

PHNOM PENH

Phnom Penh

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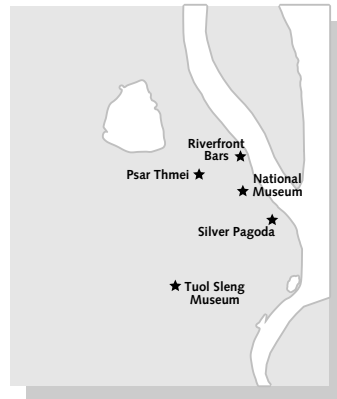
Phnom Penh: the name can't help but conjure up an image of the exotic. The glimmering spires of the royal palace, the fluttering saffron of the monks' robes, and the luscious location on the banks of the mighty Mekong; this is one of Asia's undiscovered gems. But it's also a city on the move, as a new wave of investors move in, perhaps forever changing the character, and skyline, of this classic city. Phnom Penh is a crossroads of Asia's past and present, a city of extremes of poverty and excess, of charm and chaos, but one that never fails to captivate.

Phnom Penh can be an assault on the senses. Motorbikes whiz through the backstreets without a thought for pedestrians; pungent scents float up from stalls and markets; and all the while the sound of life, of commerce, of survival, reverberates all around. But this is all part of the attraction. It's not just another metropolis, the identikit image of a modern capital; it is an older Asia that many dreamed of when first planning their adventures overseas.

Once the 'Pearl of Asia', Phnom Penh's shine was tarnished by the impact of war and revolution. But that's history, and Phnom Penh has risen from the ashes to take its place among the cool capitals of the region. Delve into the ancient past at the National Museum or struggle to make sense of the recent trauma at Tuol Sleng Museum. Browse the city's markets for a bargain or linger in the beautiful boutiques that are putting Phnom Penh on the style map. Street-surf through the local stalls for a snack or enjoy the refined surrounds of a designer restaurant. Whatever your flavour, no matter your taste, it's all here in Phnom Penh.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Be dazzled by the 5000 silver floor tiles of the **Silver Pagoda** (p83), part of the Royal Palace
- Discover the world's finest collection of Khmer sculpture at the stunning **National Museum** (p84)
- Check out the huge dome of **Psar Thmei** (p109), the Art Deco masterpiece that is Phnom Penh's central market
- Delve into the dark side of Cambodian history with a visit to **Tuol Sleng Museum** (p85), essential to understanding the pain of the past
- Experience Phnom Penh's legendary night-life with a happy-hour cocktail, a local meal and a crawl through the city's **lively bars** (p104)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 023

■ POPULATION: 2 MILLION

■ AREA: 290 SQ KM

HISTORY

Legend has it that the city of Phnom Penh was founded when an old woman named Penh found four Buddha images that had come to rest on the banks of the Mekong River. She housed them on a nearby hill, and the town that grew up here came to be known as Phnom Penh (Hill of Penh).

The story gives no hint as to why, in the 1430s, Angkor was abandoned and Phnom Penh chosen as the site of the new Cambodian capital. The move has been much lamented as evidence of cultural decline and the fall of an empire, but it made a good deal of practical sense. Angkor was poorly situated for trade and subject to attacks from the Siamese (Thai) kingdom of Ayuthaya. Phnom Penh commanded a more central position in the Khmer territories and was perfectly located for riverine trade with Laos and China, via the Mekong Delta. The Tonlé Sap River provided access to the rich fishing grounds of Tonlé Sap Lake.

By the mid-16th century, trade had turned Phnom Penh into a regional power. Indonesian and Chinese traders were drawn to the city in large numbers. A century later, however, Vietnamese incursions into Khmer territory had robbed the city of access to sea lanes, and Chinese merchants driven south by the Manchu (Qing) dynasty began to monopolise trade. The landlocked and increasingly isolated kingdom became a buffer between ascendant Thais and Vietnamese. In 1772 the Thais burnt Phnom Penh to the ground. Although the city was rebuilt, Phnom Penh was buffeted by the rival intrigues of the Thai and Vietnamese courts, until the French took over in 1863. Its population is thought not to have risen much above 25,000 during this period.

The French protectorate in Cambodia gave Phnom Penh the layout we know today. The city was divided into districts or *quartiers*: the French administrators and European traders inhabited the area north of Wat Phnom between Monivong Blvd and the Tonlé Sap River; the Chinese merchants occupied the riverfront area south of Wat Phnom to the Royal Palace and west as far as Norodom Blvd; and the Cambodians and Vietnamese lived around and to the south of the palace. By the time the French departed in 1953, they had left many important landmarks, including the Royal Palace, National Museum, Psar

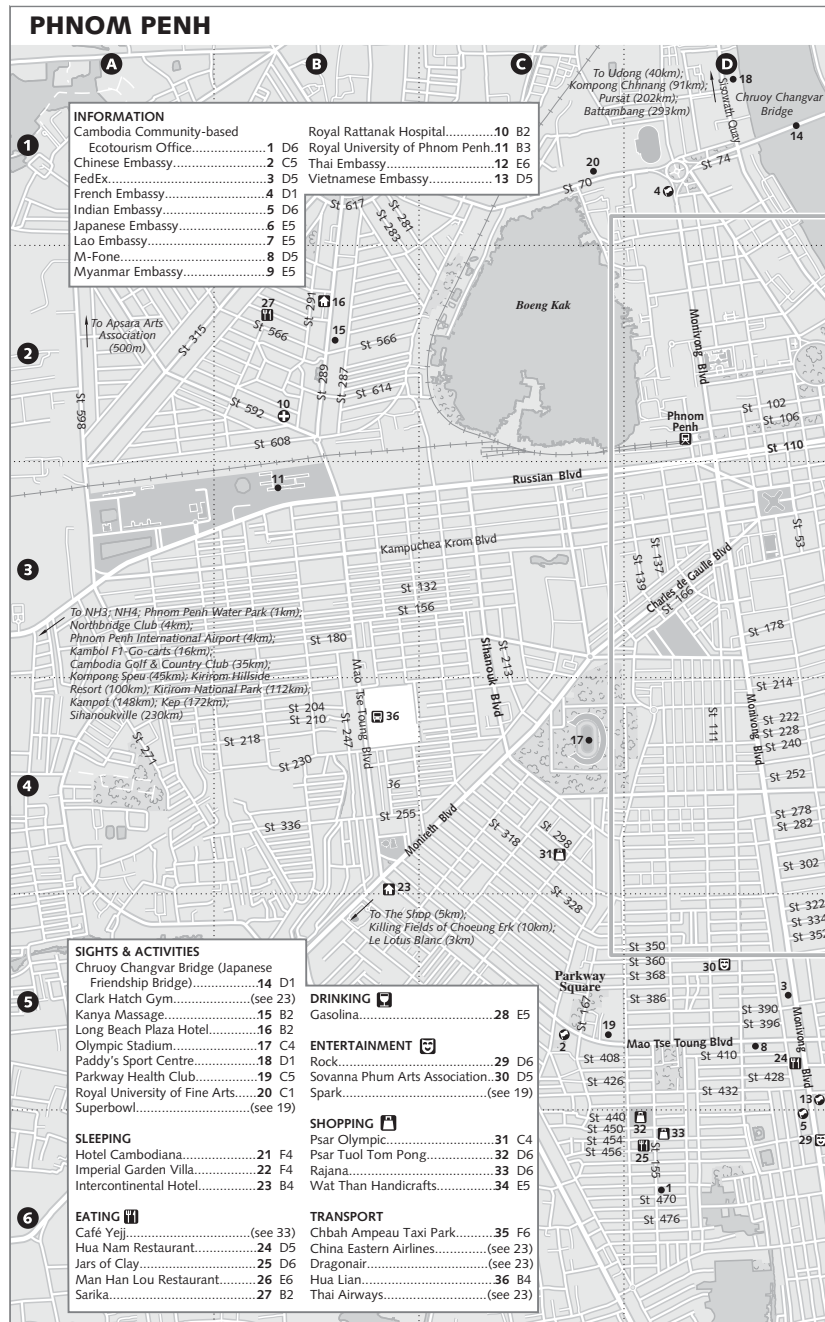
Thmei (Central Market) and many impressive government ministries.

The city grew fast in the post-independence peacetime years of Sihanouk's rule. By the time he was overthrown in 1970, the population of Phnom Penh was approximately 500,000. As the Vietnam War spread into Cambodian territory, the city's population swelled with refugees and reached more than two million in early 1975. The Khmer Rouge took the city on 17 April 1975 and, as part of its radical social programme, immediately forced the entire population into the countryside. Different factions of the Khmer Rouge were responsible for evacuating different zones of the city; civilians to the east of Norodom Blvd were sent east, those south of the palace to the south, and so on. Whole families were split up on those first fateful days of 'liberation' and, for many thousands of Cambodians, their experience of the dark days of Khmer Rouge rule depended on which area of the city they had been in that day.

During the time of Democratic Kampuchea, many tens of thousands of former Phnom Penhois – including the vast majority of the capital's educated residents – were killed. The population of Phnom Penh during the Khmer Rouge regime was never more than about 50,000, a figure made up of senior party members, factory workers and trusted military leaders.

Repopulation of the city began when the Vietnamese arrived in 1979, although at first it was strictly controlled by the new government. During much of the 1980s, cows were more common than cars on the streets of the capital, and it was not until the government dispensed with its communist baggage at the end of the decade that Phnom Penh began to develop. The 1990s were boom years for some: along with the arrival of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (Untac) came two billion US dollars, much of it in salaries for expats. Well-connected residents were only too happy to help foreigners part with their money through high rents and hefty price-hikes. Businesses followed hot on the heels of Untac and commercial buildings began to spring up.

Phnom Penh has really begun to change in the last decade, with roads being repaired, sewage pipes laid, parks inaugurated and riverbanks reclaimed. Business is booming in many parts of the city with skyscrapers under development, investors rubbing their



hands with the sort of glee once reserved for Bangkok or Hanoi and swanky new restaurants opening up. Phnom Penh is finally on the move as a new middle class emerges to replace the thousands eliminated by the Khmer Rouge, and the elite invest their dollars at home rather than taking the risk of hiding them abroad. Phnom Penh is back, and bigger changes are set to come.

ORIENTATION

Phnom Penh is a fairly easy city in which to navigate as it is laid out in a numbered grid, a little like New York City. The major boulevards of Phnom Penh run north-south, parallel to the banks of the Tonlé Sap and Tonlé Bassac Rivers. Monivong Blvd cuts north-south through the centre of town, passing just west of Psar Thmei. Its northern sector is a busy shopping strip and home to some of the oldest hotels and travel agents in town. Norodom Blvd runs north-south from Wat Phnom, and is largely lined with administrative buildings; the northern end contains banks, while further south are government ministries and embassies. Samdech Sotheareas Blvd runs north-south near the riverfront, past the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda. Sisowath Quay hugs the river and is where many of the city's most popular restaurants and bars are located. The major east-west boulevards are Russian Blvd in the north of town, Sihanouk Blvd, which passes the Independence Monument and ends near the Hotel Cambodiana, and Mao Tse Young Blvd, a ring road of sorts that also runs north-south in the west of the city.

Intersecting the main boulevards is a network of hundreds of numbered smaller streets. As a rule of thumb, streets running east-west have even numbers that increase as you head south from the Chruoy Changvar Bridge, while streets that run north-south have odd numbers that increase as you head west away from the river.

Most buildings around town have signs with both their building number and street (*phlaur*, abbreviated to Ph) number. Finding a building purely by its address, however, is not always easy, as numbers are rarely sequential. See the boxed text, p76, and pity the postman.

Most buses, taxis and pick-ups arrive in the centre of town around Psar Thmei and it is just a short *moto* (small motorcycle with driver),

KNOWING WHEN YOUR NUMBER'S UP

Navigating the streets of Phnom Penh should be pretty straightforward thanks to the grid system put in place by the French. The total and utter lack of an effective house-numbering system, however, makes some guesthouses, restaurants and offices that bit harder to track down. The long years of war, abandonment and reoccupation destroyed the old system and as residents began to repopulate the city, they seem to have picked numbers out of the air. It is not uncommon to drive past a row of houses numbered 13A, 34, 7, 26. Make sense of that and you might get a job as a code cracker. Worse still, several different houses might use the same number on the same street. The long and the short of it is that when you get to a guesthouse or restaurant recommended in this chapter only to discover it appears to have turned into a *prahoc* (fermented fish paste) shop, don't curse us for the bad smell. Just down the road will be another place with the same number – the guesthouse or restaurant you were looking for...unless, of course, it really has gone into the *prahoc* business.

When getting directions, ask for a cross-reference for an address, such as 'close to the intersection of St 110 and Norodom Blvd'. The letters 'EO' after a street address stand for *étage zéro* (ground floor).

remorque-moto (trailer pulled by motorbike) or taxi ride to most guesthouses and hotels. Some buses arrive at the north end of the riverfront near St 104 and there are persistent rumours the government will eventually develop out-of-town bus stations to ease traffic congestion. The train station is a couple of blocks northwest of Psar Thmei, but there are currently no passenger services. Boats from Siem Reap and Chau Doc (Vietnam) arrive at the tourist boat dock on the Tonlé Sap River at the eastern end of St 108. Hundreds of *motos* await in ambush. Phnom Penh International Airport is 7km west of central Phnom Penh.

Maps

For a handy pocket-size map, look out for a free copy of the *Phnom Penh 3-D Map*, which is distributed at the airport and selected bars and restaurants around the city. Both the *Phnom Penh Visitors' Guide* and the *Phnom Penh Pocket Guides*, freely available in the capital, have up-to-date maps.

INFORMATION

For up-to-date contact information on businesses in Phnom Penh, check out the **Yellow Pages** (www.yellowpages.com.kh). Check out *Phnom Penh Drinking and Dining* (www.cambodiapocketguide.com) for the low-down on bars and restaurants. The *Phnom Penh Visitors' Guide* (www.canbypublications.com) is brimming with useful information on the capital and beyond, while *AsiaLife Phnom Penh* (www.asialifecambodia.com) is a reliable read.

Bookshops

Bohr's Books (Map p79; 5 Sotheaors Blvd) A reliable, locally-owned secondhand bookshop near the riverfront.

Carnets d'Asie (Map p79; 218 St 182) A French-language bookshop in the French Cultural Centre.

D's Books (Map p79; www.ds-books.com; 79 St 240 & 7 St 178) The largest chain of secondhand bookshops in the capital, with a good range of titles, plus a third branch in the Boeng Kak backpacker area.

Monument Books (Map p79; ☐217617; 111 Norodom Blvd) The best-stocked bookshop in town, with almost every Cambodia-related book currently in print available. Toys upstairs and a small café downstairs. Operates branches at both international airports.

Emergency

Ambulance (☐119)

Fire (☐118)

Police (☐117)

There are also 24-hour emergency numbers for the English-speaking **tourist police** (☐012 942484) or the Khmer-speaking **police** (☐012 999999) in Phnom Penh. There is also an emergency number with English-speaking operators for Phnom Penh's **ambulance service** (☐724891).

In the event of a medical emergency it may be necessary to be flown to Bangkok. See opposite for details of medical services in Phnom Penh.

Internet Access

Phnom Penh is now well and truly wired, with prices dropping to less than US\$0.50 per hour. There are internet cafés across the city. The most convenient are those along the

riverfront, but cheaper rates are available in the smaller internet cafés dotted throughout the city and savings can be significant if you are making internet telephone calls.

Many budget guesthouses also offer some sort of internet access, and in the main backpacker areas there are several internet cafés. Anyone staying in more expensive hotels should venture out to find an online fix, as in-house business centres are overpriced.

Several of the midrange and top-end hotels now offer wi-fi access at a price, while many of the more popular cafés, restaurants and bars offer a free service.

Laundry

Most guesthouses around town offer reasonably priced laundry services and there are cheap local laundries scattered across the city. Tourists staying in high-end hotels can save a

small fortune by using a local laundry while in town.

Libraries

The National Library (p88) has a pretty limited selection of reading material for foreign visitors, but is set in a lovely building. French speakers should call into the **French Cultural Centre** (Map p79; St 184), which has a good range of reading material.

The **Bophana Centre** (Map p79; ☐992174; 64 St 200), established by Cambodian-French filmmaker Rithy Panh, is an audiovisual resource for filmmakers and researchers, and visitors can explore its archive of old photographs and films.

Medical Services

It is important to be aware of the difference between a clinic and a hospital in Phnom

PHNOM PENH IN...

One Day

With just a day in town, start early with a riverfront stroll to see the mass tai chi and aerobics sessions taking place in front of the **Royal Palace** (p83), although it seems to be mainly aerobics these days. Grab breakfast at one of the riverfront cafés before venturing into the Royal Palace compound to see the dazzling treasures of the **Silver Pagoda** (p83). Next is the **National Museum** (p84) and the world's most wondrous collection of Khmer sculpture. Take lunch at nearby **Friends** (p102) restaurant, giving street children a helping hand into tourism. After lunch, check out the funky architecture of **Psar Thmei** (p109), but save the shopping for the treasure trove that is **Psar Tuol Tom Pong** (p109), more commonly known as the Russian Market. Take a deep breath and continue to **Tuol Sleng Museum** (p85), a savage reminder of Cambodia's tragic past. Sobering indeed – it may be time for a happy-hour drink to reflect on the highs and lows of the day. Enjoy dinner in one of the many good **Khmer restaurants** (p96) in town, before joining the nightshift at some of the **rockin' bars** (p104).

Two Days

With two days, it is easy to get to grips with Cambodia's capital. Start the day as in the one-day itinerary with a visit to the cultural splendours that are the **National Museum** (p84) and **Royal Palace** (p83). In the afternoon, visit the harrowing **Tuol Sleng Museum** (p85) before continuing on to the **Killing Fields of Choeung Ek** (p86), where prisoners from Security Prison 21 were taken for execution. It is a grim afternoon, but essential for understanding just how far Cambodia has come in the intervening years. Wind up with a sunset cruise on the **Mekong River** (p88) with a beautiful view over the Royal Palace.

On the second day, it is time to get serious about shopping. Browse through Art Deco **Psar Thmei** (p109) and then **Psar Tuol Tom Pong** (p109), a maze of stalls selling everything from textiles and handicrafts to DVDs and cut-price clothing. Keep some cash for the excellent **shops** (p108) that support good causes, all of which stock a solid selection of silk.

In the afternoon, take a look at the **Independence Monument** (p87), modelled on Angkor Wat's central tower, and wander up the riverfront to **Wat Phnom** (p86), where the Khmers prefer to pray for luck. From here it is a short stroll to catch the happy-hour cocktails at the **Elephant Bar** (p104) at Hotel Le Royal, the perfect warm-up for a final fling in Phnom Penh.

Penh. Clinics are good for most situations, but in a genuine emergency it is best to make for one of the hospitals.

Calmette Hospital (Map p79; ☎426948; 3 Monivong Blvd; ☎ 24hr) French-administered and the best of the local hospitals.

European Dental Clinic (Map p79; ☎211363; 160A Norodom Blvd; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat) With international dental services and a good reputation.

International SOS Medical Centre (Map p79; ☎216911; www.internationalsos.com; 161 St 51; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) One of the best medical services around town, but with prices to match. Also has a resident foreign dentist.

