

Know Before You Go

pre-departure guidance & checklist

 *Ayana*
journeys



Welcome!

This information pack is provided to help you prepare for your adventure, learn more about our approach to travel, and find out how you can maximise your experience in Cambodia. Here you will find everything to help you before your departure. The more you learn beforehand, the better your trip will be. We're delighted you have chosen to explore Cambodia through Ayana Journeys, and we cannot wait to welcome you to the Kingdom of Wonder. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

Happy travels!
The Ayana Team



Ayana Journeys: About Us

handcrafted travel for curious minds

We believe that travel should always benefit the places and people we visit. That is why all our tours are carefully handcrafted with a focus on education and meaningful connections with local people and their fascinating stories.

We encourage you to visit with an open mind and an open heart. We promise, you'll leave learning new things, having experienced places other companies can't share with you, and new friends for life.

Being a Responsible Traveller

We incorporate responsible tourism practices into every aspect of our operations, but also encourage our participants to consider ways in which they can be responsible travellers. Below are some tips on how you can be a responsible traveller while exploring Cambodia...

- **Giving** – While this is ultimately a personal decision we leave up to participants, we encourage you to think carefully before giving money to children that are begging or selling trinkets on the street. It is extremely difficult to say no to a child, but giving money to street children can encourage the belief that begging is a better use of time than going to school. This may perpetuate or even increase the problem, rather than help.

- **Orphanage Tourism** – We do not support or facilitate visits to or volunteering in orphanages or residential childcare facilities. It's estimated that 80% of Cambodia's 'orphans' actually have living relatives, and many orphanages are businesses created simply to fill tourists' demand to see or 'help' orphan children. Please consider whether you would visit an orphanage in your home country? Would somewhere prioritising the best interests of children allow random visits from strangers? Learn more about protecting children as you travel by visiting the ChildSafe Movement's site: <http://thinkchildsafe.org/>
- **Environment** – You can minimise the potential negative environmental impacts of your tour by making small but significant changes. Bring a reusable water bottle rather than buying disposable ones in Cambodia, bring a reusable carrier bag rather than relying on plastic, and use rechargeable batteries where possible.
- **Photography** – We understand that capturing moments on film can be a rewarding part of any travel experience, however it is important to respect people's privacy and always ask permission before taking a photo of a person or people. In Cambodia a smile can be a sign of discomfort, so never just presume it's okay to take a photograph. We also encourage you to embrace 'camera-free' days, allowing you to really immerse in the moment instead of being behind the camera lens.

Cultural Sensitivity

"When you travel, remember that a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its own people comfortable."

– Clifton Fadiman

Cambodia is a beautiful and fascinating country with many unique cultural traditions, some of which may seem 'strange' at first. During our tours we introduce the most notable 'Dos and Don'ts', and request that our participants try to be sensitive to these as they travel through Cambodia, particularly in rural and remote areas where 'Western' influences are still minimal.

By understanding the Cambodian 'code of conduct' and being aware of how your actions may be interpreted by others, you can engage with this culture on a deeper level, be respectful to the local people you meet, and be a great ambassador for your home country too.



- **Clothing** – Cambodians traditionally dress conservatively, particularly in rural areas. Please show sensitivity by covering your knees and shoulders, particularly when visiting temples, pagodas, rural communities, and sites of cultural, historic, or religious significance. To be safe and always respectful, we recommend covering knees and shoulders at all times.

