Cambodia's Royal Heritage & Ancient Temples – 8 Days

8D / 7N	Easy	Private	USD 805 / pax
Duration	Difficulty	Tour Type	Starting From

An 8-day journey through Cambodia, exploring the historical charm of Phnom Penh, rural life along the Mekong, and the majestic ancient temples of Angkor.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Phnom Penh → Siem Reap

TOUR OVERVIEW

Overview of Your Cambodian Adventure

This 8-day Cambodian expedition takes you from the bustling capital of Phnom Penh, with its rich history and French colonial influences, through the serene rural landscapes of Kampong Cham and Kratie, before culminating in the awe-inspiring archaeological park of Siem Reap. Experience the vibrant culture, witness rare freshwater dolphins, and discover ancient temple complexes that stand as testaments to a glorious past. This tour offers a balanced blend of cultural immersion, historical exploration, and scenic beauty, providing a deep insight into the heart of Cambodia.

Journey Highlights

Discover the grandeur of the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda in Phnom Penh.

Observe the rare Irrawaddy dolphins in their natural habitat along the Mekong River near Kratie.

Explore the ancient pre-Angkorian temples of Sambor Prei Kuk, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Witness a breathtaking sunrise over the iconic Angkor Wat, followed by a traditional monk's breakfast.

Cycle through lesser-known paths to uncover hidden temples within the Angkor Thom complex.

Engage with local communities in a Cambodian village, learning about their daily life and traditions.

Experience a relaxing foot massage after a day of temple exploration in Siem Reap.

Route Summary

Your adventure begins in Phnom Penh, where you'll delve into the city's historical landmarks. The journey then heads north through the picturesque countryside to Kampong Cham and Kratie, offering glimpses into rural Cambodian life and unique wildlife. From there, you'll travel to Kampong Thom to explore ancient temple ruins before reaching Siem Reap, the gateway to the magnificent Angkor Archaeological Park. The itinerary provides ample time to explore the various temples and experience local culture around Siem Reap.

Who This Tour Suits

This tour is ideal for travelers interested in history, culture, and natural beauty. It caters to those who appreciate archaeological wonders, enjoy observing local life, and are comfortable with a moderate pace of travel that includes both guided excursions and opportunities for personal exploration. Families, couples, and solo adventurers seeking a comprehensive Cambodian experience will find this itinerary particularly rewarding.

Practical Information

Throughout your journey, comfortable air-conditioned vehicles will provide transfers between destinations and for sightseeing. Local English-speaking guides will accompany you, offering valuable insights into Cambodia's heritage and daily life. Accommodation includes 7 nights in selected hotels, with daily breakfast provided. Lunches are included on most days, ensuring you experience local cuisine. Please note that international flights, visa fees, and personal expenses are not included.

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TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

* Explore the Royal Palace, Silver Pagoda, and National Museum in Phnom Penh.
* Witness the rare freshwater Irrawaddy dolphins in the Mekong River near Kratie.
* Discover the ancient Pre-Angkorian temples of Sambor Prei Kuk.
* Experience a sunrise over Angkor Wat and enjoy breakfast with local monks.
* Cycle through the jungle to explore the less-visited West Gate of Angkor Thom.
* Visit Banteay Srei, Banteay Samre, and the root-embraced Ta Prohm temple.
* Engage with a local Cambodian village family and visit a community school.
* Enjoy a traditional 1-hour foot massage in Siem Reap after temple excursions.

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 — Phnom Penh Arrival & Royal City Exploration

Meals: L | Stay: Katari Hotel / Baitong Hotel & Resort / Palace Gate Hotel & Resort by EHM | Transport: Air-conditioned vehicle

Upon your morning arrival in Phnom Penh, you'll be greeted and transferred to your accommodation. The city, once known as the 'Gem of Southeast Asia,' still showcases its traditional Khmer and French colonial heritage. After settling in, your afternoon begins with a visit to the magnificent Royal Palace compound, established in 1866 by King Norodom's predecessors. This complex features impressive Khmer-style architecture and serves as a prominent landmark.

