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CAMBODIA PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

(Please only print this if necessary. Think before you print!)

Country Profile

Official Name: Kingdom of Cambodia

Population: 14,2 million

Capital City: Phnom Penh, population c.1 million

People: Khmers (96%), minorities include Vietnamese, Chinese, Khmer Islam, Tumpoun, Kreung, Kra Chok, Kavet, Brao and Jorai

Language: Khmer

Currency: Riel

Growth: 5% from 2000 to 2004

Major Industries: Clothing, Agriculture, Tourism

Time Zone: GMT +7 hours

Electricity: 220V, 50 Hz; 2 pin plugs

Weights and Measurements: Metric

International Dialing Code: +855



Before Departure Check list



- Travel Insurance
- Valid Passport (at least 6 months) and visa (or 2 passport pictures as well as 20/25US\$ for visa on arrival)
- Inoculations
- Foreign currency (US\$) or ATM card (preferably 2 in separate locations)
- Flight tickets
- Photocopy of passport either scanned into email account or separate from the original

Travel Insurance (compulsory)

Buffalo Tours will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, certain risks are involved and should be recognized by participants. Thus, we require all guests to purchase a travel insurance prior to their trip. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment in the event of problems due to cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind.

Visas/passport

A passport with at least six month validity is necessary. A visa is required for most nationalities and is available upon arrival at both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap international airports. A tourist visa costs 20 US\$, a business visa 25 US\$. Two passport photographs should be submitted with the visa application form.

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Health & Well-being

Your health is more at risk in Cambodia than most other parts of South-East Asia due to poor sanitation and a lack of effective medical treatment facilities. Once you venture into rural areas you should consider yourself very much on your own, and even where pharmacies and hospitals are available you may have trouble making yourself understood.

If you feel particularly ill, you should return to either Phnom Penh or Siem Reap. We recommend:

- Royal Angkor International Hospital (Siem Reap). Phone: 063 761 888
- International SOS Medical & Dental Clinic (Phnom Penh). Phone: 023 21 69 11



Each traveler is responsible for his or her health. First and foremost make sure that you have a travel insurance (see travel insurance section) for your trip. Also, consult your doctor or local travelers' clinic for the latest information on travel to the adventure destination of your choice.

Fitness Level

Participants should be reasonably fit and be able to get around easily since travel will involve walking each day, getting in/out of buses, planes, boats and trains. It's a good idea to begin an active conditioning program before departure, so that you derive the maximum enjoyment out of your trip. Walking, cycling and swimming are all beneficial activities.

Immunizations

Before travelling to Cambodia, it is important to ensure that you have adequate protection against disease. About two months before departure you should consult your tropical medicines doctor who will advise you as to the type of vaccinations that you will need. These will vary depending on the regions that you plan on visiting. Bear in mind that there is a malaria risk in rural parts of Cambodia. Consult your tropical medicines doctor for the latest information. In general, most visitors to Cambodia will require the following vaccinations:

- Hepatitis A and B
- Tetanus
- Typhoid
- Polio
- Diphtheria



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If you have any special condition or allergy that might require attention overseas, have your physician write a letter describing the nature of the condition and the treatment. Always carry the letter on your person. As outlined above, you should be aware that medical services in Cambodia are basic and might not be readily available during all or parts of your trip. It's also a good idea to bring your own basic medicine kit with you containing some basics like paracetamol since brand names of medicines that are familiar to you might not be available in pharmacies here.

Suggested Packing List

- Personal clothing items, toiletries, medication
- Sunhat
- Sarong (to cover your shoulders should you enter temples or pagodas)
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Light weight clothing for the summer months
- Camera (you can easily buy extra memory cards)
- Adapter for plugs and chargers for camera/phone/Ipod etc
- Water bottle and helmet (for cycling trips only)



Money



The official Cambodian currency is known as the Riel. American dollars are however widely accepted in Cambodia and even preferred in larger stores and supermarkets. However, the riel is more practical and economical to use for smaller, day to day items such as buying fruits and vegetables, paying motorbike drivers etc.

Credit Cards, ATMs and Foreign Money Exchange

- ATM's are widely available in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville; they give out US dollars. There is however no ATM outside of these 3 destinations. Heading to the countryside it is recommended that you carry cash with you (in small notes as people may have difficulty in getting change).

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- Banks change all major currencies with relatively little hassle. Tourists with traveler cheques are advised to cash them at the bank as few shops and other outlets have facilities to change them.

Exchange Rates

- At time of writing, the rates of exchange are: 1 Euro: 5,400 riel and 1 USD: 4,100 riel.
- Make sure to keep some cash in small denominations for last minute purchases, as well as for airport taxes (see below). Most hotels offer safe-keeping for your valuables.

Trip Budgeting

Allow \$8 to \$15 per meal for additional lunches or dinners not included in the trip price. You may also want to have some cash for shopping in markets or else.

