

Undiscovered Cambodia

14-day tour visiting Cambodia's remote northeast, including Kratie, Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, Kompong Thom, before ending in Siem Reap



Day 1 - Arrive Phnom Penh

Upon arrival in Phnom Penh this morning you will be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel in the city centre.

In the afternoon, embark on a guided tour of the capital, taking in the **Royal Palace**, a curious mix of Eastern and Western design built in 1866 and still in use by the Cambodian royal family today; the **Silver Pagoda**, a spectacular temple complex rivalling **Wat Phra Kaew** in Thailand, and housing Cambodia's own Emerald Buddha; and **Wat Phnom**, the city's oldest shrine, dating back to 1373 (though it's been rebuilt many times since), and sited on a shady knoll towards the centre of town which always throngs with worshippers.

Early evening, enjoy a traditional Khmer massage at the Spa La Rose—the most rejuvenating way to rest after a long flight and a good day's sightseeing!

Day 2 - Phnom Penh; Khmer Rouge sites and local dinner

Phnom Penh is revealing of the great contrasts in Cambodia's history, from the glories of the early Khmer civilisation to the tragedy of the country's 20th-century history. This morning you'll have the chance to learn more about the latter on a visit to the notorious Khmer Rouge Killing Fields and the

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Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Together they provide a brutal but necessary insight into this dark era in Cambodia's long history.

Returning to Phnom Penh, stop by the ***Pour Un Sourire d'Enfant*** programme, which works to support impoverished and homeless Cambodian children by providing them with accommodation, healthcare and education. Enjoy lunch at the centre's restaurant.

To get a better feel for Cambodian culture and cuisine, this evening we'll arrange for you to enjoy a home-made dinner at the house of a local Cambodian family before you return to your hotel.

Day 3 - Phnom Penh to Stung Treng

Depart Phnom Penh this morning for **Stung Treng**, with lunch en route. It's a long drive, taking 5-6 hours by private vehicle, but there will be plenty of opportunities to get out and stretch along the way.

Stung Treng is a small town situated on the banks of the Mekong River, in the remote north-east of Cambodia, within the boundaries of the Virachey National Park. The town has a long and turbulent history, having been an outpost of the Khmer Empire before being incorporated into the Lao Kingdom in the 14th-century, only to later be returned to Cambodia in 1904.

This afternoon explore the town on foot and visit a local silk-weavers, where you'll learn more about silk manufacture, a traditional Cambodian industry still practiced to this day.



Day 4 - Cruise the Mekong from Stung Treng to Preah Rumkel

This morning enjoy a leisurely boat cruise along the Mekong River near Stung Treng, stopping around noon for lunch and a few hours' rest at a local waterfall – a beautiful spot reached after a short walk through the jungle from the banks of the river.

In the afternoon, continue along the Mekong River to the village of **Preah Rumkel**. A charming riverside village, Preah Rumkel is one of the few places in Cambodia where it is still possible to see the rare Irrawaddy Dolphin. Despite this, Preah Rumkel is far from an established feature of the Cambodian tourist circuit, with no hotels and only a few home-stays. You'll stay in a local home, where this evening you'll be treated to a delicious home-cooked meal.



Day 5 - Preah Rumkel to Ratanakiri Province

Wake early this morning to watch the sunrise and the fishermen departing for a day's labour. After a hearty breakfast provided by your hosts, board the boat and set out along the **Ramsar Wetlands** to the village of **O'Svay**.



Once at O'Svay, you'll be reunited with your driver and continue by car approx. 3 hours to **Terres Rouges**, a lovely lodge situated on the banks of the Boeung Kansaing River, in **Ratanakiri Province**. Ratanakiri is among the most remote and beautiful of Cambodia's provinces, with stunning scenery and a variety of local cultures to discover that are distinct from Cambodia's dominant Khmer culture.

In the afternoon, after checking in to your lodge, visit **Yak Laom Lake**. This freshwater lake occupies a volcanic crater formed over 4,000 years ago. It's terrifyingly deep (almost 50m!), but the water is crystal clear and wonderful to swim in. Go for a swim or just enjoy a walk around the lake's forested perimeter.

