Cambodia, it is essential to check that medical coverage includes the cost of emergency evacuation (see above).

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access is available in most towns throughout the country. In Phnom Penh prices just keep dropping, thankfully, and now average US\$0.50 or less per hour. Siem Reap is a little more expensive at US\$0.50 to US\$1.50 per hour, while in other provinces it can range from US\$1 an hour to as much as US\$4 an hour, thanks to expensive domestic phone calls. Most internet cafés also supply headsets to allow cheap phone calls via Skype or similar programmes.

If travelling with a laptop, remember that Cambodia's power-supply voltage will vary from that at home, risking damage to your equipment. The best investment is a universal AC adapter, which enables you to plug it in anywhere without frying its innards.

Visitors carrying a laptop who are looking for a direct connection to a server have several choices. The most convenient option is usually via wi-fi networks, which are increasingly common in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Many cafés and restaurants offer free wi-fi for customers, while hotels often levy a small charge.

Those still working on fixed-line connections can pick up one of the prepaid internet cards offered by Online or Everyday, available from shops and some restaurants. They come in a range of values from US\$10 to US\$50

and can be purchased from shops, hotels and petrol stations.

Those who like contracts and paperwork can try **Online** (Map p79; ☎023-430000; 15 Norodum Blvd), **Camintel** (Map p79; ☎023-986789; 1 Sisowath Quay) or **Telesurf** (Map p79; ☎012 800800; 33 Sihanouk Blvd), all in Phnom Penh. Prices are high by international standards and if you are using a mobile phone from remote areas, the connection is poor.

LEGAL MATTERS

Marijuana is not legal in Cambodia and police are beginning to take a harder line on it, although usually for their own benefit rather than a desire to uphold the law. There have been several busts (and a few set-ups, too) of foreigner-owned bars and restaurants where ganja was smoked – the days of free bowls in guesthouses are now history. Marijuana is traditionally used in some Khmer food, so it will continue to be around for a long time, but if you are a smoker, be discreet. It's probably only a matter of time before the Cambodian police turn the regular busting of foreigners into a lucrative sideline.

This advice applies equally to other narcotic substances, which are also illegal. And think twice about scoring from an unfamiliar *moto* driver as it may end with you getting robbed after passing out.

MAPS

The best all-rounder for Cambodia is the Gecko *Cambodia Road Map*. At 1:750,000 scale, it has lots of detail and accurate place names. Other popular foldout maps include *Nelles Cambodia*, *Laos and Vietnam Map* at 1:1,500,000, although the detail is limited, and the *Periplus Cambodia Travel Map* at 1:1,000,000, with city maps of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

There are lots of free maps, subsidised by advertising, that are available in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap at leading hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and bars.

For serious map buffs or cartographers, Psar Thmei (Central Market) in Phnom Penh is well stocked with Vietnamese and Khmer-produced maps of towns and provinces, as well as US military maps from the 1970s at a scale of 1:50,000. Some roads have deteriorated rather than improved since the civil war, so much of the information remains accurate more than three decades on.

MONEY

Cambodia's currency is the riel, abbreviated in this guide by a lower-case 'r' written after the sum. Cambodia's second currency (some would say its first) is the US dollar, which is accepted everywhere and by everyone, though change may arrive in riel. Dollar bills with a small tear are unlikely to be accepted by Cambodians, so it's worth scrutinising the change you are given to make sure you don't have bad bills. In the west of the country, the Thai baht (B) is also commonplace. If three currencies seems a little excessive, perhaps it's because the Cambodians are making up for lost time: during the Pol Pot era, the country had *no* currency. The Khmer Rouge abolished money and blew up the National Bank building in Phnom Penh.

The Cambodian riel comes in notes of the following denominations: 50r, 100r, 200r, 500r, 1000r, 2000r, 5000r, 10,000r, 20,000r, 50,000r and 100,000r.

Throughout this book, prices are in the currency quoted to the average punter. This is usually US dollars or riel, but in the west it is often baht. While this may seem inconsistent, this is the way it's done in Cambodia and the sooner you get used to thinking comparatively in riel, dollars or baht, the easier your travels will be.

For a sprinkling of exchange rates at the time of going to print, see the Quick Reference section on the inside front cover of this book.

ATMs

There are now credit-card-compatible ATMs (Visa and MasterCard only) in most major cities including Phnom Penh, Siem Reap,

Sihanoukville, Battambang and Kompong Cham. There are also ATMs at the Cham Yeam and Poipet borders if arriving from Thailand. Machines dispense US dollars. Large withdrawals of up to US\$2000 are possible, providing your account can handle it. Stay alert when using them late at night. ANZ Royal Bank has the most extensive network, including ATMs at petrol stations and popular hotels, restaurants and shops, closely followed by Canadia Bank. Aceda Bank has the widest network of branches in the country, including all provincial capitals, and many have ATMs. However, these are not yet compatible with international credit cards, although rumours are that they will be upgraded soon.

Bargaining

It is important to haggle over purchases made in local markets in Phnom Penh (p109) and Siem Reap (p135), otherwise the stallholder may 'shave your head' (local vernacular for 'rip you off'). Bargaining is the rule in markets, when arranging share taxis and pick-ups and in cheaper guesthouses. The Khmers are not ruthless hagglers, so a persuasive smile and a little friendly quibbling is usually enough to get a good price. Try to remember that the aim is not to get the lowest possible price, but a price that is acceptable to both you and the seller. Remember back home, we pay astronomical sums for items, especially clothes, that have been made in poorer countries for next to nothing, and we don't even get the chance to bargain for them, just the opportunity to contribute to a corporate director's retirement fund. At least there is room for discussion in Cambodia, so try not to become

YABA DABA DO? YABA DABA DON'T!

Watch out for *yaba*, the 'crazy' drug from Thailand, known rather ominously in Cambodia as *yama* (the Hindu god of death). Known as ice or crystal meth back home, it's not just any old diet pill from the pharmacist, but homemade meta-amphetamines produced in labs in Cambodia and the region beyond. The pills are often laced with toxic substances, such as mercury, lithium or whatever else the maker can find. *Yama* is a dirty drug and more addictive than users would like to admit, provoking powerful hallucinations, sleep deprivation and psychosis. Steer clear of the stuff unless you plan on an indefinite extension to your trip.

Also be very careful about buying 'cocaine'. One look at the map and the distance between Colombia and Cambodia should be enough to make you dubious, but it's much worse than that. Most of what is sold as coke, particularly in Phnom Penh, is actually pure heroin and far stronger than any smack found on the streets back home. Bang this up your hooter and you are in serious trouble – several backpackers die each year in the lakeside guesthouse ghetto of Boeng Kak in Phnom Penh.

obsessed by the price. And also remember, in many cases a few hundred riel is more important to a Cambodian with a family to support than to a traveller on an extended vacation. After all, no-one bargains over a beer in a busy backpacker bar, so why bargain so hard over a cheap bottle of water?

Black Market

The black market no longer exists in Cambodia when it comes to changing money. Exchange rates on the street are the same as those offered by the banks; you just get to avoid the queues and paperwork.

Cash

The US dollar remains king in Cambodia. Armed with enough cash, you won't need to visit a bank at all because it is possible to change small amounts of dollars for riel at hotels, restaurants and markets. Hardened travellers argue that your trip ends up being slightly more expensive if you rely on US dollars rather than riel, but in reality there's very little in it. However, it never hurts to support the local currency against the greenback. It is always handy to have about US\$10 worth of riel kicking around, as it is good for *motos*, *remorque-motos* and markets. Pay for something cheap in US dollars and the change comes in riel. In remote areas of the north and northeast, locals only deal in riel or small dollar denominations.

The only other currency that can be useful is Thai baht, mainly in the west of the country. Prices in towns such as Krong Koh Kong, Poipet and Sisophon are often quoted in baht, and even in Battambang it is as common as the dollar.

There are no banks at any of the land border crossings into Cambodia, meaning credit cards and travellers cheques are effectively useless on arrival, although there will likely be ATMs in Poipet in the near future. In the interests of making life as simple as possible, organise a supply of US dollars before arriving in Cambodia. Cash in other major currencies can be changed at banks or markets in Phnom Penh or Siem Reap. However, most banks tend to offer a miserable rate for any nondollar transaction so it can be better to use moneychangers, which are found in and around every major market.

Western Union and MoneyGram are both represented in Cambodia for fast, if

more expensive, money transfers. Western Union is represented by SBC and Acleda Bank, and MoneyGram is represented by Canadia Bank.

Credit Cards

Top-end hotels, airline offices and upmarket boutiques and restaurants generally accept most major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, JCB, sometimes American Express), but they usually pass the charges straight on to the customer, meaning an extra 3% on the bill.

Cash advances on credit cards are available in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, Kampot, Battambang and Kompong Cham. Canadia Bank and Union Commercial Bank offer free cash advances, but most other banks advertise a minimum charge of US\$5.

Several travel agents and hotels in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap arrange cash advances for about 5% commission; this can be particularly useful if you get caught short at the weekend.

Tipping

Tipping is not traditionally expected here, but in a country as poor as Cambodia, tips can go a long way. Salaries remain extremely low and service is often superb thanks to a Khmer commitment to hospitality. Hence a tip of just US\$1 might be half a day's wages for some. Many of the upmarket hotels levy a 10% service charge, but this doesn't always make it to the staff. If you stay a couple of nights in the same hotel, try to remember to tip the staff that clean your room. Consider tipping drivers and guides, as the time they spend on the road means time away from home and family.

It is considered proper to make a small monetary donation at the end of a visit to a wat, especially if a monk has shown you around; most wats have contribution boxes for this purpose.

Travellers Cheques

Acleda Bank now offers travellers cheque encashment at most branches, bringing financial freedom to far-flung provinces like Ratanakiri and Mondulkiiri. It is best to have cheques in US dollars, though it is also possible to change euros at Acleda Bank and most major currencies at branches of Canadia Bank. Generally, you pay about 2% commission to change travellers cheques.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Airport Security

The X-ray machines at Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports are film-safe. If you are carrying 1000 ASA or higher film, store it separately and ask to have it inspected by hand.

Film & Equipment

Many internet cafés in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Battambang and Sihanoukville will burn CDs or DVDs from digital images using card readers or USB connections. The price is about US\$2.50 if you need a CD or US\$1.50 if you don't. Digital memory sticks are widely available in Cambodia and are pretty cheap. Digital cameras are a real bargain in Cambodia thanks to low tax and duty, so consider picking up a new model in Phnom Penh rather than Bangkok or Saigon.

Print film and processing is pretty cheap in Cambodia, with most labs charging about US\$4 for a roll. Slide film is also available at competitive prices in Phnom Penh. Do not have slide film processed in Cambodia unless it is really urgent. Many shops claim to be able to process slide film, but you'll more than likely end up with black and white X-ray-style shots.

If you carry a video camera, make sure you have the necessary charger, plugs and transformer for Cambodia. Take care with some of the electrical wiring in guesthouses around the country, as it can be pretty amateurish. In Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, it is possible to obtain video tapes for most formats, but elsewhere around the country you are unlikely to find much of use. If you are shooting on hi-def, then pick up the tapes before arriving in Cambodia, as it's still not widely available.

Photographing People

The usual rules apply. Be polite about photographing and video taping people; don't push cameras into their faces, and have some respect for monks and people at prayer. In general, the Khmers are remarkably courteous people and if you ask nicely, they'll agree to have their photograph taken. The same goes for filming, although in rural areas you will often find children desperate to get in front of the lens and astonished at seeing themselves played back on an LCD screen. It is the closest most of them will get to being on TV.

Technical Tips

The best light conditions in Cambodia begin around 20 minutes after sunrise and last for just one to two hours, roughly corresponding to 6am to 8am. The same applies for the late afternoon light, which begins to assume a radiant warm quality around an hour before sunset. From 10am to around 4pm you can expect the light to be harsh and bleaching – there's not much you can do with it unless you have a polariser. For endless tips on better travel photography, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography*.

POST

The postal service is hit and miss from Cambodia; send anything valuable by courier or from another country. Make sure postcards and letters are franked before they vanish from your sight.

Postal rates are listed in post offices in the major towns and cities. Postcards cost 1500r to 2100r to send internationally. Letters and parcels sent further afield than Asia can take up to two or three weeks to reach their destination. Use a courier to speed things up: **DHL** (Map p79; ☎023-427726; www.dhl.com; 353 St 110), **FedEx** (Map pp74-5; ☎023-216712; www.fedex.com; 701D Monivong Blvd), **TNT** (Map p79; ☎023-430922; www.tnt.com; 28 Monivong Blvd) and **UPS** (Map p79; ☎023-427511; www.ups.com; 27 St 134). All have offices in Phnom Penh and some have branch offices in Siem Reap. A slightly cheaper courier option is **EMS** (Map p79; ☎023-723511; Main Post Office, St 13), with offices at every major post office in the country.

Phnom Penh's main post office (p78) has a poste restante box at the far-left end of the post counter, but long-term travellers are better off getting their stuff sent to Bangkok.

SHOPPING

There is excellent shopping to be had in Cambodia, particularly in Phnom Penh (p107) and Siem Reap (p135). As well as the inevitable range of souvenirs, there are many high-quality handicrafts made to support disadvantaged groups in Cambodia (see p108 and p136).

For tips on how to haggle, see p315.

Antiques

Cambodia has a reasonable range of antiques, although a lot disappeared or was destroyed during the war years. Popular items include

textiles, silver, swords, coins, ceramics and furniture, but when buying antiques be very careful of fakes – they are extremely common in this part of the world. If the prices seem too good to be true, then they usually are and you'll end up with a well-aged, modern copy. This is particularly the case with 'old' bronzes from 'the time of Angkor' and a lot of 'ancient' Chinese pieces. Remember that ancient sandstone carvings from the Angkorian or pre-Angkorian periods cannot legally be taken out of the country.

For those settling in Cambodia for any length of time, there are some very nice pieces of antique furniture available in markets and shops in Phnom Penh, with Chinese, French and Khmer influences all evident.

Artwork

The choice of art was, until recently, limited to the poor-quality Angkor paintings seen throughout the country. However, the selection is improving in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Psar Chaa (p136) in Siem Reap and the art shops on St 178 in Phnom Penh (p107) are good hunting grounds, and there are a number of upmarket galleries in the capital. Cambodia has a budding art scene and local luminaries hold regular exhibitions at hotels, restaurants and cafés.

Clothing

Many international brands are made in factories around Phnom Penh, including Colombia, Gant, Gap, Levis and Nautica; there is a lot of 'leakage', with items turning up in Psar Tuol Tom Pong (p109) in Phnom Penh at very reasonable prices.

Sculpture

The beauty and intricacy of Cambodian sculpture is evident for all to see around the temples of Angkor (p140) and in the National Museum (p84) in Phnom Penh. There are many skilled stone carvers in Cambodia today, and replica sculpture is widely available in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. Popular items include busts of Jayavarman VII and statues of Hindu deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and Harihara. Do not attempt to buy ancient stone sculpture in Cambodia: looting is a huge problem in remote parts of the country and it would be grossly irresponsible for any visitor to add to the problem.

Silk & Textiles

Cambodia is world renowned for its exquisite silk. Much of the country's silk is still traditionally hand-woven and dyed using natural colours from plants and minerals. The best silk comes from Kompong Cham and Takeo Provinces, but not all the silk sold in Cambodia originates from here (some silk is imported from China and Vietnam). Concerted efforts are underway to reintroduce mulberry trees and locally cultivated silk across the country. There are silk farms in Siem Reap and some of the other provincial centres renowned for silk. Some of the best places to buy silk include Artisans d'Angkor (p123) in Siem Reap, which also operates branches at the international airports, at recommended shops in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap that support disabled and impoverished Cambodians, and at Psar Tuol Tom Pong (p109) in Phnom Penh. In the provinces, there are several high-quality silk operations, including Mekong Blue (p290) in Stung Treng and Weaves of Cambodia (p265) in Tbeng Meanchey.

Silver

Cambodian silver is valued overseas for the detail of hand-carving on most of the pieces. However, not all silver has that much silver content, so it is important to be careful what you buy. Cambodian silver ranges from copies with no silver, to 50% silver alloy, right up to pure silver. Reputable establishments will often tell you the purity of their silver, but market sellers might try to pull a fast one. The easiest way for novices to determine the quality is to feel the weight. Pure silver should be heavier than alloys or plate.

Woodcarving

Woodcarving is a rich tradition in Cambodia and there are many wooden items that make nice decorative pieces. Reproduction Buddhas are very popular with visitors and there is no restriction on taking Buddha images out of the country. There are also wooden copies available of most of the principal Angkorian sculptures, as well as finely carved animals. Weaving wheels are quite popular and are often elaborately decorated, making nice wall mounts. Betel nut boxes are plentiful, as are jewellery boxes inlaid with mother of pearl, lacquer or metalwork.