Arriving in Cambodia

We will arrange your transfer to and from the airport unless otherwise specified.

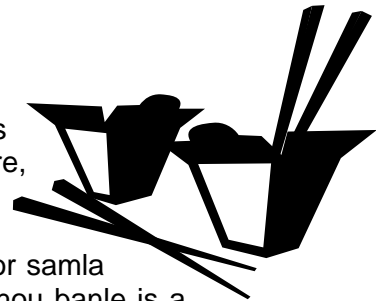
Climate



The two monsoons in the country greatly affect the rural calendar of Cambodians. From November to February the cool, dry northeastern monsoon carries relatively little rain whereas the southwestern monsoon carries up to 80% of the country's rainfall between the months of May and October. Maximum daily temperatures range from the high 20°s in January to more than 40° C in April. Daily minimum temperatures are usually no more than 15° C.

Cuisine

- Cambodian cuisine is closely related to that of its neighbors Thailand and Laos and, to a lesser extent, Vietnam. There are, however some local dishes too. The overall consensus is that Khmer cooking is similar to Thai cooking but with fewer spices.
- A traditional Cambodian meal almost always includes a soup, or samla which is eaten at the same time as other courses. Samla machou banle is a popular fish soup with a sour flavor rather like the hot and sour dishes of neighboring Thailand. Other soups include samla chapek (ginger-flavoured pork soup), samla machou bangkang (prawn soup) and samla ktis (a fish soup with coconut and pineapple).



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- Cambodian 'salad' dishes are also popular and quite different from the western concept of a cold salad. Phlea sach ko is a beef and vegetable salad, flavoured with coriander, mint leaves and lemon grass. These herbs find their ways into many Cambodian's dishes. Like all other Buddhist countries, vegetarian food is readily available in most restaurants.

Drinking Water

- It is not advisable to drink tap water in any South East Asian countries. Bottled water is recommended (approx. R1000) but do check the expiry date before opening it.
- Ice is widely used in Cambodia and it is produced with treated water, but the transportation of it in huge blocks often involves dragging it along the ground therefore, cold water in freezers should be ordered to avoid any stomach upsets.

Special Dietary Requests

If you are a vegetarian, vegan, allergic to any foods or adhere to a special diet, please advise us prior to your booking so we can comply with your dietary requirements.

Clothing



- Light thin layers of cotton clothing are the best. Long-sleeved shirts and pants are appropriate for a number of reasons: 1) they provide good protection against mosquito bites 2) they keep yourself warm during chilly November to February evenings 3) they are necessary for temple and countryside village visits where the shoulders and legs should be covered to below the knee (see more in the culture section) 4) Depending on the season, your activities and the region you will be visiting e.g. mountainous areas, it may be advisable for you to bring a jacket with you.
- You will be able to store any extra luggage or clothing not needed on your excursions in the hotel storage or in our office (in Siem Reap). Most of your toiletries requirements are available (e.g. tooth paste, soap, shampoo, sanitary towels, tampons etc).

Responsible Tourism

Please read our separate Responsible Tourism Guidelines before you arrive in Asia. We want to ensure that all our guests travel as responsibly as possible.

People

The majority of the population is comprised of the Khmers (96%). The minority population includes Vietnamese, Chinese, Khmer Islam, Tumpoun, Kreung, Kra Chok, Kavet, Brao and Jorai

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General Information

- Cambodia, a country with a tragic history, is beginning to step into the light. It is home to the amazing Angkor Temples, is blessed with stunning sceneries, and has architectural remnants of its French colonial past; it is also a country that wears scars of a war that will be forever etched in its memory.
- Cambodia is a fascinating place to visit. It is bordered by Thailand to the north and west, Laos to the north and Vietnam to the east, with the Gulf of Thailand forming to the southern border. The two dominant topographical features of the country are the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap Lake which are linked by the Tonle Sap River. As the water of the Mekong River falls during the dry season, the Tonle Sap River reverses its flow, draining the waters of the lake back into the Mekong River. This extraordinary process makes the Tonle Sap Lake one of the world's richest sources of freshwater fish; it is estimated that the lake provides a livelihood for about 40% of the Cambodian population and its fish provides almost 60% of the country's fish intake.
- From 1975 to 1978 the Khmer Rouge regime, under its infamous leader Pol Pot, systematically killed about one and a half million educated Cambodians (about one fifth of the country's population at the time) in an effort to create an agrarian society. Many more were tortured and fled the country. The Khmer Rouge was finally ousted by the Vietnamese in 1978. From 1978 until the mid 1990s Cambodia was gripped in Civil War but has enjoyed vastly improved stability since then.
- Angkor Wat, of which Cambodians are fiercely proud, is the highlight of any trip to Cambodia. It is the site of the Khmer empire which ruled most of the Indochinese peninsula during the 11th and 14th centuries.