Naga Clinic (Map p79; ☎211300; www.nagadclinic.com; 11 St 254; ☎ 24hr) A French-run clinic for reliable consultations.

Pharmacie de la Gare (Map p79; ☎430205; 81 Monivong Blvd; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon Sun) A pharmacy with English- and French-speaking consultants.

Royal Rattanak Hospital (Map pp74-5; ☎365555; www.royalrattanakhospital.com; 11 St 592; ☎ 24hr) New international hospital affiliated to Bangkok Hospital and boasting top facilities.

U-Care Pharmacy (Map p79; ☎222399; 26 Samdech Sothearos Blvd; ☎ 8am-9pm) International-style pharmacy with a convenient location near the river.

Money

Those looking to change cash into riel need look no further than jewellery stalls around the markets of Phnom Penh. Psar Thmei (p109) and Psar Tuol Tom Pong (p109) are the most convenient.

A number of upmarket hotels offer money-changing services, although this is usually reserved for their guests. Many travel agents can also change travellers cheques and offer credit-card advances for a 5% commission or higher. Most banks in Phnom Penh are open from roughly 8.30am to 3.30pm weekdays, plus Saturday mornings.

ANZ Royal Bank (Map p79; ☎726900; 265 Sisowath Quay) ATMs galore all over town, including at supermarkets and petrol stations.

Canadia Bank Head Office (Map p79; ☎215286; 265 St 110) Changes travellers cheques of several currencies for a 2% commission, plus free cash advances on MasterCard and Visa. Has an ATM.

Foreign Trade Bank (Map p79; ☎723466; 3 St 114; ☎ 7am-3.45pm Mon-Fri) Lowest commission in town on US dollar travellers cheques at 1%.

SBC Bank (Map p79; ☎990688; 315 Sisowath Quay; ☎ 8am-8pm) Convenient hours and location, plus represents Western Union.

Those needing to organise an international money transfer can use the Foreign Trade Bank. It may be quicker (and more expensive) to use an international company such as MoneyGram or Western Union. MoneyGram is represented by Canadia Bank, while Western Union can be found at SBC or **Aleda Bank** (Map p79; ☎998777; 61 Monivong Blvd).

Post

The main **post office** (Map p79; St 13; ☎ 7am-7pm) is in a charming building just east of Wat Phnom. It offers postal services as well as telephone and fax links. There is another post office on Monivong Blvd, near the corner of Sihanouk Blvd. For average postal rates see p317.

If you need to get valuables or belongings home in a hurry, there are several international courier companies (p317) represented in Phnom Penh.

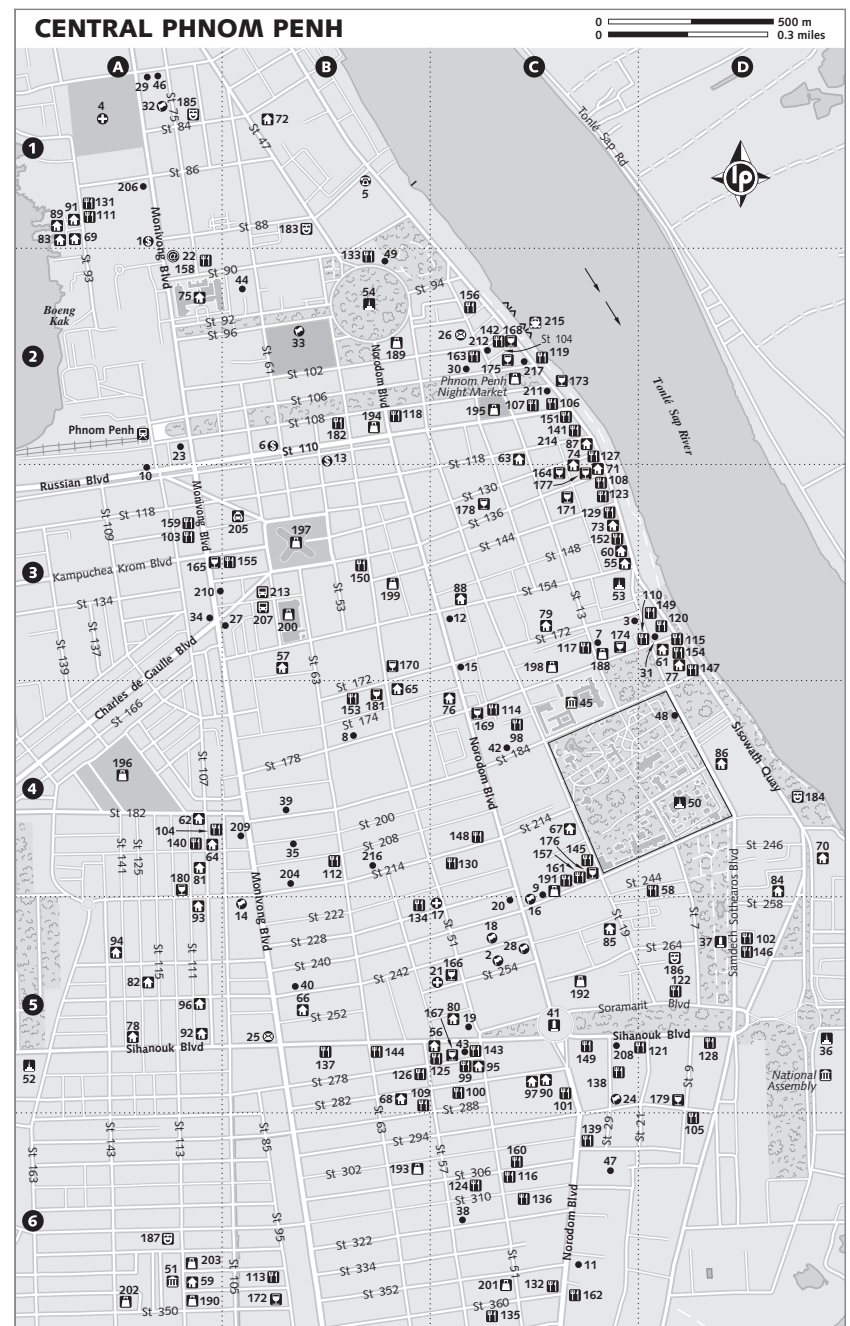
Telephone & Fax

The cheapest local and domestic calls in Phnom Penh are available from private booths found throughout the city. Whatever the number you are dialling, private booths will have a selection of telephones to make sure you get the best rate. Local calls start at 300r a minute.

Many internet cafés in Phnom Penh offer telephone services at reasonable prices, including internet phone calls, which are much

BAG SNATCHING

Bag snatching has become a real problem in Phnom Penh and foreigners are often targeted. Hot spots include the riverfront and busy areas around popular markets, but there is no real pattern and the speeding motorbike thieves can strike any time, any place. More recently, this ended in tragedy for a young French woman who was dragged from a speeding *moto* into the path of a vehicle. Try to wear close-fitting bags such as backpacks that don't dangle from the body temptingly. Don't hang expensive cameras around the neck and keep things close to the body and out of sight, particularly when walking in the road, crossing the road or travelling by *moto*, *remorque-moto* or *cyclo*. These guys are real pros and only need one chance.



INFORMATION		Cambodia-Vietnam Friendship Monument.....	37 D5	King Guesthouse.....	78 A5	
Acelda Bank Headquarters.....	1 A1	Cambodian Cooking Class.....	(see 191)	Last Home.....	79 C3	
ANZ Royal Bank.....	(see 73)	Champey Spa.....	38 C6	Manor House.....	80 C5	
Australian Embassy.....	2 C5	French Cultural Centre.....	39 B4	Mekong Palace Hotel.....	(see 73)	
Betelnut Jeep Tours.....	(see 131)	Himawari.....	(see 70)	Narin 2 Guesthouse.....	81 A4	
Bohr's Books.....	3 D3	In Style.....	40 B5	Narin Guesthouse.....	82 A5	
Calmette Hospital.....	4 A1	Independence Monument.....	41 C5	NumberA 9 Guesthouse.....	83 A1	
Camintel.....	5 B1	Language Schools.....	42 C4	NumberB 10 Guesthouse.....	(see 83)	
Canada Bank.....	6 B2	Mount Everest.....	43 C5	Okay Guesthouse.....	84 D4	
Canadian Embassy.....	(see 2)	National Library.....	44 B2	Paragon Hotel.....	(see 108)	
Carnets d'Asie.....	(see 39)	National Museum.....	45 C4	Pavilion.....	85 C5	
ChildSafe.....	7 C3	O Spa.....	46 A1	Renakse Hotel.....	86 D4	
City Colour Photo.....	(see 103)	Prayuvong Buddha Factories.....	47 C6	River Star Hotel.....	87 C2	
Cooperation Committee for Cambodia.....	8 B4	Royal Palace.....	48 D4	Royal Guesthouse.....	88 C3	
D's Books.....	9 C4	Seeing Hands Massage.....	49 B2	Same Same But Different.....	89 A1	
D's Books.....	(see 61)	Silver Pagoda.....	50 D4	Scandinavia Hotel.....	90 C5	
DHL.....	10 A3	Tuol Sleng Museum.....	51 A6	Simon's II Guesthouse.....	91 A1	
EMS.....	(see 26)	Wat Moha Montrei.....	52 A5	Sky Park Guesthouse.....	92 A5	
European Dental Clinic.....	11 C6	Wat Unalom.....	53 C3	Spring Guesthouse.....	93 A5	
Exotissimo.....	12 C3	Wat Phnom.....	54 B2	Sunday Guesthouse.....	94 A5	
Foreign Trade Bank.....	13 B2	SLEEPING ☞			Tat Guesthouse.....	(see 82)
Free the Bears.....	(see 136)	Amanjaya.....	55 C3	The Quay.....	(see 60)	
German Embassy.....	14 B5	Anise Hotel.....	56 C5	Top Banana Guesthouse.....	95 C5	
Hanuman Tourism.....	(see 136)	Billabong.....	57 B3	Town View Hotel.....	96 A5	
Hello.....	15 C3	Boddhi Tree Aram.....	58 D4	Villa Langka.....	97 C5	
Indonesian Embassy.....	16 C5	Boddhi Tree Umma Hotel.....	59 A6	EATING ☞		
International SOS Medical Centre.....	17 C5	Bougainvillier Hotel.....	60 C3	Alley Cat Café.....	98 C4	
Malaysian Embassy.....	18 C5	Bright Lotus Guesthouse.....	61 D3	Amoc Café.....	99 C5	
Mobitel.....	19 C5	Capitol Guesthouse.....	62 A4	Annam.....	100 C5	
Monument Books.....	20 C5	Dara Reang Sey Hotel.....	63 C2	Atmosphere.....	101 C5	
Naga Clinic.....	21 C5	Dragon Guesthouse.....	64 A4	Bai Thong.....	102 D5	
Online.....	22 A1	Flamingos Hotel.....	65 B4	Bayon Market.....	103 A3	
Pharmacie de la Gare.....	23 A2	Floating Island.....	(see 89)	Bites.....	104 A4	
Philippines Embassy.....	24 C5	Foreign Correspondents' Club.....	(see 115)	Boat Noodle Restaurant.....	105 D6	
Post Office.....	25 B5	Frangipani Villa.....	66 B5	Boddhi Tree Umma Restaurant.....	(see 59)	
Post Office (Main).....	26 C2	Golden Mekong Hotel.....	67 C4	Bopha Phnom Penh Restaurant.....	(see 119)	
PTM Travel & Tours.....	27 B3	Golden Tour Eiffel Guesthouse.....	(see 99)	Café 151.....	106 C2	
SBC BANK.....	(see 120)	Goldiana Hotel.....	68 B5	Café Sentiment.....	(see 165)	
Singapore Embassy.....	28 C5	Grand View Guesthouse.....	69 A1	Cantina.....	(see 120)	
Teleurf.....	(see 19)	Himawari.....	70 D4	Chi Cha.....	107 C2	
TNT.....	29 A1	Hope and Anchor.....	71 C3	Chiang Mai Riverside.....	108 C3	
Transpeed Travel.....	30 C2	Hotel Cara.....	72 B1	Comme a la Maison.....	109 B5	
U-Care Pharmacy.....	31 D3	Hotel Castle.....	(see 152)	Corner 33.....	110 D3	
UK Embassy.....	32 A1	Hotel Indochine.....	73 C3	Curry Pot.....	111 A1	
US Embassy.....	33 B2	Hotel Indochine 2.....	74 C3	Dararasmey Restaurant.....	112 B4	
VLK Tourism.....	34 A3	Hotel Le Royal.....	75 A2	Del Gusto Café.....	113 B6	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Kabiki.....	(see 192)	Ebony Apsara Café.....	114 C4	
Bliss Bar.....	(see 157)	Kambuja Inn.....	76 C4	El Mundo Café.....	(see 108)	
Bophana Centre.....	35 B4	Khmer Royal Hotel.....	77 D3	Foreign Correspondents' Club.....	115 D3	
Buddhist Institute.....	36 D5				Freebird.....	(see 191)

cheaper than normal international calls, but can involve an irritating delay that turns half the conversation into 'hello?' and 'pardon?'. Most places have Skype services or similar available for those with an account.

For further information on phone and fax services, see p319.

Tourist Information

Due to lack of funding, forget about finding much useful tourist information in Phnom Penh. The tourist office at the airport has details

on certain hotels and can make bookings, but other than this you are effectively on your own. Armed with your guidebook and with tips from your guesthouse or fellow travellers, you should be in good shape.

Cambodia Community-based Ecotourism Network (CCBEN; Map pp74-5; ☎355272; www.ccben.org; 10A St 468; ☎8am-noon, 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Information on ecotourism and community-based activities all over Cambodia.

ChildSafe (Map p79; www.childsafe-cambodia.org; 186 St 13) Located opposite the popular Friends restaurant,

Fresco.....	116 C6	Sorya Shopping Centre Food Court.....	(see 200)	SHOPPING ☞	
Friends.....	117 C3	Sugar Palm.....	(see 176)	Ambre.....	(see 8)
Frizz.....	(see 191)	Tamarind Bar.....	157 C4	Asasax Art Gallery.....	188 C3
Garden Center Café.....	118 B2	Tell Restaurant.....	158 A2	Bliss Boutique.....	(see 157)
Goldfish River Restaurant.....	119 C2	Thai Huot.....		Cambodian Craft Cooperation.....	189 B2
Happy Herb's Pizza.....	120 D3	Supermarket.....	159 A3	Cambodian Handicraft Association.....	190 A6
Java Café.....	121 D5	The Chocolate Shop.....	(see 161)	Colours of Cambodia.....	(see 115)
K'nyay Restaurant.....	122 D5	The Living Room.....	160 C6	Couleurs d'Asie.....	(see 157)
Kandal House.....	123 C3	The Metro Café.....	(see 73)	Friends & Stuff.....	(see 117)
Khmer Borane Restaurant.....	(see 147)	The Shop Café.....	161 C4	Jasmine.....	191 C4
Khmer Restaurant.....	124 C6	Topaz.....	162 C6	Kabiki.....	192 C5
Khmer Restaurant.....	125 C5	Van's Restaurant.....	163 C2	Kambuja.....	(see 194)
Khmer Surin.....	126 B5	DRINKING ☞		Khemara Handicrafts.....	193 B6
Kiwi Bakery.....	127 C2	Blue Chili.....	(see 114)	Khmer Life.....	(see 203)
Ko Ko Ro.....	128 D5	Broken Bricks.....	164 C3	NCDP Handicrafts.....	194 B2
La Crosette.....	129 C3	Lazy Gecko Café.....	131 A1	Nyemo.....	(see 136)
La Marmite.....	(see 182)	Le Café du Centre.....	(see 39)	Psar Chaa.....	195 C2
La Residence.....	130 C4	Le Cedre.....	132 C6	Psar O Russei.....	196 A4
La Residence.....	130 C4	Le Deauville.....	133 B2	Psar Thmei.....	197 B3
Lazy Gecko Café.....	131 A1	Le Duo.....	134 B5	Reyum.....	198 C3
Elsewhere.....	(see 39)	Le Jardin.....	135 C6	Sobhana.....	199 B3
Equinox.....	167 C5	Le Rit's.....	136 C6	Sorya Shopping Centre.....	200 B3
Flavour.....	(see 95)	Lucky Burger.....	(see 137)	Tabitha.....	201 C6
Gym Bar.....	169 C4	Lucky Supermarket.....	137 B5	Tuol Sleng Shoes.....	202 A6
Hart of Darkness.....	170 B3	Luna D'Autunno.....	138 C5	Villageworks.....	203 A6
Howie's Bar.....	(see 170)	Malis.....	139 C6	Water Lily.....	(see 161)
Huxley's Brave New World.....	171 C3	Mama's Restaurant.....	140 A4	TRANSPORT	
Martini.....	172 B6	Master Suki Soup.....	(see 200)	Bangkok Airways.....	204 B4
Pink Elephant.....	(see 120)	Mekong River Restaurant.....	141 C2	Blue Cruiser.....	(see 168)
Pontoon Lounge.....	173 C2	Mondo Burger.....	(see 146)	Capitol Transport.....	(see 62)
Revolution.....	(see 95)	Monsoon.....	142 C2	Chbah Ampeau Taxi Park.....	205 B3
Rising Sun.....	(see 61)	Mount Everest.....	(see 43)	China Southern Airlines.....	206 A1
Riverhouse Lounge.....	(see 151)	Nature & Sea.....	143 C5	GST.....	207 B3
Rory's Pub.....	174 C3	Nike Pizza.....	144 B5	Hang Chau.....	(see 217)
Rose Bar.....	175 C2	Open Wine.....	145 C4	Lao Airlines.....	208 C5
Rubies.....	176 C4	Origami.....	146 D5	Lucky! Lucky!.....	209 B4
Salt Lounge.....	177 C3	Pacharan.....	147 D3	Malaysia Airlines.....	210 A3
Sharky's.....	178 C3	Pencil Supermarket.....	148 C4	Mekong Express.....	(see 168)
Talkin To A Stranger.....	179 D5	Pho Fortune.....	(see 31)	Neak Krohorm.....	211 C2
Teukei Bar.....	180 A4	Pho Shop.....	149 C5	New! New!.....	(see 209)
Walkabout.....	(see 181)	Pop Café.....	(see 115)	Paramount Angkor Express.....	212 C2
Zeppelin Café.....	181 B4	Psar Ta Pang.....	150 B3	Phnom Penh Sorya Public Transport.....	213 B3
ENTERTAINMENT ☞		Riverhouse Restaurant.....	151 C2	RAC Limousine Bus.....	(see 217)
Art Café.....	182 B2	Riverside Bistro.....	152 C3	Riverside Moto.....	214 C2
Casa.....	183 B1	Romdeng.....	153 B4	Shanghai Airlines.....	(see 30)
Chatomuk Theatre.....	184 D4	Sa'em Restaurant.....	154 D3	Siem Reap Airways.....	(see 204)
Manhattan Club.....	185 A1	Sam Doo Restaurant.....	155 B3	Silk Air.....	(see 70)
Memphis Pub.....	(see 141)	Seven Bright Restaurant.....	156 C2	Tourist Boat Dock.....	215 C2
Meta House.....	186 D5	Shiva Shakti.....	(see 149)	Vietnam Airlines.....	216 B4
Miles.....	187 A6			Virak Buntham.....	217 C2

this drop-in office for the ChildSafe campaign aims to raise awareness among visitors about the problems of child begging, sex tourism and more.