- **Touching heads** – The head is considered to be the most sacred part of the body in Cambodia, and as such it is considered very rude to touch someone’s head, including children. This is especially true for elders and monks.
- **Hats off!** – It is respectful to remove your hat and shoes when entering a pagoda, temples, or someone’s home.
- **Take a bow** – When you meet someone, it’s polite to remove your hat, bow your head slightly, and put your hands together in a ‘prayer’ position. This is particularly important when you meet monks or elders.
- **Watch your feet** – The soles of your feet should never be pointed towards anyone, particularly elders and images or statues of the Buddha. This is because feet are considered to be the least holy part of the body.
- **Communication** – Cambodians typically feel very embarrassed or uncomfortable if you lose your cool, as this is not socially acceptable in Khmer culture. They may even smile out of awkwardness, which can make the situation more confusing. Keep calm!
- **Public affection** – Cambodia is generally conservative when it comes to physical displays of affection between romantic couples, even if they are married. Hugging or kissing in public will likely attract stares and may make people feel very uncomfortable, so should be avoided.
- **Buddha images** – Remember that Buddha images are extremely sacred and your actions towards and around them should be respectful (e.g. never point your feet at the Buddha). Images of the Cambodian Royal Family should also be respected.
- **Pointing** – In Cambodia it is considered rude to point at someone with your index finger, as this is how people point at animals or objects. Instead you can use either your open palm or your mouth to point.
- **Getting attention** – Try to avoid beckoning anyone with your palm facing upwards as this is how animals are called in Cambodia, and it is therefore considered rude to do this to a person. Instead if you need to beckon someone (e.g. a tuktuk driver), you can do so with your palm facing downwards.

Health & Safety

Vaccinations

We strongly recommend that you visit a travel nurse to seek professional advice well before your trip. If you decide to have any vaccinations prior to travel, these may need to be administered over the course of a month or more. We also recommend checking the Center for Disease Control and Prevention for up-to-date information and recommendations for Cambodia.

Our trip leaders have first aid training and carry a first aid kit, but are not allowed to issue medication. For this reason, it's also a good idea to pack a personal first aid kit to travel with you, ensuring you bring necessary prescriptions or other over-the-counter medications from your home country that you may need.

Travel insurance

Ayana Journeys requires that all tour participants arrange their own travel insurance. We require that participants' insurance must include coverage for emergency medical evacuation, and that insurance details are provided to us prior to your arrival in Cambodia to ensure we can offer support in case of an accident or illness.

For additional peace of mind, we recommend becoming a member of International SOS for the duration of your trip. You can find more information about the services they offer at www.internationalsos.com/personal-travel

Food

It is important that you tell us before you arrive if you have any strict dietary requirements so we can cater to your needs. Whilst it is possible for us to cater to most dietary preferences and restrictions, it is important to note that in rural areas only traditional Khmer cuisine is available. This means options for vegetarians and vegans may be limited, as ingredients such as fish sauce and shrimp paste are very widely used.

As being healthy and well-nourished is a key to overall happiness on trips, we recommend that anyone who has special dietary requirements bring supplements and snacks (like protein and energy bars) from home. If you prefer to travel light, some Western products like peanut butter are available at international shops in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, or you can always try local snack options like Cambodian cashews and dried fruit.

Coming to Cambodia with a flexible attitude towards amenities, food, and other travel logistics will make for a more enjoyable trip. By planning ahead and packing a few comforts from home, you will be better prepared for the adventure. If you have questions or concerns regarding food in Cambodia, please contact us before arriving so we can ensure you stay healthy during the trip.



We regularly cater for guests with allergies, such as nut or seafood, and always do our best to take care of you and communicate your needs to kitchen staff. Ayana Journeys staff do not carry epi-pens with

them, and it is crucial that if you have a known anaphylaxis allergy, you must carry your own epi-pens with you at all times.

Water

It is extremely important to stay hydrated in Cambodia, as the most common health issue that arises during our trips is dehydration. During all activities and meals we will provide plenty of clean, potable water to ensure you are getting enough fluids.

Dehydration often manifests with feelings of nausea. Many people who travel in the area think they have eaten bad food at first, but later realise it is only a side effect of dehydration.

Ice in Cambodia is delivered from facilities that use purified water for their ice production. Unless otherwise noted during the trip, all of the restaurants we visit will have ice that is clean and safe to drink.

The sun

The sun is very strong in South East Asia so heat exhaustion, dehydration, and sunburn can occur quickly. All carry serious risks and can make a trip unpleasant, but they are easily avoided with proper precautions. In hot and humid climates the body's cooling system is over worked and loses large amounts of fluids and salts (electrolytes). Participants who are not well adjusted to heat and exercise in a hot and humid environment should be especially careful. Please remember during the trip you are likely to experience temperatures from 30- 40°C (80-100°F).