Cultural Differences

Experiencing cultural diversity is one of the great joys of travelling, and it is important that these differences are encouraged and respected. Things are done differently in Asia, which is why we love it! At a general level, we need to respect the cultural rules in the areas we travel to. Please remember to accept these differences and not try and change them for the benefit of your own comfort. The traveler who wishes to have a happy and successful trip should keep as calm, cheerful and friendly as humanly possible. Patience and courtesy are virtues that open many doors. Demanding tourists do not get smiles, service or respect.

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Attire

The Khmer are a tolerant population and may choose not to point out improper behavior to its foreign guests, but you should dress and act with the utmost respect when visiting Wats (pagodas) or other religious sites (including the temples of Angkor). This is all the more important given the vital role Buddhism has played in the lives of many Cambodians, especially in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge holocaust. Proper etiquette in pagodas is mostly a matter of common sense. Unlike Thailand, a woman may accept something from a monk, but she should be careful not to touch him.



A few other tips include:

- Don't wear shorts or tank tops.
- Remove your hat when entering the ground of the Wats
- Remove your shoes before going into the vihara (sanctuary).
- If you sit down in front of the dais (the platform on which the Buddhas are placed), sit with your feet to the side rather than in the lotus position.
- Never point your finger or the sole of your feet towards a person or a figure of the Buddha.

Swimming

Remember that there are no areas in Asia where nude sunbathing or swimming is acceptable. In most places Khmer people will swim wearing all their clothes which is a reminder of the level of modesty that exists in here. If you are staying in a small village you will probably be bathing in a stream, river or waterfall, and women should wash in a sarong or in the mode that the local women use.

Saving Face & Manners

Getting angry and showing it by shouting or becoming abusive is extremely impolite and a poor reflection on you. In addition, it is unlikely to achieve much. If things aren't being done as they should, remember that there is a critical shortage of trained people in the country because the vast majorities of educated Cambodians either fled the country or were killed between 1975 and 1978.

Other general points of etiquette

There are a few general codes of behavior that apply in Cambodia:

- As in Thailand, it is improper to pat children on the head.
- If you would like someone to come over to you, motion with your whole hand help palm down signaling with your index finger and your palm pointed skyward may be interpreted as being sexually suggestive.

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- When using a toothpick, it is considered polite to hold it in one hand and to cover your open mouth with the other.
- When handing things to other people, use both of your hands or your right hand only, never your left hand (reserved for toilet ablutions!).
- Public displays of affection are considered to be quite offensive in Cambodia - definitely no kissing! It is also extremely rare to see couples holding hands. To the contrary it is quite common to see friends of the same sex holding hands.
- It is polite to remove your shoes before entering a house. Look for shoes at the front door as a clue.
- Criticism should only be used when put among praise.

Donations and gift-giving

- Do not give to begging children as it reinforces for these children that begging is an acceptable way to make a living. However in many places, it is considered acceptable to give to the elderly and disabled as there is no social security or other way these people can earn money.
- Giving money and goods away at random to individuals can result in the local communities acting like beggars. It accentuates an unequal relationship between locals and visitors, with tourists being seen as purely 'money givers'. We also need to be careful not to pay for acts of kindness in monetary terms, for example paying for photographs. We do not want to encourage the development of a society that equates every human action as a potential money making scheme.
- Do not to give sweets to children in villages that we visit. Local people do not have access to dentists, nor can they afford them and again there is the issue of turning children into beggars. Pens, toothbrushes, clothing or other perhaps 'worthwhile' items are best distributed via a local charity, school teacher or community leader.
- Avoid feeling that you necessarily have to give 'material' things. The best giving can sometimes be shared interactions: a smile, a joke, a sing-song, dance or playing a game. Giving something of your friendship, time and interest to interact with locals can be the best gift of all.

Post and Telecommunication

- Post is now routed by air through Bangkok, which makes Cambodia a much more reliable place from which to send mails and parcels. Telephone connections with the outside world have also improved immensely, though they are not cheap.



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- Most hotels in Phnom Penh will allow you to make local calls free of charge. Numbers starting with 011, 012, 015, 017 or 018 are mobile phone numbers.
- There is a directory inquiries service in Cambodia called The Yellow Pages: www.yellowpages-cambodia.com
- International phone calls are easy to make with a phone card or from your hotel.
- Internet access is available in all major tourist places.

Tips

Tipping is a personal matter, and passengers are encouraged to tip an amount they find appropriate. For your convenience we've included a tipping guide below; please however note that these amounts are only suggestions; we encourage our passengers to reward guides based on their performance:

- Meals (restaurants): the average amount is \$1
- Tips for guides and drivers are completely at your discretion, but here are some guidelines: \$1,5 to \$3 per day per person for guides (depending on group size), \$1 per day per person for drivers
- Bellboy: the average amount is \$1
- Chambermaid: the average amount is \$1 per day



Departure airport taxes

There is an airport departure tax for both domestic and international flights which is not included in the airfare: domestic departure tax: US\$6; international departure tax: US\$25

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