Travel Agencies

There are plenty of travel agents around town, including some long-travelling places near Psar Thmei. Try the following:

Exotissimo (Map p79; ☎218948; www.exotissimo.com; 46 Norodom Blvd)

Hanuman Tourism (Map p79; ☎218356; www.hanumantourism.com; 12 St 310)

PTM Travel & Tours (Map p79; ☎364768; www.ptm-travel.com; 200 Monivong Blvd)

Transpeed Travel (Map p79; ☎723999; www.transpeedholiday.com; 19 St 106)

VLK Tourism (Map p79; ☎723331; www.vlktravel.com; 195 Monivong Blvd)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Phnom Penh is not as dangerous as people imagine, but it is important to take care. Armed robberies do sometimes occur, but statistically you would be very unlucky to be a victim.

CHILD PROSTITUTION

The sexual abuse of children by foreign paedophiles is a serious problem in Cambodia. Paedophilia is a crime in Cambodia and several foreigners have served or are serving jail sentences. There is no such thing as an isolation unit for sex offenders in Cambodia. Countries such as Australia, France, Germany, the UK and the USA have also introduced much-needed legislation that sees nationals prosecuted in their home country for having under-age sex abroad.

This child abuse is slowly but surely being combated, although in a country as poor as Cambodia, money can tempt people into selling babies for adoption and children for sex. The trafficking of innocent children has many shapes and forms, and the sex trade is just the thin end of the wedge. Poor parents have been known to rent out their children as beggars, labourers or sellers; many child prostitutes in Cambodia are Vietnamese and have been sold into the business by family back in Vietnam. Once in the trade, it is difficult to escape a life of violence and abuse. Drugs are also being used to keep children dependent on their pimps, with bosses giving out *yama* (a dirty meta-amphetamine) or heroin to dull their senses.

Paedophilia is not unique to Western societies and it is a big problem with Asian tourists as well. The problem is that some of the home governments don't treat it as seriously as some of their Western counterparts, although Japan is now catching up with a highly visible billboard campaign around cities. Even more problematic is the domestic industry of virgin-buying in Cambodia, founded on the superstition that taking a virgin will enhance one's power. Even if NGOs succeed in putting off Western paedophiles, confronting local traditions may be a greater challenge.

Visitors can do their bit by keeping an eye out for any suspicious behaviour on the part of foreigners. Don't ignore it – pass on any relevant information such as the name and nationality of the individual to the embassy concerned. There is also a **Cambodian hotline** (☎023-720555) and a confidential **ChildSafe Hotline** (☎012 296609; www.childsafe-cambodia.org). When booking into a hotel or jumping on transport, look out for the ChildSafe logo, as each establishment or driver who earns this logo supports the end to child sex tourism and has undergone child-protection training. **End Child Prostitution and Trafficking** (Ecpat; www.ecpat.org) is a global network aimed at stopping child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes, and has affiliates in most Western countries.

Should you become the victim of a robbery, do not panic and do not, under any circumstances, struggle. Calmly raise your hands and let your attacker take what they want. *Do not* reach for your pockets as the assailant may think you are reaching for a gun. You will most likely get any documents back later via your guesthouse or embassy, as the robbers often want only cash and valuables. For the time being, even passports and credit cards seem to be returned. Do not carry a bag at night, as it is more likely to make you a target.

It pays to be cautious in crowded bars or nightclubs that are frequented by the Khmer elite. Many pampered children hang out in popular places, bringing their bodyguards along for good luck. This is fine until a drunk foreigner trends on their toes or they decide they want to hit on a Western girl. Then the problems start and if they have bodyguards with them, it will only end in tears, big tears.

If you ride your own motorbike during the day, some police may try to fleece you for the most trivial of offences, such as turning left in violation of a no-left-turn sign. At their most audacious, they may try to get you for riding with your headlights on during the day although, worryingly, it does not seem to be illegal for Cambodians to travel without their headlights on at night. The police will most likely demand US\$5 from you and threaten to take you to the police station for an official US\$20 fine if you do not pay. If you are patient with them and smile, you can usually get away with handing over US\$1. The trick is not to stop in the first place by not catching their eye.

The riverfront area of Phnom Penh, particularly places with outdoor seating, attracts many beggars, as do Psar Thmei (p109) and Psar Tuol Tom Pong (p109). Generally, however, there is little in the way of push and shove. For more thoughts on how to handle beggar fatigue, see p309.

Flooding is a major problem during heavy downpours in the wet season (June to October). Phnom Penh's drainage system is notoriously unreliable and when the big rains kick off, some streets turn into canals for a few hours. The Japanese government is currently reworking the drains and sewers along the riverfront, which may well ease things. The downside is that much of the riverfront promenade has been fenced off during this work, which is scheduled to continue until 2009.

SIGHTS

Phnom Penh is a relatively small city and most of the major sights are fairly central. The most important cultural sights can be visited on foot and are located near the riverfront in the most beautiful part of the city.

Royal Palace & Silver Pagoda

ព្រះបរមរាជវាំង/ទីធ្លី វត្តព្រះព័កវិ

With its classic Khmer roofs and ornate gilding, the **Royal Palace** (Map p79; Samdech Sothearos Blvd; admission US\$3, camera/video US\$2/5; ☎7.30-11am & 2.30-5pm) dominates the diminutive skyline of Phnom Penh. It is a striking structure near the riverfront, bearing a remarkable likeness to its counterpart in Bangkok. Hidden away behind protective walls and beneath shadows of striking ceremonial buildings, it's an oasis of calm with lush gardens and leafy havens.

Being the official residence of King Sihanouk, parts of the massive compound are closed to the public. Visitors are only allowed to visit the palace's Silver Pagoda and its surrounding compound. However, photography is not permitted inside the pagoda itself. Visitors need to wear shorts that reach to the knee, and T-shirts or blouses that reach to the elbow; otherwise they will have to rent an appropriate covering. The palace gets very busy on Sundays when countryside Khmers come to pay their respects, but this can be a fun way to experience the place, thronging with locals.

CHAN CHAYA PAVILION

Performances of classical Cambodian dance were once staged in the Chan Chaya Pavilion, through which guests enter the grounds of the Royal Palace. This pavilion is sometimes lit up at night to commemorate festivals or anniversaries.

THRONE HALL

The Throne Hall, topped by a 59m-high tower inspired by the Bayon at Angkor, was inaugurated in 1919 by King Sisowath; the present cement building replaced a vast wooden structure that was built on this site in 1869. The Throne Hall is used for coronations and ceremonies such as the presentation of credentials by diplomats. Many of the items once displayed here were destroyed by the Khmer Rouge. In the courtyard is a curious iron house given to King Norodom by Napoleon III of France, hardly designed with the Cambodian climate in mind.

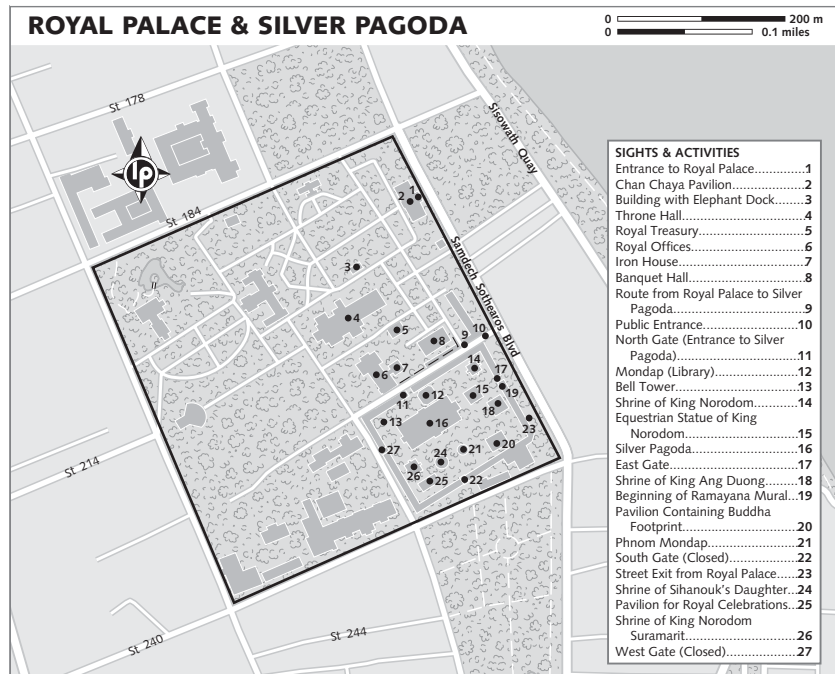
SILVER PAGODA

The Silver Pagoda is named in honour of the floor, which is covered with over 5000 silver tiles weighing 1kg each, adding up to 5 tonnes of gleaming silver. You can sneak a peek at some of the 5000 tiles near the entrance – most are covered for their protection. It is also known as Wat Preah Keo (Pagoda of the Emerald Buddha). It was originally constructed of wood in 1892 during the rule of King Norodom, who was apparently inspired by Bangkok's Wat Phra Keo, and was rebuilt in 1962.

The Silver Pagoda was preserved by the Khmer Rouge to demonstrate its concern for the conservation of Cambodia's cultural riches to the outside world. Although more than half of the pagoda's contents were destroyed under Pol Pot, what remains is spectacular. This is one of the few places in Cambodia where bejewelled objects embodying some of the brilliance and richness of Khmer civilisation can still be seen.

The staircase leading to the Silver Pagoda is made of Italian marble. Inside, the Emerald Buddha, believed to be made of Baccarat crystal, sits on a gilt pedestal high atop the dais. In front of the dais stands a life-size gold Buddha decorated with 9584 diamonds, the largest of which is a whopping 25 carats. Created in the palace workshops around 1907, the gold Buddha weighs in at 90kg. Directly in front of it is a miniature silver-and-gold stupa containing a relic of Buddha brought from Sri Lanka. To the left is an 80kg bronze Buddha, and to the right a silver Buddha. On the far right, figurines of solid gold tell of the life of the Buddha.

Behind the shrine is a standing marble Buddha from Myanmar (Burma). Nearby is



a bed once used by the king on his coronation day and designed to be carried by 12 men; the gold-work alone weighs 23kg.

Along the walls of the pagoda are examples of extraordinary Khmer artisanship, including intricate masks used in classical dance and dozens of gold Buddhas. The many precious gifts given to Cambodia's monarchs by foreign heads of state appear rather spiritless when displayed next to such diverse and exuberant Khmer art.

The epic of the *Ramayana* (known as the *Reamker* in Cambodia) is depicted on a beautiful and extensive mural enclosing the pagoda compound, created around 1900; the story begins just south of the east gate and includes vivid images of the battle of Lanka.

Other structures to be found in the complex (listed clockwise from the north gate) include the mondap (library), which housed richly decorated sacred texts that are written on palm leaves; the shrine of King Norodom (r 1860–1904); an equestrian statue of King Norodom; the shrine of King Ang Duong (r 1845–59); a pavilion housing a huge footprint of Buddha; Phnom Mondap, an artificial

hill with a structure containing a bronze footprint of the Buddha from Sri Lanka; a shrine dedicated to one of Prince Sihanouk's daughters; a pavilion for celebrations held by the royal family; the shrine of Prince Sihanouk's father, King Norodom Suramarit (r 1955–60); and a bell tower, whose bell is rung to order the gates to be opened or closed.

National Museum

ស្ថាវ័រមន្ទីរជាតិ

Located just north of the Royal Palace, the **National Museum of Cambodia** (Map p79; www.cambodiainform.info; admission US\$3, camera/video US\$13; ☎ 8am–5pm) is housed in a graceful terracotta structure of traditional design (built 1917–20), with an inviting courtyard garden. The museum is home to the world's finest collection of Khmer sculpture – a millennia's worth and more of masterful Khmer design.

The museum comprises four pavilions, facing the pretty garden. The most significant displays of sculpture are in the courtyards to the left and directly ahead of the entrance, but most visitors approach the collection in a clockwise chronological direction. The

pre-Angkorian collection visualises the journey from the human form of Indian sculpture to the more divine form of Khmer sculpture from the 5th to 8th centuries. Highlights include an imposing eight-armed statue of Vishnu from the 6th or 7th century and a staring Harihara, combining the attributes of Shiva and Vishnu. The Angkor collection includes a striking statue of Shiva (c 870 AD), a giant pair of wrestling monkeys, an exquisite frieze from Banteay Srei, and the sublime statue of a seated Jayavarman VII (r 1181–1219), his head bowed slightly in a meditative pose.

The museum also contains displays of pottery and bronzes dating from the pre-Angkorian periods of Funan and Chenla (4th to 9th centuries), the Indravarman period (9th and 10th centuries), the classical Angkorian period (10th to 14th centuries), as well as more-recent works such as a beautiful wooden royal barge. There is a permanent collection of post-Angkorian Buddhas, many of which were rescued from Angkor Wat when the civil war erupted. See p53 for more information.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to photograph the collection, only the courtyard. English- and French-speaking guides (from US\$2, depending on group size) are available, and there is also a useful booklet, *The New Guide to the National Museum*, available at the front desk.

Tuol Sleng Museum

ស្ថាវ័រមន្ទីរទុលស្រែង

In 1975 Tuol Svay Prey High School was taken over by Pol Pot's security forces and turned into a prison known as Security Prison 21 (S-21). This soon became the largest centre of detention and torture in the country. Between 1975 and 1978 more than 17,000 people held at S-21 were taken to the killing fields of Choeung Ek (p86).

S-21 has been turned into the **Tuol Sleng Museum** (Map pp74–5; St 113; admission US\$2, video US\$5; ☎ 8am–5.30pm), which serves as a testament to the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. Entry is on the western side of St 113.

Like the Nazis, the Khmer Rouge leaders were meticulous in keeping records of their barbarism. Each prisoner who passed through S-21 was photographed, sometimes before and after torture. The museum displays include room after room of harrowing black-and-white photographs; virtually all of the men, women

and children pictured were later killed. You can tell which year a picture was taken by the style of number-board that appears on the prisoner's chest. Several foreigners from Australia, France and the USA were also held at S-21 before being murdered. Their documents are on display. It is worth paying US\$2 to have a guide show you around, as they can tell you the stories behind some of the people in the photographs.

As the Khmer Rouge 'revolution' reached ever greater heights of insanity, it began devouring its own. Generations of torturers and executioners who worked here were in turn killed by those who took their places. During early 1977, when the party purges of Eastern Zone cadres were getting underway, S-21 claimed an average of 100 victims a day.

When the Vietnamese army liberated Phnom Penh in early 1979, there were only seven prisoners alive at S-21, all of whom had used their skills such as painting or photography to stay alive. Fourteen others had been tortured to death as Vietnamese forces were closing in on the city. Photographs of their gruesome deaths are on display in the rooms where their decomposing corpses were found. Their graves are nearby in the courtyard.

Altogether, a visit to Tuol Sleng is a profoundly depressing experience. The sheer ordinariness of the place makes it even more horrific: the suburban setting, the plain school buildings, the grassy playing area where children kick around balls; rusted beds, instruments of torture and wall after wall of disturbing portraits conjure up images of humanity at its worst. It demonstrates the darkest side of the human spirit that lurks within us all. Tuol Sleng is not for the squeamish.

Behind many of the displays at Tuol Sleng is the **Documentation Center of Cambodia** (DC-Cam; www.dccam.org). DC-Cam was established in 1995 through Yale University's **Cambodian Genocide Program** (www.yale.edu/cgp) to research and document the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. It became an independent organisation in 1997 and researchers have spent years translating confessions and paperwork from Tuol Sleng, mapping mass graves and preserving evidence of Khmer Rouge crimes.

French-Cambodian director Rithy Panh's 1996 film *Bophana* tells the true story of Hout Bophana, a beautiful young woman, and Ly Sitha, a regional Khmer Rouge leader, who fall in love but are made to pay for this 'crime' with imprisonment and execution at S-21

prison. It is well worth investing an hour to watch this powerful documentary, which is screened here at 10am and 3pm daily.

Killing Fields of Choeng Ek

វាលពិឃាតជើងឯក

Between 1975 and 1978 about 17,000 men, women, children and infants who had been detained and tortured at S-21 were transported to the extermination camp of **Choeng Ek** (Map pp74-5; admission US\$3; ☎ 8-5.30pm). They were often bludgeoned to death to avoid wasting precious bullets.

The remains of 8985 people, many of whom were bound and blindfolded, were exhumed in 1980 from mass graves in this one-time longan orchard; 43 of the 129 communal graves here have been left untouched. Fragments of human bone and bits of cloth are scattered around the disinterred pits. More than 8000 skulls, arranged by sex and age, are visible behind the clear glass panels of the Memorial Stupa, which was erected in 1988. It is a peaceful place today, masking the horrors that unfolded here less than three decades ago.

The Killing Fields of Choeng Ek are 15km from central Phnom Penh and well signposted in English. Most people arrive by bicycle, *moto* or taxi – it's too far to walk. To get here, take Monireth Blvd southwest out of the city. The site is 13km from the bridge near St 271. Take the left fork when the road splits and pretty soon you will find yourself in rural surroundings. Look out for an archway on the left and it's another kilometre or so down this track. A memorial ceremony is held annually at Choeng Ek on 9 May.

The site was recently 'privatised' and is now controlled by a Japanese company, hence the price rise to US\$3. Part of the deal involved upgrading the road, which is now surfaced all the way, but many Khmers and foreign observers alike were deeply disturbed that a foreign company was permitted to exploit Cambodia's tragedy.

Wat Phnom

វត្តភ្នំ

Set on top of a 27m-high tree-covered knoll, **Wat Phnom** (Map p79; admission US\$1) is the only hill in town. According to legend, the first pagoda on this site was erected in 1373 to house four statues of Buddha deposited here by the waters of the Mekong River and discov-

ered by Madame Penh. The main entrance to Wat Phnom is via the grand eastern staircase, which is guarded by lions and *naga* (mythical serpent) balustrades.

Today, many people come here to pray for good luck and success in school exams or business affairs. When a wish is granted, the faithful return to deliver on the offering promised, such as a garland of jasmine flowers or a bunch of bananas, of which the spirits are said to be especially fond.

The *vihara* (temple sanctuary) was rebuilt in 1434, 1806, 1894 and 1926. West of the *vihara* is a huge stupa containing the ashes of King Ponhea Yat (r 1405–67). In a pavilion on the southern side of the passage between the *vihara* and the stupa is a statue of a smiling and rather plump Madame Penh.

A bit to the north of and below the *vihara* is an eclectic shrine dedicated to the genie Preah Chau, who is especially revered by the Vietnamese. On either side of the entrance to the chamber containing a statue of Preah Chau are guardian spirits bearing iron bats. On the tiled table in front of the two guardian spirits are drawings of Confucius, as well as two Chinese-style figures of the sages Thang Cheng (on the right) and Thang Thay (on the left). To the left of the central altar is an eight-armed statue of Vishnu.

Down the hill from the shrine is a royal stupa sprouting full-sized trees from its roof. For now, the roots are holding the bricks together in their netlike grip, but when the trees eventually die the tower will slowly crumble, creating the devastation seen at temples around Angkor (p140).