DOMESTIC TELEPHONE AREA CODES

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Banteay Meanchey Province | 054 |
| Battambang Province | 053 |
| Kampot Province | 033 |
| Kandal Province | 024 |
| Kep Province | 036 |
| Koh Kong Province | 035 |
| Kompong Cham Province | 042 |
| Kompong Chhnang Province | 026 |
| Kompong Speu Province | 025 |
| Kompong Thom Province | 062 |
| Kratie Province | 072 |
| Mondulkiri Province | 073 |
| Oddar Meanchey Province | 065 |
| Phnom Penh | 023 |
| Preah Vihear Province | 064 |
| Prey Veng Province | 043 |
| Pursat Province | 052 |
| Ratanakiri Province | 075 |
| Siem Reap Province | 063 |
| Sihanoukville Province | 034 |
| Stung Treng Province | 074 |
| Svay Rieng Province | 044 |
| Takeo Province | 032 |

TELEPHONE & FAX

Cambodia's landline system was totally devastated by the long civil war, leaving the country with a poor communications infrastructure. The advent of mobile phones has allowed Cambodia to catch up with its regional neighbours by jumping headlong into the technology revolution. Mobile phones are everywhere in Cambodia, but landline access in major towns is also improving, connecting more of the country to the outside world than ever before.

Domestic Calls

Local calls are usually pretty cheap, even from hotel rooms. Calling from province to province is considerably more expensive by fixed lines. The easiest way to call in most urban areas is to head to one of the many small private booths on the kerbside, usually plastered with numbers like 012 and 016 and with prices around 300r. Operators have a selection of mobile phones and leased lines to ensure that any domestic number you want to call is cheap. Local phone calls can also be made on the MPTC and Camintel public payphones, which are sometimes still seen in places like Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville. It can sometimes be difficult to get through

to numbers outside Phnom Penh, and there is no directory inquiries service. Some hotels have telephone directories for the capital if you need to track down a number. Try to find a copy of the **Yellow Pages** (www.yellowpages.com.kh), which has a pretty comprehensive coverage of businesses, services and government offices.

Fax

Sending faxes is getting cheaper as telephone charges drop. The cheapest fax services are those via the internet; these can be arranged at internet cafés for around US\$1 to US\$2 a page. Some of the more popular midrange hotels have reliable business centres, but be aware that faxing from Cambodia's top-end hotels is expensive, costing three times the price charged elsewhere.

International Calls

When it comes to calling overseas, there is now a whole lot more choice than in the bad old days of all calls going via Moscow. There are several telephone cards available for card phones, several prepaid calling cards for use from any telephone, private booths offering calls via mobile phones and the growing world of internet phone calls. Calling from hotels attracts a surcharge and the more expensive the hotel, the heftier the hit. As a general rule, whichever way you choose to ring, it is a little cheaper to make a call at weekends.

The cheapest way to call internationally is via internet phone. Most of the shops and cafés around the country providing internet services also offer internet calls. Calls usually cost between 200r and 2000r per minute, depending on the destination. Calling the USA and Europe is generally the cheapest, but there is a hefty surcharge for connecting to mobile numbers. While the price is undoubtedly right, the major drawback is that there is often a significant delay on the phone, making for a conversation of many 'hello?'s and 'pardon?'s. Using services such as Skype makes these calls a little clearer and slightly cheaper or you can hook up with a fellow Skype user for free. Most internet cafés also provide webcams, so you can see family and friends while catching up on the gossip.

It is straightforward to place an international call from Ministry of Post & Telecommunications (MPTC) or Camintel phone booths. Purchase a phonecard, which in larger cities can be bought at hotels,

restaurants, post offices and many shops. Phonecards come in denominations of US\$5 to US\$50. Before inserting the card into a public phone, always check that there is a read-out on the phone's LCD unit. If there isn't, it probably means the phone is broken or there is a power cut – inserting the card at these times can wipe the value off the card.

Camshin offers a handy tourist SIM card. This costs US\$10 and can be inserted into any unlocked phone. Calls are cheap at just US\$0.25 per minute and the line is usually clear. The card lasts for seven days from activation.

If dialling from a mobile or using card-phones, instead of using the original international access code of 001, try 007, which works out cheaper. The name is not Bond, but Tele2, a private operator that has recently set up shop in Cambodia.

Mobile Phones

Telephone numbers starting with 01 or 09 are mobile phone (cell phone) numbers. If you are travelling with a mobile phone on international roaming, just select a network upon arrival, dial away and await a hefty phone bill once you return home. Note: Cambodian roaming charges are extraordinarily high.

Those who are planning on spending longer in Cambodia will want to hook up with a local network. Those with their own phone need only purchase a SIM card for one of the local service providers, but if you are travelling with a locked phone linked to your network back home, then you can't switch SIM cards. Local phone shops can usually unlock your phone for a small charge. Mobile phones are very cheap in Cambodia and secondhand ones are widely available. Most of the local companies offer fixed-contract deals with monthly bills, or pay-as-you-go cards for those who want flexibility. All offer regular promotions, so it is worth shopping around.

Local companies based in Phnom Penh:
Hello (Map p79; 016 810001; www.hellosm.com.kh; 56 Norodom Blvd)
M Fone (Map pp74-5; 023-367801; www.mfone.com.kh; 294 Mao Tse Toung Blvd)
Mobitel (Map p79; 012 801801; www.mobitel.com.kh; 33 Sihanouk Blvd)

TIME

Cambodia, like Laos, Vietnam and Thailand, is seven hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time

or Universal Time Coordinated (GMT/UTC). When it is midday in Cambodia it is 10pm the previous evening in San Francisco, 1am in New York, 5am in London, 6am in Paris and 3pm in Sydney.

TOILETS

Cambodian toilets are mostly of the sit-down variety. The occasional squat toilet turns up here and there, particularly in the most budget of budget guesthouses in the provinces. If you end up in the sticks, you will find that hygiene conditions deteriorate somewhat, but rural Cambodian bathrooms are often in a better state than those in rural China or India.

The issue of toilets and what to do with used toilet paper is a cause for concern. Generally, if there's a wastepaper basket next to the toilet, that is where the toilet paper goes, as many sewerage systems cannot handle toilet paper. Toilet paper is seldom provided in the toilets at bus and train stations or in other public buildings, so keep a stash with you at all times.

Many Western toilets also have a hose spray in the bathroom, aptly named the 'bum gun' by some. Think of this as a flexible bidet, used for cleaning and ablutions as well as hosing down the loo.

Public toilets are rare, the only ones in the country being along Phnom Penh's riverfront and some beautiful wooden structures dotted about the temples of Angkor. The charge is usually 500r for a public toilet, although they are free at Angkor. Most local restaurants have some sort of toilet; pay 500r if you are not eating or drinking anything.

Should you find nature calling in rural areas, don't let modesty drive you into the bushes: *there may be land mines not far from the road or track*. Stay on the roadside and do the deed, or grin and bear it until the next town.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Cambodia has only a handful of tourist offices, and those encountered by the independent traveller in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are generally unhelpful unless you look like you're going to spend money. However, in the provinces it is a different story, as the staff are often shocked and excited to see visitors. They may have to drag the director out of a nearby karaoke bar, even at 10am, but once it is made clear that you are a genuine tourist,

they will usually tell you everything there is to know about places of interest. More and more towns are ambitiously opening tourist offices, but they generally have little in the way of brochures or handouts. You'll find some tourist offices listed in the relevant destination sections in this book, but lower your expectations compared with regional powerhouses like Malaysia and Singapore. Generally, fellow travellers, guesthouses and hotels, and free local magazines are much more useful than tourist offices.

Cambodia has no official tourist offices abroad and it is unlikely that Cambodian embassies will be of much assistance in planning a trip, besides issuing a visa.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Broken pavements (sidewalks), potholed roads and stairs as steep as ladders at Angkor ensure that for most people with mobility impairments, Cambodia is not going to be an easy country in which to travel. Few buildings in Cambodia have been designed with the disabled in mind, although new projects, such as the international airports at Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, and top-end hotels, include ramps for wheelchair access. Transport in the provinces is usually very overcrowded, but taxi hire from point to point is an affordable option.

On the positive side, the Cambodian people are usually very helpful towards all foreigners, and local labour is cheap if you need someone to accompany you at all times. Most guesthouses and small hotels have ground-floor rooms that are reasonably easy to access.

The biggest headache also happens to be the main attraction – the temples of Angkor. Causeways are uneven, obstacles common and staircases daunting, even for able-bodied people. It is likely to be some years before things improve, although some ramping is now being introduced at major temples.

Wheelchair travellers will need to undertake a lot of research before visiting Cambodia. There is now a growing network of information sources that can put you in touch with others who have wheeled through Cambodia before. Try contacting:
Mobility International USA (054-1343 1284; www.miusa.org)

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (Radar; 020-7250 3222; www.radar.org.uk)

Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH; 212-447 7284; www.sath.org)

Lonelyplanet.com has a travel forum called the Thorn Tree, which is a good place to seek advice from other travellers.

VISAS

Most visitors to Cambodia require a one-month tourist visa (US\$20), although some visitors enter on a one-month business visa (US\$25). Most nationalities receive a one-month visa on arrival at Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports, and at land borders. One passport-sized photo is required and you'll be 'fined' US\$1 if you don't have one. It is also possible to arrange a visa through Cambodian embassies overseas or an online e-visa (US\$25) through the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (<http://evisa.mfaic.gov.kh>). Arranging a visa ahead of time can help prevent potential overcharging at some land crossings.

Those seeking work in Cambodia should opt for the business visa as, officially, it is easily extended for long periods and, unofficially, can be extended indefinitely, including multiple entries and exits. A tourist visa can be extended only once and only for one month, and does not allow for re-entry.

Travellers are sometimes overcharged when crossing at land borders with Thailand, as immigration officials demand payment in baht and round up the figure considerably. Arranging a visa in advance avoids this potential problem. Travellers planning a day trip to Prasat Preah Vihear from Thailand do not require visas, but may be asked to leave their passport on the Thai side of the border to ensure they don't continue on into Cambodia.

Overstaying your visa currently costs a hefty US\$5 a day.

Visa Extensions

Visa extensions are issued by the large immigration office located directly across the road from Phnom Penh International Airport (p111).

There are two ways of getting an extension (one official and one unofficial) and, unsurprisingly, the time and money involved differ greatly. Officially, a one-month extension costs US\$35, three months US\$65, six months US\$125, and one year US\$200; your passport will be held for 25 days and there will be more paperwork than a communist bureaucrat could dream up. This is fine for expats with an employer to make the arrangements, but

SHOULD WE BE VISITING ORPHANAGES?

In recent years, visiting orphanages in the developing world – and Cambodia in particular – has become a popular activity, but is it always good for the children and the country in the longer run? Tough question. ‘Orphan tourism’ and all the connotations that come with it could be considered a scary development that is bringing unscrupulous elements into the world of caring for Cambodian children. There have already been reports of new orphanages opening up with a business model to bring in a certain number of visitors per month. In other cases, the children are not orphans at all, but are ‘borrowed’ from the local school for a fee.

Many orphanages in Cambodia are doing a great job in tough circumstances. Some are world class, enjoy funding and support from wealthy benefactors and don’t need visitors; others are desperate places which need all the help they can get. However, if a place is promoting orphan tourism, then proceed with caution, as the adults may not always have the best interests of the children at heart. Cambodia is a confusing and confounding place and it’s not for us to play judge and jury, but we do believe travellers should be informed before they make a decision.

those on their own really need to go unofficial. They don’t call it corruption in Cambodia but ‘under the table’, and you can have your passport back the next day for the inflated prices of US\$45 for one month, US\$80 for three months, US\$165 for six months and US\$265 for one year. Once you are one of the ‘unofficials’, it is pretty straightforward to extend the visa ad infinitum. Travel agencies and some motorbike rental shops in Phnom Penh can help with arrangements, sometimes at a discounted price.

VOLUNTEERING

There are fewer opportunities for volunteering than one might imagine in a country as impoverished as Cambodia. This is partly due to the sheer number of professional development workers based here, and development is a pretty lucrative industry these days.

Cambodia hosts a huge number of NGOs, some of whom do require volunteers from time to time. The best way to find out who is represented in the country is to drop in on the **Cooperation Committee for Cambodia** (CCC; Map p79; ☎023-214152; 35 St 178) in Phnom Penh. This organisation has a handy list of all NGOs, both Cambodian and international, and is extremely helpful.

Grass-roots organisations are the most appreciative of volunteers. Try the Lazy Gecko Café (p102) in Phnom Penh, which supports Jeannie’s Orphanage, and the Starfish Bakery & Café (p210) in Sihanoukville, which helps to raise funds for local projects.

Other places that can readily benefit from volunteers are certain orphanages in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and other towns

in Cambodia, as some of these are in a very rundown condition.

The other avenue is professional volunteering through an organisation back home that offers one- or two-year placements in Cambodia. One of the largest organisations is **Voluntary Service Overseas** (VSO; www.vso.org.uk) in the UK, but other countries also have their own organisations, including **Australian Volunteers International** (AVI; www.australianvolunteers.com) and New Zealand’s **Volunteer Service Abroad** (VSA; www.vsa.org.nz). The UN also operates its own volunteer programme; details are available at www.unv.org. Other general volunteer sites with links all over the place include www.worldvolunteerweb.com and www.volunteerabroad.com.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Women will generally find Cambodia a hassle-free place to travel, although some of the guys in the guesthouse industry will try their luck from time to time. Foreign women are unlikely to be targeted by local men, but at the same time it pays to be careful. As is the case anywhere in the world, walking or riding a bike alone late at night is risky, and if you’re planning a trip off the beaten trail it would be best to find a travel companion.

Despite the prevalence of sex workers and women’s employment as ‘beer girls’, dancing companions and the like, foreign women will probably find Khmer men to be courteous and polite. It’s best to keep things this way by being restrained in your dress; flaunting a pierced belly button is likely to get the blood racing among Khmer males. Khmer women dress fairly conservatively, and it’s best to

follow suit, particularly when visiting wats. In general, long-sleeved shirts and long trousers or skirts are preferred. It is also worth having trousers for heading out at night on *motos* , as short skirts aren’t too practical.

Tampons and sanitary napkins are widely available in the major cities and provincial capitals, but if you are heading into very remote areas for a few days, it is worth having your own supply.

WORK

Jobs are available throughout Cambodia, but apart from English teaching or helping out in guesthouses, bars or restaurants, most are for professionals and are arranged in advance. There is a lot of teaching work available for English-language speakers, although the salary is directly linked to experience. Anyone with an English-language teaching certificate can earn considerably more than those with no qualifications.

For information about work opportunities with NGOs call into the CCC (opposite), which has a notice board for positions vacant and may also be able to give advice on where to look. If you are thinking of applying for work with NGOs, you should bring copies of your education certificates and work references. However, most of the jobs available are likely to be on a voluntary basis, as most recruiting for specialised positions is done in home countries or through international organisations.

Other places to look for work include the classifieds sections of the *Phnom Penh Post* and the *Cambodia Daily*, and on the notice boards at guesthouses and restaurants in Phnom Penh.

Do not expect to make a lot of money working in Cambodia, but if you want to learn more about the country and help the locals improve their standard of living, it can be a very worthwhile experience.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Cambodia has two international gateways for arrival by air, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, and a healthy selection of land borders with neighbouring Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Formalities at Cambodia's international airports are traditionally smoother than at land borders, as the volume of traffic is greater. Crossing at land borders is relatively easy, but immigration officers may try to wangle some extra cash, either for your visa or via some other scam. Stand your ground. Anyone without a photo for their visa form will be charged about US\$1 at the airport, and as much as 100B at land borders with Thailand.

Arrival by air is popular for those on a short holiday in Cambodia, as travelling overland to or from Cambodia puts a significant dent in your time in the country. Travellers on longer trips usually enter and exit by land, as road and river transport is very reasonable in Cambodia.

Passport

Not only is a passport essential but you also need to make sure that it's valid for at least six months beyond the *end* of your trip – Cambodian immigration will not issue a visa

THINGS CHANGE!

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change: prices for international travel are volatile, routes are introduced and cancelled, schedules change, special deals come and go, and rules and visa requirements are amended. You should check directly with your airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works, and be aware of the security requirements for international travel.

The upshot of this is that you should get opinions, quotes and advice from as many airlines and travel agents as possible before you spend your hard-earned cash. Details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful and up-to-date research.

if you have less than six months' validity left on your passport.

It's also important to make sure that there is plenty of space left in your passport. Do not set off on a six-month trek across Asia with only two blank pages left – a Cambodian visa alone takes up one page. It is sometimes possible to have extra pages added to your passport, but most people will be required to get a new passport. This is possible for most foreign nationals in Cambodia, but it can be time consuming and costly, as many embassies process new passports in Bangkok.

Losing a passport is not the end of the world, but it is a serious inconvenience. To expedite the issuing of a new passport, keep a copy of your passport details somewhere separate from your passport.

For the story on visas, see p321.

AIR Airports & Airlines

Phnom Penh International Airport (PNH; ☎023-890520; www.cambodia-airports.com/phnompenh/en) is the gateway to the Cambodian capital, while **Siem Reap International Airport** (REP; ☎063-380283; www.cambodia-airports.com/siemreap/en) serves visitors to the temples of Angkor. Both airports have a

good range of services, including restaurants, bars, shops and ATMs.

Flights to Cambodia are quite limited and most connect only as far as regional capitals. However, budget airlines have taken off in recent years and are steadily driving down prices. Bangkok offers the most connections to Cambodia, and it is usually possible to get on a flight with any of the airlines at short notice, although flying Bangkok Airways to Siem Reap can get very busy from November to March.

