



Buddhist students and monks visit businesses and homes each day, offering blessings for donations, rain or shine — Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

By MARK GILCHRIST
I rode around the western part of this incredible country in the summer of 2018 and what a ride – talk about wide, open spaces! Beautiful people, (Khmer,) with an amazing, bright spirit.

Geography

Location: In the center of SE Asia, Cambodia is surrounded by Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand.
Time Zone: UTC+7 (ET+12)
Latitude: 10°-14° N (Similar to the Central Caribbean.)
Size: 70,000 square miles, or about the size of Oklahoma.
Terrain: Very flat, with mountains in the west and east.

History

Evidence of humans here from 6000 B.C. Khmer and Angkor Empires ruled in the second century. A French protectorate from 1867 to 1953. Cambodia aided N. Vietnam during our “Vietnam War” and suffered devastating bombings in its east. Genocide from 1975-78 during Pol Pot reign of Khmer Rouge.
Independence: Nov. 9, 1953

Government

Type: Parliamentary constitutional monarchy
Capital: Phnom Penh
Citizenship: Blood, (1 parent)
Suffrage: Age 18
Conscription: Age 18 males
Flag: The only flag in the world with a building, (a temple.)



Climate

Temperatures: 70s-90s
Tourist Seasons: “Monsoon Season” is June, (or earlier,) to Nov., but that just means more rain, and not monsoons every day. Fewer tourists.

Antipodes

On exact opposite side of This Planet Earth is Peru, right [HERE](#).

Health

Life Expect.: Girl: 71 Boy: 67
Infant Mort.: 46.1/1k live birth
911: PD 117, FD 118, EMS 119
Adult Obesity: 3.9%

Holidays

Independence Day: Nov. 9
Victory over Genocide: Jan. 7
Khmer New Year: Mid-April
Royal Plowing Cer.: May 3
King’s Birthday: Mid-May
Day of Remembrance: May 20
Constitutional Day: Sept. 24
Pchum Ben Day: Mid-Oct.
Water Festival: Late Nov.

Rankings

Human Development Index: 146th best country to live.
Corruption: Local experts and businesspeople see Cambodia as the 161st least corrupt country.
Passport: Simple visa access to 58 countries for the world’s 161st strongest passport.
Peace: 96th most peaceful country on Global Peace Index.
Terrorism: 130th, with “No Impact of Terrorism.”
Happiness: 129th, a little happier than Sudan, Ghana and Ukraine.
Press Freedom: This media-hostile country ranks 142nd of 180.

UNESCO

Cambodia is host to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Angkor; the Temple of Preah Vihear; & Temple Zone of Sambor Prei Kuk.

People

Population: 16,449,519, About half of California.
Density: 233/sq mi. About the same as Illinois.
Ethnicity: 97% Khmer
Religion: 97% Bhuddist
Language: 96% Khmer

Day Lengths

Long: 12 hr, 48 min (6/20)
Short: 11 hr, 27 min (12/20)
Difference: 1 hr, 21 min

Technical

Electricity: 230 volt, Euro plug.
Wifi: Good in most hotels
Cellular: Good in most places
Internet Domain: .kh
Telephone Calling Code: 885

Economy

GDP/Cap.: \$1,279
Resources: Oil & gas, timber, gemstones, iron ore, manganese
Exports: Clothing, timber, rice, rubber
Imports: Petroleum, Cigarettes, Gold

Photos



Visit my [Cambodia page](#) for photographs of beautiful Cambodia and its incredible people, and an essay on the genocide.



Left, this is enough to scare any kid into behaving, at the Sonya Ram temple. Center, studying hard in Butom Sakor. Right, another new friend I made in Kampong Kleang. (Click on any photo for more.)



Left, the Battambang District Police Station. Center, guarding the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. Right, Sure is ironic that this motorcycle, in Ko Kong, has no rearview mirrors.

Transportation

Public: Buses and vans. Only passenger rail is between Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville.
Airport: International airports at Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, (Angkor,) and Sihanoukville.
Road / Traffic Quality: Decent roads mostly, but traffic can be hectic with a lot of horn blowing.
Drive: Right Side of the road
Drinking: 0.01 BAC

Follow Me Here

Visas: E-Visa online
Winter: Not an issue – warm.
Medical: Don’t drink the water. Eat “on the street” once you’re acclimated, to watch food being prepared.
Vaccinations: Routine ones, plus Hepatitis A and Typhoid.
Crime: I had no problem, but take care in tourist areas at night.
Political: After decades of upheaval, Cambodia is doing better.
STEP: The U.S. Govt. travel advisory program. Enroll [HERE](#)

Eat What I Ate

Lots of vegetables and fish, barbecued meats, and rice, but not much pasta except for rice noodles. Some breads, but nothing exciting.



Do What I Did

Ride a big loop, from Phnom Penh, ride west to Kampot. Skip Sihanouk on your way up to O Soam in the Cardamom Mountains, and then up to Battambang. (The Cardamoms are rugged, so pick dry season.) Then up to Siem Reap for Angkor Wat, and stay in the “floating” village of Kampong Khleang, near Lake Tonle, then back to Phnom Penh.

See What I Saw

Angkor Wat Temple Complex, (even though I barely saw it...)



Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum: Includes the S-21 prison in a former school and the Killing Fields orchard, both in Phnom Penh.
Cardamom Mountains: A beautiful range that holds the Stoenng rivers, which the Chinese are damming all to hell.

The Peace Corps

Since 2007, nearly 600 **Peace Corps** volunteers have shared skills and culture with the Khmer. Currently, 126 volunteers live and work mostly in rural areas. Projects involve teaching English and health topics, and “Feed the Future.”

The Beautiful Thing

Khmer are astoundingly adaptive, especially ones living in “floating” villages on rivers and lakes, in homes that either float or are on stilts. As waters rise and fall each year, the Khmer rearrange their communities accordingly, living on and around land that expands and contracts with the water’s whims.



Cambodia is surrounded by three other SE Asian countries and the Gulf of Thailand.

Myz Words?

chums
flowcharts
cleanse

Type those three words into a browser aimed [HERE](#) to magically visit Angkor Wat.

Do You Know Cambodia?

Ellen Wong of “GLOW” and “The Carrie Diaries.” Journalist Dith Pran, subject of “The Killing Fields.” Francois Chau of “Lost,” and “21 & Over.” “Skyfall” Bond Girl Berenice Marlohe.

Say Hello!

Khmer (“Ka-My”) is the most common language, spoken by 96-percent of Cambodians.
Hello: “Chun - reet - suel”
Goodbye: “Lee - hi”

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