Wat Phnom can be a bit of a circus. Beggars, street urchins, women selling drinks, and children selling birds in cages (you pay to set the bird free, but the birds are trained to return to their cage afterwards) pester everyone who turns up to climb the 27m to the summit. Fortunately it's all high-spirited stuff, and it's difficult to be annoyed by the vendors, who, after all, are only trying to eke out a living. You can also have a short elephant ride around the base of the hill, perfect for those elephant-trekking photos, but without the accompanying sore backside.

Wat Ounalom

វត្តខ្ពស់លោម

This **wat** (Map p79; Samdech Sotheas Blvd; admission free; ☎ 6am–6pm) is the headquarters of Cambodian

Buddhism. It was founded in 1443 and comprises 44 structures. It received a battering during the Pol Pot era, but today the wat has come back to life. The head of the country's Buddhist brotherhood lives here, along with a large number of monks.

On the 2nd floor of the main building, to the left of the dais, is a statue of Samdech Huot Tat, fourth patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism, who was killed by Pol Pot. The statue, made in 1971 when the patriarch was 80, was thrown in the Mekong by the Khmer Rouge to show that Buddhism was no longer the driving force in Cambodia. It was retrieved after 1979. To the right of the dais is a statue of a former patriarch of the Thummayuth sect, to which the royal family belongs.

On the 3rd floor of the building is a marble Buddha of Burmese origin that was broken into pieces by the Khmer Rouge and later reassembled. On the front right corner of the dais on this floor are the cement remains of a Buddha stripped of its silver covering by the Khmer Rouge. In front of the dais, to either side, are two glass cases containing flags – each 20m long – used during Buddhist celebrations. The walls are decorated with scenes from the life of Buddha and were painted when the building was constructed in 1952.

Behind the main building is a stupa containing an eyebrow hair of Buddha with an inscription in Pali (an ancient Indian language) over the entrance.

Wat Moha Montrei

វត្តមហាមន្ត្រី

Situated close to the Olympic Stadium, **Wat Moha Montrei** (Map pp74-5; Sihanouk Blvd; admission free; ☎ 6am–6pm) was named in honour of one of King Monivong's ministers, Chakrue Ponn, who initiated the founding of the pagoda (*moha montrei* means 'the great minister'). The cement *vihara*, topped with a 35m-high tower, was completed in 1970. Between 1975 and 1979, it was used by the Khmer Rouge to store rice and corn.

Check out the assorted Cambodian touches incorporated into the wall murals of the *vihara*, which tell the story of Buddha. The angels accompanying Buddha to heaven are dressed as classical Khmer dancers and the assembled officials wear the white military uniforms of the Sihanouk period. Along the wall to the left of the dais is a painted wooden lion

from which religious lessons are preached four times a month. The golden wooden throne nearby is used for the same purpose. All the statues of Buddha were made after 1979.

Independence Monument

វិមានឯករាជ្យ

Modelled on the central tower of Angkor Wat, the **Independence Monument** (Map p79; nr Norodom & Sihanouk Blvds) was built in 1958 to commemorate the country's independence from France in 1953. It also serves as a memorial to Cambodia's war dead (at least those that the current government chooses to remember) and is sometimes referred to as the Victory Monument. Wreaths are laid here on national holidays. Nearby, beside Samdech Sotheas Blvd, is the optimistically named **Cambodia-Vietnam Friendship Monument**, built to a Vietnamese (and rather communist) design in 1979.

Other Sights

The 700m **Chruy Changvar Bridge** (Map pp74-5), which spans the Tonlé Sap River, is often referred to by visitors as the Japanese Bridge. It was blown up during fighting in 1975. Long a symbol of the devastation visited upon Cambodia, it was repaired in 1993 with US\$23.2 million of Japanese funding. Those who have seen the film *The Killing Fields* may be interested to note that it was near here on the afternoon of 17 April 1975 – the day Phnom Penh fell – that Khmer Rouge fighters imprisoned and threatened to kill *New York Times* correspondent Sydney Schanberg and his companions.

Located at the northern end of Monivong Blvd, the **French embassy** (Map pp74-5; ☎430020; 1 Monivong Blvd) played a significant role in the dramas that unfolded after the fall of Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975. About 800 foreigners and 600 Cambodians took refuge in the embassy. Within 48 hours, the Khmer Rouge informed the French vice-consul that the new government did not recognise diplomatic privileges and that if all the Cambodians in the compound were not handed over, the lives of the foreigners inside would also be forfeited. Cambodian women married to foreigners could stay; Cambodian men married to foreign women could not. Foreigners wept as servants, colleagues, friends, lovers and husbands were escorted out of the embassy gates. At the end of the month the

foreigners were expelled from Cambodia by truck. Many of the Cambodians were never seen again. The building was used for many years as an orphanage and its apparently larcenous residents were blamed by local people for every theft in the neighbourhood. Today a high whitewashed wall surrounds the massive complex and the French have returned to Cambodia in a big way, promoting French language and culture in their former colony.

There is a cluster of private **language schools** (Map p79) teaching English and French on St 184 between Norodom Blvd and the rear of the Royal Palace compound. Between 5pm and 7pm the area is filled with students who see learning English as the key to making it in contemporary Cambodia. This is a good place to meet young locals.

Known collectively as the National Sports Complex, the **Olympic Stadium** (Map pp74-5; near cnr Sihanouk & Monireth Blvds) is a striking example of 1960s Khmer architecture and includes a sports arena and facilities for boxing, gymnastics, volleyball and other sports. Turn up after 5pm to see countless football matches, *pétanque* duels or badminton games.

In order to replace the countless Buddhas and ritual objects smashed by the Khmer Rouge, a whole neighbourhood of private workshops making cement Buddhas, *naga* and small stupas has grown up on the grounds of Wat Prayuvong. While the graceless cement figures painted in gaudy colours are hardly works of art, they are an effort by the Cambodian people to restore Buddhism to a place of honour in their culture. The **Prayuvong Buddha factories** (Map p79; btwn St 308 & St 310) are about 300m south of the Independence Monument.

The **National Library** (Bibliothèque Nationale; Map p79; St 92; ☎ 8-11am & 2-5pm Tue-Sun) is in a graceful old building constructed in 1924, near Wat Phnom. During its rule, the Khmer Rouge turned the building into a stable and destroyed most of the books. Many were thrown out into the streets, where they were picked up by people, some of whom donated them back to the library after 1979; others used them as food wrapping.

ACTIVITIES

Boat Cruises

Boat trips on the Tonlé Sap or Mekong Rivers are very popular with visitors. Sunset cruises are ideal, the burning sun sinking slowly be-

hind the glistening spires of the Royal Palace. It is also possible to charter them further afield for a visit to Koh Sdach or Silk Island, where there is a cottage industry of silk weavers. Local **tourist boats** are available for hire on the riverfront in Phnom Penh and can usually be arranged on the spot for between US\$10 and US\$20 an hour, depending on negotiations and numbers.

Bowling

There is now just one bowling alley in town, the **Superbowl** (Map pp74-5; Mao Tse Toung Blvd; per hr US\$9, shoe hire US\$1) at Parkway Square. Hourly rates are per lane, with any number of bowlers.

Cooking Courses

To learn more about the art of Cambodian cooking, sign up for the **Cambodian Cooking Class** (Map p79; ☎012 524801; www.cambodian-cooking-class.com; 67 St 240), based at Frizz Restaurant. The cooking class costs US\$20/12.50 per full day/half day, includes a booklet of recipes, and operates daily (except Sundays) at 9am.

Go-carting

Kambol F1 Go-carts (off Map pp74-5; ☎210501; per 10min US\$7) is a professional circuit located about 12km beyond the airport, and 2km off the road to Sihanoukville. It organises races on Sundays, so if you fancy yourself as the new Michael Schumacher, turn up then. Prices include helmets and racing suits.

Golf

A round of golf is expensive by Cambodian standards, but pretty cheap for the region. Contact **Royal Golf Club** (☎366689; NH4; per round Mon-Fri US\$35, shoe/club hire US\$5/10), on the road to Sihanoukville, or **Cambodia Golf & Country Club** (☎363666; NH4; per round US\$35, shoe/club hire US\$5/10) if you can't survive without a swing.

Gymnasiums

There are plenty of backstreet local gyms in Phnom Penh that charge less than US\$1 per hour and have very basic weights. The best all-round gym in town is **Paddy's Sports Centre** (Map pp74-5; ☎012 214940; 356 Sisowath Quay), located just north of the Chruoy Changvar Bridge on the right-hand side. Another sophisticated option is the **Clark Hatch Gym** (Map pp74-5; Intercontinental Hotel, cnr Mao Tse Toung & Monireth Blvds; per day US\$14).

THE SHOOTING RANGES

Shooting ranges have long been a popular activity for gung-ho travellers visiting Cambodia. Cambodia's lack of law enforcement and culture of impunity allowed visitors to do pretty much anything they wanted in the bad old days. The Cambodian military wasn't blind to the market opportunities this presented, and with a hefty surplus of weapons from 25 years of civil war, it began to offer its own ammunition reduction scheme involving feisty foreigners wanting to do the Rambo thing. A number of military bases near Phnom Penh were transformed into shooting ranges and rapidly became popular with tourists wanting to try their luck with an AK-47, M-60 or B-40 grenade launcher. The government periodically launched crackdowns, but the business continued largely unabated.

And so the show goes on. Visitors can try out a range of weapons, but most of the machine guns work out at about US\$1 a bullet. Handguns are available at the lower end, while at the other extreme it is possible to try shooting a B-40 rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

There have been rumours that it is possible to shoot live animals at these places, such as a chicken or cow. Naturally, we in no way endorse such behaviour. Does it ever happen? It is a possibility, as Cambodia is an impoverished country where money talks.

Massage & Spas

There are plenty of massage parlours in Phnom Penh, but quite a few double up as brothels. However, there are also now a lot of legitimate massage centres and a number of superb spas for that pampering palace experience.

Most of the more upmarket hotels offer traditional massage services, but one of the best value options in town is the long-running **Seeing Hands Massage** (Map p79; ☎012 680 934; 12 St 13; per hr US\$5.50). The blind masseurs here have been in the business for many years and can sort out those niggling aches and pains, offering shiatsu or foot massages. There are several other similar cooperatives around town.

In a similar vein, **Kanya Massage** (Map pp74-5; ☎09 683477; 38 St 289; per hr US\$5) is run by victims of acid attacks and helps to run a support network for survivors of these horrific crimes.

When it comes to spas, there is now an enticing selection of places. Some of the leading addresses for massage, facials, manicures and the full spa menu:

Amret Spa (Map p79; ☎997994; 3 St 57) Smart new spa near the popular 'Golden Mile'.

Bliss Spa (Map p79; ☎215754; 29 St 240) One of the most established spas in town, set in a lovely old French house on popular 240.

Champey Spa (Map pp74-5; ☎222846; 38 St 57) Khmer, Swedish and other massages, plus beauty care and hairdresser.

In Style (Map p79; ☎986747; 63 St 242) Garden spa and wellness centre with massage, facials and spa treatments.

O Spa (Map pp74-5; ☎992405; 4B St 75) An oasis of calm with rejuvenating hot-stone massage, plus Balinese and Thai treatments.

Running

A good opportunity to meet local expatriates is via the Hash House Harriers, usually referred to simply as 'the Hash'. A weekly run/walk takes place every Sunday. Participants meet in front of Phnom Penh train station (Map pp74-5) at 2.45pm. The entry fee of US\$5 includes refreshments (mainly a lot of beer) at the end.

Swimming

Many of the midrange and top-end hotels have swimming pools in which to cool off on a hot day. Most open their pools to the public for a fee. The Hotel Cambodiana (p95) charges just US\$6 during the week, while Hotel Le Royal demands US\$20 per day for use of the pool and gym.

The best-value deal in town is currently at Pavillon (p95), which has a leafy swimming pool in its grounds and requires only that swimmers spend US\$5 on food and drink in the course of their visit. The bad news for families is that children are not allowed. There is also the tiny swimming pool at popular bar-restaurant Elsewhere (p104); a dip (more than a swim) is free, including children between 4pm and 6pm.

Other options include **Himawari** (Map p79; ☎426806; 313 Sisowath Quay), which charges US\$10 including access to the gym; **Parkway Health Club** (Map pp74-5; ☎982928; 113 Mao Tse Toung; US\$6), which has an indoor pool, steam bath, sauna and gym; and **Long Beach Plaza Hotel** (Map pp74-5; ☎998007; St 289; US\$1), a bargain for a lap-sized pool.

There is also a beautiful swimming pool at L'Elephant Blanc Resort (p95) about 7km out of town on the road to Neak Luong. It costs US\$4/2 per adult/child, half again when it is quiet during the week, and there is a decent restaurant-bar here.

WALKING TOUR

What better place to kick off a walking tour of the city (Map p90) than the landmark temple of **Wat Phnom** (1; p86), perched atop the only hill in town. Pray for luck like the locals, or at least pray that you won't fall into one of Phnom Penh's open drains on this walking tour. Take a look southwest at the fortress that is the new **US embassy** (2; p312) and wonder to yourself how it is that the security-conscious State Department managed to find the only site in Phnom Penh overshadowed by a hill?

Head west along St 92 and pause at the **National Library** (3; p88), a classic example of French colonial-era architecture. Just along the road is the striking façade of **Hotel Le Royal** (4; p96), now owned by the Raffles group. Bookmark it for a happy-hour cocktail some time between 4pm and 8pm. Turn left on to

Monivong Blvd, the capital's main commercial thoroughfare. Fast approaching on the right is Phnom Penh's **train station** (5), a grand old building, home to not-so-grand old trains.

Swing southeast towards the dominant dome of **Psar Thmei** (6; p109). This is a market to remember, packed to the gunnels with everything and anything you can imagine and some things you can't, such as deep-fried insects and peeled frogs. Browse awhile and take in the natural air-conditioning of this immense centre. Don't get liberal with your wallet, however, as sellers here are known to overcharge. That said, the food stalls are a great place for cheap local bites.

Continue south on St 63 and take a peek at the modern equivalent of the Central Market, aka **Sorya Shopping Centre** (7; p107). The food court here is bigger and cleaner than at the market and offers the advantage of air-conditioning.

Snake east on St 154 and then south on to Norodom Blvd, before turning left on to St 178, a lively strip to browse the many **art shops** (8; p107). Turn right onto St 19 before swinging west again, along St 240, one of the more

fashionable stretches in the capital. Take your pick from one of the many cafés, restaurants or bars along here to recharge the batteries for the second half of the walk.

Head southwards on to Norodom Blvd again and make for the **Independence Monument** (9; p87), which was modelled on the central tower of Angkor Wat and built to commemorate freedom from the French. From here make a loop east and then north.

Take an hour or more to experience the treasures of the **Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda complex** (10; p83) before delving into the world's finest collection of Khmer sculpture from the Angkor period at the stunning **National Museum** (11; p84). After an hour or so exploring this magnificent old building, wander east towards the riverfront. Stroll riverside along the Tonlé Sap or duck into a bar or restaurant for a well-earned drink.

PHNOM PENH FOR CHILDREN

With its chaotic traffic, lack of public parks and open sewers, at first glance Phnom Penh is not the most child-friendly city in Asia. However, there are a few little gems that help to pass the time in Phnom Penh.

Most sights will be overwhelming for younger children, but the Royal Palace (p83) is an interesting place to explore and Wat Phnom (p86) has the option of an elephant ride around the base.

Many of the leading hotels have swimming pools (p89) that are open to the public for a fee, and the go-cart tracks (p88) might prove popular if you have the next Lewis Hamilton in tow. **Phnom Penh Water Park** (off Map pp74-5; ☎881008; Russian Blvd; admission US\$5; ☎8am-6pm) with its slides and wave pool is a definite hit with the young-uns and a world away from bustling downtown Phnom Penh. There is also a small fairground here. Sorya Shopping Centre (p107) includes a roller-skating rink on the upper floor, while there is ten-pin bowling at Superbowl (p88). There are also lots of children's playgrounds with ball ponds, trampolines and walkways, including one at Pencil Supermarket (p104).

Many of the restaurants and cafés are child-friendly, but there are a few specifically aimed at families, including Le Jardin (p103) and The Living Room (p104), while Fresco (p103) has a cool kiddies corner complete with PlayStation (big kids, hands

off!). Gasolina (p105) is another good option thanks to its huge garden, plus most of the riverfront places draw a breeze.

The most interesting attractions are beyond the city limits and would make good day trips to give the children a break from the hustle and bustle of the city. **Phnom Tamao Wildlife Sanctuary** (p115) is a rescue centre for Cambodia's incredible wildlife and the huge enclosures here include tigers, elephants and bears. Further afield is **Kirirom National Park** (p116), with gentle waterfalls and cooler temperatures, plus the fun **Kirirom Hillside Resort** (p116), which offers fresh air, pine trees, giant dinosaurs and activities such as horse riding and kayaking.

TOURS

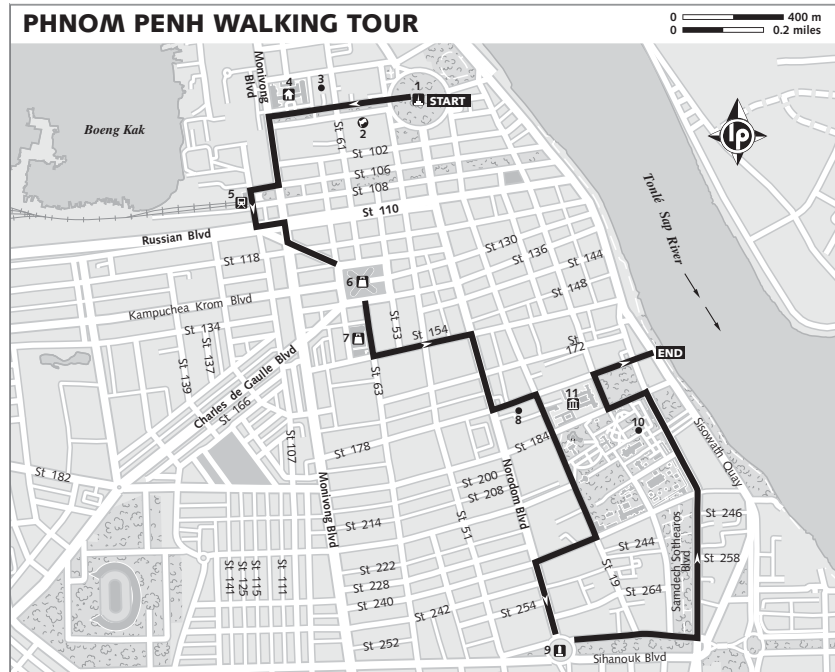
Travelling independently, Phnom Penh is a city best enjoyed at your own pace, without the timetable of a tour. If you really want to have an organised city tour, most of the leading guesthouses organise city tours including the sights listed earlier for around US\$6 per person. Prices mentioned do not include entrance fees.

Those interested in the new-wave Khmer architecture from the Sangkum era (1953-70) should sign up with **Khmer Architecture Tours** (www.ka-tours.org). These tours take in some of the most prominent buildings in the city and take place on foot or by *cyclo*, usually starting at 8.30am on weekends. The website also includes a DIY map of the most popular walking tour. For more on this landmark architecture, pick up a copy of *Cultures of Independence* (2001) or *Building Cambodia: New Khmer Architecture 1953-70* (2006).