If you are heading to Cambodia for a short holiday and want a minimum of fuss, Thai Airways offers the easiest connections from major cities in Europe, the USA and Australia. Singapore Airlines' regional wing, Silk Air, is another good option, with at least one flight a day connecting Cambodia to Singapore. Other regional centres with flights to Cambodia are Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Hanoi, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Pakse, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

Airlines in Cambodia tend to open up and close down regularly. This means that those who have the choice should enter the country on an international carrier rather than a local outfit.

Some airlines offer open-jaw tickets into Phnom Penh and out of Siem Reap, which can save some time and money. The follow-

ing telephone numbers are for Phnom Penh offices (☎023). See the Siem Reap section for airline offices there (p137).

AIRLINES FLYING TO/FROM CAMBODIA

Air Asia (AK; ☎356011; www.airasia.com; hub Kuala Lumpur) Daily budget flights connecting Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok.

Angkor Airways (G6; ☎222056; www.angkorairways.com; hub Phnom Penh) Regular connections from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to Taipei.

Asiana Airlines (OZ; ☎890440; www.asiana.co.kr; hub Seoul) Regular connections between Phnom Penh and Seoul.

Bangkok Airways (Map p79; PG; ☎722545; www.bangkokair.com; hub Bangkok) Daily connections from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to Bangkok.

China Eastern Airlines (Map pp74-5; MU; ☎063-965229; www.ce-air.com; hub Shanghai) Regular flights from Siem Reap to Kunming.

China Southern Airlines (Map p79; CZ; ☎430877; www.cs-air.com; hub Guangzhou) Regular flights from Phnom Penh to Guangzhou.

Dragon Air (Map p79; KA; ☎424300; www.dragonair.com; hub Hong Kong) Daily flights between Phnom Penh and Hong Kong.

Eva Air (Map p79; BR; ☎219911; www.evair.com; hub Taipei) Daily flights between Phnom Penh and Taipei.

Jetstar Asia (3K; ☎220909; www.jetstarasia.com; hub Singapore) Daily budget flights from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to Singapore.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying and climate change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon offset schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel. For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURE TAX

There is a departure tax of US\$25, payable by cash or credit card, on all international flights out of both Phnom Penh International Airport and Siem Reap International Airport.

Lao Airlines (Map p79; QV; ☎216563; www.laairlines.com; hub Vientiane) Regular flights from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to both Pakse and Vientiane.

Malaysia Airlines (Map p79; MY; ☎426688; www.malaysiaairlines.com; hub Kuala Lumpur) Daily connections from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to Kuala Lumpur.

PMT Air (U4; ☎221379; www.pmtair.com; hub Phnom Penh) Regular flights from Siem Reap to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Shanghai Airlines (FM; ☎723999; www.shanghai-air.com; hub Shanghai) Regular flights linking Phnom Penh with Shanghai.

Siem Reap Airways (Map p79; FT; ☎720022; www.siemreapairways.com; hub Phnom Penh) Regular connections from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap to Hong Kong. High season flights connect Luang Prabang and Siem Reap.

Silk Air (Map p79; MI; ☎426807; www.silkair.com; hub Singapore) Daily flights linking Phnom Penh and Siem Reap with Singapore.

Thai Airways (Map pp74-5; TG; ☎214359; www.thair.com; hub Bangkok) Daily flights connecting Phnom Penh and Bangkok.

Vietnam Airlines (Map p79; VN; ☎363396; www.vietnamair.com.vn; hub HCMC) Daily flights linking both Phnom Penh & Siem Reap with both Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City, as well as Phnom Penh with Vientiane & Siem Reap with Luang Prabang.

Tickets

When buying airline tickets, it is always worth shopping around. Buying direct from the airline is usually more expensive, unless the airline has a special promotion. As a rule, it is better to book as early as possible, as prices only get higher as the seats fill up.

The time of year has a major impact on flight prices. Starting out from Europe, North America or Australia, figure on prices rising dramatically over Christmas and between July and August, and dropping significantly during lax periods of business like February, June and October.

Thailand is the most convenient gateway to Cambodia when travelling from outside the region. In Bangkok, the Banglamphu

area, especially Khao San Rd, is a good place to buy tickets to Cambodia. Those who are travelling into Cambodia by air through Vietnam can easily pick up tickets in Ho Chi Minh City.

When buying tickets in Cambodia, the biggest agents are in Phnom Penh (p81), although many now operate branch offices in Siem Reap. Agents can normally save you a few dollars on the airline price, much more for long-haul flights or business-class seats.

To research and buy a ticket on the internet, try these services:

Cheapflights (www.cheapflights.com) No-frills website with a number of locations.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Use the Trip Planner service to book multistop trips.

OneTravel (www.onetravel.com) Another website with a number of locations.

Travel.com (www.travel.com) This website also has numerous locations.

From Australia

The best place to look for cheap fares is in the travel sections of weekend newspapers, such as the *Age* in Melbourne and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. There are good connections between major Australian cities and both Thailand and Vietnam. Elsewhere, you'll need to connect through a regional hub.

Two well-known agencies for cheap fares:

Flight Centre (☎133 133 using local area code; www.flightcentre.com.au) Offices throughout Australia.

STA Travel (☎1300 733 035 Australia-wide; www.statravel.com.au) Has offices in all major cities and on many university campuses.

From Canada

It is cheaper to fly from the west coast than it is to fly from the east. Canadian air fares tend to be higher than those sold in the USA. The *Globe & Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Vancouver Sun* carry travel agency ads and are good places to look for good value fares. **Travel CUTS** (www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency and has offices in all major cities.

From Continental Europe

Although London is the discount-travel capital of Europe, major airlines and big travel agents usually have offers from all the major cities on the continent.

Recommended agents with branches across France:

Nouvelles Frontières (☎08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

OTU Voyages (www.otu.fr) This agency specialises in student and youth travel.

Voyageurs du Monde (☎01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com)

Reliable agencies in Germany:

Just Travel (☎089-747 33 30; www.justtravel.de)

STA Travel (☎0180-545 64 22; www.statravel.de)

From other countries in Europe, try the following agencies:

Airfair (☎0206-20 51 21; www.airfair.nl; Netherlands)

Barcelo Viajes (☎902 11 62 26; www.barceloviajes.com; Spain)

CTS Viaggi (☎064 62 04 31; www.cts.it; Italy)

NBBS Reizen (☎0900 1020 300; www.nbbs.nl; Netherlands)

Nouvelles Frontières (☎902 17 09 79; www.nouvelles-frontieres.es; Spain)

SSR Voyages (☎058 450 4020; www.ssr.ch; Switzerland)

From New Zealand

National newspaper the *New Zealand Herald* (www.nzherald.co.nz) has a helpful travel section. **Flight Centre** (☎0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) has a large central office in Auckland and many branches throughout the country. **STA Travel** (☎0508 782 872; www.statravel.co.nz) has offices in Auckland and other major centres in New Zealand.

From the UK

Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheets, such as the *Independent* and the *Sunday Times*.

Popular travel agencies in the UK include:

Flightbookers (☎087-0010 7000; www.ebookers.com)

North-South Travel (☎01245-608291; www.northsouthtravel.co.uk) North-South Travel donates part of its profit to projects in the developing world.

STA Travel (☎087-0160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk)

Trailfinders (☎084-5050 5891; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

Travel Bag (☎087-0890 1456; www.travelbag.co.uk)

From the USA

Ticket promotions frequently connect Asia to San Francisco and Los Angeles, New York and other big cities. The *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Examiner* all produce weekly travel sections in which you will find a number of travel agency ads and fare promos.

Useful online options in the USA:

- www.cheaptickets.com
- www.itn.net
- www.lowestfare.com
- www.sta.com
- www.travelocity.com

LAND

For years overland travellers were restricted to entering or exiting Cambodia at the Bavet–Moc Bai border crossing with Vietnam. However, lots of new land crossings between Cambodia and its neighbours have opened, offering overland connections with Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. However, many of the newly opened borders are in relatively off-the-beaten path destinations and are aimed at promoting trade more than serving tourists. For the latest on Cambodian border crossings, check out the Immigration Department website at <http://cambodia-immigration.com>.

Bus

It is possible to use buses to cross into Cambodia from Thailand or Vietnam. The most popular way to or from Vietnam is a cheap bus via Bavet on the Cambodian side and Moc Bai in Vietnam. From Thailand, many travellers take the nightmare 'scam bus' (p330) from Bangkok to Siem Reap via the Poipet–Aranya Prathet border crossing.

Car & Motorcycle

Car drivers and motorcycle riders will need registration papers, insurance documents and an International Driving Licence to bring vehicles into Cambodia. It is complicated to bring in a car, but relatively straightforward to bring in a motorcycle, as long as you have a *carnet de passage* (vehicle passport). This acts as a temporary import-duty waiver and should save a lot of hassles when dealing with Cambodian customs. Increasing numbers of international bikers are crossing into Cambodia, while most of the foreign cars that tend to make it are Thai-registered.

River

There is a river border crossing between Cambodia and Vietnam on the banks of the Mekong. There are regular fast passenger boats plying the route between Phnom Penh and Chau Doc in Vietnam, via the Kaam Samnor–Vinh Xuong border crossing. There are also a couple of luxurious river boats

running all the way to the temples of Angkor in Cambodia. There is also a river crossing on the Mekong border with Laos, although most travellers use the road these days.

Border Crossings

Cambodia shares one border crossing with Laos, six crossings with Thailand and eight with Vietnam. Visas are now available at all the land crossings with Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

There are now international ATMs near the Cham Yeam and Poipet borders with Thailand. However, at the rest of the borders, there are very few money-changing facilities at any of these crossings, so be sure to have some small-denomination US dollars handy or baht if crossing from Thailand. The black market is also an option for local currencies – Vietnamese dong, Lao kip and Thai baht. Remember that black marketeers have a well-deserved reputation for short-changing and outright theft.

Cambodian immigration officers at the land border-crossings have a bad reputation for petty extortion. Travellers are occasionally asked for an ‘immigration fee’ of some kind, particularly when entering or exiting via the Lao border. Other scams include overcharging for the visa in Thai baht (anywhere between 1000B and 1200B instead of 700B) and forcing tourists to change US dollars into riel at a poor rate. Hold your breath, stand your ground, don’t start a fight and remember that not all Cambodians are as mercenary as the men in blue.

Senior government officials in Phnom Penh are trying to crack down on overcharging for visas and general petty extortion at the borders, as it gives Cambodia a bad image. In order to help bring an end to this, we suggest you ask for the name of any official demanding extra money at the border and mention you will pass it on to the Ministers of Interior and Tourism.

LAOS

Cambodia and Laos share a remote frontier that includes some of the wildest areas of both countries. There is only one border crossing open to foreigners and given the remoteness of the region, it is unlikely any more will open in the near future.

Dom Kralor–Voen Kham

The border between Cambodia and Laos is officially open from 7am to 5pm daily. It is very popular as an adventurous and cheap way to combine travel to northeastern Cambodia and southern Laos. On the Cambodian side of the border, there are confusingly two possible places to cross the border: one on the river (Koh Chheuteal Thom) and one on the old road from Stung Treng (Dom Kralor). Few travellers use the original Koh Chheuteal Thom crossing as the speedboats to Stung Treng are overpriced. More prefer to travel by minibus via the road border at Dom Kralor.

To enter Cambodia using this route, visas are available on arrival. Those exiting Cambodia for Laos should arrange a Lao visa

in advance in Phnom Penh. Both sides of the border seem to charge an overtime fee for those crossing at lunch time or after dark, although the exact sum (usually US\$1 to US\$5) depends on gentle but persuasive bargaining.

To leave Cambodia, travel to the remote town of Stung Treng (p289). From Stung Treng there are regular minibuses (US\$5 per person) heading north to the border. Longtail rocket boats (US\$30 for the boat, US\$5 per person, one hour) can be chartered up the Mekong and take up to six people.

The road crossing is more straightforward, as on the Mekong, Cambodian immigration is on the west bank and Lao immigration is on the east bank. Once in Voen Kham in Laos, there are outboards running up to the island of Don Khone (US\$5, 20 minutes), although they drop you on the wrong side of the island, as they can’t traverse the falls.

Those heading further north can take a motorcycle taxi for about US\$5 to Nakasong, where it is possible to arrange a boat to Don Det or Don Khone, or arrange a *jamboh* (three-wheeled motorcycle taxi) on to Hat Xai Khun for the boat across to Don Khong.

Coming to Cambodia from Laos, the options outlined above can be run in reverse. The cheapest way is to take one of the dirt-cheap boat trips advertised on Don Khone and Don Khong, costing just a few dollars, which include the waterfalls and dolphin viewing. Once you get back to Voen Kham from viewing the dolphins, jump ship and arrange a seat in a Cambodian taxi or minibus, costing about US\$5 to Stung Treng. There are also plenty of Cambodian outboards hanging around the dock at Voen Kham for the run to Stung Treng, but they seem to have fixed the price at US\$10 per person, which is double what it costs to travel in the other direction.

THAILAND

Cambodia and Thailand share a lengthy border and there are now six legal international border crossings, and many more options for locals. Land borders with Thailand are open from 7am to 8pm daily. Tourist visas are available at all crossings for US\$20. There are now clear signs displaying the US\$20 charge, but many people are still charged 1000B. For the latest sagas on land crossings between Thailand and Cambodia, visit www.talesofasia.com.

Poipet–Aranya Prathet

The original land border crossing between Cambodia and Thailand has earned itself a bad reputation in recent years, with scams galore to help tourists part with their money. The ‘scam bus’ (p330) promoted on Khao San Rd in Bangkok is now legendary throughout Asia, but many travellers still succumb to the charms of cheap tickets.

There are two slow trains a day from Hualamphong train station in Bangkok to the Thai border town of Aranya Prathet (48B, six hours); take the 5.55am service unless you want to spend the night in a border town. There are also regular bus services from Bangkok’s Mo Chit northern terminal to Aranya Prathet (200/160B 1st/2nd class, four to five hours). From Aranya Prathet, take a *tuk tuk* (motorised three-wheeled pedicab) for the final six kilometres to the border for about 80B.

Avoid the touts when crossing into Cambodia and don’t listen to any offers of help securing a visa. Once across, try not to get roped into the ‘free’ tourist shuttle to the ‘Tourist Lounge’. This place arranges transport to major cities, but at inflated prices: Phnom Penh (US\$15, seven to eight hours); Siem Reap (US\$10, five hours); Battambang (US\$8, 2½ hrs). Stick solo and walk to the bus company offices for cheaper fares. Almost all buses run by all the companies depart very early in the morning (before 8am). It is also possible to negotiate taxis if you can avoid the taxi mafia. Try to pay no more than US\$40 to Siem Reap or US\$30 to Battambang. Finally, there is the independent option of climbing aboard a pick-up truck hanging out in front of the market near the central roundabout. It’s just 50B for a spot in the back to Sisophon from where there is onward transport to Battambang or Siem Reap.

The road to Siem Reap is still unsurfaced and gets very, very ugly during the wet season. It should be the number one priority for trade and tourism, and it should finally be rebuilt during the lifetime of this book.

Leaving Cambodia, it is easy enough to get to Poipet from Siem Reap (p136), Battambang (p246) or even Phnom Penh (p110). By land there is no departure tax to leave Cambodia. From Poipet, take a *tuk tuk* to Aranya Prathet, from where there are regular buses to Bangkok between 4am and 10pm or the slow train at 1.55pm.

CAMBODIA BORDER CROSSINGS AT A GLANCE

| Country | Border Crossing | Connecting |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cambodia/Laos | Dom Kralor/Voen Kham | Stung Treng/Si Phan Done |
| Cambodia/Thailand | Poipet/Aranya Prathet | Siem Reap/Bangkok |
| | Cham Yeam/Hat Lek | Koh Kong/Trat |
| | O Smach/Chong Jom | Samraong/Surin |
| | Choam/Choam Srawngam | Anlong Veng/Sangkha |
| | Psar Pruhm/Ban Pakard | Pailin/Chantaburi |
| | Kamrieng/Daun Lem | Battambang/Chantaburi |
| Cambodia/Vietnam | Bavet/Moc Bai | Phnom Penh/HCMC |
| | Kaam Samnor/Vinh Xuong | Phnom Penh/Chau Doc |
| | Prek Chak/Xa Xia | Kampot/Ha Tien |
| | Phnom Den/Tinh Bien | Takeo/Chau Doc |
| | O Yadaw/Le Tanh | Ratanakiri/Pleiku |
| | Trapaeng Thlong/Xa Mat | Kompong Cham/Tay Ninh |
| | Trapaeng Sre/Loc Ninh | Snuol/Loc Ninh |
| Banteay Chakrey/Khanh Binh | Neak Luong/An Phu | |

THE SCAM BUS

Poipet is a Wild West kind of place and has attracted a lot of unsavoury characters clinging to the coat-tails of the economic boom. Unfortunately, many of these are involved in the travel business and carry on like some sort of mafia, giving Cambodia a bad name. Welcome to the scam bus, notorious throughout Asia for ripping off foreigners. Anyone staying in Khao San Rd in Bangkok will soon notice the cheap tickets to Siem Reap and the temples of Angkor on offer. Once travellers get to the border, someone will 'help' arrange the visas and pretend the visa fee is now 1300B rather than US\$20. The latest trick is to stop the buses several clicks before the border at a 'visa office' and pressure travellers into paying for an overpriced Cambodian visa.