Adjacent to the Royal Palace, explore the Silver Pagoda, also known as the Emerald Buddha Temple. This sacred site houses numerous Buddha statues adorned with diamonds, emeralds, gold, and silver. Your journey continues to the Independence Monument, erected in 1954 to commemorate Cambodia's liberation from French colonial rule. Next, visit the National Museum, a distinct red building from 1917, which preserves over 5,000 art pieces crafted from sandstone, bronze, silver, copper, and wood.

Later, pass through the scenic River Front Park, offering excellent photo opportunities. Ascend Wat Phnom Daun Penh, the city's sole hill, home to a pagoda built in 1372 by Lady Daun Penh. Legend states she discovered four Buddha statues inside a tree on the Mekong banks after a severe flood. Conclude your day with a leisurely stroll along the Mekong River bank, enjoying picturesque views of Phnom Penh illuminated at night.

Activities: Arrive in Phnom Penh and transfer to hotel.
Visit the Royal Palace compound.
Explore the Silver Pagoda.
See the Independence Monument.
Discover exhibits at the National Museum.
Walk through River Front Park.
Ascend Wat Phnom Daun Penh.
Stroll along the Mekong River bank in the evening.

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Day 2 Rural Cambodia Journey to Kratie & Dolphin Spotting

Meals: B,L | Stay: UDOM SAMBATH GUESTHOUSE | Transport: Air-conditioned vehicle

After breakfast, depart Phnom Penh for a scenic drive towards Kampong Cham. This route offers a window into rural Cambodian life, passing by lush cashew nut plantations, expansive rice fields, and traditional villages. Kampong Cham itself is a historic town, once a French trading post situated on the Mekong River banks. Take time to soak in the tranquil countryside views as you travel.

Continue your journey to Kratie, where you will check into your hotel. In the afternoon, embark on a city tour of this charming provincial town. Kratie is celebrated for its well-preserved colonial architecture and boasts a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere. The tour will take you along the Mekong River basin, passing through the villages of Sambok, Sre Sbov, and Phumi Prek Preah, offering further insights into local riverside communities.

As the day progresses, head further north to a prime riverside vantage point. This location is renowned for offering the best opportunities to observe the rare freshwater Irrawaddy dolphins, particularly in the late afternoon. The Mekong River, originating in Tibet, flows for 315 kilometers through Cambodia before continuing into Vietnam and eventually reaching the sea, providing a vital ecosystem for these unique creatures.

Activities:
Drive from Phnom Penh to Kampong Cham.
Observe rural Cambodian scenery, including plantations and villages.
Arrive in Kratie and check into hotel.
Take a city tour of Kratie, admiring colonial architecture.
Travel along the Mekong River basin through local villages.
Visit a riverside vantage point to see Irrawaddy dolphins.

Day 3 Kratie Market, Colonial Architecture & Kampong Thom

Meals: B,L | Stay: KOMPONG THOM VILLA HOTEL | Transport: Private bus

Begin your day with a visit to Kratie pagoda and the bustling local market, where you can observe daily life and perhaps find unique local goods. Afterwards, continue your journey to Chhlong, a serene village nestled on the Mekong River bank. Chhlong is notable for its blend of traditional Khmer and colonial architectural styles, offering a picturesque glimpse into Cambodia's past.

A highlight in Chhlong is the unique '100 columns house,' a beautiful wooden structure dating back to the 19th century, known for its numerous supporting columns. Before reaching Kampong Cham, make a stop at Chhup, home to the country's largest rubber plantation. This extensive plantation was established during the French colonial era by the renowned French tire manufacturer, Michelin, showcasing a significant piece of industrial history.

Your journey then includes a visit to Wat Nokor, also known as Nokor Bachey Pagoda. This 11th-century Mahayana Buddhist shrine is constructed from sandstone and laterite, featuring a large reclining Buddha and numerous alcoves filled with Buddha images. Following these explorations, you will depart for Kampong Thom by private bus, covering a distance of 138 kilometers from Kampong Cham. You'll spend the night in Kampong Thom, preparing for the next day's adventures.

Activities:
Visit Kratie pagoda and local market.
Travel to Chhlong village to see Khmer and colonial architecture.

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Explore the '100 columns house' in Chhlong.
Stop at Chhup rubber plantation.
Visit Wat Nokor (Nokor Bachey Pagoda).
Depart for Kampong Thom by private bus.