Heat exhaustion symptoms include fatigue / weakness, muscle cramps, a weak and quickening heartbeat, dizziness, nausea, cool and clammy skin, headache, and a dry mouth. All are related to dehydration and the accompanying rise in internal body temperature. The simplest and most effective ways to prevent heat exhaustion are to drink plenty of fluids and to avoid the sun during the hottest part of the day. If you experience some of these symptoms during the trip, please tell a trip leader immediately, get out of the sun, and drink water or a fresh coconut.

Travel Logistics

Passport

All nationalities require a passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. You will not be allowed to enter Cambodia if your passport expires in less than six months from the date of your intended departure. Please check your passport as soon as possible to ensure that you have enough time to renew it if necessary.

Visas

Most recently available information states that almost all nationalities are able to obtain a tourist visa ('T visa') on arrival in either Siem Reap or Phnom Penh International Airports. To do this, you must pay \$30

USD and provide 2 passport photographs. We recommend bringing the correct change with you if possible.

A Cambodian tourist visa lasts for 30 days, and can be extended in-country once. After one extension you will be required to leave Cambodia and re-enter, in order to obtain a new visa.

Holders of passports from the following countries do not require a Cambodian tourist visa for a visit of up to 30 days:

- ✓ Brunei
- ✓ Indonesia
- ✓ Laos
- ✓ Malaysia
- ✓ Myanmar
- ✓ Philippines (21 days)
- ✓ Singapore
- ✓ Thailand (14 days)
- ✓ Vietnam



The image shows a Cambodian Immigration Card form with fields for personal information, travel details, and visa type. The form is titled 'សេវាកម្មត្រូវបានប្រើសេវា / IMMIGRATION CARD / 移民卡' and includes instructions to complete it in capital letters. Fields include: Surname / 姓氏, Given Name / 名字, Date of Birth / 出生日期 (DD/MM/YY), Nationality / 国籍, Passport No. / 护照/旅行证件号码, Flight/Car/Ship/Train No. / 航班号, From / 来自, Final City / 最终目的地, Purpose of Travel / 旅行目的, Length of Stay / 停留时间, and Visa Type selection (Tourist, Special, Ordinary, Other). A declaration at the bottom states: 'I declare that the information given on this card is complete and correct.' There is also a section for 'FOR OFFICIAL USE' with a date field and a signature line.

Holders of passports from the following countries are required to obtain a visa prior to their arrival in Cambodia, which can be done via a Royal Kingdom of Cambodia Embassy:

- ✓ Afghanistan
- ✓ Algeria
- ✓ Bangladesh
- ✓ Iran
- ✓ Iraq
- ✓ Nigeria
- ✓ Pakistan
- ✓ Saudi Arabia
- ✓ Sri Lanka
- ✓ Sudan

Nationals from the above countries are also advised to be able to prove onward / return travel tickets upon arrival in Cambodia. More information can be found at:

<https://www.embassyofcambodiadc.org/how-to-get-a-visa.html>
<http://www.tourismcambodia.com/tripplanner/essential-information/visa-passport.htm>

E-visa

Obtaining a visa on arrival is generally straightforward, however it is also possible for most nationalities to obtain an e-visa in advance if they prefer. The e-visa costs the same (\$30) + \$6 processing fee. More information can be found at:

<https://www.evisa.gov.kh/>

Arrival to Cambodia

You will be required to fill in and submit an arrival / immigration form upon entering Cambodia. This form will likely be given to you on the plane (sample here on right).

You will need to submit the name and address (street name and city will suffice) of the accommodation for the first night of your stay in Cambodia. Ensure you have these details at hand during your flight so you can complete this form easily.

You are usually also given a customs form at the same time. Submit this and drop it off at the appropriate desk on the way out of the airport.

Money

Cambodia uses two currencies: Khmer Riel and US Dollars (notes only – you will not be able to spend US coins in Cambodia). The exchange rate fluctuates slightly, but most businesses operate a flat exchange rate of 4,000 Khmer Riel to 1 USD.

