

Cambodia Adventure

Best time of travel: December through April.

Due to the route including a river-crossing and some off-road sections, this specific itinerary can only be operated during the dry season.

This program is a starting point only. At all times we remain flexible to ideas and suggestions from our clientele, and are most willing to meet with any special requests. After all, it's your vacation!

Day 1: Phnom Penh, arrival

You will be met by your guide at Phnom Penh International Airport as you get off your plane, with our VIP visa service and transfer directly to your hotel.

This evening take a **private sunset boat cruise** with drinks and canapés from Sisowath Quay (weather allowing) on the Tonle Sap and Mekong Rivers. Sisowath Quay and its surrounding streets offer a variety of restaurants and bars to prolong your evening should you wish.

Accommodation: Raffles le Royal Phnom Penh – State Room |
Meals: n/a | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 2: Phnom Penh

This morning we endeavor to provide some insights into the events of the late 1970's under the despotic Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot. A difficult journey, but one that reveals much of what continues to shape present day Cambodia.

After breakfast, you will meet your guide and set out to visit the **Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum**, formerly the Khmer Rouge **Security Prison S-21**, where only 7 inmates survived of the thousands imprisoned, mainly on "political" charges. Here, you may also have the opportunity to **speak with a survivor** and learn first-hand about his unimaginable experiences under the Khmer Rouge. You will follow the route that many S-21 prisoners took, ending their journey around 15km to the southeast of the city at **Choeung Ek**, actually one of hundreds of **Killing Fields** of the Khmer Rouge regime. At this moving memorial to the millions who lost their lives around the country, you may even find yourself walking upon a shred of clothing or bone fragment.

In the afternoon, visit the **National Museum** where you can linger among the linga and other relics removed from Angkor Wat to prevent looting. The world's largest collection of Khmer art is often overshadowed by the actual temple complex at Angkor but these are archaeological and ethnographic masterpieces, including an imposing 11th century bronze sculpture of reclining Vishnu considered one of the monumental examples of Khmer statuary. Continue next door to the **Royal Palace**, built in 1866 by King Norodom, and visit the **Silver Pagoda** with its floor of over 5,000 silver tiles. This spectacular palace still in use features a distinctly out-of-place cast iron pavilion, a gift from Napoleon III. Look out here for the life-sized solid gold Buddha encrusted with over 9,000 real diamonds.

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Nearby, the Royal University of Fine Art, and Street 178, is now a thriving shopping area for art and traditional Khmer crafts.

Accommodation: Raffles le Royal Phnom Penh – State Room |
Meals: breakfast | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 3: Prey Veng Camp

Flight transfer to Siem Reap: Depart Phnom Penh 7.15am, Arrive Siem Reap 8.00am. Depart Siem Reap by 4-WD to Prey Veng, a remote forest village in the Khulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, guided by our Cambodia Head of Adventure. En route stop at jungle clad Beng Mealea, thought to be a 'blueprint' for Angkor Wat and built under the control of Suryavarman II, where you will have fun clambering over the stones.

Continue to Kulen Town and then your destination Prey Veng; depending on weather conditions and your fitness level, this journey can be made by motorbike-only for the most adventurous!

Your safari-style campsite lies on the banks of an ancient Angkorian Baray (reservoir), now an important feeding site for many rare birds and mammals. You will arrive at the campsite around 3pm, after settling in you can stroll around the banks of the Baray with a pair of binoculars to spot the bird life as it comes in to feed and roost as the sun sinks behind the forest perhaps catching it's last rays with a drink in hand back at the camp. Dinner will be cooked on a campfire prepared by women from the village and eaten on a table under the stars.

Accommodation: Private comfortable safari camp |
Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 4: Prey Veng camp

Rise early for a full days challenging hike (25-30k) through uneven terrain and undisturbed forest to Prasat Phnom Sondark. Your local guide will find the path whilst the Sam Veasna Center guide will point out the endangered wildlife on route. Enjoy a picnic lunch in a secluded location. Climb up through towering trees to enjoy this remote temple hidden on a hilltop, a marvelous rarely visited gem you will experience all to yourself. From here you will gain wonderful views of the surrounding countryside and experience a real sense of adventure as you explore this forest clad temple. This is a truly unique and exceptional experience limited to few travelers.