Once inside Cambodia, a new game begins: drive as slowly as possible to Siem Reap. The road from Poipet to Siem Reap is good enough to cover in about three to four hours in the dry season, but somehow the bus driver will make sure you get there after dark, arriving at a backstreet guesthouse of their choice. Any attempt to leave this guesthouse could lead to a major bust up with the guesthouse owners, as they have already agreed to a commission with the transport company and it's nonrefundable. So the cheap bus ends up costing you time and money, deservedly earning its name the 'scam bus'. In recent years, it got worse, with Thai and Cambodian companies colluding to take travellers through the Psar Pruhm–Ban Pakard border crossing (opposite) near Pailin, a massive diversion on miserable roads. Coming this way ensures that you arrive in Siem Reap in the middle of the night, in no mood to go looking for another guesthouse.

Travelling independently is the way to go, using public buses on the Thai side and share taxis on the Cambodian side. Sure it could cost a bit more, but this way you keep your options open. Remember the phrase 'too good to be true'? That's the scam bus, through and through.

Cham Yeam–Hat Lek

The Cham Yeam–Hat Lek border crossing between Cambodia's Krong Koh Kong and Trat in Thailand is popular with travellers linking the beaches of Cambodia and Thailand.

Coming from Bangkok, take a bus to Trat (210B, five to six hours) from the city's Eastern bus station. Buses depart regularly from 6am until 11.30pm. The 11.30pm bus arrives in Trat early enough to get to Krong Koh Kong in time to catch the 8am fast boat to Sihanoukville. Another convenient option for travellers staying in the Khao San Rd area is to take one of the minibuses bound for Koh Chang, getting off at Trat.

From Trat, take a minibus straight to the Thai border at Hat Lek for 110B. The border opens at 7am so it is possible to stay the night in Trat and, with an early enough start, still make the boat to Sihanoukville – but it's tight. Alternatively, cross later in the day and stay the night in Krong Koh Kong and see the waterfalls and islands (p186) around there. Once on the Cambodian side of the border you can take a *moto* (motorcycle with driver; 50B plus 11B toll) or taxi (200B plus 44B toll) to Krong Koh Kong.

Fast boats from Krong Koh Kong to Sihanoukville (US\$20 for foreigners, four

hours) leave at 8am and depart Sihanoukville at 9.30am when heading in the other direction. A word of warning: the sea can be dangerously rough at times and these boats were designed for river travel, not sailing the open seas! From Sihanoukville (p211) there are cheap air-con buses to Phnom Penh (p110).

It is also possible to travel by road from Krong Koh Kong to Phnom Penh or Sihanoukville. Virak Buntham and Rith Momy run bus and minibus services to both cities (300B) every morning, or negotiate with a share taxi. It should be 400B for a seat to either destination, but it is probably worth buying two seats for comfort. The road is now surfaced with four new bridges, bringing journey times – and prices – down dramatically.

Leaving Cambodia, take either a taxi or *moto* across the bridge to the border from Krong Koh Kong. Once in Thailand, catch a minibus to Trat from where there are regular buses to Bangkok. Alternatively, stay the night in Trat and then head to Ko Chang or the surrounding islands the following day.

Other Crossings

Several more out of the way crossings are open for international traffic. The **O Smach–Chong Jom** crossing connects Cambodia's Oddar

Meanchey Province and Thailand's Surin Province with Siem Reap, but it is very remote. There are five buses per day from Surin to Chong Jom (30B, two hours). Once on the Cambodian side, you can head to Samraong (p257) on a miserable road by *moto* (250B, one hour) or private taxi (1200B, almost two hours), and arrange local transport from there on to Siem Reap. There is no public transport east to Anlong Veng or southwest to Banteay Chhmear.

The **Choam–Choam Srawngam** crossing, 16km north of Anlong Veng on unexpected paved road, puts you into a pretty remote part of Thailand and hence transport connections are, for once, harder on the Thai side. Pick-up trucks (3000/2000r inside/on the back) leave Anlong Veng early, heading to the Cambodian border town of Choam from 6am. Alternatively, charter a *moto* (10,000r) or a taxi (US\$20). Once on the Thai side, there are several onward buses a day, but they are quite spaced out. Coming in the other direction from Thailand, the closest major town is Si Saket. From Si Saket there are several buses that make the journey each day to the border. Note that from Anlong Veng (p261) there is no public transport east to Prasat Preah Vihear or west to Samraong.

The border near Pailin, 102km southwest of Battambang, is open for business as well. Some foreigners are unexpectedly crossing the border at **Psar Pruhm–Ban Pakard**, courtesy of the 'scam bus' (opposite). To travel this way independently, take a bus from Bangkok to Chantaburi (160B, four hours) and then a minibus from there to Ban Pakard (150B, 1½ hours). Cross the Cambodian border into the casino area and then arrange a share taxi into Pailin (300B for the whole car, 50B per person). From Pailin it is possible to get to Battambang (200B, 2½ hours) by share taxi on a real joke of a road. Run this route in reverse to exit Cambodia; prices should be the same with a bit of bargaining here and there.

There is another remote border at **Kamrieng–Daun Lem** in Battambang Province, but it is really just an outpost with a casino catering to Thai gamblers and not very accessible from the Cambodian side.

There is also a border at **Prasat Preah Vihear** (p268), the stunning Cambodian temple perched atop the Dangrek mountains. This is currently just a day crossing for tourists

wanting to visit the temple from the Thai side, but it may be upgraded to a full international crossing during the lifetime of this book.

VIETNAM

Cambodia and Vietnam share a long frontier with a bevy of border crossings. Foreigners are currently permitted to cross at eight places and there are new crossings opening all the time. Cambodian visas are now available at all crossings. Vietnamese visas should be arranged in advance, as they are not available on arrival. Luckily, Cambodia is the easiest place in the world to pick up Vietnamese visas. It is no longer necessary to stipulate your exact point of entry and exit on the Vietnam visa, or the exact date of arrival, making for the sort of carefree travel overlanders prefer.

Bavet–Moc Bai

The original land crossing between Vietnam and Cambodia has seen steady traffic for more than a decade. The trip by bus between Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City takes about five to six hours, including the border crossing. There are now several companies offering direct services with no need to change buses. Choose from Capitol Transport, GST, Mai Linh, Mekong Express, Neak Krohorm and Phnom Penh Sorya Transport. All charge between US\$9 and US\$12; see p110 for contact details.

Kaam Samnor–Vinh Xuong

Cambodia and Vietnam opened their border on the Mekong back in 2000 and it is now very popular with independent travellers. It is a far more interesting trip than taking the road, as it involves a fast boat on the Mekong in Cambodia and travel along some very picturesque areas of the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Coming from Ho Chi Minh City, it is possible to book a cheap Mekong Delta tour through to Chau Doc and then make your own way from there.

Adventurous travellers like to plot their own course. Leaving Cambodia, take a bus from Psar Thmei in Phnom Penh to Neak Luong (4500r, 1½ hours, regular departures) then jump off the bus on the west bank of the Mekong (don't take the ferry across the river!) and ask around for outboards to Kaam Samnor (one hour). They depart from a small pier about 300m south of the ferry. It costs

US\$20 to charter the whole boat, but those with a little time on their hands can wait until it fills with locals and pay 16,000r (US\$4) for a place. The border posts at Kaam Samnor are some way apart so hire a *moto* (US\$1) to carry you from building to building to deal with the lengthy bureaucracy. There are separate offices for immigration and customs on both sides of the border, so it can end up taking as much as an hour to navigate. Luggage has to be x-rayed on the Vietnamese side of the border! Once officially in Vietnam at the village of Vinh Xuong, catch a minibus to Chau Doc (US\$2, one hour). From Chau Doc, there are frequent buses to Cantho and Ho Chi Minh City. Those entering Cambodia via Vinh Xuong can just run the aforementioned route in reverse.

There are several boat companies offering direct services between Phnom Penh and Chau Doc. The more upmarket **Blue Cruiser** (☎016 824343; 93 Sisowath Quay; US\$35) departs Chau Doc at 8.30am and Phnom Penh at 1.30pm. **Hang Chau** (☎012 883542; US\$16) pulls out from Chau Doc at 9am and departs Phnom Penh's tourist boat dock at 12 noon. Both take about three hours or so. **Victoria Hotels** (www.victoriahotels-asia.com; US\$80) also has a boat making several runs a week between Phnom Penh and its luxury Victoria Chau Doc Hotel.

Lastly, there are two companies offering luxury cruises between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap via the Kaam Samnor-Vinh Xuong border crossing. International player **Pandaw Cruises** (www.pandaw.com) is an expensive option favoured by high-end tour companies. Cambodian company **Toum Teav Cruises** (www.cf-mekong.com) is smaller and is well regarded for its personal service and excellent food.

Other Crossings

It's open season when it comes to border crossings between Cambodia and Vietnam, but many are a little out of the way for the average traveller. There are rumours that a ferry may soon link Kep or Kampot with Vietnam's Phu Quoc island.

The newly opened **Prek Chak-Xa Xia** crossing has been long anticipated, connecting Kep and Kampot with the Mekong Delta town of Ha Tien. This also offers the prospect of linking the Cambodian coast with the beautiful Vietnamese island of Phu Quoc, formerly the Cambodian island of Koh Tral. As this is a fairly new crossing there is still little in the way of regular transport, but expect bus services

to start at some stage. For now, it is possible to take a *moto* from Kompong Trach (US\$3), Kep (US\$6) or Kampot (US\$9) to the border, cross into Vietnam and take a *xe om* (*moto*) to Ha Tien (US\$2). It is also possible to charter a taxi from Kampot (US\$40), Kep (US\$30) and Kompong Trach (US\$20) to the border.

The **Phnom Den-Tinh Bien** crossing has been open for some time now, but is rarely used as most travellers prefer the Mekong crossing at Kaam Samnor or the new Prek Chak crossing to the south. It lies about 60km southeast of Takeo town in Cambodia and offers connections to Chau Doc. A seat in a share taxi will cost about 6000r from Takeo to the border.

There is a new border crossing in Ratanakiri province at **O'Yadaw-Le Tanh**, offering connections between Banlung and Pleiku, in Vietnam's central highlands. NH19 from Banlung to the O'Yadaw border (five hours) is still in a shameful state, so it may be some time before this border sees regular traffic. Ask around in Banlung or Pleiku about charters or try your luck with a combination of pick-ups and motos.

There are a cluster of border crossings in the east of Cambodia that connect obscure towns and are not really on the radar. The **Trapaeng Phlong-Xa Mat** and **Trapaeng Sre-Loc Ninh** crossings are both off NH7 and the Xa Mat crossing could be useful for those planning to visit the Cao Dai temple travelling to or from Ho Chi Minh City. Once the roads are all upgraded, this will probably be the favoured route for direct traffic between Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City. The **Banteay Chakrey-Dong Thap** crossing is really out of the way and sees almost no foreign travellers.

TOURS

In the early days of tourism in Cambodia, organised tours were a near necessity. The situation has changed dramatically and it is now much easier to organise your own trip. Budget and midrange travellers in particular can go it alone, as arrangements are cheap and easy on the ground. If you are on a tight schedule, it can pay to book a domestic flight in advance if planning to link the temples of Angkor and Siem Reap with Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. Once at Angkor, guides and all forms of transport under the sun are plentiful.

Shop around before booking a tour, as there is lots of competition and some companies, such as those listed here, offer more inter-

esting itineraries than others. There are also several good companies based in Cambodia that are trying to put a little something back into the country.

Australia

Adventure World (☎02-8913 0755; www.adventureworld.com.au) Offers adventure tours of Cambodia, as well as neighbouring Vietnam and Laos.

Intrepid Travel (☎1300 360 667; www.intrepidtravel.com.au) Small group tours for all budgets with an environmental, social and cultural edge.

Peregrine (☎02-9290 2770; www.peregrine.net.au) Small group and private tours supporting responsible tourism.

Cambodia

About Asia (☎855-92 121059; www.asiatravel-cambodia.com) Small bespoke travel company specialising in Siem Reap and Cambodia with a growing reputation. Profits going to build schools in Cambodia.

Cambodia Expeditions (☎855-12 583759; www.cambodiaexpeditions.com) Adventurous outfit promoting motorbike tours, expeditions and trekking tours.

Hanuman Tourism (☎855-23 218396; www.hanumantourism.com) Long-running locally-owned, locally-operated company with innovative tours like Temple Safari. Runs a charitable foundation to build bridges between tourists and worthy causes.

Journeys Within (☎855-63 964748; www.journeys-within.com) A boutique tourism company offering trips to Cambodia and the Mekong region. Operates a small boutique hotel in Siem Reap and has a charitable arm (see www.journeyswithinourcommunity.org for more information) helping schools and communities.

Local Adventures (☎855-23 990460; www.cambodia.nl) Cambodian-based company specialising in off-the-beaten path tours to the less visited regions of the country. Assists Cambodian children through the Cambodian Organisation for Learning and Training (www.colt-cambodia.org).

Pepy Ride (☎855-23 222804; www.pepyride.org) Specialist cycling company that runs adventurous bike rides through Cambodia to raise funds to build schools and improve education. Also offers noncycling trips.

Sam Veasna Centre (☎855-63 761597; www.samveasna.org) Established ecotourism operator specialising in bird-watching tours around Cambodia, including Ang Trapeang Thmor and Ttamboey. Supports conservation and education.

France

Compagnie des Indes & Oriens (☎01-5363-3340; www.compagniesdumonde.com) Offers organised tours covering more of Cambodia than most.

Intermedes (☎01-4561-9090; www.intermedes.com) Offers specialised private tours.

La Route des Indes (☎01-4260-6090; www.laroutedesindes.com) High-end tours with an academic edge.

UK

Audley Travel (☎01604-234855; www.audleytravel.com) Popular tailor-made specialist covering Cambodia.

Carpe Diem (☎0845-2262198; www.carpe-diem-travel.com) Not-for-profit travel company specialising in original adventures in Cambodia and Laos.

Cox & Kings (☎020-7873-5000; www.coxandkings.co.uk) Well-established high-end company, strong on cultural tours.

Explore (☎01252-760100; www.exploreworldwide.com) Small-group adventure travel company.

Hands Up Holidays (☎0776-501 3631; www.handsupholidays.com) A popular company bringing guests closer to the people of Cambodia through its responsible holidays with a spot of volunteering.

Mekong Travel (☎01494-674456; www.mekong-travel.com) A name to inspire confidence in the Mekong region.

Symbiosis (☎020-7924 5906; www.symbiosis-travel.com) Small bespoke travel company with an emphasis on cycling and diving.

Selective Asia (☎0845-370 3344; www.selectiveasia.com) New company that cherry-picks the best trips from leading local agents.

Wild Frontiers (☎020-7376 3968; www.wildfrontiers.co.uk) Adventure specialist with themed tours and innovative adventures.

USA

Asia Transpacific Journeys (☎800-642 2742; www.asiatrainspacific.com) Group tours and tailor-made trips across the Asia-Pacific region.

Distant Horizons (☎800-333 1240; www.distanthorizons.com) Educational tours for discerning travellers.

Geographic Expeditions (☎800-777 8183; www.geoex.com) Well-established high-end adventure travel company.

Global Adrenaline (☎800-825 1680) Luxury adventures for the experienced traveller.

GETTING AROUND

AIR

Airlines in Cambodia

Domestic flights offer a quick way to travel around the country. The problem is that the airlines themselves seem to come and go pretty quickly. There is currently only one domestic airline fully operational in Cambodia,

Siem Reap Airways (Map p79; FT; ☎720022; www.siemreapairways.com; hub Phnom Penh), and that is only an offshoot of Bangkok Airways. It serves the Phnom Penh to Siem Reap route with modern ATRs from France. The government plans to relaunch a national carrier in partnership with an Indonesian business consortium.

There are up to five flights a day between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap and it is usually possible to get on a flight at short notice. However, tickets for Siem Reap Airways (US\$75/115 one way/return) book out fast in peak season.

There are currently no flights to Ratanakiri, although they will likely resume at some stage. There used to be regular services to Battambang, Koh Kong, Mondulki and Stung Treng, but no airline has operated these routes for several years now.

The baggage allowance for domestic flights is only 10kg for each passenger, but unless you are way over the limit it is unlikely you will have to pay for excess baggage.

Helicopter

Helicopters Cambodia (p153) has offices in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap and operates reliable choppers that are available for hire. It mostly operates scenic flights around Angkor, but can be chartered for any journey. Newcomer Sokha Helicopters (p153) has also moved into this business.

BICYCLE

Cambodia is a great country for adventurous cyclists to explore. Needless to say, a mountain bike is the best bet. Basic cycling safety-equipment and authentic spare parts are also in short supply, so bring all this from home. A bell is essential – the louder the better. Many roads remain in bad condition, but there is usually a flat trail along the side. Travelling at such a gentle speed allows for much more interaction with the locals. Although bicycles are common in Cambodian villages, cycling tourists are still very much a novelty and will be wildly welcomed in most small villages. In many parts of the country there are new dirt tracks being laid down for motorcycles and bicycles, and these are a wonderful way to travel into remote parts of Cambodia.

