

# Cambodia

## A Jewel Of Culture, Heritage And Nature

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What use is a luminous jewel if dust and darkness cover and hide it? Cambodia has answered this question and would like to share its experiences with the rest of the world. In 1998, the world saw a people who had rolled up their sleeves to clean up the 35-year-old dust of war, putting, an end to the dark era and enabling visitors to re-examine the glare of the tourist jewel.

### The State of the Khmers

The kingdom of Cambodia, which recently joined ASEAN, is located at the extreme of south-east Asia. Its neighbours are Vietnam in the east and south-east, Laos in the north and Thailand in the north and the west. In the south-west, the country has a coast on the Gulf of Thailand.

Cambodia has a surface area of 131,035 km and a population of 12 million of which 90% are from the Khmer ethnic group. The remainder are

ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese and Charn. The official religion, Buddhism, is also practised by the neighboring countries: Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Burma. Khmer is the official language. English is usually spoken by young people, while French is often spoken by older people who lived through the French colonization during the first half of the 20th century.

### A capital reflecting Europe

The capital, Phnom Penh (population one million) tastefully reflects European influences with its magnificent boulevards

and old French-style buildings, which testify to the beauty of French architecture at the beginning of last century.

The centre of Phnom Penh is full of cafeterias and restaurants specializing in French cuisine and delicacies. There are also delicious local dishes, based mainly on seafood, rice and spices; in addition to meat and poultry.

The capital has many tourist landmarks, of which the most significant are the Tuol Sleng Temple which commemorates the sad past of Khmer Rouge massacres; an old school transformed by the Khmer Rouge into a torture chamber and the National Temple of Cambodia which shows the history of the Khmers.



### Cambodia is not only Phnom Penh

Other landmarks and beautiful places of interest are distributed throughout the country. The historical heritage testifies to the Khmer culture which has deep roots in Cambodia's history. Tourists can visit the temples of Angkor, located a few kilometres from the town of Siem Reap. The temple of stones is 1000 years old and spreads out over an area of 200 km. One can spend several days discovering its splendid statues, walls and other buildings which extend to infinity. One can also enjoy sailing on one of the largest Asian lakes, Tonle Sap. The Mekong River which traverses the country has numerous tourist attractions on its banks and is a favorite for water sports' enthusiasts. There are also the beautiful beaches of the Gulf of Thailand.

Culture, heritage and nature combine to make Cambodia a country of dreams of come true. ■