Head back to the baray in the evening for a well-deserved drink before a quiet night's sleep.

Accommodation: Private comfortable safari camp |
Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 5: Siem Reap

Enjoy waking to the sounds of nature. A mere ½k from you campsite you will discover a small hidden temple to explore this morning. Alternatively, you can go for a gentle walk to enjoy the birding opportunities around the Baray that this area offers, before transferring back to Siem Reap.

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On your way back to the creature comforts of town, divert to Koh Ker temple, and from the summit of the predominant Prasat Thom monument enjoy the stunning views at this remote, scarcely visited temple. To relax and unwind, indulge in a massage spa treatment in the evening at one of Siem Reap's top spas which will ease your muscles following your exertion.

Dine at Cuisine Wat Damnak with the chance to meet the chef Joannes Rivières (subject to availability).

Accommodation: Amansara – Suite |

Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 6: Siem Reap

Accompanied this morning by a **professional international photographer**, travel towards **Ta Prohm temple** (11km), taking a detour to view the serene royal baths of Srah Srang. This iconic C12 temple is very popular and much photographed for the interplay of man and nature: Giant banyan roots strangling the ancient stonework. An early start today is rewarded by an exploration of the monastery before the crowds arrive.

Stroll (2 km) through these ruins from the West entrance to the East entrance to meet your driver. Nearby Ta Prohm, you will walk or ride through the forest to the temple ruins of **Ta Nei**. There is every chance of exploring this beautiful but little visited Angkorian temple without other tourists.

We pause for **coffee and croissants** in a quiet and beautiful spot.

Travel by road to the **Victory Gate of Angkor Thom**, memorable for its colossal heads of gods and demons. Walk (600m) along the 8m high laterite city wall to the enchanting **East Gate** (Gate of Death). You can see the old crematoriums shaded by the mature Dipterocarp forest with the crumbling city gate as a backdrop.. Then return by road to your hotel.

Afternoon: Sat on the edge of Dangrek mountain cliff the **UNESCO World heritage site of Preah Vihear** and its spectacular views across both Cambodia and Thailand is not to be missed. This impressive site, a masterpiece of Khmer architecture built over a period of 300 years by different Kings, is reached today by **helicopter** for an adventurous experience and breathtaking views.

The temple complex's unique blend of sanctuaries linked by pavements and staircases with the spectacular natural landscape make of this temple a site of exceptional quality.

Accommodation: Amansara – Suite |

Meals: breakfast | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 7: Siem Reap

One of travel's greatest adventures is to motor through the darkness of the Cambodian night to welcome the dawn on the stones at **Angkor Wat**. We explore this architectural wonder and the world-class **bas-reliefs** before walking between the outer laterite wall and the moat.

Tip: For a more tranquil sunrise experience let us lead you through the back door of Angkor Wat, the east entrance, to avoid the camera wielding crowds at the main gate. We recommend exploring this popular temple in the hours immediately after sunrise. This morning you will also be afforded access to go **behind the scenes of**

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Angkor, joining one of the organizations – Angkor Conservation - working on the conservation and preservation of the temples. Return to the hotel for a late breakfast.

Afternoon: we travel some 35 km to the east of town on the main road to Phnom Penh before turning right to explore the largest village on **Tonle Sap Lake** at **Kompong Khleang**. Depending on the season and the water levels we may recommend **Kompong Phluck** as an alternative.

These fishing communities live in stilted houses up to 10 meters above the ground to cope with seasonal variation in the water levels. You would not recognize the place between high and low water. These experiences are wholly different to the overly touristic floating villages close to Siem Reap. Often tourists outnumber the locals in **Chong Kneas** with processions of boats being taken to crocodile and fish farms for souvenir shopping. Wandering through the village we will have the opportunity to climb up into the houses. Your guide will translate, allow you to speak with the villagers to gain an understanding of their unique lifestyle. **Lunch in a village house** or perhaps learn how to handle a 'cast fishing' net. Later we can take a **private boat** out from the village to the main body of the lake past floating houses, fishermen and mangroves or flooded forest. Experience a traditional water blessing by monks on return to Siem Reap. This evening experience some of Cambodia's exciting arts with a private traditional **puppet show** held in Wat Bo, one of Siem Reap's oldest pagodas.