Much of Cambodia is pancake flat or only moderately hilly. Safety, however, is a considerable concern on the newer surfaced roads, as local traffic travels at high speed. Bicycles can

DOMESTIC DEPARTURE TAX

The airport tax for domestic flights is US\$6 from Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports, and just US\$5 from regional airports.

be transported around the country in the back of pick-ups or on the roof of minibuses.

Cycling around Angkor (p153) is an awesome experience as it really helps to get a measure of the size and scale of the temple complex. Mountain biking is likely to take off in Mondulki and Ratanakiri Provinces over the coming years, as there are some great trails off the beaten track. Guesthouses and hotels throughout Cambodia rent out bicycles for US\$1 to US\$2 per day, and a repair stall is never far away.

For the full story on cycle touring in Cambodia, see Lonely Planet's *Cycling Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia*, which has the lowdown on planning a major ride. It outlines 14 days' worth of rides in Cambodia, including a five-day ride from Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, travelling via Kompong Cham (p280) and Prey Veng (p278).

PEPY Ride (☎023-222-804; www.pepyride.org) is a bicycle and volunteer tour company offering adventures throughout Cambodia. PEPY promotes 'adventurous living, responsible giving' and uses proceeds to help build schools in rural Cambodia and fund education programmes.

BOAT

Cambodia's 1900km of navigable waterways are a key element in the country's transportation system, particularly given the state of many roads and the railways. North of Phnom Penh, the Mekong is easily navigable as far as Kratie (p285), but there are no longer regular passenger services on these routes as the roads have taken all the business. There are fast-boat services between Siem Reap and Battambang (p240), and Tonlé Sap Lake is also navigable year-round, although only by smaller boats between March and July.

Traditionally the most popular boat services with foreigners are those that run between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap (p109). The express services do the trip in as little as five hours, but the boats between Phnom

Penh and Siem Reap are horrendously overcrowded and foreigners are charged almost twice the price of Khmers for the 'privilege' of sitting on the roof. It is not the most interesting boat journey in Cambodia, as Tonlé Sap Lake is like a vast sea, offering little scenery. It's much smarter to take a bus (p110) on the new road instead.

The small boat between Siem Reap and Battambang (p245) is more rewarding, as the river scenery is truly memorable, but it can take forever. Whichever fast-boat journey takes your fancy, you may well end up on the roof so remember to use sun block and wear a head covering.

There are now longtail rocket boats operating on northern stretches of the Mekong between Stung Treng (p291) and the Lao border. These are super fast, but are super dangerous if overcrowded or travelling after dark. Never risk departing late if it means travelling at night.

Many travellers use the fast boat between Sihanoukville and Krong Koh Kong (p330) to travel between Thailand and Cambodia.

BUS

The range of road transport is extensive in Cambodia. On sealed roads, large air-conditioned buses are the best choice. Elsewhere in the country, a pick-up truck, share taxi or minibus is the way to go.

Bus services have come on in leaps and bounds in the last few years and the situation is getting even better as more roads are upgraded. The services used most regularly by foreigners are those from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, Battambang, Sihanoukville, Kompong Cham and Kratie, and the tourist buses from Siem Reap to Poipet.

There is a clean and comfortable bus service to towns and villages in the vicinity of Phnom Penh, such as Udong and Phnom Chisor. Operated by Phnom Penh Sorya Transport (Sorya; p110), these services are very cheap and English-speaking staff can direct you onto the right bus.

Minibuses serve most provincial routes, but are not widely used by Western visitors. They are very cheap, but often uncomfortably overcrowded and driven by maniacs, like the meanest of *matatus* (minibus taxis) in East Africa. Only really consider them if there is no alternative.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Car and motorcycle rental are comparatively cheap in Cambodia and many visitors rent a car or motorcycle for greater flexibility to visit out-of-the-way places and to stop when and where they choose. Almost all car rental in Cambodia includes a driver, which is good news given the abysmal state of many roads and the prominence of the psychopathic driver gene among many Cambodian road users.

Driving Licence

A standard driving licence is not much use in Cambodia. In theory, to drive a car you need an International Driving Licence, usually issued through your automobile association back home. It is very unlikely that a driving licence will be of any use to most travellers to Cambodia, save for those coming to work with one of the many foreign organisations in Cambodia.

When it comes to renting motorcycles, it's a case of no licence required. If you can drive the bike out of the shop, you can drive it anywhere, or so the logic goes.

Fuel & Spare Parts

Fuel is relatively expensive in Cambodia, at around 4000r (US\$1) a litre. Fuel is readily available throughout the country, but prices rise in rural areas. Even the most isolated communities usually have someone selling petrol out of Fanta or Johnnie Walker bottles. Some sellers mix this fuel with kerosene to make a quick profit – use it sparingly, in emergencies only.

When it comes to spare parts, Cambodia is flooded with Japanese motorcycles, so it is easy to get parts for Hondas, Yamahas or Suzukis, but finding a part for a Harley or a Ducati is another matter. The same goes for cars – spares for Japanese cars are easy to come by, but if you are driving something obscure, bring substantial spares.

Hire

CAR

Car hire is generally only available with a driver and is only really useful for sightseeing around Phnom Penh and Angkor. Some tourists with a healthy budget also arrange cars or 4WDs with drivers for touring the provinces. Hiring a car with a driver is about US\$25 to US\$35 for a day in and around Cambodia's towns. Heading into the provinces it rises to

right. There are few traffic lights at junctions in Phnom Penh, so most traffic turns left into the oncoming traffic, edging along the left-hand side of the road until a gap becomes apparent. For the uninitiated it looks like a disaster waiting to happen, but Cambodians are quite used to the system. Foreigners should stop at crossings and develop a habit of constant vigilance.

Phnom Penh is the one place where, amid all the chaos, traffic police take issue with Westerners breaking even the most trivial road rules (p81). Make sure you don't turn left at a 'no left turn' sign or travel with your headlights on during the day (although strangely, it doesn't seem to be illegal for Cambodians to travel without headlights at night).

HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe in any country, and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. People who do choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they are planning to go. Hitching with truck drivers is a possibility, but it is very uncomfortable and should be considered extremely unsafe for lone women. Expect to pay for the ride.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Bus

There are currently no local bus networks in Cambodia, even in the capital Phnom Penh.

Cyclo

As in Vietnam and Laos, the *samlor* or *cyclo* (pedicab) is a cheap way to get around urban areas. In Phnom Penh *cyclo* drivers can either be flagged down on main roads or found loitering around markets and major hotels. It is necessary to bargain the fare if taking a *cyclo* from outside an expensive hotel or popular restaurant or bar. Fares range from 1000r to US\$1 (about 4000r). There are few *cyclos* in the provinces and in Phnom Penh the *cyclo* is fast losing ground to the *moto*.

Lorry

No, not a big truck, but the Cambodian name for a local train made from wood and powered by a motorcycle, quite literally the motorcycle's rear wheel touching the track and propelling it along. In the Battambang area, they

WARNING

Moto drivers and *cyclo* riders with little or no English may not understand where you want them to go even though they nod vigorously. This is a particular headache in a big city like Phnom Penh – see the boxed text, p113.

are known as a *norry* or the 'bamboo train' to tourists, and they are powered by an electric motor. Great fun until you meet another train coming the other way – aaaaargh!

Moto

Motos, also known as *motodups* (meaning moto driver), are small motorcycle taxis and their drivers almost universally wear a baseball cap. They are a quick way of making short hops around towns and cities. Prices range from 1000r to US\$1 or more, depending on the distance and the town; expect to pay more at night. (Inflation may also increase prices; see p15.) It used to be that prices were rarely agreed in advance, but with the increase in visitor numbers a lot of drivers have got into the habit of overcharging. It's probably best to negotiate up front, particularly in the major tourist centres, outside fancy hotels or at night.

Outboards

Outboards (pronounced 'out-boor') are the equivalent of Venice's *vaporetto*, a sort of local river-bus or taxi. Found all over the country, they are small fibreglass boats with 15hp and 40hp engines, and can carry up to six people for local or longer trips. They rarely run to schedules, but locals wait patiently for them to fill up. Those with time on their hands can join the wait, those in a hurry can charter the whole boat and take off. Another variation are the longtail rocket boats imported from Thailand that connect small towns on the upper stretches of the Mekong. Rocket is the definitive word and their safety is questionable.

Remorque-kang

The *remorque-kang* is a trailer pulled by a bicycle, effectively a kind of *cyclo* with the passenger travelling behind. The coming of the *moto* has led to a dwindling in numbers, but they are still seen in Battambang (p240) and Kampot (p215). Fares are about the same as *moto* rides.

Remorque-moto

The *remorque-moto* is a large trailer hitched to a motorcycle and pretty much operates as a low-tech local bus with oh-so-natural air-conditioning. They are used throughout rural Cambodia to transport people and goods, and are often seen on the edge of towns ready to ferry farmers back to the countryside. Fares are very cheap, at around 100r per kilometre.

Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville have their very own tourist versions of the *remorque-moto*, with a cute little canopied trailer hitched to the back for two people in comfort or as many as you can pile on at night. These make a great way to explore the temples, as you get the breeze of the bike but some protection from the elements. These are often referred to as *tuk taks* by foreigners travelling in Cambodia.

Rotei Ses

Rotei means 'cart' or 'carriage' and *ses* is 'horse', but the term is used for any cart pulled by an animal. Cambodia's original 4WD, ox carts are a common form of transport in remote parts of the country, as they are the only things that can get through thick mud in the height of the wet season. They are usually pulled by water buffalo or cows. Horse-and-carts are commonly seen in rural Cambodia, although very few tourists like the idea of being pulled along by one of these pitiful horses. Some local community tourism initiatives now include cart rides.

Taxi

Taxi hire is getting easier in Cambodia, but there are still next to no metered taxis. There are many private operators working throughout Cambodia. Guesthouses, hotels and travel agents can arrange them for sightseeing in and around towns. Even in Phnom Penh, however, it can be almost impossible to find a taxi for short hops unless you've booked a car in advance or are leaving popular nightspots late at night.

PICK-UP, SHARE TAXI & JEEP

These days the pick-up trucks are losing ground to the pumped-up Toyota Camrys that have their suspension jacked up like monster trucks. When using pick-up trucks or share taxis, it is an advantage to travel in numbers, as you can buy spare seats to make the journey more comfortable. Double the price for the

front seat and quadruple it for the back row. It is important to remember that there aren't necessarily fixed prices on every route, so you have to negotiate and prices do fluctuate with the price of petrol – after all, the cost of petrol has more than doubled in the last few years.

Pick-ups and share taxis take on the bad roads that buses would break down on and some of the busier roads that buses serve. Share taxis are widely available for hire and for major destinations they can be hired individually or you can pay for a seat and wait for other passengers to turn up. Guesthouses are also very helpful when it comes to arranging share taxis – at a price, of course.

When it comes to pick-ups, passengers can sit in the cab or, if money is short and comfort an alien concept, out on the back; trucks depart when seriously full. Passengers sitting out back should carry a scarf to protect from the dust and sunscreen to protect against the sun. In the wet season a raincoat is as good as compulsory. Arranging a pick-up directly is less expensive than getting a guesthouse to organise it, but involves considerable aggravation. Haggle patiently to ensure a fair price.

In very remote areas, particularly in the wet season, when the roads are even more abysmal than usual, huge six-wheel-drive Russian military trucks serve as periodic transport. These are known as *lan damrei* (elephant trucks).

TRAIN

Cambodia's rail system is, like the old road network, one of the most notorious in Asia. There are no longer passenger services, but it may be possible to negotiate a ride on a freight train if you are feeling really masochistic. The best sections of the network are between Takeo and Kampot and from there to Sihanoukville. Trains travel at an average speed of 20km/h, bridges are not always maintained and the ride is often as bumpy as on some of the roads, as the tracks are so warped.

The railway is about to be completely overhauled to plug it into the Trans-Asian Railway which will eventually link Singapore and China, but this will take a few years. In the meantime, ardent trainspotters should be able to pay their way onto a cargo train, but bear in mind it takes more than 12 hours to Battambang, and that's if the train doesn't derail. It's more fun to take to the rails on the bamboo train (p247) around Battambang.

The rail network consists of about 645km of single-track metre-gauge lines. The 382km northwestern line, built before WWII, links Phnom Penh with Pursat (165km), Battambang (274km) and Sisophon (302km). The last stretch to Poipet was pulled up by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. The 263km southwestern line, which was completed in 1969, connects Phnom Penh with Takeo (75km), Kampot (166km) and the port of Sihanoukville (228km).

The civil war during much of the 1980s and 1990s led to some unique developments in the Cambodian rail system. Each train was equipped with a tin-roofed, armoured carriage sporting a huge machine gun and numerous gun ports in its sides. In addition, the first two flat-bed carriages of the train operated as mine sweepers. Travel on the first carriage was free and on the second carriage half-price and, despite the risks, these options were extremely popular with the locals.

Health

Dr Trish Batchelor

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Your health is more of a concern in Cambodia than most other parts of Southeast Asia, due to poor sanitation and a lack of effective medical treatment facilities. Once you venture into rural areas you are very much on your own, although most towns have a reasonable clinic these days.

If you feel particularly unwell, try to see a doctor rather than visit a hospital; hospitals in rural areas are pretty primitive and diagnosis can be hit and miss. If you fall seriously ill in Cambodia you should head to major centres Phnom Penh or Siem Reap, as these are the only places in the country with decent emergency treatment. Pharmacies in the larger towns are remarkably well stocked and you don't need a prescription to get your hands on anything from antibiotics to anti-malarials. Prices are also very reasonable, but do check the expiry date, as some medicine may have been on the shelves for quite a long time.

Don't let these warnings make you paranoid. Travel health depends a lot on your level of predeparture preparation, your daily health care while travelling and also how you handle any medical problem that may develop. While the potential dangers can seem quite frightening, in reality few travellers experience anything more than an upset stomach.

BEFORE YOU GO

INSURANCE

Make sure that you have adequate health insurance. See p314 for details.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Plan ahead for getting your vaccinations (see the boxed text, p342): some of them require more than one injection over a period of time, while others should not be given together. Note that some vaccinations should not be given during pregnancy or to people with allergies.

It is recommended that you seek medical advice at least six weeks before travel. Be aware that there is often a greater risk of disease during pregnancy and among children.

Record all vaccinations on an International Certificate of Vaccination, available from your doctor. It is a good idea to carry this as proof of your vaccinations when travelling in Cambodia.

FURTHER READING

If you are planning on travelling in remote areas for a long period of time, you may consider taking a more detailed health guide, such as Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel: Asia & India*, which is a handy pocket-sized guide packed with useful information including pre-trip planning, emergency first aid, immunisation and disease information, and what to do if you get sick on the road. *Where There Is No Doctor*, by David Werner, is a very detailed guide intended for those going to work in an underdeveloped country.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan, includes advice on travel health for younger children.

OTHER PREPARATIONS

Make sure you're healthy before you start travelling. If you're going on a long trip, make a visit to a dentist before you depart. If you wear glasses, take a spare pair and your prescription.

If you require a particular medication, try to ensure that you take an adequate supply, as it may not be available locally. Take part of the packaging that shows the generic name rather than the brand only, as this will make getting replacements easier. To avoid any problems, it is also a good idea to have a legible prescription or letter from a doctor to show that you use the medication regularly.

Medical Kit Check List

Following is a list of items you should consider including in your medical kit – consult your pharmacist for brands available in your country.

- aspirin or paracetamol (acetaminophen in the USA) – for pain or fever
- antihistamine – for allergies, eg hay fever; to ease the itch from insect bites or stings; and to prevent motion sickness

REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Vaccinations you may want to consider for a trip to Cambodia are listed here, but it is imperative that you discuss your needs with your doctor. For more details about the diseases themselves, see the individual entries later in this section.

- **Diphtheria and tetanus** – vaccinations for these two diseases are usually combined. After an initial course of three injections (usually given in childhood), boosters are necessary every 10 years.
- **Hepatitis A** – this vaccine provides long-term immunity after an initial injection and a booster at six to 12 months. Alternatively, an injection of gamma globulin can provide short-term protection against hepatitis A – two to six months, depending on the dose. It is reasonably effective and, unlike the vaccine, is protective immediately but, because it is a blood product, there are current concerns about its long-term safety. The hepatitis A vaccine is also available in a combined form with the hepatitis B vaccine – three injections over a six-month period are required.
- **Hepatitis B** – travellers who should consider vaccination against hepatitis B include those on a long trip, as well as those visiting countries where there are high levels of hepatitis B infection (such as Cambodia), where blood transfusions may not be adequately screened or where sexual contact or needle sharing is a possibility. Vaccination involves three injections, with a booster at 12 months. More rapid courses are available if necessary.
- **Japanese B Encephalitis** – consider vaccination against this disease if spending a month or longer in Cambodia, when making repeated trips or if visiting during an epidemic. It involves three injections over 30 days.
- **Polio** – everyone should keep up-to-date with this vaccination, normally given in childhood. A booster every 10 years maintains immunity.
- **Rabies** – vaccination should be considered by those spending a month or longer in Cambodia, especially if they are cycling, handling animals, caving or travelling to remote areas. It's also recommended for children, as they may not report a bite. Vaccination involves having three injections over 21 to 28 days. Vaccinated people who are bitten or scratched by an animal will require two booster injections of vaccine; those not vaccinated require more.
- **Tuberculosis** – the risk of travellers contracting TB is usually very low, unless you will be living with, or closely associated with, local people. Vaccination against TB (BCG vaccine) is recommended for children and young adults who will be living in high-risk areas, including Cambodia, for three months or more.
- **Typhoid** – vaccination against typhoid may be required if you are travelling for more than a couple of weeks in Cambodia.
- **Yellow Fever** – a yellow fever vaccine is now the only vaccine that is a legal requirement for entry into Cambodia when coming from an infected area. This refers to a direct flight from an infected area, but there are no direct flights from Africa or South America, the most likely places of infection.