Day 6 - Explore Ratanakiri Province

This morning you'll have the opportunity to visit a thriving local market, where the region's various ethnic minorities gather to trade. The market is a short distance from your lodge, meaning you can enjoy a spot of souvenir shopping before returning to the lodge for breakfast.

The rest of the day is spent visiting the best of Ratanakiri's many sights. You'll explore a local weaving village, where you'll be able to learn more about this essential Cambodian craft; relax at **Lum Kut**, another beautiful volcanic lake; and explore the market and gem mines at **Borkeo**. In the afternoon hop aboard a river boat and cruise the **Se San River**, stopping to explore an abandoned **Charai Hindu cemetery**, where the graves have been decorated with fascinating carved effigies.



Late afternoon, return to Terres Rouges.



Day 7 – Ratanakiri to Kratie

After breakfast at the lodge, leave for **Kratie**. It's a long drive (approx. 5 hours), with a stop en route at the **Kampi Pool**, where, with luck, you may be able to see the Irrawaddy Dolphin.

Kratie is a sleepy riverside town situated close to the Laos Border. Formerly a French colonial retreat, the town still retains much of its 19th-century architecture.

On arrival in Kratie, board a ferry to **Koh Trong**, a small island situated in the middle of the Mekong River. Koh Trong is a pleasure to explore on foot, bicycle or, if you want the authentic experience, by ox cart! There's a nine kilometre circuit trail around the island, which takes you through riverside villages, fruit groves and paddy fields. Take the time to observe the daily rituals and distinct pace of life in a traditional Cambodian village.



You'll spend the night in a local home, with dinner included. The home stay is basic, with shared facilities and no air-con, but you'll be provided with the essentials: excellent home-cooked food, clean accommodation, and the utmost attention from your charming hosts!

Day 8 – Kratie to Mondulkiri

Northeast Cambodia remains one of Cambodia's most beautiful environments, but it's suffered terribly from mass deforestation in recent years, including in and around Kratie and Koh Trong. This morning you'll visit a reforestation initiative, where you'll learn more about the project, help plant a tree, and sample Koh Trong's famous pomelos. Later in the morning, visit Koh Trong's floating market. Afterwards, it's time to board the boat, say goodbye to Koh Trong, and head back to Kratie. You'll have a bit of time to explore Kratie, before continuing south via **Chhlong** to the elevated town of **Sen Monorom**, capital of the hilly Mondulkiri Province.

The least populous of Cambodia's provinces, **Mondulkiri** is a remote region dominated by hills and beautiful woodland.

Though it's the regional capital, Sen Monorom is a sleepy town, situated between high hills and centred on two lakes. It's a beautiful location, very much off-the-beaten path and somewhat difficult to access, but well worth the extra effort required to get here. Sen is surrounded by local villages and serves as a regional market hub where the local tribes meet to trade.



Accommodation in Sen Monorom is fairly limited, but there are a number of small guesthouses and hotels. Tonight you stay in an air-conditioned hotel (though you might not need it – due to its altitude, Sen Monorom can be chilly at night!)

Day 9 - Explore Mondulkiri Province

Leave Sen Monorom early this morning and drive to **Boo Sra Falls**, located an hour outside of town. The waterfall, one of the largest in Cambodia, is a popular picnic and bathing spot.

Visit **Busra**, a weaving village, in the afternoon, before returning to explore Sen Monorom and its immediate surrounds, including the **Maiden Breast Hill**, from where you have a beautiful sunset view of the town on a clear day.



Day 10 - Kompong Thom via Kompong Cham

Leave Sen Monorom for **Kompong Cham** (approx. 4 hours), a busy French colonial town set on the banks of the Mekong River.

After lunch in town, you might like to spend time exploring Kompong Cham's old colonial homes and temples before moving on. Most notable is the temple complex of **Banteay Prey Nokor**, at the centre of which is **Wat Nokor**, an 11th-century Mahayana Buddhist temple constructed with sandstone – in a similar style to the temples at Siem Reap – that has been incorporated into a more modern Theravadan shrine. Angkorian experts and enthusiasts consider this a hidden gem of Khmer art, since it receives so few visitors compared to the more famous temples at Siem Reap and Battambang.