Khmer Riel is used for small change, normally denominations under \$1, and is very useful when shopping in rural areas or at a market. It cannot be obtained outside of Cambodia, but you will be given it as change when making purchases upon arrival.

US Dollars are generally used for larger payments, and can be brought into the country when you travel here. If you wish to withdraw money from an ATM while you are in Cambodia, it is recommended that you do so in USD. ATMs are now readily available in most towns, but bank charges will apply. Make sure you update your home bank in advance of your travel to Cambodia (or anywhere overseas) as if you don't they may block your account to prevent fraud.

Travellers cheques can often be challenging to change in Cambodia, and we would not recommend carrying money in this way.

Electricity

Cambodia uses two pin plugs (both flat and round). Adapters are easy to come by in Cambodia and can be bought cheaply, however these are not voltage converters. The standard voltage is 230V (frequency 50Hz), which means appliances from the UK, Australia, and most parts of Asia and Africa should work in

Cambodia without a voltage converter. If you are bringing appliances from North or South America you will need to bring a voltage converter with you, as those are not easily available in Cambodia

Please note that power cuts can be frequent and long, and there are still rural communities that do not have electricity.

Suggested Packing List

Clothing

Cambodia is very hot, so we recommend that all clothing is loose, lightweight, and made of natural fibers if possible. We also suggest bringing clothes that aren't new or expensive, as they may not leave Cambodia in the condition they arrived in!

- Comfortable shoes with grip (e.g. for walking on rough or muddy terrain)
- A second pair of flip-flops or sandals
- Socks and underwear
- Tops / t-shirts that cover your chest, back, and shoulders
- Loose, lightweight long sleeved shirts (for evenings / sun protection)
- Loose, lightweight shorts, trousers, skirts / dresses that cover your knees
- Loose, lightweight sleepwear
- Swimwear - If you will be staying in a rural community where swimming is available, you will need to wear a t-shirt and long shorts over your swimwear
- A pashmina, shawl, or sarong – these are very handy multi-purpose items!
- A hat that shades your eyes from the sun, and covers bald spots from the sun
- Sunglasses

Travel and personal items

A limited selection of toiletries are available to purchase in Cambodia, however brands and prices may be different to those you're used to.

- Money belt
- Sun protection cream
- Insect repellent (we recommend using natural options if possible)
- Personal toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, etc.)
- Torch (flashlight)
- Camera, memory cards, and charger (and / or power bank)
- Phone (note only unlocked phones will work with a local SIM card)
- Reusable water bottle
- Reusable carrier bag
- Plug adaptor if necessary
- Earplugs if you are a light sleeper

- Notebook and pens
- Bank cards if you plan with withdraw cash from an ATM in Cambodia

Medical

- Basic first aid kit
- Personal medication
- Sanitary products (tampons are often not available outside of large cities in Cambodia)

Documents

- US dollars (small bills are useful)
- At least 2 passport sized photos (if you are applying for a visa on arrival)
- Insurance information
- Accommodation information (you will need this for your arrival card)
- Photocopy of your passport
- Scanned copy of your passport and travel documents saved to email / a USB

Learn Before you Leave

As all Ayana Journeys' tours have a focus on education, allowing you to connect with Cambodia through a deeper understanding of the country, its people, culture, challenges, and opportunities, we recommend you do a little reading before you visit.

Suggested reading

- Cambodia: Tales from a Stricken Land, Henry Kamm
- Cambodia Now: Life In the Wake of War, Karen J. Coates
- First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers, Loung Ung
- Despite Good Intentions: Why Development Assistance to the Third World Has Failed, Thomas W. Dichter
- Golden Bones: An Extraordinary Journey from Hell in Cambodia to a New Life in America, Sichan Siv

Films

- First They Killed My Father (available on Netflix)
- The Killing Fields
- Bombhunters
- The Last Reel
- The Missing Picture
- Don't Think I've Forgotten

Contact us

For more information to help plan your trip, or if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us...

contact@ayanajourneys.com
+855 (0) 88 316 0220

During your trip, we'll also provide you with a list of emergency contact details.

Happy travels!