For those wanting to discover another side of Phnom Penh, try **Mango Cambodia** (☎998657; www.mangocambodia.com), which offers trips into the surrounding countryside to meet the friendly locals. Supporting sustainable tourism with their country 'detours', Mango Cambodia also operates a small bed-and-breakfast in the capital.

SLEEPING

Phnom Penh now offers a world-class selection of places to stay. There is an excellent range of guesthouses, hotels and luxury palaces to suit all wallets passing through the capital. With the surge in visitors, many new hotels are also under development.



Affordable guesthouses are springing up all over the city. Some places charge as little as US\$2 a room; US\$5 will guarantee a small room with a fan and there are some smart new pads with air-con rooms from US\$10. The best hotel deals in Phnom Penh fall in the midrange category and for around US\$25 it is possible to get hooked up with air-con, satellite TV and a smart bathroom. Spend a little more cash and there are places that have a swimming pool for US\$50 or under. Top-end travellers will find a selection of properties, including the grand, the bland and the boutique.

Budget

There are two popular backpacker strips, one along the eastern shore of Boeng Kak and the other around the long-running Capitol Guesthouse along St 182 and St 111, just west of Monivong Blvd. The area around Boeng Kak has improved considerably, but the rooms in these guesthouses are pretty basic compared with elsewhere in the city. For those who have seen enough of their fellow travellers to last a lifetime, there are several smaller guesthouses spread across the city.

BOENG KAK AREA

Most of the lakeside guesthouses are built on wooden platforms over Boeng Kak, a seriously polluted body of water that no-one should swim in, however much they have drunk or smoked. The guesthouses used to be rickety shacks with dodgy planking, but are now more solidly built, with great communal areas to while away the day. For some it's like experiencing Ko Pha Ngan in the city, only Boeng Kak isn't quite the Gulf of Thailand.

Unfortunately, this whole area is slated for redevelopment and work has already started on pumping out the lake. This will be a great loss to Phnom Penh, as this area has a unique vibe, so enjoy it while you can. Sunsets over the lake are not to be missed whether you are staying here or not. Valuables should be kept in lockers, as most rooms aren't very secure.

Number 10 Lakeside Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012 725032; 10 St 93; r US\$2-8) This stalwart on the lake has some bargain rooms with share bathroom or bigger rooms with hot water and cable TV. The drinking and dining area (smoking and joking for others) is a mellow place to hang out, and there's a boozy boat docked offshore.

Number 9 Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012 766225; 9 St 93; r US\$3-8; ☐☐) The very first lakefront guesthouse is still a popular place thanks to its blooming plants and billowing hammocks. There are more than 50 rooms, but be selective as some are shabby.

Grand View Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐430766; St 93; r US\$4-10; ☐☐☐) Thailand meets Vietnam, with boxy rooms à la Bangkok housed in a tall, skinny structure à la Saigon. Upper floors involve a real hike, but the views of the lake are unrivalled.

Other places worth a flutter among the many up here:

Same Same But Different (Map p79; ☐012 263332; 11 St 93; s/d/tr without bathroom US\$2/3/4) More like same same but the same. Comfortable beds and an inviting lounge.

Floating Island (Map p79; ☐012 551227; 11 St 93; r US\$5-9; ☐☐) Rooms are much like everywhere else, but there is a great double-decker terrace for a serious view of the sunset.

Simon's II Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012 608892; St 93; r US\$10-15; ☐☐) This big wedding cake of a villa is home to the smartest rooms near the lake, including satellite TV and a bathroom.

PSAR O RUSSEI AREA

Another budget accommodation area starts near Psar O Russei and heads south along a network of backstreets.

Narin Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐982554; touch_narin@hotmail.com; 50 St 125; r US\$2-10; ☐☐) A long-running family place, this still offers some real budget deals, but rooms are quite basic. There is a relaxed terrace for taking some time out.

Dragon Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012 239066; 238 St 107; r US\$5-10; ☐☐) A friendly little guesthouse, all rooms here include cable TV and bathroom. There is also a lively balcony restaurant with an international menu.

Narin 2 Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐986131; 20 St 111; r US\$3-12; ☐☐☐) More like a hotel, Narin 2 is located just a few blocks away from the Narin.

Spring Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐222155; 34 St 111; r US\$6-12; ☐☐) An unfortunate typo on its card says 'bland new building', but it's all about interior comfort and this place has bright, spotless rooms, complete with cable TV. Long-term discounts available.

Sunday Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐211623; 97 St 141; r US\$5-15; ☐☐) Rooms have been upgraded here, but not prices, making for a fine deal. The friendly English-speaking staff can help with travel arrangements.

Sky Park Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐992718; 78 St 111; r US\$6-20; ☐☐) One of a new breed of smart guesthouses in this part of town, the Sky Park is a real bargain for such cleanliness and comfort. Air-con starts at US\$10 and all rooms have cable TV and hot water, and there's even a lift.

Good Luck Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012 882936; 74 St 115; r US\$6-20; ☐☐) Almost an identikit of the Sky Park, but maroon rather than orange.

Other good spots in this area:

Tat Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐986620; 52 St 125;

r US\$2-10; ☐☐) A friendly, family-run place with cheap and cheerful rooms, plus a breezy rooftop restaurant.

Capitol Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐724104; capitol@online.com.kh; 14 St 182; r US\$3-16; ☐☐☐) The original guesthouse in town has several annexes with good-value rooms and a bustling café with travel info.

The King Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐220512; www.thekingankor.com; 74 St 141; r US\$3-25; ☐☐☐) The range of rooms is as wide as the king's girth (that's Elvis, not Sihanouk!) and there is a huge restaurant and travel centre downstairs.

AROUND THE CITY

Other guesthouses are spread evenly across the city.

Okay Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012-920556; St 258; r US\$2-15; ☐☐) Okay is more than OK thanks to a popular restaurant, an appealing garden, great rooms and the best backpacker vibe beyond Boeng Kak. Budget rooms start with share bathroom, and top whack brings air-con, TV and hot water.

Top Banana Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐012 885572; www.topbanana.biz; cnr Sts 51 & 278; r US\$5-13; ☐☐) In a great location on a popular corner opposite Wat Langka, this place has a rooftop chill-out area above the dust. Cheap rooms have a share bathroom, while the more expensive include brisk air-con.

Royal Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐218026; 91 St 154; r US\$6-12; ☐☐) This old-timer has been given a major facelift, with smart rooms, sparkling bathrooms and tasteful decoration. In a good location, there is also a café-restaurant here.

Dara Reang Sey Hotel (Map p79; ☐428181; darareangsey@camnet.com.kh; 45 St 13; r US\$6-16; ☐☐) This long-running place has good-value rooms, and the family here really look after the staff.

The Last Home (Map p79; ☐012 831702; 21 St 172; r US\$6-20; ☐☐) Recently relocated to a dapper new building behind Wat Ounalom, Last

Home has a loyal following among regular visitors. Added extras include cable TV and newish bathrooms.

Midrange

For those looking to spend between US\$15 and US\$75 for a room, there are some excellent deals to be had around town. Some of the fancier midrange places with swimming pool are not that far behind the top-range hotels in comfort, but are pleasingly off the pace in price, at just US\$40 to US\$60. Several places now offer free wi-fi for guests or diners.

As with the budget guesthouses, there is no single midrange hotel area. Probably the best choice, and definitely the best location, is along the riverfront on Sisowath Quay. The area to the southwest of the Independence Monument also has a concentration of mid-range deals. The stretch of Monivong Blvd between Russian and Sihanouk Blvds is the old hotel district, but this is hardly the most alluring area of town.

RIVERFRONT AREA

Bright Lotus Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐990446; 22 St 178; r US\$12-18; ☐☐) Occupying a strategic corner with top views of the National Museum, Royal Palace and, if you have a neck like Mr Fantastic, the riverfront, this guesthouse is one place where it is worth climbing the stairs.

Hotel Indochine (Map p79; ☐724239; indochinehtl@camnet.com.kh; 251 Sisowath Quay; r US\$10-20; ☐☐) One of the oldies on the riverfront, but the price is right. Aim for a balcony river-view, but all rooms include TV, fridge and hot water.

Hotel Indochine 2 (☐211525; 28 St 130; US\$10-20; ☐☐) For more comfort but a street view, try its other place around the corner.

Paragon Hotel (Map p79; ☐222607; 219 Sisowath Quay; r US\$15-30; ☐☐) A 40-room property on a lively stretch of the riverfront, this hotel represents excellent value. All rooms have TV and minibar, plus the pricier options have smart showers.

Mekong Palace Hotel (Map p79; ☐998876; 253 Sisowath Quay; r US\$15-35; ☐☐) Formerly the Sunshine Hotel, the new-look Mekong Palace has risen in its place. Top location and comfortable rooms, but the cheaper rooms don't have a window.

River Star Hotel (Map p79; ☐990501; www.riverstarhotel.com; 185 Sisowath Quay; r US\$25-35; ☐☐☐) The reliable rooms here include the usual cable TV, fridge and air-con, and are quite

spacious. Downstairs is a popular bar-restaurant and there's a lift.

Hope & Anchor (Map p79; ☐☐☐1190; www.hopeandanchor-cambodia.com; 213 Sisowath Quay; r US\$25-50; ☐☐) Don't be deceived by the British pub image, as this place is all about continental comfort upstairs, with thoughtfully designed rooms and slick bathrooms. The tempting bar beneath includes a pool table.

Hotel Castle (Map p79; ☐☐211425; www.hotelcastle.com.kh; 4 St 148; s/d from US\$50/55; ☐☐☐) This new hotel is quickly earning a name for itself as one of the better addresses in town. It's not quite on the riverfront, but more than makes up for it with smart business-like rooms, a swimming pool and free wi-fi. Highly recommended.

Bougainvillier Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐220528; www.bougainvillierhotel.com; 277 Sisowath Quay; r US\$53-88; ☐☐) One of the most impressive midrange options, the rooms are lavishly decorated with Chinese-Khmer furniture and elegant silk. The suites are a worthy investment with acres of space and an unobstructed view of the Tonlé Sap. There is also a highly regarded French restaurant where the complimentary breakfast is served.

Foreign Correspondents' Club (Map p79; ☐☐210142; www.fccambodia.com; 363 Sisowath Quay; d US\$55; ☐☐☐) This landmark location is a fine place to recapture the heady days of the war correspondents. The rooms are delightfully finished in wood and include DVD players. All include a minibar clearly aimed at the journalists who pass through town – the spirits come in 1L bottles rather than miniatures. The restaurant-bar (p101) always draws a crowd.

And there's more:

Renaké Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐215701; 40 Samdech Sothearos Blvd; r US\$35-60; ☐☐) This grand old dame is a colonial relic tucked away amid lush gardens opposite the Royal Palace. Up for sale, it may well close for a full makeover some time soon.

Khmer Royal Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐223824; www.khmerroyalhotel.com; Sisowath Quay; r US\$45-55; ☐☐☐) The brash exterior conceals some smart rooms. Request a river view if available.

CENTRAL PHNOM PENH

One area that is worth seeking out for those wanting good value is the so-called 'Golden Mile', a strip of hotels on St 278 that all feature 'Golden' in their name. There is little to choose between them, as all offer air-con,

cable TV, fridge, hot water and free laundry for around US\$15.

Bodhi Tree Umma (Map pp74-5; www.bodhitree.com; 50 St 113; r US\$12-32; ☐☐☐) Some might be spooked by the location opposite Tuol Sleng Museum, but for those who don't get nightmares this is a wonderfully atmospheric place to stay. The old wooden house includes air-con options and there is a divine restaurant in the verdant garden.

Golden Tour Eiffel Guesthouse (Map p79; ☐☐225018; 4B St 278; r US\$15; ☐☐) Rooms here are more like suites, with full kitchens and plenty of extra features, making the rates a real bargain. Monthly discounts available.

Town View Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐992939; 30 St 111; www.townviewhotel.com; r from US\$15; ☐☐☐) A smart new hotel in a popular budget district, rooms here are absurdly good value. All include cable TV, minibar and sparkling bathrooms, plus there's a lift.

Kambuja Inn (Map p79; ☐☐223377; 10 St 174; r US\$20-35; ☐☐) Attractively set in a cluster of old French shophouses near Norodom Blvd, the 10 rooms here offer a degree of charm and comfort. All have a wood and silk trim and the more expensive are almost suites.

Flamingo Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐221640; 30 St 172; r US\$25-35; ☐☐☐) A towering hotel for this part of town, the smart rooms include lots of little extras, and bigger bucks bring a bathtub. There's also a lift leading to a relaxed rooftop restaurant and bar.

Hotel Cara (Map pp74-5; ☐☐430066; www.hotelcara.com; 18 St 47; s/d from US\$28/33; ☐☐☐) This hotel exudes real style at an affordable price. Rooms are finished in contemporary Khmer materials with original furnishings, and most include a balcony. Downstairs is the Japanese Fusion Restaurant.

Anise Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐225222; www.anisehotel.com.kh; 2C St 278; s US\$29-55, d US\$35-60; ☐☐☐) A chic hotel in the popular NGO quarter of town, Anise offers flat-screen TVs and internet throughout. Smarter rooms also have DVD players and a safe. There's a great little restaurant, but no lift makes life at the top tough.

Scandinavia Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐214498; www.hotel-scandinavia-cambodia.com; 4 St 282; r US\$30-55; ☐☐☐) Long popular with Phnom Penh aficionados, this place has been renovated and upgraded making for an enticing deal. Rooms include a DVD player and minibar, plus there is a swimming pool in the garden, a restaurant and an art gallery.

Manor House (Map p79; ☐☐992566; 21 St 262; s/d from US\$33/38; ☐☐☐) Set in a small villa in the backstreets, this gay-friendly guesthouse offers artfully decorated rooms and a small swimming pool. Deluxe rooms have a DVD player and wi-fi is available at US\$3 per day.

Villa Langka (Map p79; ☐☐726771; www.villalangka.com; 14 St 282; r US\$35-100; ☐☐☐) A new boutique hotel near Wat Langka, the 24 rooms here face a tempting swimming pool and garden café. Cheaper rooms are smaller and the décor gets more expressive with the price, rising to US\$100 suites with large balcony and a large flat-screen TV. Add 10% to rates for tax but all include breakfast.

The Billabong (Map p79; ☐☐227303; 5 St 158; r US\$36-58; ☐☐☐) Near Psar Thmei but an oasis of calm by comparison, this Aussie-run place has 15 rooms set around a large swimming pool. Standard rooms are smallish, so it's better to invest in the pool-view rooms for space and style.

The Pavilion (Map p79; ☐☐222280; www.pavilion-cambodia.com; 227 St 19; r US\$50-80; ☐☐☐) Housed in one of the most elegant French villas in town, this is an atmospheric place to stay. Furnishings show a Chinese-Khmer touch and some have commanding pool views. Recently expanded into a second contemporary building next door, some of the new rooms include a private plunge pool. Free wi-fi and a gorgeous garden to while away the days, but no children allowed.

Kabiki (Map p79; ☐☐222290; www.thekabiki.com; 22 St 264; r from US\$50; ☐☐☐) The owners of the Pavilion (see above) also have a new family-friendly place, with suite rooms, bunks for kiddies and a lush garden with pool. Both Kabiki and the Pavilion have solar power.

Other places worth a look:

Golden Mekong Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐211721; 205 St 19; r US\$25; ☐☐☐) Atmospheric hotel behind the royal palace offering a good deal for the standard and comfort.

Frangipani Villa (Map p79; ☐☐012 687717; www.frangipanihotel.com; 20 St 252; r US\$25-45; ☐☐☐) Like a boutique bed-and-breakfast, rooms here have character and include a stylish bathroom. Popular with long-stayers.

Goldiana Hotel (Map p79; ☐☐219558; www.goldiana.com; 10 St 282; s/d US\$28/38; ☐☐☐) This huge hotel offers a fair deal considering facilities include a pool and gym. Free transfer from the airport.

Bodhi Tree Aram (Map p79; www.bodhitree.com; 70 St 244; r US\$64-78; ☐☐☐) Those on a bigger budget might consider this beautiful and smart new place with stylish rooms.

BEYOND THE CITY

L'Elephant Blanc Resort (off Map pp74-5; ☐☐22988; www.elephantblancresort.com; NH1; r US\$25-40; ☐☐☐) A lovely little resort beyond the city limits, this is a peaceful retreat for those that have tired of the city life. Rooms are large and comfortable and the pool is a real treat. It tends to be much quieter during the week, as expats descend at the weekend.

Top End

Walk-in rates at many of Phnom Penh's luxury hotels are high by regional standards. Consider booking via the internet or through a travel agent for a better deal, which can be as much as half of the published rates.

Imperial Garden Villa (Map pp74-5; ☐☐219991; www.imperialgarden-hotel.com; 315 Sisowath Quay; s/d US\$70/80; ☐☐☐) Rooms here are a three-star standard, but a little on the 'business bland' side. However, there are also large residential-style villas available. There's a large pool and a tennis court, plus Mekong views.

The Quay (Map p79; www.thequayhotel.com; Sisowath Quay; ste from US\$80; ☐☐☐) A new boutique hotel from the FCC group, this riverfront property aims to be carbon neutral in an effort to help the fight against global warming. Sleek and minimalist, this promises to be a stylish venue and includes a fusion restaurant and rooftop swimming pool.

Hotel Cambodiana (Map pp74-5; ☐☐426288; www.hotelcambodiana.com; 313 Sisowath Quay; s/d US\$110/115; ☐☐☐) A real Phnom Penh landmark, the Cambodiana has recently joined the empire of local tycoon Kith Meng. Rooms and facilities are rapidly being upgraded, ensuring this will once again be one of the smartest places in town. Started in 1967, the unfinished structure and its grounds were used as a military base by the Lon Nol government, and by 1975 thousands of refugees from the countryside sheltered under its concrete roof.

Himawari (Map p79; ☐☐214555; www.himawarihotel.com; 313 Sisowath Quay; apt US\$128; ☐☐☐) Another residential-style property offering rooms, suites and apartments, Himawari has a great location on the banks of the Mekong. Facilities include a pool and a gym, plus riverside dining. Definitely request a nonsmoking room, as smokers have left their stamp on some rooms.

Intercontinental Hotel (Map pp74-5; ☐☐424888; www.intercontinental.com; cnr Mao Tse Toung & Monireth Bldvs; s/d from US\$135/145; ☐☐☐) The original

five-star hotel in town, it was also long the city's tallest building. The location is not ideal, but the comfort is Intercon through and through. Facilities include a Clark Hatch fitness centre, a swimming pool, a business centre, conference facilities, a great breakfast buffet and live music in the lobby bar.

Amanjaya (Map p79; ☎219579; www.amanjaya.com; 1 St 154; ste US\$155-250; 📶 🚶 🚶) Occupying a superb location near the riverfront, with panoramic views over the Tonlé Sap and Wat Ounalom, the Amanjaya is the leading boutique hotel in Phnom Penh. All rooms are suites, and are spacious and stylish, with elegant Khmer drapes and tropical furnishings. Rates include free wi-fi access. Downstairs is a popular steakhouse and bar, K-West, which draws an expat crowd seeking a slice of home comfort.