Day 4 Sambor Prei Kuk Temples & Journey to Siem Reap

Meals: B,L,D | Stay: Ladear Angkor Hotel / The Aviary Hotel / Angkor Village Hotel | Transport: Air-conditioned vehicle

An early morning departure from Kampong Thom will take you to the archaeological site of Sambor Prei Kuk. This expansive site is dotted with hundreds of Pre-Angkorian temples, representing the former capital of the Chenla Kingdom. Enclosed by double walls, the area spans nearly 1000 acres and contains numerous temples and towers, predating Angkor Wat by several centuries. While the road conditions to the site can be challenging, the spectacular scenery, combining ancient temples with lush forest, makes the journey worthwhile.

Spend your morning exploring these significant ruins, gaining insight into the architectural and religious developments that preceded the Angkorian era. The intricate details and historical importance of Sambor Prei Kuk offer a profound experience for history enthusiasts. Your guide will provide context and stories about this remarkable landmark.

After your exploration, continue your journey towards Siem Reap, the gateway to the famous Angkor temples. Along the way, you will pass through various traditional Khmer villages, offering glimpses into contemporary Cambodian rural life. A notable stop will be at the archaeological 'Naga Bridge' at Kompong Kdei, an ancient stone bridge with significant historical value. You will arrive in Siem Reap in the late afternoon, ready for the next phase of your adventure.

Activities: Depart early for Sambor Prei Kuk.
Explore hundreds of Pre-Angkorian temples at Sambor Prei Kuk.
Drive towards Siem Reap, passing Khmer traditional villages.
Visit the archaeological 'Naga Bridge' at Kompong Kdei.

Day 5 Sunrise at Angkor Wat & Temple Circuit Exploration

Meals: B,L | Stay: Ladear Angkor Hotel / The Aviary Hotel / Angkor Village Hotel | Transport: Air-conditioned vehicle

Begin your day before dawn to witness a magical sunrise over the iconic Angkor Wat temple. As the sun ascends, listen to the sounds of birds awakening over the ancient Angkor landscape. Following this breathtaking experience, take a short walk to a nearby pagoda to participate in an offering of food to the resident monks. After the monks conclude their breakfast, you will enjoy your own breakfast box on the pagoda grounds, accompanied by jasmine tea, in a peaceful setting. This offers a unique opportunity to interact with monks and nuns, exchanging cultural insights.

Your temple exploration continues with Banteay Srei, often considered a favorite site due to its compact size, exceptional preservation, and the exquisite decorative carvings in rose-colored sandstone. Next, visit Banteay Samre, known for its intricate carvings and bas-reliefs, which are among the finest examples of Angkorian artistry.

Proceed to the fabulous Ta Prohm temple, famously embraced by the massive roots of fig trees and gigantic creepers, creating a mystical atmosphere. Continue your circuit to Prasat Kravan, notable for its unique brick sculptures, and Srah Srang, the Royal Baths, once used for ritual bathing. Conclude this day's temple visits at Banteay Kdei, a monastic complex surrounded

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by four concentric walls, offering further architectural marvels.

Activities: Witness sunrise over Angkor Wat.
Offer food to monks at a local pagoda and have breakfast.
Visit Banteay Srei temple.
Explore Banteay Samre temple.
Discover Ta Prohm temple.
See Prasat Kravan and Srah Srang.
Visit Banteay Kdei temple.

Day 6 Angkor Thom Cycling & Sunset at Bakheng Temple

Meals: B,L | Stay: Ladear Angkor Hotel / The Aviary Hotel / Angkor Village Hotel | Transport: Bicycle, Air-conditioned vehicle

Today offers a unique perspective of the Angkor complex as you embark on a 45-minute cycling tour through less-traveled roads. Ride through lush jungle, passing local villages and shops, for a truly immersive experience. This active day will allow you to explore some of Angkor's most beautiful and historically significant temples, starting with the West Gate of Angkor Thom, a section often missed by larger tourist groups.