- cold and flu tablets, throat lozenges and nasal decongestant
- multivitamins – consider for long trips, when dietary vitamin intake may be inadequate
- antibiotics – consider including these if you're travelling well off the beaten track; see your doctor before you go, as they must be prescribed, and carry the prescription with you
- loperamide or diphenoxylate – 'blockers' for diarrhoea
- prochlorperazine or metaclopramide – for nausea and vomiting
- rehydration mixture – to prevent dehydration, which may occur, for example, during bouts of diarrhoea; rehydration mixture is particularly important when travelling with children
- insect repellent, sunscreen, lip balm and eye drops
- calamine lotion, sting relief spray or aloe vera – to ease irritation from sunburn and insect bites or stings
- antifungal cream or powder – for fungal skin infections and thrush
- antiseptic (such as povidone-iodine) – for cuts and grazes
- bandages, Band-Aids (plasters) and other wound dressings
- water purification tablets or iodine
- scissors, tweezers and a thermometer – note that mercury thermometers are prohibited by airlines
- sterile kit (sealed medical kit containing syringes and needles) – highly recommended, as Cambodia has medical hygiene problems

to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, walk about the cabin, contract the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is experienced when a person travels by air across more than three time zones. It occurs because many of the functions of the human body (such as temperature, pulse rate and emptying of the bladder and bowels) are regulated by internal 24-hour cycles. When we travel long distances rapidly, our bodies take time to adjust to the 'new time' of our destination, and we may experience fatigue, disorientation, insomnia, anxiety, impaired concentration and loss of appetite. These effects will usually be gone within three days of arrival, but to minimise the impact of jet lag:

- rest for a couple of days prior to date of departure.
- try to select flight schedules that minimise sleep deprivation; arriving late in the day means you can go to sleep soon after you arrive. For very long flights, try to organise a stopover.
- avoid excessive eating (which bloats the stomach) and alcohol intake (which causes dehydration) during the flight. Instead, drink plenty of noncarbonated, nonalcoholic drinks such as fruit juice or water.
- make yourself comfortable by wearing loose-fitting clothes and perhaps bringing an eye mask and earplugs to help you sleep.
- on the flight, try to sleep at the appropriate time for the time zone to which you are travelling.

Eating lightly before and during a trip will reduce the chances of motion sickness. If you are prone to motion sickness, try to find a place that minimises movement – near the wing on aircraft, close to midships on boats, near the centre on buses. Fresh air usually helps; reading and cigarette smoke don't. Ginger (available in capsule form) and peppermint (including mint-fla-

IN TRANSIT

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when blood clots form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they may cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle, or calf, usually on just one side. When a blood clot travels

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN CAMBODIA

Traditional medicine or *thnam boran* is very popular in rural Cambodia. There are *kru Khmer* or traditional medicine men in most districts of the country and some locals trust them more than modern doctors and hospitals. Working with tree barks, roots, herbs and plants, they boil up brews to supposedly cure all ills. However, when it comes to serious conditions like snake bites, their treatments can be counterproductive and infectious. Other popular traditional remedies, even in the city, include *kor kchoal*, a vigorous coin massage to take away the bad wind, and *chup kchoal*, a massage using heated vacuum cups. The first leaves red streaks on the torso like the patient has been flayed, the second large round circles like a contagious disease.

voured sweets) are natural preventatives of motion sickness.

IN CAMBODIA

AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Self-diagnosis and treatment of health problems can be risky, so you should always seek professional medical help. Although we do give drug dosages in this section, they are for emergency use only. Correct diagnosis is vital.

An embassy, consulate or five-star hotel can usually recommend a local doctor or clinic. Antibiotics should ideally be administered only under medical supervision. Take only the recommended dose at the prescribed intervals and use the whole course, even if the illness seems to be cured earlier. Stop immediately if there are any serious reactions and don't use the antibiotic at all if you are unsure that you have the correct one. Some people are allergic to commonly prescribed antibiotics such as penicillin or sulpha drugs; carry this information (eg on a bracelet) when travelling.

The best clinics and hospitals in Cambodia are found in Phnom Penh (p77) and Siem Reap (p122). A consultation usually costs in the region of US\$20 to US\$40, plus medicine. Elsewhere, facilities are more basic, although a private clinic is usually preferable to a govern-

ment hospital. For serious injuries or illnesses, seek treatment in Bangkok.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Dengue

This viral disease is transmitted by mosquitoes and occurs mainly in tropical and subtropical areas of the world. There is only a small risk to travellers, except during epidemics, which are usually seasonal in Cambodia, during and just after the wet season.

Unlike the malaria mosquito, the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits the dengue virus, is most active during the day and is found mainly in urban areas.

Signs and symptoms of dengue fever include a sudden onset of high fever, headache, joint and muscle pains (hence its old name, 'breakbone fever') and nausea and vomiting. A rash of small red spots appears three to four days after the onset of fever. Dengue is commonly mistaken for other infectious diseases, including influenza.

Seek medical attention if you think you may be infected. A blood test can diagnose infection, but there is no specific treatment for the disease. Aspirin should be avoided, as it increases the risk of haemorrhaging, but plenty of rest is advised. Recovery may be prolonged, with tiredness lasting for several weeks. Severe complications are rare in travellers but include dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF), which can be fatal without prompt medical treatment. DHF is thought to be a result of secondary infection due to a different strain (there are four major strains) and usually affects residents of the country rather than travellers.

There is no vaccine against dengue fever. The best prevention is to avoid mosquito bites at all times – see Malaria, opposite, for more details.

Fungal Infections

Fungal infections occur more commonly in hot weather and are usually on the scalp, between the toes (athlete's foot) or fingers, in the groin and on the body (ringworm). Ringworm, a fungal infection, not a worm, is contracted from infected animals or other people. Moisture encourages these infections.

To prevent fungal infections wear loose, comfortable clothes, avoid artificial fibres, wash frequently and dry yourself carefully. If you do get an infection, wash the infected area at least daily with a disinfectant or medicated

soap and water, and rinse and dry well. Apply an antifungal cream or powder like tolnaftate (Tinaderm). Try to expose the infected area to air or sunlight as much as possible. Wash all towels and underwear in hot water, change them often and let them dry in the sun.

Hepatitis

Hepatitis is a general term for inflammation of the liver. It is a common disease worldwide. There are several different viruses that cause hepatitis, and they differ in the way that they are transmitted. The symptoms are similar in all forms of the illness, and include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, feelings of weakness and aches and pains, followed by loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, light-coloured faeces, jaundiced (yellow) skin and yellowing of the whites of the eyes. People who have had hepatitis should avoid alcohol for some time after the illness, as the liver needs time to recover.

Hepatitis A is transmitted by ingesting contaminated food or water. You should seek medical advice, but there is not much you can do apart from resting, drinking lots of fluids, eating lightly and avoiding fatty foods. Hepatitis E is transmitted in the same way as hepatitis A; it can be particularly serious in pregnant women.

There are almost 300 million chronic carriers of hepatitis B in the world. It is spread through contact with infected blood, blood products or body fluids; for example, through sexual contact, unsterilised needles, blood transfusions or contact with blood via small breaks in the skin. Other risk situations include shaving, tattooing or body piercing with contaminated equipment. The symptoms of hepatitis B may be more severe than type A and the disease can lead to long-term problems such as chronic liver damage, liver cancer or a long-term carrier state. Hepatitis C and D are spread in the same way as hepatitis B and can also lead to long-term complications.

There are vaccines against hepatitis A and B, but there are currently no vaccines against the other types of hepatitis. Following the basic rules about food and water (hepatitis A and E) and avoiding risk situations (hepatitis B, C and D) are important preventative measures.

HIV/AIDS

Infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) may lead to acquired immune de-

ficiency syndrome (AIDS), which is a fatal disease. Any exposure to blood, blood products or body fluids may put the individual at risk.

The disease is often transmitted through sexual contact or dirty needles, so vaccinations, acupuncture, tattooing and body piercing can be potentially as dangerous as intravenous drug use. HIV/AIDS can also be spread through infected-blood transfusions; although the blood centre in Phnom Penh does screen blood used for transfusions, it is unlikely to be done in many of the provinces.

If you do need an injection, ask to see the syringe unwrapped in front of you, or take a needle and syringe pack with you. Fear of HIV infection should never preclude any treatment for serious medical conditions.

According to WHO figures, Cambodian rates of infection are highest among sex workers. However, due to a concerted awareness campaign, HIV/AIDS infection rates have been steadily declining in the past decade from a high of around 5% of the population in the 1990s to about 1.6% today.

Intestinal Worms

These parasites are most common in rural Cambodia. The various worms have different ways of infecting people. Some may be ingested in food such as undercooked meat (eg tapeworms) and some enter through your skin (eg hookworms). Infestations may not show up for some time, and although they are generally not serious, if left untreated they may cause severe health problems later. Consider having a stool test when you return home to check for worms to determine the appropriate treatment.

Japanese B Encephalitis

This viral infection of the brain is transmitted by mosquitoes. Most cases occur among locals living in rural areas, as the virus exists in pigs and wading birds. Symptoms include fever, headache and alteration in consciousness. Hospitalisation is needed for correct diagnosis and treatment. There is a high mortality rate among those who have symptoms; of those who survive many are intellectually disabled.

Malaria

This serious and potentially fatal disease is spread by mosquitoes. If you are travelling in endemic areas it is extremely important

to avoid mosquito bites and to take tablets to prevent the disease developing if you become infected. There is no malaria in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and most other major urban areas in Cambodia, so visitors on short trips to the most popular places do not need to take medication. Malaria self-test kits are widely available in Cambodia, but are not that reliable.

Symptoms of malaria include fever, chills and sweating, headache, aching joints, diarrhoea and stomach pains, usually preceded by a vague feeling of ill health. Seek medical help immediately if malaria is suspected, as, without treatment, the disease can rapidly become more serious or even fatal.

If medical care is not available, malaria tablets can be used for treatment. You need to use a different malaria tablet to the one you were taking when you contracted the disease, as obviously the first type didn't work. If travelling widely in rural areas of Cambodia, it is worth visiting a pharmacy to purchase a treatment dose – this will save you from complications in the event of an emergency. Antimalarials are available cheaply throughout Cambodia, although buy them from a reputable clinic to be sure they are not fakes.

Travellers are advised to prevent mosquito bites at all times. The main messages:

- Wear light-coloured clothing.
- Wear long trousers and long-sleeved shirts.
- Use mosquito repellents containing the compound DEET on exposed areas (prolonged overuse of DEET may be harmful, especially to children, but its use is considered preferable to being bitten by disease-transmitting mosquitoes).
- Avoid perfumes or aftershave.
- Use a mosquito net impregnated with mosquito repellent (permethrin) – it may be worth taking your own.
- Impregnate clothes with permethrin to effectively deter mosquitoes and other insects.

MALARIA MEDICATION

Antimalarial drugs do not prevent you from being infected but they kill the malaria parasites during their developmental stage, significantly reducing the risk of becoming very ill or dying. Expert advice on medication should be sought, as there are many factors to consider, including the area to be visited, the risk of exposure to malaria-

carrying mosquitoes, the side effects of medication, your medical history and whether you are a child or an adult, and whether you're pregnant. Travellers heading to isolated areas in Cambodia should carry a treatment dose of medication for use if symptoms occur. A new drug called Malarine, supplied and subsidised by the European Union (EU) and WHO, is cheaply available in pharmacies throughout Cambodia. A combination of artesunate and mefloquinine, it is undoubtedly the most effective malaria killer available in Cambodia today. See the English instructions for advice about the appropriate dosage.

Schistosomiasis

Also known as bilharzia, this disease is transmitted by minute worms. They infect certain varieties of freshwater snails found in rivers, streams, lakes and, in particular, dams. The worms multiply and are eventually discharged into the water.

The worm enters through the skin and attaches itself to the intestines or bladder. The first symptom may be feeling generally unwell, or a tingling and sometimes a light rash around the area where the worm entered. Weeks later a high fever may develop. Once the disease is established, abdominal pain and blood in the urine are other signs. The infection often causes no symptoms until the disease is well established (several months to years after exposure), when damage to internal organs is irreversible.

The main method of preventing the disease is avoiding swimming or bathing in fresh water where bilharzia is present. Even deep water can be infected. If you do get wet, dry off quickly and dry your clothes as well.

A blood test is the most reliable way to diagnose the disease, but the test will not show positive until a number of weeks after exposure.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Gonorrhoea, herpes and syphilis are among these infections. Sores, blisters or a rash around the genitals and discharges or pain when urinating are common symptoms. With some STIs, such as wart virus or chlamydia, symptoms may be less marked or not observed at all, especially in women. Syphilis symptoms eventually disappear

completely, but the disease continues and can cause severe problems in later years. While abstinence from sexual contact is the only 100% effective prevention, using condoms is also effective. Reliable condoms are widely available throughout urban areas of Cambodia. Different STIs each require specific antibiotics. The treatment of gonorrhoea and syphilis is with antibiotics. There is no cure for herpes or HIV/AIDS (see p345).

Typhoid

Typhoid fever is a dangerous gut infection caused by contaminated water and food. Medical help must be sought.

In its initial stages sufferers may feel they have a bad cold or flu on the way, as early symptoms are a headache, body aches and a fever that rises a little each day until it is around 40°C (104°F) or higher. The victim's pulse is often slow relative to the degree of fever present – unlike a normal fever where the pulse increases. There may also be vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea or constipation.

In the second week the high fever and slow pulse continue, and a few pink spots may appear on the body; trembling, delirium, weakness, weight loss and dehydration may occur. Complications such as pneumonia, perforated bowel or meningitis may also present themselves.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Simple things like a change of water, food or climate can all cause a mild bout of diarrhoea, but a few rushed toilet trips with no other symptoms are not indicative of a major problem. Almost everyone gets a mild bout of the runs on a longer visit to Cambodia.

Dehydration is the main danger with diarrhoea, particularly in children or the elderly as dehydration can occur quite quickly. Under

all circumstances *fluid replacement* is the most important thing to remember. Weak black tea with a little sugar, soda water, or soft drinks allowed to go flat and diluted 50% with clean water are all good. You need to drink at least the same volume of fluid that you are losing in bowel movements and vomiting. Urine is the best guide to the adequacy of replacement: if you have small amounts of concentrated urine, you need to drink more. Keep drinking small amounts often. Stick to a bland diet as you recover.

With severe diarrhoea, a rehydrating solution is preferable to replace lost minerals and salts. Commercially available oral rehydration salts are very useful; add them to boiled or bottled water. In an emergency you can make up a solution of six teaspoons of sugar and a half-teaspoon of salt to a litre of boiled or bottled water.

Gut-paralysing drugs such as Lomotil or Imodium can be used to bring relief from the symptoms of diarrhoea, although they do not actually cure the problem. Only use these drugs if you do not have access to toilets and *must* travel. For children under 12 years the use of Lomotil and Imodium is not recommended. Do not use these drugs if the person has a high fever or is severely dehydrated.

In certain situations antibiotics may be required: diarrhoea with blood or mucus (dysentery), any diarrhoea with fever, profuse watery diarrhoea, persistent diarrhoea not improving after 48 hours and severe diarrhoea. These suggest a more serious cause of diarrhoea, and gut-paralysing drugs should be avoided.

In these situations, a stool test may be necessary to diagnose what bug is causing the diarrhoea, so seek medical help urgently. Where this is not possible the recommended drugs for bacterial diarrhoea – the most likely cause of severe diarrhoea in travellers –

EVERYDAY HEALTH

Normal body temperature is up to 37°C (98.6°F); more than 2°C (4°F) higher indicates a high fever. The normal adult pulse rate is 60 to 100 beats per minute (children 80 to 100, babies 100 to 140). As a general rule, the pulse increases about 20 beats per minute for each 1°C (2°F) rise in fever.

Respiration (breathing) rate is also an indicator of illness. Count the number of breaths per minute: between 12 and 20 is normal for adults and older children (up to 30 for younger children, 40 for babies). People with a high fever or serious respiratory illness breathe more quickly than normal. More than 40 shallow breaths a minute may indicate pneumonia.

A BANANA A DAY...

If your diet is poor or limited in variety, if you're travelling hard and fast and therefore missing meals or if you simply lose your appetite, you can soon start to lose weight and place your health at risk.

Make sure your diet is well balanced. Cooked eggs, tofu, beans, lentils and nuts are all safe ways to get protein. Fruit you can peel (bananas, oranges or mandarins, for example) is usually safe and a good source of vitamins. Melons can harbour bacteria in their flesh and are best avoided. Try to eat plenty of grains (including rice) and bread. Remember that although food is generally safer if it is well cooked, overcooked food loses much of its nutritional value. If your diet isn't well balanced or if your food intake is insufficient, it's a good idea to take vitamin and iron pills.