Hotel Le Royal (Map p79; ☎981888; www.raffles.com; cnr Monivong Blvd & St 92; r from US\$300; 📶 🚶 🚶) From the golden age of travel, this is one of Asia's grand old palaces, in the illustrious company of the Oriental in Bangkok and Raffles in Singapore. This classic colonial-era property is Phnom Penh's leading address, with a heritage to match its service and style. Indulgent diversions include two swimming pools, a gym, a spa, and bars and restaurants with lavish food and drink. Between 1970 and 1975 many famous journalists working in Phnom Penh stayed here, and part of the film *The Killing Fields* was set in the hotel (though filmed in Hua Hin, Thailand).

EATING

For foodies, Phnom Penh is a real delight, boasting a superb selection of restaurants that showcase the best in Khmer cooking, as well as the greatest hits from world cuisine such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Indian, French, Italian, Spanish, Mexican and more. Visitors to Phnom Penh are quite literally spoilt for choice these days. Most local restaurants open around 6.30am and serve food until 9pm or so. International restaurants stay open until about 11pm, but some close between breakfast and lunch or between lunch and dinner.

The best bet for budget dining in Phnom Penh is to head to one of the city's many markets. The dining areas may not be the most sophisticated in the world, but the food is tasty and cheap. If the markets are just too hot or claustrophobic for your taste, then look out for the mobile street sellers carrying

their wares on their shoulders or wheeling it around in small carts.

Local hole-in-the-wall restaurants are slightly more civilised but still very cheap. Many of the international restaurants around town are expensive by local standards, but compared with dining in the West, the prices are very reasonable.

Most of the big hotels have in-house restaurants with multinational menus, but prices tend to be high and tax and service is extra, adding up to a multinational-sized bill.

Some travellers get into the habit of hunkering down on their guesthouse balcony, encouraged by proprietors talking up the dangers of Phnom Penh. Don't do it, as a culinary adventure awaits...

Khmer

After dark, Khmer eateries scattered across town illuminate their beaconlike Angkor Beer signs, hailing locals in for fine fare and generous jugs of draft beer. Don't be shy, and heed the glowing signs – the food is great and the atmosphere lively. A typical meal will cost just 4000r to 8000r and a jug of beer is only 8000r (around US\$2). Good hunting grounds include St 184 (Map p79) near the French Cultural Centre and St 108 (Map p79) just to the east of Norodom Blvd.

Soup chhnang dei (cook-your-own soup) restaurants are very popular with Khmers and are great fun if you go in a group. Other diners will often help with protocol, as it is important to cook things in the right order so as not to overcook half the ingredients and eat the rest raw. These places also offer *phnom pleung* (hill of fire), which amounts to cook-your-own beef, shrimp or squid (or anything else that takes your fancy) over a personal barbecue.

The best markets for breakfast and lunch are Psar Thmei (Central Market; Map p79), Psar Tuol Tom Pong (Russian Market; Map pp74–5) and Psar O Russei (Map p79), which is handy given these are also great shopping venues. Most dishes cost a reasonable 2000r to 4000r. There are also several areas around the city with open-air food stalls during the early evening – try **Psar Ta Pang** (Map p79; cnr Sts 51 & 136) for excellent *bobor* (rice porridge) and tasty desserts.

If the market stalls look a little raw, and street-surfing doesn't appeal, then consider the air-conditioned alternative in the shape of

LUU MENG *Nick Ray*

Renowned Cambodian celebrity chef and restaurateur Luu Meng is the face behind a handful of Phnom Penh's best-known restaurants and cafés.

Luu Meng's love of cooking started at a young age, as his Chinese-Cambodian family ran a restaurant on Sothearos Blvd in the late 1960s, not far from his new Thai-Japanese restaurant Bai Thong (p99). 'My family had a typical Chinese restaurant, so I grew up around food and we always ate well,' Luu explains. He joined the Sofitel Cambodiana Hotel (now Hotel Cambodiana) as the country opened its doors to the world once more and soon became one of the country's rising culinary stars. 'I travelled the region, working in Thailand and at the famous Sofitel Metropole in Hanoi,' Meng continues, an experience which brought him into contact with new flavours and regional specialities. Returning to Cambodia, he eventually formed Man Co, the group behind such popular Phnom Penh restaurants as Malis and Topaz.

We discuss Cambodian cuisine and what differentiates it from its neighbours. 'Thai food is hot, spicy and sweet, while Vietnamese is more Chinese influenced,' explains Meng. 'Khmer cuisine is all about fresh spices. There are influences from India, but always with fresh ingredients, not powders. Our cuisine is not as spicy as Thai and we don't use as much fish sauce as Vietnam, although we do love *prahoc* [fish paste].' He pauses to reflect, 'It's all about freshness.'

On the subject of Cambodian tastes and a Cambodian national dish, he is animated, and naturally *amoc* (mild baked fish curry) leads the discussions. '*Amoc* is typically Cambodian and takes advantage of our abundance of fresh fish from the Tonlé Sap,' Meng points out. 'Cambodian cuisine also has some superb salads, which often surprises people. *Sait ko plear* [raw beef salad] can be prepared carpaccio style with fresh, finely grated lemon grass and is a symphony of subtle flavours.'

Travelling widely and cooking for a diverse audience, Meng has taken on many influences, but is quite a traditionalist at heart. 'For me, the most important thing about cooking is quality. Quality of the ingredients, quality of the kitchen, quality of the service,' he continues. 'If a chef knows and understands this, it can be applied to different cuisines.' However, he prefers to concentrate on his strengths and promote local ingredients and traditional dishes. 'If we plan to promote another cuisine, then we bring in a specialist chef from that culinary culture,' he explains. 'That way, we always guarantee the authentic flavour.'

Naturally, we end up discussing the best restaurants in Phnom Penh for traditional Cambodian food. 'For me, you have to go over the bridge [Chruoy Changvar Bridge] for the real taste of Cambodia,' he enthuses. 'Many of the places in town serve a bit of everything from the region, but over the bridge are the real Cambodian restaurants.' A favourite? He laughs. 'It has to be Rum Chang, as they offer very traditional recipes and a peaceful setting.'

Luu Meng is the Managing Director of Man Co (Management Company), which runs several hotels and restaurants in Cambodia.

the **Sorya Shopping Centre Food Court** (Map p79; 4th fl, cnr Sts 63 & 154). Run on the coupon system like in Thailand, there are more than 20 outlets serving Khmer, Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and more, plus desserts and fruit shakes. It's always full of locals and most dishes are just 4000r to 6000r. A few floors up is **Master Suki Soup** (7th fl; soup from US\$5), which may be a Japanese concept but has a very Khmer touch and is a great way to try *soup chhnang dei*, with photos to help choose the ingredients. Superb views over Psar Thmei.

Sa'em Restaurant (Map p79; ☎219254; 379 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$1-3; 📶 🕒7am-10pm) Tucked away under a shady terrace, this place has some of

the best-value meals on the riverfront. Most of the Khmer and Asian standards are here and even the beer is at giveaway prices.

Khmer Borane Restaurant (Map p79; ☎012 290092; 389 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$1.50-4; 📶 🕒11am-11pm) A great little restaurant for traditional Khmer recipes, choose from *trey kor* (steamed fish with sugar palm) or *lok lak* (fried diced beef with a salt, pepper and lemon dip).

Seven Bright Restaurant (Map p79; ☎012 833555; St 13; mains US\$1.50-5; 📶 🕒5:30am-10:30pm) This was Gerard Depardieu's hotel lobby in the movie *City of Ghosts*. Good food, likeable location and occasional live music. Early doors make it a great place for breakfast before a boat trip.

Goldfish River Restaurant (Map p79; Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 7am-10pm) Sitting on stilts over the Tonlé Sap, this restaurant may not be designed to impress, but the menu offers authentic Cambodian food. Crab with black pepper, squid with fresh peppercorns; the selection is dizzying with more than 300 dishes available.

Knyay (Map p79; ☎ 225225; 25K Soramarit Blvd; mains US\$2-5; ☎ noon-9pm Tue-Fri, 7am-9pm Sat, 7am-3pm Sun) A stylish new Cambodian restaurant that is hidden away from the main road in a leafy villa. The menu includes a generous selection of vegetarian and vegan options and original health shakes.

Frizz Restaurant (Map p79; ☎ 220953; 67 St 240; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 7am-10pm) True, the name doesn't sound that Khmer, but the aromatic Cambodian cuisine here is some of the most delicious in town. The restaurant also operates cooking classes (p88) for those wanting to learn some secrets.

Bopha Phnom Penh Restaurant (Map p79; ☎ 992800; Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-7; ☎ 6am-11pm) Right next door to Goldfish, this place is designed to impress, complete with Angkor-style carvings, heavy furniture and an attractive riverside terrace. The menu includes Khmer, Asian and Western dishes, plus cheaper lunchtime set menus are available. Nightly classical dancing ensures it is popular with tour groups.

Khmer Surin (Map p79; ☎ 363050; 9 St 57; mains US\$3-6; ☎ 11am-10pm) Popular with tour groups thanks to the atmospheric ambience with floor cushions, flowering plants and antique furnishings, this restaurant serves reliable Cambodian and Thai food. Set over three levels, it should be possible to find a quiet corner.

Sugar Palm (Map p79; ☎ 220956; 19 St 240; mains US\$4-8; ☎ 11.30am-late) A homely restaurant-bar on lively St 240, this delivers the traditional taste of Cambodia in cool, contemporary surrounds. Have a cocktail downstairs, then head up to the balcony for dinner.

Malis (Map p79; ☎ 221022; 136 Norodom Blvd; mains US\$4-12; ☎ 6am-11pm) The leading Khmer restaurant in the Cambodian capital, Malis is a chic place to dine. The garden is the most atmospheric, but air-conditioned dining is available in the warren of a building. The original menu includes beef in bamboo strips, sand goby with ginger and traditional soups and salads. Popular for a

boutique breakfast, as the menu is a good deal at US\$1.50 to US\$3.

It's Cambodia, of course there are more: **Khmer Kitchen** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 012 712541; 41 St 310; mains US\$2-5) Affordably priced food for a local crowd and authentic décor to draw the international crowd.

Dararasmy Restaurant (Map p79; St 63; mains US\$2-5) One of the most popular DIY restaurants in Phnom Penh, a lively spot to pass an evening as an amateur chef.

Ponlok Restaurant (Map p79; ☎ 212025; 319 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-6) Great riverfront views from the 3rd floor, but service can be hit and miss.

Amok Café (Map p79; ☎ 012 912319; 2 St 278; mains US\$3-7; ☎ 10am-10pm) Named in honour of one of Cambodia's national dishes, the delicious *amok* (fish coconut curry in a banana leaf).

Chinese

There are numerous Chinese restaurants around Phnom Penh, many offering an authentic taste of the Middle Kingdom. There are several real-deal Chinese restaurants along St 136, opposite the Phnom Penh Sorya bus station, with names like Peking and Shanghai. These are the perfect place for a budget meal before or after a long bus ride and most also do good dim sum.

Sam Doo Restaurant (Map p79; ☎ 218773; 56 Kampuchea Krom Blvd; mains US\$2-10; ☎ 7am-2pm) Sino-Khmers swear this has the best food in town. Choose from spicy morning glory, signature 'Sam Doo fried rice', *trey chamhoy* (steamed fish with soy sauce and ginger), and fresh seafood. It's open late and has delicious dim sum.

Man Han Lou Restaurant (Map pp74-5; ☎ 721966; 456 Monivong Blvd; mains US\$5-10; ☎ 10am-11pm) Chinese, Khmer, Thai, Vietnamese, this restaurant covers all bases, but the real draw here is the microbrewery turning out beer in golden (lager), red (bitter), black (stout) and 'green' (not sure) shades.

Hua Nam Restaurant (Map pp74-5; ☎ 364005; 753 Monivong Blvd; mains US\$5-15 and up; ☎ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm) One of the original classy Chinese restaurants, this heavyweight dining experience includes such 'delicacies' as goose webs and abalone. Smart, but expensive by local standards.

Thai

Boat Noodle Restaurant (Map p79; ☎ 012 200426; St 294; mains 3000-10,000r; ☎ 10am-10pm) This old wooden house, in a leafy garden brimming with water features, offers some of the

DINING OUT 'OVER THE BRIDGE'

The reconstruction of the Chruoy Changvar Bridge (Japanese Friendship Bridge) spanning the Tonlé Sap River created a restaurant boom on the river's east bank. There are dozens of restaurants lining the highway – from the decidedly downmarket to the obviously over-the-top – but most are interesting places for a very Cambodian night out. These are restaurants frequented by well-to-do Khmers, and on the weekend are packed with literally thousands of people on a big night out. Most charge about US\$2 to US\$5 a dish (with around 300 dishes to choose from). Heading north, the restaurants start to appear about 1km from the bridge on the east bank. Many of the larger places include a resident band and the amps are often cranked up to 11 – remember to sit a fair distance from the stage.

Places come in and out of favour, but following are some of the consistently popular. All are signposted from the main road. A *moto* should cost about US\$1 or so each way from the city centre.

- **Boeng Bopha Restaurant** – the food here is similar to elsewhere, but this is a popular place for a younger crowd out drinking.
- **Rum Chang Restaurant** – long one of the best places for authentic Khmer food, there is no band here and the location overlooking the Mekong is very breezy. Recommended by Luu Meng (p97).
- **Ta Oeu Restaurant** – this simple place is popular for its value-for-money food, which has a reputation as being authentic and tasty.
- **Tata Restaurant** – one of the newer breed of smart and sophisticated places, it hosts leading comedians at the weekend and is popular with Cambodians. The food is well-regarded, if relatively expensive.

best-value Thai and Cambodian food in town. With tasty noodle soups for breakfast and special set lunches each day for US\$4, it's worth a visit.

Chiang Mai Riverside (Map p79; ☎ 012 832369; 272 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 10am-10pm) One of the original riverfront restaurants, it's still going strong thanks to the taste of Thailand at a reasonable price. The fish cakes are always good, plus there are some authentic curries to spice up your life.

Bai Thong Restaurant (Map p79; ☎ 211054; 100 Samdech Sotheaor Bld; mains US\$3-6; ☎ 11am-2pm & 6-11pm) Smart new eatery dedicated to traditional Thai food with a Japanese twist; the prices are pretty reasonable given the classy ambience.

Vietnamese

Pho Shop (Map p79; Sihanouk Blvd; mains 4000r) For cheap and delicious *pho bo* (Vietnamese beef noodle soup), try this local hole-in-the-wall near Independence Monument. It does genuine *pho* with all the accompaniments and serves cheap beer as the day wears on.

Phò Fortune (Map p79; ☎ 012 871753; 11 St 178; mains from US\$1-4; ☎ 8am-9pm) Great location

for good *pho*, the noodle soup that keeps Vietnam on its feet, plus a smattering of dishes from other regions of the world.

Indian & Nepalese

Chi Cha (Map p79; ☎ 366065; 27 St 110; set menus US\$2; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm) Actually Bangladeshi, this established curry house offers the cheapest subcontinental selection in town. The thalis (set meals) are a bargain, starting from US\$2. The menu is 100% halal.

Monsoon (Map p79; 17 St 104; curries US\$3-5) Alright, so it's also a sophisticated wine bar and it happens to be in the middle of a 'lively' bar strip, but do not be deceived, for this is home to some of the best Pakistani curries this side of Lahore. Or *lahore na* (very good), as the Cambodians say.

Shiva Shakti (Map p79; 70 Sihanouk Blvd; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-10pm, closed Mon; mains US\$5-15) The leading Indian restaurant in town, the opulent decoration sets the tone for an original menu of Moghul cuisine, but expect to pay US\$20 or more for a spread.

More spots for a curry fix: **Curry Pot** (Map p79; St 93; mains US\$2-4) One of many Indian places in backpackersville, this place turns out some great curries.

FLOWER POWER

Anyone who spends a night or two on the town in Phnom Penh will soon be familiar with young girls and boys hovering around popular bars and restaurants to sell decorative flowers. The kids are incredibly sweet and most people succumb to their charms and buy a flower or two. All these late nights for young children might not be so bad if they were benefiting from their hard-earned cash, but usually they are not. Look down the road and there will be a *moto* driver with an ice bucket full of these flowers waiting to ferry the children to another popular spot. Yet again, the charms of children are exploited for the benefit of adults who should know better but are too poor to worry about it. Think twice before buying from them, as the child probably won't reap the reward.

Mount Everest (Map p79; ☐213821; 98 Sihanouk Blvd; curries US\$2-5) One of the oldest curry houses in town, the menu includes popular Indian and Nepalese dishes.

Annam (Map p79; ☐726661; 1C St 282; mains US\$4-7; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm) Attractive garden restaurant that offers excellent Indian recipes in refined surrounds.

Italian

Pop Café (Map p79; ☐012 562892; 371 Sisowath Quay; ☎ 11am-3pm & 6-10pm; pizzas US\$3-7) Owner Giorgio welcomes diners as if it's his home, making this is a popular spot for authentic Italian cooking. Thin-crust pizzas, homemade pastas and tasty gnocchi, it could be Roma.

Happy Herb's Pizza (Map p79; ☐362349; 345 Sisowath Quay; pizzas US\$4-7; ☎ 8am-11pm) No, happy doesn't mean it comes with free toppings, it means pizza à la ganja. The nonmarijuana pizzas are also pretty good, but don't involve the free trip.

Luna D'Autunno (Map p79; ☐220895; 6C St 29; mains US\$5-15; ☎ 11am-2.30pm & 5.30-10.30pm) This elegant garden restaurant has an open kitchen firing up delicious pizzas from US\$6 to US\$10. Inside is a sophisticated restaurant with a walk-in wine cellar with bottles from the homeland. The menu includes some delicious seafood and traditional Italian recipes.

Other Italian places:

Nike Pizza (Map p79; 160 St 63; pizzas US\$3-7; ☎ 8am-11pm) Reliable pizzas. Try the 'pineapple porn moan' pizza – silly spelling or pure pleasure?

Le Duo (Map p79; 17 St 228; mains US\$5-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Popular Italian restaurant set in a garden villa, with fresh pasta and authentic pizzas.

Japanese

Ko Ko Ro (Map p79; ☐012 601095; 18 Sihanouk Blvd; dishes US\$2-7; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5.30-9pm) This tiny little Japanese restaurant has a big personality

thanks to the friendly and attentive owner who will advise on selection. The walls are plastered with photos of his creations and the fish is very fresh.

Origami (Map p79; ☐012 968095; 88 Sthearos Blvd; set menus US\$8-15; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5.30-9.30pm) This elegant Japanese eatery takes the art of Japanese food to another level thanks to the charismatic owner. Set menus include beautifully presented sushi, sashimi and tempura sets; affordable business lunches for those in a hurry.

French

Comme à la Maison (Map p79; ☐360801; 13 St 57; mains US\$3-8; ☎ 6am-10.30pm) Just like at home, at least if you are lucky enough to live with a first-class French chef, this place offers succulent steaks and a tour of provincial France.

La Marmite (Map p79; ☐012 391746; 80 St 108; mains US\$5-10; ☎ 11am-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm) It may not be the most traditional French name, but the menu at La Marmite is a tour de force in the French classics. Choose from daily specials such as scallops or go with the regular menu that includes tender tournedos and herb-infused lamb.

Topaz (Map p79; ☐211054; 705 Norodom Blvd; dishes US\$5-20; ☎ 11am-2pm & 6-11pm) One of Phnom Penh's first designer restaurants, Topaz is housed in an elegant villa with reflective pools, a walk-in wine cellar and piano bar. The menu is classic Paris, including delicate Bourgogne snails drizzled in garlic and steak tartare for those with rare tastes.