Accommodation: Amansara – Suite |

Meals: breakfast, lunch | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 08: Siem Reap

This morning you may wish to enjoy a relaxing morning at your leisure unwinding at the hotel pool. Optionally take the opportunity to head out into the countryside to see more of the real Cambodia with a private village tour. Gain an insight into authentic country life as you soak up **rice paddies and village life** (no temples) with a leisurely village walk and talk. Arriving at the unique vantage point of your own traditional private village house enjoy panoramic views of paddy fields as daily life continues to go by - from villagers working in the fields to school children out on their bikes. Here you will enjoy traditional a picnic lunch this stunning pastoral setting.

Accompanied by a leading academic on the temples, explore more of the Angkor Archaeological Park. Jayavarman VII was the most prolific builder of the Khmer Empire. Following a lengthy stay in the neighbouring kingdom of Champa in central Vietnam he returned, a Buddhist, to Angkor to reclaim his country from a Champa invasion. He assumed the title of God-King at the relatively advanced age of 56. In the following 30 years he presided over an expansion of the empire and the building of hundreds of temples, rest houses and hospitals throughout modern day Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. This afternoon we explore the city at the centre of his Empire, **Angkor Thom**. Walk back in time to temples that pre-date Angkor Thom, first the monumental and recently restored 11th century **Baphuon temple** and onward to the 10th century **Phimeanakas**, with its hidden bathing pools.

Continue through shaded parkland to the 300m long and 3m high **Terrace of the Elephants**. This long succession of elephant carvings shows them in battle alongside lion headed warriors, garudas, lions and seven-headed horses - all

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fantastical creatures of Hindu mythology. As you climb the terrace from the rear, imagine the Khmer imperial army arrayed on the parade ground to the East in what must have been a fearsome spectacle. Just to the South we will find the state temple of **Bayon** at the very centre of the Khmer Empire. 216 giant stone faces on 37 towers maintained a gaze over Jayavarman's vast city. The mainly wooden dwellings have long since been reclaimed by the forest. Just a short drive away you can **enjoy a drink** and **watch the sunset** over the water. This is a beautiful and peaceful way to reflect on the day, serenaded by the cicadas, before we return by road back to your hotel.

Accommodation: Amansara – Suite |

Meals: breakfast, lunch | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 09: Departure

Hop in a tuk-tuk to the **Old and Central Markets** for souvenir shopping or **Psa Leu** for an anything but touristy experience. Roam narrow lanes lined with stalls selling a bewildering array of wonderfully exotic edibles, from waterfowl to snakes, spiders and fried bugs. Visit Theam's house, a fascinating atelier and artist's studio, where you can see craftsmen at work on unique products, lacquered panels and other creations. You may also have the chance to meet the artist Theam himself, who is helping to revive the Cambodian craft sector.

Afternoon: departure for your flight onwards.

Accommodation: n/a |

Meals: breakfast | Transportation: private A/C-vehicles.

Day 9 - onwards

Why not extend your journey in Cambodia with either a relaxing stay on the beach of Song Saa private island, and/or in the jungles of Koh Kong's 4-Rivers Floating Lodge?

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Accommodation

Phnom Penh

Raffles le Royal Phnom Penh

For over eighty years, the Raffles Hotel Le Royal has been the choice of royalty, dignitaries and celebrities travelling through the capital of modern Cambodia, Phnom Penh. This landmark Phnom Penh hotel sets the benchmark for refined enchantment in Cambodia.

Raffles le Royal is ideally situated at the heart of the city and has easy access to the prime shopping attractions in the city, and is an ideal base for sight-seeing tours.

The epitome of sophistication, this luxurious hotel's French colonial elegance is complemented by modern comforts and a leisurely ambience.

Website: <http://www.raffles.com/phnom-penh/>

Siem Reap

Amansara

Situated in Siem Reap, the cultural capital of Cambodia, just 10 minutes from the entrance to Angkor, Amansara was once the guest villa of King Norodom Sihanouk. Today the walled garden compound serves as a tranquil 24-suite retreat with the ambience of a gracious home.

Quintessentially '60s in character, it featured cool, low-slung chalets spaced around an irregular-shaped swimming pool and a shady lawn.

Website: <http://www.amanresorts.com/amansara/home.aspx>

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