Make sure you drink enough – don't rely on feeling thirsty to indicate when you should drink. Not needing to urinate or voiding small amounts of very dark yellow urine is a danger sign. Always carry a water bottle with you on long trips. See below for information on heat exhaustion.

are norfloxacin (400mg twice daily for three days) or ciprofloxacin (500mg twice daily for five days). These are not recommended for children or pregnant women. The drug of choice for children would be co-trimoxazole (Bactrim, Septrin or Resprim) with dosage dependent on weight. A five-day course of the drug is given. Ampicillin or amoxicillin may be given in pregnancy, but medical care is necessary.

Amoebic Dysentery & Giardiasis

Two other causes of persistent diarrhoea in travellers are amoebic dysentery and giardiasis.

Amoebic dysentery, caused by the protozoan *Entamoeba histolytica*, is characterised by a gradual onset of low-grade diarrhoea, often with blood and mucus. Cramping abdominal pain and vomiting are less likely than in other types of diarrhoea, and fever may not be present. Amoebic dysentery will persist until treated and can recur and cause other health problems.

Giardiasis is caused by a common parasite, *Giardia lamblia*. Symptoms include stomach cramps, nausea, a bloated stomach, watery, foul-smelling diarrhoea and frequent gas. Giardiasis can appear several weeks after you have been exposed to the parasite. The symptoms may disappear for a few days and then return; this can go on for several weeks.

Seek medical advice if you think you have giardiasis or amoebic dysentery, but where this is not possible, tinidazole (Fasigyn) or metronidazole (Flagyl) are the recommended drugs to take, although the side effects of Flagyl are severe. Treatment is a 2g single dose of Fasigyn or 250mg of Flagyl three times daily for five to 10 days.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**Food**

There is an old adage that says 'If you can cook it, boil it or peel it you can eat it...otherwise forget it'. This is slightly extreme, but many travellers have found it is better to be safe than sorry. Vegetables and fruit should be washed with purified water or peeled where possible. Beware of ice cream that is sold in the street or anywhere it might have been melted and refrozen. Shellfish such as mussels, oysters and clams should be avoided, as should undercooked meat, particularly in the form of mince. Steaming does not make shellfish safe for eating.

If a place looks clean and well run, and the vendor also looks clean and healthy, then the food is probably safe. In general, places that are packed with travellers or locals will be fine, while empty restaurants might be empty for a reason. The food in busy restaurants is cooked and eaten quite quickly with little standing around and is probably not reheated.

Heat Exhaustion

Dehydration and salt deficiency can cause heat exhaustion. Take time to acclimatise to high temperatures, drink sufficient liquids and do not do anything too physically demanding.

Salt deficiency is characterised by fatigue, lethargy, headaches, giddiness and muscle cramps; salt tablets may help, but adding extra salt to your food is better.

Anhidrotic heat exhaustion is a rare form of heat exhaustion that is caused by an inability to sweat. It tends to affect people who have been in a hot climate for some time, rather than newcomers. It can progress to heatstroke. Treatment involves removal to

a cooler climate or immediate cold showers and wet sheets.

Heatstroke

This serious and occasionally fatal condition can occur if the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down, causing the body temperature to rise to dangerous levels. Long, continuous periods of exposure to high temperatures and insufficient fluids can leave you vulnerable to heatstroke.

The symptoms: feeling unwell, not sweating very much (or at all) and a high body temperature (39°C to 41°C, or 102°F to 106°F). Where sweating has ceased, the skin becomes flushed and red. Severe, throbbing headaches and lack of coordination will also occur, and the sufferer may be confused or aggressive. Eventually the victim will become delirious or convulse. Hospitalisation is essential, but in the interim get victims out of the sun, remove their clothing, cover them with a wet sheet or towel and then fan continually. Give fluids if they are conscious.

Insect Bites & Stings

Bedbugs live in various places, but particularly in dirty mattresses and bedding, and are evidenced by spots of blood on bedclothes or on the wall. Bedbugs leave itchy bites in neat rows. Calamine lotion or Stingose spray may help.

All lice cause itching and discomfort. They make themselves at home in your hair (head lice), your clothing (body lice) or in your pubic hair (crabs). You catch lice through direct contact with infected people or by sharing combs, clothing and the like. Powder or shampoo treatment will kill the lice, and infected clothing should be washed in very hot, soapy water and left to dry in the sun.

Bee and wasp stings are usually painful rather than dangerous. However, in people who are allergic to them, severe breathing difficulties may occur and urgent medical care is then required. Calamine lotion or Stingose spray will relieve itching, and ice packs will reduce the pain and swelling.

Avoid contact with jellyfish, which have stinging tentacles – seek local advice on the safest swimming waters. Dousing in vinegar will deactivate any stingers that have not 'fired'. Calamine lotion, antihistamines and analgesics may reduce the reaction and relieve the pain.

Leeches may be present in damp rainforest conditions; they attach themselves to your skin to suck your blood. Trekkers often get them on their legs or in their boots. Salt or a lighted cigarette end will make them fall off. Do not pull them off, as the bite is then more likely to become infected. Clean and apply pressure if the point of attachment is bleeding. An insect repellent may keep them away, and walkers in leech-infested areas should consider having their boots and trousers impregnated with benzyl benzoate and dibutylphthalate (available from pharmacies in Cambodia).

Always check all over your body if you have been walking through a potentially tick-infested area, as ticks can cause skin infections and other more serious diseases. If a tick is found attached, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Try to avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease. Smearing chemicals on the tick will not make it let go and this is not recommended.

To minimise your chances of being bitten by a snake, always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present. Don't put your hands into holes and crevices, and be careful if collecting firewood.

Snake bites in Cambodia do not cause instantaneous death, but unfortunately antivenoms are not widely available in the country. Immediately wrap the victim's bitten limb tightly, as you would for a sprained ankle, and then attach a splint to immobilise the limb. Keep the victim still and seek medical attention, if possible with the dead snake for identification. However, do not attempt to catch the snake if there is any possibility of being bitten. Tourniquets and sucking out the poison are now comprehensively discredited.

Prickly Heat

Prickly heat is an itchy rash caused by excessive perspiration trapped under the skin. It usually strikes people who have just arrived in a hot climate. Keeping cool, bathing often, drying the skin and using a mild talcum or prickly heat powder, or resorting to the use of air-conditioning, may help.

NOT A GOOD PLACE FOR CONTACTS

People wearing contact lenses should be aware that Cambodia is an extremely dusty country and this can cause much irritation when travelling. It is generally bearable in cars, but when travelling by motorcycle or pick-up, it is most definitely not. Pack a pair of glasses.

Sunburn

You can get sunburnt surprisingly quickly, even through cloud. Use a sunscreen, a hat, and a barrier cream for your nose and lips. Calamine lotion or Stingose are good for mild sunburn. Protect your eyes with good-quality sunglasses. Sunscreen is easily available in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville, but not elsewhere.

Water

The number one rule is *be careful of the water and ice*, even though both are almost always factory-produced, a legacy of the French. If you don't know for certain that the water is safe, assume the worst. Reputable brands of bottled water or soft drinks are generally fine, but you can't safely drink tap water. Only use water from containers with a serrated seal. Tea and coffee are generally fine, as the water will have been boiled.

The simplest way of purifying water is to boil it thoroughly. Vigorous boiling should be satisfactory; however, at high altitude water boils at a lower temperature, so germs are less likely to be killed. Make sure you boil it for longer in these environments.

Consider purchasing a water filter for a long trip. Total filters take out all parasites, bacteria and viruses and make water safe to drink. They are often expensive, but can be more cost effective than buying bottled water. Simple filters (which can even be a nylon mesh bag) take out dirt and larger foreign bodies from the water so that chemical solutions work much

more effectively; if the water is dirty, chemical solutions may not work at all. Chlorine tablets (Puritabs, Steritabs or other brands) will kill many pathogens, but not some parasites like giardia and amoebic cysts. Iodine is more effective in purifying water and is available in tablet form (such as Potable Aqua).

WOMEN'S HEALTH
Gynaecological Problems

Antibiotic use, synthetic underwear, sweating and contraceptive pills can lead to fungal vaginal infections, especially when travelling in hot climates. Thrush (yeast infection or vaginal candidiasis) is characterised by a rash, itching and discharge. Nystatin, miconazole or clotrimazole pessaries or vaginal cream are the usual treatment. Maintaining good personal hygiene and wearing loose-fitting clothes and cotton underwear may help prevent these infections.

STIs are a major cause of vaginal problems. Symptoms include a smelly discharge, painful intercourse and sometimes a burning sensation when urinating. Medical attention should be sought and male sexual partners must also be treated. For more details see p346. Besides abstinence, the best thing is to practise safe sex using condoms.

Pregnancy

Most miscarriages occur during the first three months of pregnancy. Miscarriage is common and can occasionally lead to severe bleeding. The last three months of pregnancy should also be spent within reasonable distance of good medical care. A baby born as early as 24 weeks stands a chance of survival, but only in a good modern hospital such as Calmette in Phnom Penh (p77). Pregnant women should avoid all unnecessary medication, although vaccinations and malarial prophylactics should still be taken where needed. Additional care should be taken to prevent illness and particular attention should be paid to diet and nutrition.

Language

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The Khmer (or Cambodian) language is spoken by approximately nine million people in Cambodia, and is understood by many in bordering countries. Written Khmer is based on the ancient Brahmi script of southern India. Arguably one of the oldest languages in Southeast Asia, Khmer inscriptions have been dated back to the 7th century AD. Although separate and distinct from its Thai, Lao and Burmese neighbours, Khmer shares with them the common roots of Sanskrit and Pali – a heritage of centuries of linguistic and cultural interaction and of their shared faith in Theravada Buddhism. More recently, many French words have entered the Khmer language during the colonial period, especially medical and technical terms.

Unlike the languages of neighbouring countries, Khmer is non tonal, meaning that there are no special intonations within words that alter their meaning. This may be a relief for travellers in the region who have been frustrated in their attempts at tonal languages such as Thai, Vietnamese and Lao. However, the lack of tones is easily offset by the complexity of the Khmer pronunciation. There are 33 consonants, often paired in seemingly bizarre combinations, and some 24 vowels and diphthongs. Further complicating the language is the haphazard transliteration system left over from the days of French rule, which does not

reflect accurate pronunciation of Khmer words by English speakers.

On the positive side, Khmer grammar is very simple. There are no verb conjugations or gender inflections, no endings for single or plural, masculine or feminine. Adding a few words changes sentence tense to past, present or future.

A bit of Khmer will go a long way – no matter how rough it is. The Khmers sincerely appreciate any effort to learn their language and are very supportive of visitors who give it even a halfhearted try. You'll find that as your skill and vocabulary increase, so does your social standing: people go out of their way to compliment you, *moto* fares and prices at markets drop, and you may even win a few friends.

Though English is fast becoming Cambodia's second language, the Khmer still cling to the Francophone pronunciation of the Roman alphabet and most foreign words. This is helpful to remember when spelling Western words and names aloud; thus 'ay-bee-see' becomes 'ah-bey-sey' and so on. French speakers will definitely have an advantage when addressing the older generation, as most educated Khmers studied French at some point during their schooling. Many household items retain their French names as well, especially those which were introduced to Cambodia by the French, such as *robinet* (tap, faucet) and *ampoule* (light bulb).

Recommended reading for those interested in further study of spoken and written Khmer are *Cambodian System of Writing and Beginning Reader*, *Modern Spoken Cambodian* and any other books by Frank Huffman.

Dialects

Although the Khmer language as spoken in Phnom Penh is generally intelligible to Khmers nationwide, there are several distinct dialects in other areas of the country. Most notably, the Khmers of Takeo Province tend to modify or slur hard consonant/vowel combinations, especially those that contain 'r'; thus *bram* (five) becomes *pe-am*, *sraa* (alcohol) becomes *se-aa*, and *baraang*

(French or foreigner) becomes *be-ang*. In Siem Reap, sharp-eared travellers will notice a very Lao-sounding lilt to the local speech. Here, certain vowels are modified, such as *poan* (thousand), which becomes *peuan*, and *kh'sia* (pipe), which becomes *kh'seua*.

TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration system used in this chapter has been designed for basic communication rather than linguistic perfection. Several Khmer vowels, however, have no English equivalent, thus they can only be approximated by English spellings. Other words are written to convey the way they are pronounced and not necessarily according to the actual vowels used in the words. (Khmer place names in this book written in the Roman alphabet will follow their common or standard spellings.)

PRONUNCIATION

The pronunciation guide below covers the trickier parts of the transliteration system used in this chapter. It uses the Roman alphabet to give the closest equivalent to the sounds of the Khmer language. The best way to improve your pronunciation is to listen carefully to native speakers.

Vowels

Vowels and diphthongs with an **h** at the end should be pronounced hard and aspirated (with a puff of air).

Table with 2 columns: Roman letter and Khmer description. Includes entries for aa, i, uh, ii, ei, eu, euh, oh, ow, u, uu, ua, uah.

Table with 2 columns: Roman letter and Khmer description. Includes entries for aa-oe, oe, eua, ia, e, ai, ay, ae, ey, ao, av, euv, ohm, am, oam, a, ah, eah, ih, eh, aw, oah, aw.

Consonants

Khmer uses some consonant combinations that may sound rather bizarre to Western ears and be equally difficult for Western tongues, eg 'j-r' in 'j'rook (pig), or 'ch-ng' in 'ch'ngain (delicious). For ease of pronunciation, in this guide these types of consonants are separated with an apostrophe.

Table with 2 columns: Roman letter and Khmer description. Includes entries for k, kh, ng, j, ch.

Table with 2 columns: Roman letter and Khmer description. Includes entries for ny, t, th, p, ph, r, w.

ACCOMMODATION

Where is a (cheap) hotel? សំណួរគារ/ត្រូវតែល(ថោក)នៅឯណា? I've already found a hotel. ខ្ញុំមានត្រូវតែលហើយ I'm staying at ... ខ្ញុំនៅនៅ ... Could you write down the address, please? សូមសរសេរអាសយដ្ឋានឱ្យខ្ញុំ?

I'd like a room ... ខ្ញុំសុំបន្ទប់ ... for one person សំរាប់មួយនាក់ for two people សំរាប់ពីរនាក់ with a bathroom ដែលមានបន្ទប់ទឹក with a fan ដែលមានកង្ហារ with a window ដែលមានបង្អួច

I'm going to stay for ... ខ្ញុំនឹងនៅទីនេះ ... one day មួយថ្ងៃ one week មួយអាទិត្យ

Do you have a room? នឹកមីនបន្ទប់ទីនេះទេ? How much is it per day? តើលេចមួយថ្ងៃប៉ុន្មាន?

Does the price include breakfast? តើលេចបន្ទប់គិតទាំងម្ហូបពេលព្រឹកឬ? Can I see the room? ខ្ញុំអាចមើលបន្ទប់បានទេ?

I don't like this room. ខ្ញុំមិនចូលចិត្តបន្ទប់នេះទេ Do you have a better room? នឹកមីនបន្ទប់ល្អជាងនេះទេ?

I'll take this room. ខ្ញុំយកបន្ទប់នេះ

Can I leave my things here until ...? ខ្ញុំអាចផ្ញើវត្ថុរបស់ខ្ញុំនៅទីនេះដល់ ... បានទេ? this afternoon ល្ងាចនេះ this evening យប់នេះ

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS Forms of Address

The Khmer language reflects the social standing of the speaker and subject through various personal pronouns and 'politeness words'. These range from the simple baat for men and jaa for women, placed at the end of a sentence, meaning 'yes' or 'I agree', to the very formal and archaic Reachasahp or 'Royal language', a separate vocabulary reserved for addressing the King and very high officials. Many of the pronouns are determined on the basis of the subject's age and sex in relation to the speaker. Foreigners are not expected to know all of these forms. The easiest and most general personal pronoun is niak (you), which may be used in most situations, with either sex. Men of your age or older may be called lowk (Mister). Women of your age or older can be called bawng srei (older sister) or for

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more formal situations, *lowk srei* (Madam). *Bawng* is a good informal, neutral pronoun for men or women who are (or appear to be) older than you. For third person, male or female, singular or plural, the respectful form is *koat* and the common form is *ke*.

- Hello. johm riab sua/sua s'dei ជំរាបសួរ/សួរស្តី
Goodbye. lia suhn hao-y លាសិនហើយ
See you later. juab kh'nia th'ngay krao-y ជួបគ្នាថ្ងៃក្រោយ
Yes. baat បាទ
Please. sohm សូម
Thank you. aw kohn អរគុណ
You're welcome. awt ei te/sohm anjoe-in អត់អីទេ/សូមអញ្ជើញ
Excuse me/I'm sorry. sohm toh សុំទោស
Pardon? (What did you say?) niak niyey thaa mait? អ្នកនិយាយថាម៉េច?
Hi. How are you? niak sohk sabaay te? អ្នកសុខសប្បាយទេ?
I'm fine. kh'nyohm sohk sabaay ខ្ញុំសុខសប្បាយ
Where are you going? niak teuv naa? អ្នកទៅណា?