Van's Restaurant (Map p79; ☐722067; 5 St 13; dishes US\$5-25; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5-10.30pm) Located in one of the grandest buildings in the city, the former Banque Indochine, you can still see the old vault doors as you make your way to the refined dining room upstairs. Dishes are beautifully presented with a

decorative flourish, and menu highlights include sea perch carpaccio and tender veal.

La Residence (Map p79; ☐224582; 22 St 214; mains US\$7-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) Part of Princess Marie's family home has been converted into this classy contemporary restaurant. Pass through the immense wooden doors and enjoy fine French food, including a foie gras speciality menu and superb seafood.

Other places for the Gallic touch:

Le Deauville (Map p79; ☐012 843204; St 94; ☎ 11am-10pm; mains US\$4-8) French and international cuisine, with a menu of steaks and salads. On Friday, it doubles as a popular bar for well-heeled expats.

Atmosphere (Map p79; ☐994224; 141C Norodom Blvd; mains US\$5-10) A French bistro near Independence Monument, the menu includes some fine cuts of meat, country salads and tasty desserts.

International

The number of international restaurants in Phnom Penh is ever-expanding and between them they offer a tantalising array of tastes. Heading north along the riverfront from the Royal Palace, the international restaurants come thick and fast.

Cantina (Map p79; 347 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-4; ☎ 11am-11pm, dosed Sat) This is the spot for tostadas, fajitas and other Mexican favourites, all freshly prepared. It's also a lively bar with professional margaritas and tequilas, thanks to local legend and owner Hurley Scroggins.

Kandal House (Map pp74-5; 239 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-4) A tiny restaurant on the riverfront, the menu includes some delicious homemade pastas, salads and soups, plus a smattering of Asian favourites. Anchor draft available in pints.

Pacharan (Map p79; ☐012 556503; 389 Sisowath Quay; dishes US\$2-12; ☎ 11am-midnight) A Spanish taverna and tapas restaurant, it grandly occupies one of the finest old buildings in town. Tapas bites include a vegetarian selection and plenty of seafood, plus there is the popular paella. Spanish wines feature strongly.

Riverside Bistro (Map p79; ☐213898; 273 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$3-9; ☎ 7am-1am) This popular corner restaurant has deep wicker chairs that are hard to leave. The menu includes a wide range of meals, including Cambodian favourites like grilled pork on lemon-grass skewers and a strong showing from Central Europe. It doubles as a popular bar later in the night and there are two pool tables here, plus live music.

Metro Café (Map p79; ☐222275; cnr Sisowath Quay & St 148; mains US\$3-16) Metro has been turning heads thanks to a striking design, original lighting and an adventurous menu. Small plates are for sampling and include rare-pepper tuna and tequila black-pepper prawns, while large plates include twice-cooked duck with lychee. Linger to enjoy the bar.

Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC; Map p79; ☐724014; 363 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$5-15; ☎ 7am-midnight) Famous beyond the borders of Cambodia, almost everyone swings by for a drink during a visit to Phnom Penh. Set in a colonial-era gem with high ceilings, the 'F', as expats call it, has voluptuous views over the Tonlé Sap River and the National Museum. Hit the happy hour between 5pm and 7pm and linger over dinner to soak up the atmosphere, as the menu includes a tempting selection of international dishes.

Riverhouse Restaurant & Lounge (Map p79; ☐212302; cnr St 110 & Sisowath Quay; mains US\$5-15; ☎ 10am-11pm) One of the most sophisticated riverfront restaurants, the menu includes classic Cambodian cuisine and a strong international selection with a French accent. It gets very busy at the weekend when diners warm up for a night at the upstairs lounge (p105).

It's also worth steering a course away from the river for some more great places.

Bodhi Tree Umma Restaurant (Map pp74-5; 50 St 113; mains US\$1.50-5; ☎ 7am-9pm) This is heaven compared to the hell of Tuol Sleng across the road. The lush garden is the perfect place to seek solace and silence after the torture museum. The impressive menu includes fusion flavours, Asian dishes, sandwiches and salads, innovative shakes and tempting desserts.

Del Gusto Café (Map pp74-5; ☐012 446710; 43 St 95; mains US\$2-4; ☎ 7am-9pm) This beautiful Art Deco-style villa is buried beneath a tumble of tropical plants. The menu here is predominantly Mediterranean, with breads and dips, salads and wraps, all set to a soundtrack of jazz and classical music. Rooms are also available.

Nature & Sea (Map p79; 78 St 51; mains US\$2-6; ☎ 8am-10pm) Perched on a rooftop above the lively 278 strip and with views over Wat Langka, this is a place to escape the *moto* madness below. The fruit shakes are excellent and include passionfruit and honey blends. The specialities are savoury whole-wheat pancakes and fresh sea-caught fish.

DINING FOR A CAUSE

There are several restaurants around town that are run by aid organisations to help fund their social programmes in Cambodia. These are worth seeking out, as the proceeds of a hearty meal go towards helping Cambodia's recovery and allow restaurant staff to gain valuable work experience.

Café 151 (Map p79; www.theglobalchild.com; 151 Sisowath Quay; US\$1-3; ☎ 8am-7pm) A hole-in-the-wall offering coffee with a kick and fresh fruit shakes, with 100% of profits going to help street children.

Café Yejj (Map pp74-5; 170 St 450; mains US\$3-5; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) An air-con escape from Psar Tuol Tom Pong (aka Russian Market), this bistro-style café specialises in pastas and salads. Or indulge in a frappuccino and chocolate brownie. Promoting fair trade and responsible employment.

Ebony Apsara Café (Map p79; 42 St 178; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 11am-midnight, until 2am weekends) A stylish little café near Norodom Blvd serving health shakes, vegetarian treats, Khmer food and international favourites. A good spot for late-night fixes as 40% of profits go to the Apsara Arts Association (p107).

Friends (Map p79; ☐ 426748; www.friends-international.org; 215 St 13; dishes US\$1.50-7; ☎ 11am-9pm) One of Phnom Penh's best-loved restaurants, this place offers tasty tapas, heavenly smoothies and creative cocktails. With a prime location near the National Museum, this a must and offers former street children a helping hand into the hospitality industry.

Lazy Gecko Café (Map p79; ☐ 017 912935; 23B St 93; mains US\$1.50-4.50; ☎ 8am-11pm) Boasting 'homemade hummus just like when mum was dating that chap from Cyprus', this fun place serves international dishes and supports a local orphanage. Thursday is quiz night, while Saturday involves an orphanage visit with dinner and a performance by the children.

Le Café du Centre (Map p79; ☐ 992432; French Cultural Centre, St 184; mains US\$1.50-5; ☎ 8am-9pm) Another Friends-run restaurant, hidden away in the lush courtyard garden of the French Cultural Centre. Sandwiches and crepes, plus a good selection of ice cream.

Le Lotus Blanc (off Map pp74-5; ☐ 995660; Stung Mean Chey; set menu US\$6; ☎ noon-2pm Mon-Fri) Fifteen minutes from the city centre, this restaurant acts as a training centre for youths who previously survived by scouring the city dump. Run by French NGO, Pour un Sourire d'Enfant (For the Smile of a Child), it serves classy Western and Khmer cuisine.

Le Rit's (Map p79; ☐ 213160; 14 St 310; breakfast from US\$3, set lunch US\$5; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) The three-course lunch and dinners here are a relaxing experience in the well-groomed garden. Set menus include a French flourish, while the main menu is Thai-style. Proceeds assist disadvantaged women to re-enter the workplace.

Romdeng (Map p79; ☐ 092-219565; 74 St 174; mains US\$4-6.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Also part of the Friends' extended family, the elegant Romdeng specialises in Cambodian country fare and offers a staggering choice of traditional Khmer recipes, including the legendary deep-fried spiders.

Tamarind Bar (Map p79; ☐ 012 727197; 31 St 240; mains US\$3-9; ☎ 10am-midnight) Maghreb meets Moorish with some classic Moroccan tajines and a small selection of tapas, plus some French influence. Downstairs is an inviting bar with high ceilings, while the rooftop is a great open-air dining area for the dry season.

Open Wine (Map p79; ☐ 223527; 219 St 19; mains US\$4-15; ☎ 9am-11pm) This one-stop shop for dining and drinking includes a large garden restaurant with a bistro menu, a sophisticated French restaurant inside, a boutique wine wholesaler and an ice-cream parlour.

Tell Restaurant (Map p79; ☐ 430650; 13 St 90; mains US\$5-15; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5-11pm) With fondues and *raclettes* (melted cheeses with vegetables), this restaurant brings a Swiss touch to the Wat Phnom area. Portions are generous and dishes include a selection of tenderised meats. There are also some Asian selections.

More international bites:

Khmer Restaurant (Map p79; ☐ 216336; St 278; mains US\$2-4) International? Yes, this small place has great salads and sandwiches, pub-style grub and desserts such as brownies and crumbles.

Alley Cat Café (Map p79; near cnr Sts 178 & 19; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 11am-11pm) Likeable little restaurant-bar

turning out tasty tacos, burritos and enchiladas. Large portions, plus plenty of booze at the bar.

Le Cedre (Map pp74-5; ☐ 216336; St 278; mains US\$3-7; ☎ 11am-11pm) Phnom Penh's first Lebanese restaurant boasts an atmospheric setting and a chef from Beirut.

La Croisette (Map p79; ☐ 220554; 241 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$3-7; ☎ 7am-late) The new-look Croisette is a stylish spot with a good range of Western and Asian favourites.

Mekong River Restaurant (Map p79; ☐ 991150; cnr St 118 & Sisowath Quay; mains US\$3-9; ☎ 10am-11pm) Good value set menus with a generous selection of Asian and international choices. Plus tapas for inveterate snackers.

Sarika (Map pp74-5; ☐ 017 456116; 69 St 566, Tuol Kork District; mains US\$5-15) This stylish new address has a large and leafy garden for alfresco dining, plus interior dining in a gorgeous wooden house. The menu includes Asian fusion and an outdoor grill.

Fast Food & Bar Food

The good news is that at present none of the big fast-food chains grace Phnom Penh, just a few copycats including **Lucky Burger** (Map p79; 160 Sihanouk Blvd; ☎ 7am-9pm), but KFC is on its way (Khmer Fried Chicken?).

More popular than the copycats are the Khmer burger joints opening around town that pull in students between and after classes. There is a whole strip of them on Samdech Sothearos Blvd south of the Royal Palace, including **Mondo Burger** (Map p79; Sothearos Blvd). BB World in Sorya Shopping Centre (Map p79) also has a children's playground for those seeking a diversion over lunch. Don't expect McDonalds, but at least the ingredients are fresh.

Many of the recommended bars have great food, including Green Vespa, Rising Sun, Pink Elephant, Gym Bar, Talkin' to a Stranger and Teukai Bar: see Drinking (p104) for more options. One place that has particularly excellent bar food and could equally be at home under Eating or Drinking is **Freebird** (Map p79; ☐ 224712; 69 St 240; mains US\$3-7; ☎ 7am-midnight), an American-style bar-diner with a great selection of burgers, wraps, salads and Tex-Mex.

Cafés

Corners 33 (Map p79; ☐ 092-998850; 33 Sothearos Blvd; mains US\$1-4; ☎ 7am-late) A smart new café near the National Museum and riverfront, the elegant interior makes it a relaxing place to pass the time. Cakes, coffees and shakes, free wi-fi, plus free internet for those without a laptop.

El Mundo Café (Map p79; ☐ 012 520775; 219 Sisowath Quay; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm) A mellow riverfront establishment, some say this has the best coffee in town. The menu includes a range of global food, ice cream and pastries, plus there's an upstairs lounge for movies.

Le Jardin (Map pp74-5; ☐ 011 723399; 16 St 360; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 7am-6pm, closed Mon) Taking full advantage of the garden, this is a family-oriented café with a giant sandpit, a playhouse and toys for little boys and girls. Snacks and salads for adults, pastas and tidbits for kids, and everyone loves the ice cream.

The Shop (Map p79; ☐ 986964; 39 St 240; mains US\$2-5; ☎ 7am-7pm) If you are craving the local deli back home, then make for this haven, which has a changing selection of sandwich and salad specials. The pastries and cakes are delectable and worth the indulgence. The team has opened **The Chocolate Shop** (35 St 240; ☎ 8am-8pm), highly dangerous for recovering chocoholics.

Java Café (Map p79; ☐ 987420; 56 Sihanouk Blvd; mains US\$2-7; ☎ 7am-10pm) One of the most popular café-restaurants in the city, thanks to a breezy balcony and air-conditioned interior. The creative menu includes crisp salads, homemade sandwiches, towering burgers and daily specials. Plus health drinks, fruit shakes and coffee from several continents.

Garden Center Café (Map p79; ☐ 997850; 60 St 108; mains US\$3-7; ☎ 7am-10pm, closed Mon) Relocated to a new home, there is less garden than before, but it remains an expat favourite thanks to the big breakfasts and huge portions of home-cooked food. Most mains come with a side salad, plus there are Sunday roasts, some Thai favourites and tasty desserts.

Fresco (Map p79; ☐ 224891; cnr Sts 51 & 306; mains US\$3-10; ☎ 7am-7pm) A chic new café in the popular NGO district, there is an air-con interior, a breezy rooftop, plus a kiddies' play area. Sandwiches and salads dominate, plus some good value lunch combos. Wi-fi is free from 3pm to 5pm. There is a second smaller branch beneath FCC (p101).

Café culture doesn't stop there:

Café Sentiment (Map p79; ☐ 221922; 64 Monivong Blvd; mains US\$1-4; ☎ 7am-11pm) Popular new café set over several floors on a busy Monivong junction. Great value pastries, snacks and coffees.

Jars of Clay (Map pp74-5; ☐ 300281; 39 St 155; cakes US\$1, mains US\$2-3; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sat) If the Russian Market (p107) is too much, this little café is a great escape. Thirst-quenching drinks, light bites and home-baked cakes.

The Living Room (Map p79; ☐726139; 9 St 306; mains US\$2-4; ☎ 7am-6.30pm Tue-Thu, to 9.30pm Fri-Sun, closed Mon) Family-friendly place with garden and playground, plus a healthy menu and organic coffee. Free wi-fi.

Backpacker Cafés

There are few backpacker cafés of the sort so popular in nearby Vietnam, unless you include all the restaurants in the more popular guesthouses. Or try the Lazy Gecko Café (p102), which has a great vibe.

Mama's Restaurant (Map p79; 10C St 111; mains 2000-6000r; ☎ 7am-9.30pm) This long-running little place turns out cheap specials in steaming pots and is one of the best deals in town; includes a bit of Khmer, Thai, French and even African.

Bites (Map p79; 240 St 107; mains US\$1-2.50; ☎ 7am-10pm) Mixing Malaysian, Padang and some international options, this is a clean little restaurant in a popular budget area of town.

Bakeries

Kiwi Bakery (Map p79; ☐215784; Sisowath Quay) Now boasting a great riverfront location, the Kiwi Bakery offers fresh bread, cakes and pies. Owned by a Khmer family who ran a bakery in New Zealand, it has everything from Eccles cakes to éclairs.

Among the aforementioned restaurants and cafés, the Shop (p103) has a great selection of breads and pastries, as does Comme a la Maison (p100).

Most of the city's finest hotels also operate bakery outlets with extravagant pastries, but prices are higher than elsewhere. Drop in after 6pm when they offer a 50% discount, and gorge away. The larger supermarkets also stock their own range of breads and cakes, freshly baked on the premises.

Self-Catering

Self-catering is easy enough in Phnom Penh, but it often works out considerably more expensive than eating like the locals. The markets are well stocked with fruit and vegetables, fish and meat, all at reasonable prices if you are prepared to bargain a little. Local baguettes are widely available, and start from 500r. Phnom Penh's supermarkets are remarkably well stocked. Imported items aren't that expensive as taxes aren't always paid, so for just US\$2 to US\$4 there are treats such as German meats, French cheeses and American snacks.

Lucky Supermarket (Map p79; 160 Sihanouk Blvd; ☎ 7am-9pm) Affectionately known as the unlucky market by some, this is the biggest supermarket chain in town with a serious range of products and several branches, including one in the Sorya Shopping Mall (p107) on St 63.

Pencil Supermarket (Map p79; St 214; ☎ 7am-9pm) This popular Thai-run place is one of the largest supermarkets in town and is well stocked.

Bayon Market (Map p79; 133 Monivong Blvd) It may be a smaller supermarket, but Bayon Market has a good range of products, including some nice surprises that don't turn up elsewhere in the city.

Thai Huot Supermarket (Map p79; 103 Monivong Blvd) This is the place for French travellers who are missing home, as it stocks almost exclusively French products, including Bonne Maman jam and creamy chocolate.

Many petrol stations include shops with a good selection of imported products; most Starmart shops at Caltex petrol stations on major junctions in the city are now open 24 hours. La Boutique shops located at Total petrol stations are also worth keeping an eye out for.

DRINKING

Phnom Penh has some great bars and it's definitely worth at least one big night on the town when staying here. Many popular bars are clustered along the riverfront, but one or two of the best are tucked away in the back streets. Most bars are open until midnight and beyond.

Should it survive the developer's wrecking ball, the lakeside is a great place for sunset drinks. Laze in a hammock and watch the sun burn red – this is a must. Two of the more popular backpacker bars up here are the Drunken Frog and the Magic Sponge, but neither are on the water.

Keep an eye out for happy hours around town as these include two-for-one offers and the like that can save quite a bit of cash. Standard drink prices are US\$1 to US\$2 for a beer and US\$3 to US\$4 for a glass of wine. The happy hour at FCC (p101) from 5pm to 7pm is particularly popular.

Elephant Bar (Map p79; St 92; ☎ 2pm-midnight) This place has been drawing journalists, politicians and the rich and famous for 80 years. This sophisticated spot offers two-for-one happy

hours between 4pm and 8pm, plus there's accompanying snacks and a pool table.

Pink Elephant (Map p79; 343 Sisowath Quay; ☎ 11am-midnight) A long-running riverfront bar, it pulls the punters thanks to top tunes, bargain beer and filling food. The only drawback are the hordes of 'soo-sine, Bangkok Poh, you wan buy flower, one doll-aah' kids passing by all night. Enter into the spirit (or imbibe it) and it's all good fun.

Green Vespa (Map p79; 95 Sisowath Quay; ☎ 6am-late) One of the most welcoming bars in town, the Vespa has a huge drinks collection, including some serious single malts. There's also hearty pub grub, an eclectic music collection and some devilish promotions, adding up to a popular place day or night.

Huxley's Brave New World (Map p79; 30 St 136; ☎ 10am-2am) The first upmarket British pub to open its doors in town, it occupies a laudable location near the riverfront. Think modern bar more than country pub, but it has one of the biggest drinks collections in Cambodia, and upstairs dining.

Talkin to a Stranger (Map p79; ☐012-798530; 21B St 294; ☎ 5pm-late, closed Mon) A lovable little garden bar, the congenial hosts have earned the place a loyal following with their killer cocktails and dinner specials. Regular events include quiz nights and live music.

Flavour (Map p79; 21B St 278; ☎ 7am-late) Located on the corner of up-and-coming St 278, this place was always destined to be popular and has rapidly become a darling of the NGO crowd, with cheap draft beer, cocktails and a menu which travels the world.