After exploring Kompong Cham, continue on to **Kompong Thom**, arriving at your hotel late afternoon.

Day 11 - Kompong Thom to Siem Reap via Chenla

After breakfast, begin the day with a drive through rural scenes to the **Sambor Prei Kuk** group of temples and the ancient capital of **Chenla**. These are among the oldest sites in Cambodia, pre-dating Angkor by 400 years. They are not nearly as large in scope as the temples at Siem Reap, but they provide a fascinating insight into the development of the Khmer style.

In the afternoon, continue to **Siem Reap**, arriving late afternoon.

Day 12 - Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom

Today you'll visit the most famous of the Khmer temples: the ancient city of **Angkor Thom**, with the iconic Bayon temple at its centre, and **Angkor Wat**, the largest and, many would argue, most spectacular religious site in the world.

Angkor Thom, formerly the capital of the Angkor Empire, is a huge site, accessed via a grand gate and encompassing several structures, including the Bayon, Phimeanakas, and the Elephant Terrace. You'll likely recognise many of the sites immediately, notably the Bayon with its famous face towers, almost as iconic as Angkor Wat itself.



You'll have a full morning to explore Angkor Thom in the company of your guide. For lunch, you may prefer to head into town or return to your hotel in order to escape the midday heat.

Late afternoon, begin your tour of the stunning Angkor Wat. You will need 3-4 hours to explore Angkor Wat in depth. This is a site that is spectacular to look at but also one that is rich in symbolism, revealed, not just in its wall murals, but in its very layout, with the temple's moat, concentric galleries, and five central towers thought to be a depiction of the Hindu universe. Your guide will be able to tell you more about the symbolism underpinning Angkor Wat as you explore the site at length. In the early evening, find a quiet spot to sit and watch the sun set over the temple.

Day 13 - Siem Reap; Ta Prohm and Banteay Temples.

Continue your temple visits with some of the more remote of Siem Reap's sites, **Banteay Samre**, **Banteay Srei** (the temple of Shiva), and **Ta Prohm**, the famous 'jungle temple'.

Banteay Srei differs from the main Angkorian temples in several respects. It is much smaller, constructed almost entirely of pink sandstone (which is softer than the laterite and sandstone used in Angkor Wat and hence much easier to carve) and is decorated with intricate carved wall murals of a sort not seen on other Angkorian temples.

Banteay Samre receives fewer visitors than many other temples near Siem Reap, but only because of its remoteness. It's a stunning temple, remarkable for its condition (its centre has been fully restored). Its design is similar to Angkor Wat, with a long causeway leading to a central temple with towers, enclosed within two galleries. The outer walls, however, have not been restored and only the foundations are visible.

Ta Prohm is iconic. Popularly known as the 'jungle temple', it provides a good indication of how all of the temples at Angkor would have looked when they were discovered by archaeologists in the late 19th-century. Whereas extensive restoration work has been done on other temples, Ta Prohm has been intentionally left as it was discovered – in a gently decaying state, overgrown with roots and vines from the forest – giving it a romantic and mysterious air.



In the late afternoon, relax with a Khmer massage before being returned to your hotel. Evening at leisure.

Day 14 - Depart Siem Reap

At leisure until your scheduled transfer to the airport for your homeward flight. Check out is at noon, though we can arrange a day room if your flight departs this evening.

If you have time this morning, you may wish to explore Siem Reap's lively morning market or enjoy an early visit to one of the temples to watch the sunrise.



Price guide overleaf.

Price Guide:

The cost of this itinerary is from **£1,455 per person**, based on twin/double accommodation. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).

Includes:

- Accommodation as described (B&B basis)
- Lunch on days 3, 4, 6, 7 and 11
- Dinner on days 2, 4 and 7
- All transfers as described
- Private transportation throughout
- All entrance fees
- Activities mentioned in itinerary
- Experienced regional guides

Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Visas
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Lunch and dinner to own account unless stated otherwise in itinerary