Delve into the ancient capital of Angkor Thom, built in the 12th century. Your exploration includes the South Gate, followed by the iconic Bayon Temple, distinctive for its 54 towers adorned with over 200 smiling faces of Avolokitesvara. Continue to Baphuon temple, a pyramidal structure representing the mythical Mount Meru, and explore the Royal Enclosure, including Phimeanakas. You'll also visit the Elephant Terrace and the Terrace of the Leper King, both featuring impressive bas-reliefs. The tour culminates with a visit to the renowned Angkor Wat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1992, celebrated for its beauty and grandeur. Marvel at the world's longest continuous bas-reliefs, depicting stories from Hindu mythology, which line the outer gallery walls. In the late afternoon, ascend Bakheng Temple to enjoy a romantic sunset view from Bakheng hill. Conclude your day with a relaxing 1-hour foot massage and a stroll along the vibrant Pub Street, offering numerous options for drinks or shopping at the Angkor Night Market.

Activities: Cycle to Angkor Thom via less-traveled roads.
Visit the West Gate of Angkor Thom.
Explore Angkor Thom, including the South Gate.
Discover Bayon Temple with its smiling faces.
See Baphuon temple, the Royal Enclosure, Phimeanakas.
Walk along the Elephant Terrace and Terrace of the Leper King.
Visit Angkor Wat and its famous bas-reliefs.
Enjoy sunset from Bakheng Temple.
Receive a 1-hour foot massage.
Walk and shop at Pub Street and Angkor Night Market.

Day 7 Cambodian Village Life & Community Engagement

Meals: B,L | Stay: Ladear Angkor Hotel / The Aviary Hotel / Angkor Village Hotel | Transport: Air-conditioned vehicle

Today presents a unique opportunity to experience authentic Cambodian village life and contribute to local communities. Your

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journey begins with an early drive towards a local village, traversing through picturesque landscapes of rice plantations and past herds of cows or buffalo. Feel free to request stops along the way to capture stunning photo opportunities of the rural scenery.

Upon arrival at the village, you will be warmly welcomed by your host family for the day. This program is designed to provide sustainable income for the family and create opportunities for the entire village. Life in Cambodian villages revolves around agricultural seasons, from rice planting to harvesting, sorting, and husking. For several hours, you will assist your host family with their daily tasks, gaining hands-on insight into their routines and traditions.

A traditional Khmer lunch will be prepared and shared with your host family, fostering a communal dining experience. After lunch, the tour continues to a local school and a pagoda. This offers a wonderful chance to interact with friendly children, allowing them to practice their English skills. The visit to the pagoda provides an interesting perspective on Buddhism's role in the daily lives of the Khmer people, enriching your understanding of their culture and spiritual practices.

Activities: Drive through rural villages and rice plantations.
Meet and interact with a local host family.
Assist with daily village tasks (e.g., rice sorting/husking).
Share a Khmer lunch with the host family.
Visit a local school and interact with children.
Tour a local pagoda to learn about Buddhism.

Day 8 Siem Reap Departure

Meals: B | Transport: Air-conditioned vehicle

After enjoying your final breakfast in Siem Reap, prepare for your departure. A private transfer will be arranged to take you to Siem Reap airport, ensuring a smooth and timely journey for your onward flight to your next destination. This marks the end of your Cambodian adventure.

Bid farewell to your Cambodian guide and driver, who have accompanied you throughout your exploration of this fascinating country. Reflect on the rich history, vibrant culture, and memorable experiences gained from the ancient temples, bustling cities, and serene rural landscapes of Cambodia. We hope you carry cherished memories of your time here.

Activities: Enjoy breakfast at the hotel.
Transfer to Siem Reap airport.
Depart from Cambodia.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

INCLUDED

- v 07 nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast
- v Full board at local restaurant as mention in program
- v Airport transfers & Transport by air con. vehicles as per

NOT INCLUDED

- x Visa fee: 30$
- x International air ticket in-out Cambodia
- x Other meal, drink

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program
- v Sightseeing and entrance fees as specified
- v Local English speaking guide as per program
- v Bike & 1 hour foot massage
- v Cold water and towel during tours

- x Personal expenses, tip

PRICE INCLUDES

- v 07 nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast
- v Full board at local restaurant as mention in program
- v Airport transfers & Transport by air con. vehicles as per program
- v Sightseeing and entrance fees as specified
- v Local English speaking guide as per program
- v Bike & 1 hour foot massage
- v Cold water and towel during tours

CANCELLATION POLICY

Tour Code: IMP-9FD53F39E6EB