(NB This is a very common question used when meeting people, even strangers; an exact answer is not necessary.)

- What's your name? niak ch'muah ei? អ្នកឈ្មោះអី?
My name is ... kh'nyohm ch'muah ... ខ្ញុំឈ្មោះ ...
Where are you from? niak mao pii prateh naa? អ្នកមកពីប្រទេសណា?
I'm from ... kh'nyohm mao pii ... ខ្ញុំមកពី ...
I'm staying at ... kh'nyohm snahk neuv ... ខ្ញុំស្នាក់នៅ ...
May I take your photo? kh'nyohm aa-it thawt ruup niak baan te? ខ្ញុំអាចថតរូបអ្នកបានទេ?

DIRECTIONS

- How can I get to ...? phleuv naa teuv ...? ផ្លូវណាទៅ ...?
Is it far? wia neuv ch'ngay te? វាដៅឆ្ងាយទេ?
Is it near? wia neuv juht te? វាដៅជិតទេ?
Is it near here? wia neuv juht nih te? វាដៅជិតនេះទេ?
Go straight ahead. teuv trawng ទៅត្រង់
Turn left. bawt ch'weng បត់ឆ្វេង
Turn right. bawt s'dam បត់ស្តាំ
at the corner neuv kait j'rohng ដៅកាត់ជ្រុង
in front of neuv khaang mohk ដៅខាងមុខ
next to neuv joab ដៅជាប់
behind neuv khaang krao-y ដៅខាងក្រោយ
opposite neuv tohl mohk ដៅទល់មុខ
north khaang jaeng ខាងជើង
south khaang d'bowng ខាងត្បូង
east khaang kaot ខាងកើត
west khaang leit ខាងលិច

HEALTH

- Where is a ដៅណា?
dentist paet th'mein ពេទ្យធ្មេញ
doctor kruu paet គ្រូពេទ្យ
hospital mohntrii paet មន្ទីរពេទ្យ
pharmacy kuhnlaing luak th'nam/ ohsawt s'thaan កន្លែងលក់ថ្នាំ/ ឧសថស្ថាន
I'm ill. kh'nyohm cheu ខ្ញុំឈឺ
My ... hurts. ... r' bawh kh'nyohm cheu ... របស់ខ្ញុំឈឺ
I feel nauseous. kh'nyohm jawng k'uat ខ្ញុំចង់ក្អក

EMERGENCIES

- Help! juay kh'nyohm phawng! ជួយខ្ញុំផង!
It's an emergency! nih jia reuang bawntoan! ទេសេដៅរឿងបន្ទាន់!
Call a doctor! juay hav kruu paet mao! ជួយហៅគ្រូពេទ្យមក!
Call the police! juay hav polih mao! ជួយហៅប៉ូលីសមក!
Could you help me please? niak aa-it juay kh'nyohm h'ok s'haang ch'weng ch'weng? អ្នកអាចជួយខ្ញុំបានទេ?
Could I please use the telephone? kh'nyohm braa-ae ខ្ញុំប្រើទូរស័ព្ទបានទេ?
I've been robbed. kh'nyohm treuv jao plawn ខ្ញុំត្រូវបានចោរចូល.
Stop! chohp! ឈប់!
Watch out! prawyah! ប្រុងប្រយ័ត្ន!
Where are the toilets? bawngkohn neuv ai naa? បង្គោលដៅណា?
I wish to contact my embassy/consulate. kh'nyohm jawng hav s'thaantuut/kohngsuhi r' bawh prawteh kh'nyohm ខ្ញុំចង់ហៅស្ថានទូត/កុងស៊ុលរបស់ប្រទេសខ្ញុំ
I feel weak. kh'nyohm awk kamlahng ខ្ញុំអស់កំលាំង
I keep vomiting. kh'nyohm k'uat j'raa-aen ខ្ញុំក្អកប្រើស
I feel dizzy. kh'nyohm wuhl mohk ខ្ញុំវិលមុខ
I'm allergic to ... kh'nyohm muh treuv thiat ... ខ្ញុំមិនត្រូវធាតុ ...
penicillin ប៉េនីស៊ីលីន
antibiotics អង់ទីប៊ីយោទិក
I need medicine for ... kh'nyohm treuv kaa th'nam samruhp ... ខ្ញុំត្រូវការថ្នាំសំរាប់ ...
diarrhoea rowk joh riak រោគចុះរាក
dysentery rowk muat រោគមូល
fever krohn/K'dav kh'luan ក្រ្រង់/ក្តៅខ្ពស់

- pain cheu ឈឺ
antiseptic th'nam samlahp me rowk ផ្តាសំលាប់មេរោគ
aspirin parasetamol ប៉ារ៉ាសេតាម៉ុល
codeine codiin ខូឌីន
condoms sraam ahnaamai ព្រូសាមអនាម័យ
medicine th'nam ថ្នាំ
mosquito repellent th'nam kaa pia ថ្នាំការពារមូស
quinine kiiniin គីនីន
razor blade kambuht kao pohk moat កាំបិតកោរពុកមាត់
sanitary napkins samlei ahnaamai សំទ្រីអនាម័យ
shampoo sabuu kaww sawk សាប៊ូកក់សក់
shaving cream kram samruhp kao pohk moat ព្រែកមសំរាប់កោរពុកមាត់
sunblock cream kram kaa pia pohkleu th'ngay ព្រែកការពារពន្លឺថ្ងៃ
toilet paper krawdah ahnaamai ក្រដាសអនាម័យ

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

- Does any one here speak English? tii nih mian niak jeh phiasaa awngle te? ទីនេះមានអ្នកចេះភាសាអង់គ្លេសទេ?
Do you understand? niak yuhl te/niak s'dap baan te? អ្នកយល់ទេ/អ្នកស្តាប់បានទេ?
I understand. kh'nyohm yuhl/kh'nyohm s'dap baan ខ្ញុំយល់/ខ្ញុំស្តាប់បាន
I don't understand. kh'nyohm muh yuhl te/kh'nyohm s'dap muh baan te ខ្ញុំមិនយល់ទេ/ខ្ញុំស្តាប់មិនបានទេ
What does this mean? nih mian nuh-y thaa mait? ទេសេនេះមានន័យម៉េច?
What is this called? nih ke hav thaa mait? ទេសេហៅថាម៉េច?

LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE

Please speak slowly.

sohm niyay yeut yeut

សូមនិយាយយឺតៗ

Please write that word down for me.

sohm sawse piak nu ao-y kh'nyohm

សូមសរសេរពាក្យនោះឱ្យខ្ញុំ

Please translate for me.

sohm bawk brai ao-y kh'nyohm

សូមបកប្រែឱ្យខ្ញុំ

NUMBERS & AMOUNTS

Khmers count in increments of five. Thus, after reaching the number five (bram), the cycle begins again with the addition of one, ie 'five-one' (bram muy), 'five-two' (bram pii) and so on to 10, which begins a new cycle. This system is a bit awkward at first (for example, 18, which has three parts: 10, five and three) but with practice it can be mastered.

You may be confused by a colloquial form of counting that reverses the word order for numbers between 10 and 20 and separates the two words with duhn: pii duhn dawp for 12, bei duhn dawp for 13, bram buan duhn dawp for 19 and so on. This form is often used in markets, so listen keenly.

Table with 3 columns: Number, Khmer, English. Rows include 1 (muy មួយ), 2 (pii ពីរ), 3 (bei បី), 4 (buan បួន), 5 (bram ប្រាំ), 6 (bram muy ប្រាំមួយ), 7 (bram pii/puhl ប្រាំពីរ), 8 (bram bei ប្រាំបី), 9 (bram buan ប្រាំបួន), 10 (dawp ដប់), 11 (dawp muy ដប់មួយ), 12 (dawp pii ដប់ពីរ), 16 (dawp bram muy ដប់ប្រាំមួយ), 20 (m'phei ម្ភៃ), 21 (m'phei muy ម្ភៃមួយ), 30 (saamsuhp សាមសិប), 40 (saisuhp សែសិប), 100 (muy roy មួយរយ), 1000 (muy poan មួយពាន់), 1,000,000 (muy lian មួយលាន)

Table with 3 columns: English, Khmer, English. Rows include 1st (tii muy ទីមួយ), 2nd (tii pii ទីពីរ), 3rd (tii bei ទីបី), 4th (tii buan ទីបួន), 10th (tii dawp ទីដប់)

SHOPPING & SERVICES

Table with 3 columns: English, Khmer, English. Rows include Where is a/the... (neuv ai naa? នៅណា?), bank (th'niakia ធនាគារ), cinema (rowng kohn ភោងកុន), consulate (kohng sul កុងស៊ុល), embassy (s'thaantuut ស្ថានទូត), hospital (mohntii paet មន្ទីរពេទ្យ), market (p'saa ផ្សារ), museum (saramohntii សារមន្ទីរ), park (suan សួន), police station (poh polth/ s'thaanii nohkohbaal ប៉ស្ដុប៉ូលីស/ស្ថានីយនគរបាល), post office (praisuhnii ប្រៃសណីយ៍), public telephone (turasahp saathiaranah ទូរស័ព្ទសាធារណៈ), public toilet (bawngkohn saathiaranah បង្គន់សាធារណៈ), temple (wawt វត្ត)

Table with 3 columns: English, Khmer, English. Rows include How far is the... (ch'ngaay pohmmaan? ឆ្ងាយប៉ុន្មាន?), I want to see the... (kh'nyohm jawng teuv mael... ខ្ញុំចង់ទៅមើល...), I'm looking for the... (kh'nyohm rohk... ខ្ញុំរក...), How much is it? (nih th'lay pohmmaan? នេះថ្លៃប៉ុន្មាន?), That's too much. (th'lay pek ថ្លៃពេក), I'll give you... (kh'nyohm ao-y... ខ្ញុំឱ្យ...), No more than... (muhn leh pii... មិនលើសពី...), What's your best price? (niak dait pohmmaan? ត្រូវកំដៅប៉ុន្មាន?)

What time does it open?

wia baok maong pohmmaan?

វាបើកម៉ោងប៉ុន្មាន?

What time does it close?

wia buht maong pohmmaan?

វាបិទម៉ោងប៉ុន្មាន?

I want to change US dollars.

kh'nyohm jawng dow dolaa amerik

ខ្ញុំចង់ដូរដុល្លារអាមេរិក

What is the exchange rate for US dollars?

muy dolaa dow baan pohmmaan?

មួយដុល្លារដូរបានប៉ុន្មាន?

TIME & DAYS

What time is it?

eileuv nih maong pohmmaan?

ឥឡូវនេះម៉ោងប៉ុន្មាន?

Table with 3 columns: English, Khmer, English. Rows include in the morning (pel pruhk ពេលព្រឹក), in the afternoon (pel r'sial ពេលរសៀល), in the evening (pel l'ngiat ពេលល្ងាច), at night (pel yohp ពេលយប់), today (th'ngay nih ថ្ងៃនេះ), tomorrow (th'ngay s'aik ថ្ងៃស្អែក), yesterday (m'suhl mein ម្សិលមិញ), Monday (th'ngay jahn ថ្ងៃចន្ទ)

Tuesday

th'ngay ahngkia

ថ្ងៃអង្គារ

Wednesday

th'ngay poht

ថ្ងៃពុធ

Thursday

th'ngay prohoah

ថ្ងៃព្រហស្បតិ៍

Friday

th'ngay sohk

ថ្ងៃសុក្រ

Saturday

th'ngay sav

ថ្ងៃសៅរ៍

Sunday

th'ngay aatuht

ថ្ងៃអាទិត្យ

TRANSPORT

Where is the...?

Table with 3 columns: English, Khmer, English. Rows include ... neuv ai naa? (នៅណា?), airport (wial yohn hawh វាលយង្កូហោះ), bus station (kuhnlaing laan ch'nual កន្លែងឡានឈ្នួល), bus stop (jammawt laan ch'nual ចំណតឡានឈ្នួល), train station (s'thaanii roht plæng ស្ថានីយរថភ្លើង)

What time does the ... leave?

Table with 3 columns: English, Khmer, English. Rows include ... jein maong pohmmaan? (ចេញម៉ោងប៉ុន្មាន?), bus (laan ch'nual ឡានឈ្នួល), train (roht plæng រថភ្លើង), plane (yohn hawh/k'pal hawh យន្តហោះ/កប៉ាល់ហោះ)

What time does the last bus leave?

laan ch'nual johng krao-y jein teuv maong pohmmaan? ឡានឈ្នួល ចុងក្រោយចេញទៅម៉ោងប៉ុន្មាន?

I want to get off (here)!

kh'nyohm jawng joh (tii nih)! ខ្ញុំចង់ចុះ (ទីនេះ)!

How much is it to...?

teuv ... th'lay pohmmaan? ទៅ ... ថ្លៃប៉ុន្មាន?

Please take me to ...

sohm juun kh' nyohm teuv ... សូមជូនខ្ញុំទៅ ...

this address

aadreuh/aasayathan nih អាសយដ្ឋាននេះ

Here is fine, thank you.

chohp neuv tii nih kaw baan ឈប់នៅទីនេះក៏បាន



Also available from Lonely Planet: Southeast Asia Phrasebook

LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE

Glossary

apsara – heavenly nymph or angelic dancer, often represented in Khmer sculpture

Asean – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Avalokiteshvara – the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the inspiration for Jayavarman VII's Angkor Thom

barang – foreigner

baray – reservoir

boeng – lake

CCC – Cooperation Committee for Cambodia

chunchiet – ethnic minorities

CPP – Cambodian People's Party

cyclo – pedicab; bicycle rickshaw

devaraja – cult of the god-king, established by Jayavarman II, in which the monarch has universal power

devadas – goddesses

EFEO – École Française d'Extrême Orient

essai – wise man or traditional medicine man

Funcinpec – National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia; royalist political party

garuda – mythical half-man, half-bird creature

gopura – entrance pavilion in traditional Hindu architecture

Hun Sen – Cambodia's prime minister (1998 to present)

Jayavarman II – the king (r 802–50) who established the cult of the god-king, kicking off a period of amazing architectural productivity that resulted in the extraordinary temples of Angkor

Jayavarman VII – the king (r 1181–1219) who drove the Chams out of Cambodia before embarking on an ambitious construction programme, including the walled city of Angkor Thom

Kampuchea – the name Cambodians use for their country; to non-Khmers, it is associated with the bloody rule of the Khmer Rouge, which insisted that the outside world adopt the name Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979

Khmer – a person of Cambodian descent; the language of Cambodia

Khmer Krom – ethnic Khmers living in Vietnam

Khmer Leu – Upper Khmer or ethnic minorities in northeastern Cambodia

Khmer Rouge – a revolutionary organisation that seized power in 1975 and implemented a brutal social restructuring, resulting in the suffering and death of millions of Cambodians in the following four years

kouprey – extremely rare wild ox of Southeast Asia, probably extinct

krama – checked scarf

linga – phallic symbols

Mahayana – literally, 'Great Vehicle'; a school of Buddhism (also known as the Northern School) that built upon and extended the early Buddhist teachings; see also *Theravada*

moto – small motorcycle with driver; a common form of transport in Cambodia

Mt Meru – the mythical dwelling of the Hindu god Shiva

MPTC – Cambodian Ministry of Post and Telecommunications

naga – mythical serpent, often multiheaded; a symbol used extensively in Angkorian architecture

nandi – sacred ox, vehicle of Shiva

NCDP – National Centre for Disabled Persons

NGO – nongovernmental organisation

NH – national highway

Norodom Ranariddh, Prince – son of King Sihanouk and former leader of *Funcinpec*

Norodom Sihanouk, King – former king of Cambodia, film director and a towering figure in modern-day Cambodia

Pali – ancient Indian language that, along with Sanskrit, is the root of modern *Khmer*

phlaur – street; abbreviated to Ph

phnom – mountain or hill

Pol Pot – the former leader of the Khmer Rouge who is roundly blamed for the suffering and deaths of millions of Cambodians; also known as Saloth Sar

prang – temple tower

prasat – stone or brick hall with religious or royal significance

preah – sacred

psar – market

Ramayana – an epic Sanskrit poem composed around 300 BC featuring the mythical Ramachandra, the incarnation of the god Vishnu

RCAF – Royal Cambodian Armed Forces

remorque-kang – trailer pulled by a bicycle

remorque-moto – trailer pulled by a motorcycle

rom vong – Cambodian circle dancing

Sangkum Reastr Niyum – People's Socialist Community; a national movement, led by King Sihanouk, that ruled the country during the 1950s and 1960s

Sanskrit – ancient Hindu language that, along with Pali, is the root of modern Khmer language

SNC – Supreme National Council

stung – river

Suryavarman II – the king (r 1112–52) responsible for building Angkor Wat and for expanding and unifying the Khmer empire

Theravada – a school of Buddhism (also known as the Southern School or Hinayana) found in Myanmar (Burma),

Thailand, Laos and Cambodia; this school confined itself to the early Buddhist teachings; see also *Mahayana*

tonlé – large river

UNDP – UN Development Programme

Unesco – UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR – UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Untac – UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia

vihara – temple sanctuary

WHO – World Health Organization

Year Zero – 1975; the year the Khmer Rouge seized power

yoni – female fertility symbol

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