Revolution (Map p79; 9 St 51; ☎ 11am-late) Nearby, Revolution is a new spot with cheeky cocktails and an open jukebox (read: computer).

Equinox Bar (Map p79; ☐012 586139; 3A St 278) Popular place with a welcoming outdoor bar downstairs, plus a pool table and an intimate upstairs. Friendly service, cheap drinks, good food and a happy hour from 5pm to 8pm.

Zeppelin Café (Map p79; St 51; ☎ 4pm-late) Who says vinyl is dead? It lives on here in the Cambodian capital, thanks to the owner of this old-skool rock bar manning the turntables every night.

Rubies (Map p79; cnr Sts 240 & 19; ☎ 5.30pm-late, closed Mon) If you prefer the grape to the grain, then make for this small wine bar with a big personality. Lined with wood and spilling out onto the pavement, the lengthy wine list includes the best of the new world wines.

Elsewhere Bar (Map p79; 175 St 51; ☎ 10am-late, closed Tue) Why go Elsewhere? Ambient vibes, a lush garden setting, a great drinks menu, brilliant bar staff and a beckoning plunge pool, that's why. Hit the happy hour at 5pm and take a dip, or forget your worries over an 'amnesia' cocktail.

Gasolina (Map pp74-5; 56-58 St 57; ☎ 6pm-late, closed Mon) This stylish garden bar specialises in the sensual sounds of South America and even offers Salsa lessons (Tuesday and Thursday nights). Rum punches, cheap beers and a tasty bar menu round things off.

Gym Bar (Map p79; 42 St 178; ☎ 11am-late) The only workout going on here is raising glasses, as this is the number one sports bar in town. You won't find a better selection of big – no, make that giant – screens in this part of the world. Cold beer, pub grub and a rowdy crowd for the big ball games.

Salt Lounge (Map p79; 217 St 136; ☎ 6pm-late) Sleek, modern and minimalist, this cool cocktail bar is one of the most gay-friendly in town. The original interior draws a mixed crowd, making for a great spot.

Blue Chili (Map p79; 36 St 178; ☎ 6pm-late) Another leading gay bar in town that draws all-comers, the original interior design includes tropical aquariums and some quiet corners.

Pontoon Lounge (Map p79; Tonlé Sap River, end of St 108; ☎ 11.30am-late) This place floats everyone's boat thanks to its unique location on the waters of Tonlé Sap River. One of the *in* spots, there are DJs at the weekend and happy hours every day from 5pm to 8pm. Aboard the attached boat is a smart new fusion restaurant called the Galley.

Riverhouse Lounge (Map p79; cnr St 110 & Sisowath Quay; ☎ 4pm-2am) Almost a club as much as a pub, this atmospheric lounge bar has DJs and live music through the week. It's chic and cool, as this is where young royals hang out.

Heart of Darkness (Map p79; 26 St 51; ☎ 8pm-late) More like the Heart of Business these days, it's evolved into a nightclub more than a bar, but remains a place to see and be seen thanks to the alluring Angkor theme. Be very wary of large gangs of rich young Khmers here...some are children of the elite and rely on their bodyguards to do their dirty work.

Other admired establishments with liquid menus:

Broken Bricks (Map p79; cnr Sts 130 & 5; ☎ 11am-2am) Atmospheric little bar set in a decaying colonial house near the riverfront.

'LOVE YOU LONG TIME'

There are lots of 'hostess' bars or 'girlie' bars in Phnom Penh. They are pretty welcoming to guys and girls, although 'I love you long time' should be taken with a pinch of salt. Some of them are quite smart and well-run, others are super-sleazy and little more than brothels with beer. Some of the girls are out-and-out prostitutes, others are more traditional bar staff and some are just fishing for boyfriends. Opinions are divided on these places. A certain breed of male expat can't get enough of them, while the NGO crowd can't stand them. While it's undoubtedly exploitation and the girls wouldn't choose this line of work if they were from wealthy families, it's nowhere near as scary or dangerous as the local prostitution scene where girls are virtual slaves and gang rapes are common. That said, it's a rocky road and once some of these girls cross the line there is no going back. Still, at least these places are in the public eye, the girls are free to pick and choose their customers and some make good money compared with unregulated underground brothels. If you want to join the circus, St 104, St 136 and St 51 are popular haunts with plenty of places. Some well-known spots around town:

Martini (Map pp74-5; 45 St 95) The original girlie bar; there's a big beer garden showing movies, plus a dark dance space.

Rose Bar (Map p79; 8 St 104) The place that kick-started the 104 strip, the food here is worth the diversion even if the girls are not your thang.

Sharky's (Map p79; 126 St 130) Plenty of pool tables and plenty more working girls. The bar food is some of the best in town.

Howie's Bar (Map p79; 32 St 51; ☎ 7pm-6am) Friendly and fun place that is the perfect spillover when the Heart of Darkness is packed.

Rising Sun (Map p79; 20 St 178; ☎ 7am-11pm) English pub meets backpacker bar with affordable drinks and top pub grub.

Rory's Pub (Map p79; 33 St 178; ☎ 7am-midnight, later at weekends) Popular Irish pub in an inviting central location.

Teukei Bar (Map p79; 23 St 111; ☎ 5pm-late, closed Sun) Funky little bar with signature rum punches, ambient sounds and reggae classics. Close to the Psar O Russei guesthouses.

ENTERTAINMENT

For news on what's happening here while you are in town, grab a copy of *AsiaLife Phnom Penh*, check the back page of the Friday edition of the *Cambodia Daily*, or look at the latest issue of the *Phnom Penh Post*.

Nightclubs

There aren't many out-and-out nightclubs in Phnom Penh and the few that there are tend to be playgrounds of the privileged, attracting children of the country's political elite who aren't always the best-behaved people to hang out with. The volume is normally cranked up to 11 and drinks are pretty expensive. Among the many bars listed earlier, the best dance spots are Heart of Darkness (p105) on any night of the week, Pontoon

(p105) or the classy Riverhouse Lounge (p105) on weekends.

Other clubbing options to see Cambodians at play:

Casa (Map p79; St 47; admission depends on event; ☎ late) Rejuvenated Casa is back with guest DJs, themed nights and local celebs.

Manhattan Club (Map pp74-5; St 84; admission free; ☎ until daylight) Cambodia's longest running full-on club with banging techno and a big crowd.

Rock (Map pp74-5; Norodom Blvd; admission depends on event; ☎ late) Looks like a gigantic Home Depot, but Khmers go crazy for the place.

Spark (Map pp74-5; Mao Tse Toung Blvd; admission depends on event; ☎ late) Owned by the daughter of Prime Minister Hun Sen, security should be tight.

Cinemas

There has been a renaissance of the cinema scene in Phnom Penh, following an appeal for the reopening of certain historic cinemas by King Sihanouk in 2001. There are almost no English-language films on offer, just a steady diet of low-budget Khmer films about zombies, vampires and ghosts.

Many lakeside guesthouses show movies every night, particularly those with a Cambodian connection such as the heart-wrenching *The Killing Fields*.

The French Cultural Centre (p77) has frequent movie screenings in French during the week, usually kicking off at 6.30pm. Check

at the centre, where a monthly programme is available.

The Mekong River Restaurant (p103) screens two original films in English, one covering the Khmer Rouge and the other on the subject of land mines. Showings are hourly from 11am to 9pm and cost US\$3.

Meta House (Map p79; www.meta-house.com; 6 St 264; ☎ 6pm-midnight, closed Mon) is a night gallery that has a great programme of films, documentaries and shorts about Cambodia (usually with English subtitles), including presentations by some of those involved.

Classical Dance & Arts

Apsara Arts Association (☎990621; www.apsara-art.org; 71 St 598) Alternate performances of classical dance and folk dance (US\$5) are held every Saturday at 7.30pm. Visitors are also welcome from 7.30am to 10.30am and from 2pm to 5pm Monday to Saturday to watch the students in training (donations accepted). However, it is important to remember that this is a training school – noise and flash photography should be kept to a minimum.

Sovanna Phum Arts Association (Map pp74-5; ☎987564; 111 St 360) Impressive traditional shadow puppet performances and classical dance shows are held here at 7.30pm on Friday and Saturday nights. Tickets are usually US\$5.

Check the latest information on performances at the **Chatomuk Theatre** (Map pp74-5; Sisowath Quay), just north of the Hotel Cambodiana. Officially, it has been turned into a government conference centre, but it's occasionally the venue for displays of traditional dance.

Live Music

Live music is pretty limited in Phnom Penh compared with the bigger Asian capitals. Several of the larger hotels have lobby bands from the Philippines, including the Intercontinental Hotel (p95) and Hotel Cambodiana (p95), but it can be more muzac than music.

Memphis Pub (Map p79; 3 St 118; ☎ 5pm-1am) It's not closed, it just has soundproof doors. This is the leading live-music venue in Phnom Penh, with live rock n' roll from Tuesday to Saturday, including a Wednesday jam session.

Art Café (Map p79; www.artcafé-phnom-penh.com; 84 St 108; ☎ 11am-11pm) This cultured café and art space, offering German and Central European fare, is a big promoter of live music and plays

host to blues, classical and traditional Khmer musicians on Friday and Saturday nights. See the website for performances.

Miles (Map pp74-5; ☎011 698470; cnr Sts 113 & 310; ☎ 4pm-midnight Tue-Sun) Relocated to a rooftop near Tuol Sleng, this chilled out jazz café offers live sessions on Friday and Sunday.

Riverside Bistro (p101), a mainstay of the riverfront scene, often has bands jamming away in the back room.

SHOPPING

There is some great shopping to be had in Phnom Penh, but don't forget to bargain in the markets or you'll have your 'head shaved', local-speak for being ripped off. Most markets are open from around 6.30am to 5.30pm. Some shops keep shorter hours by opening later, while tourist-oriented stores often stay open into the evening.

As well as the markets, there are now some shopping malls in Phnom Penh. While these may not be as glamorous as the likes of the Siam Paragon in Bangkok, they are good places to browse thanks to the air-con. **Sorya Shopping Centre** (Map p79; cnr Sts 63 & 154) is currently pick of the crop with a good range of shops and superb views over the more traditional Psar Thmei.

Art Galleries

There are plenty of shops selling locally produced paintings along St 178, opposite the National Museum. It used to be a pretty sorry selection of the amateurish Angkor paintings seen all over the country, but now with a new generation of artists coming up, the selection is much stronger. It is necessary to bargain. There are also lots of reproduction busts of famous Angkorian sculptures available along this stretch – great for the mantel-piece back home.

Many of the leading hotels and restaurants dedicate some space to art or photographic exhibitions. There are several galleries and art spaces of note to seek out around the city: **Art Café** (Map p79; 84 St 108; ☎ 11am-11pm) Café and gallery with changing exhibitions of local and international artists.

Asasax Art Gallery (Map p79; 192 St 178; ☎ 9am-8pm) High-end gallery featuring the striking work of local artist Asasax.

Java Café (Map p79; 56 Sihanouk Blvd; ☎ 7am-10pm) Strong supporter of the art scene in Cambodia with challenging exhibitions.

SHOPPING FOR A CAUSE

There are a host of tasteful shops selling handicrafts and textiles to raise money for projects to assist disadvantaged Cambodians. These are a good place to spend some dollars, as it helps to put a little bit back into the country.

Cambodian Craft Cooperation (Map p79; www.cambodian-craft.com; 1 Norodom Blvd; ☎ 9am-8pm) Just to the southeast of Wat Phnom, this lovely boutique showcases exquisite silk from Takeo, silver from Kompong Loung, pottery from Kompong Chhnang and wicker work from Kratie.

Cambodian Handicraft Association (Map p79; 40 St 160; ☎ 8am-6pm) This well-stocked showroom and workshop sells fine handmade clothing, scarves, toys, bags and photo albums.

Colours of Cambodia (Map p79; 373 Sisowath Quay; ☎ 9am-6pm) Tucked away underneath FCC, this is a popular fair-trade gift shop supporting NGO craft projects. Lines include silk, wood carvings, T-shirts and jewellery.

Friends & Stuff (Map p79; 215 St 13; ☎ noon-9pm Mon to Fri, 9am-6pm Sat) The closest thing to a charity shop or thrift store in Phnom Penh, with a good range of new and secondhand products sold to generate money to help street children.

Khemara Handicrafts (Map p79; 18 St 302; ☎ 8am-6pm) Run by a local NGO and women's self-help groups, this is a relaxing place for hassle-free browsing through the silk and other handicrafts.

Khmer Life (Map pp74-5; St 113; ☎ 8am-5pm) Close to Tuol Sleng, this shop is linked to the Khmer Village Homestay (p274) and sells handicrafts.

NCDP Handicrafts (Map p79; ☎ 213734; 3 Norodom Blvd; ☎ 8am-6pm) This shop was set up by the National Centre for Disabled Persons (NCDP). The collection includes exquisite silk scarves, throws, bags and cushions. Other items include *kramas* (scarves), shirts, wallets and purses, notebooks and greeting cards.

Nyemo (Map p79; 33 St 310; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm) Helping disadvantaged women return to work, Nyemo's focus is on quality silk. It has a convenient new outlet next door to Rajana in Psar Tuol Tom Pong.

Rajana Main store (Map pp74-5; 170 St 450; ☎ 10am-6pm); Market store (Map pp74-5; Psar Tuol Tom Pong) There are two convenient branches of Rajana, both aimed at promoting fair wages and training. They have a beautiful selection of cards, some quirky metalware products, quality jewellery, bamboo crafts and a range of condiments from Cambodia.

Sobhanna (Map p79; 23 St 144; ☎ 9am-noon, 2.30-6pm) Established by Princess Marie, the Sobhanna Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation training women in traditional weaving. Beautiful silks in a stylish boutique.

Tabitha (Map pp74-5; St 51; ☎ 7am-6pm) This is another NGO shop with a good collection of silk bags, tableware, bedroom decorations and children's toys. Proceeds go towards rural community development, such as well drilling.

The Shop (off Map pp74-5; Stung Mean Chey; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Small shop at the Pour un Sourire d'un Enfant site, with silk, clothing, jewellery and toys made by families living around the Stung Mean Chey dump.

Villageworks (Map pp74-5; 118 St 113; ☎ 8am-6pm) Opposite Tuol Sleng Museum, this shop has the inevitable silk, as well as some delightful handmade cards and coconut shell utensils.

Wat Than Artisans (Map pp74-5; 180 Norodom Blvd; ☎ 7.30-noon, 1.30-5pm) Located in the grounds of Wat Than, this handicrafts shop is similar to NCDP, with an emphasis on products made from Khmer silk. Proceeds go to help land-mine and polio victims.

Meta House (Map p79; www.meta-house.com; 6 St 264;

☎ 6pm-midnight, closed Mon) Contemporary art space and night gallery with local exhibitions, international collections and photography.

Reyum (Map p79; ☎ 217149; www.reyum.org; 47 St 178) If you happen to be browsing St 178, drop in on Reyum, a nonprofit institute of arts and culture that hosts regular exhibitions on all aspects of Cambodian culture.

Designer Boutiques

There are several boutiques specialising in silk furnishings and stylish clothing, as well as glam accessories.

Ambre (Map p79; ☎ 217935; 37 St 178) Leading fashion designer Romyda Keth has turned this striking French-era mansion into an ideal showcase for her stunning silk collection.

Bless Boutique (Map p79; 29 St 240) Attractive home decoration and interior design in silk and textiles, plus some casual clothing.

Couleurs D'Asie (Map p79; 33 St 240) Specialising in sumptuous silks for the home, this is the place for hangings, bedspreads and throws.

Jasmine (Map p79; 73 St 240) Popular boutique specialising in elegant evening wear and sartorial silk, there are some bold creations here.

Kambuja (Map p79; 165 St 110) Blending the best of Cambodian materials with innovative international designs, the Cambodian and American designers have quickly made a name for themselves.

Tuol Sleng Shoes (Map p79; 144 St 143) Scary name, but there's nothing scary about the price of these handmade shoes.

Water Lily (Map p79; 37 St 240) Popular jewellery and accessory shop with strikingly original designs.

Markets

Bargains, and bargaining sessions, await in Phnom Penh's lively markets – put on your haggling hat and enter the fray.

PSAR THMEI

ផ្សារថ្មី

A landmark building in the capital, the Art Deco **Psar Thmei** (Central Market; Map p79; north of St 63) is often called the Central Market, a reference to its location and size. The huge domed hall resembles a Babylonian ziggurat and some claim it ranks as one of the largest domes in the world. The design allows for maximum ventilation, and even on a sweltering day the central hall is cool and airy. The market has four wings filled with stalls selling gold and silver jewellery, antique coins, dodgy watches, clothing and other such items. For photographers, the fresh food section affords many opportunities. There are a host of food stalls for a local lunch, located on the western side, which faces Monivong Blvd.

Psar Thmei is undoubtedly the best market for browsing. However, it has a reputation among Cambodians for overcharging on most products. The French government is currently assisting with renovations to restore it to its former glory.

PSAR TUOL TOM PONG

ផ្សារតួលត្បូង

More commonly referred to by foreigners as the Russian Market (it is where the Russians shopped during the 1980s), **Psar Tuol Tom Pong** (Map pp74-5; south of Mao Tse Toung Blvd) is the best

place in town for souvenir and clothes shopping. It has a large range of handicrafts and antiques (many fake), including miniature Buddhas, woodcarvings, betel-nut boxes, silks, silver jewellery, musical instruments and so on. Bargain hard as thousands of tourists pass through here each month.

This is also the market where all the Western clothing made in garment factories around Phnom Penh turns up, all at just 10% of the price back home. Popular brands include Banana Republic, Billabong, Calvin Klein, Colombia, Gap, Gant and Next, but other names are contracting to Cambodia as time goes on. There are also fakes floating around, so be suspicious of labels like Kevin Clein.

This is the one market all visitors should come to at least once during a trip to Phnom Penh.

PSAR O RUSSEI

ផ្សារអូរុស្សេ

Not to be confused with the Russian Market (left), **Psar O Russei** (Map p79; St 182) sells luxury foodstuffs, costume jewellery, imported toiletries, secondhand clothes and everything else you can imagine from hundreds of stalls. The market is housed in a huge labyrinth of a building that looks like a shopping mall from the outside.

Also worth checking out:

Phnom Penh Night Market (Map p79; Sisowath Quay; ☎ 4pm-midnight) A cooler alfresco version of Psar Tuol Tom Pong, this night market takes place every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening, if rain doesn't stop play. Bargain vigorously, as it already has something of a reputation for overcharging.

Psar Chaa (Map p79; St 108) This is a scruffy place that deals in household goods, clothes and jewellery. There are small restaurants, food vendors and jewellery stalls, as well as some good fresh-fruit stalls outside.

Psar Olympic (Map pp74-5; St 310) Items for sale include bicycle parts, clothes, electronics and assorted edibles. This is quite a modern market set in a covered location.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For information on international and domestic air services to/from Phnom Penh, see p324.

Boat

There are numerous fast-boat companies that operate from the tourist boat dock (Map

p79; Sisowath Quay) at the eastern end of St 104. Boats go to Siem Reap up the Tonlé Sap River and then Tonlé Sap Lake, but there are no longer services up the Mekong from Phnom Penh. For details on the international boat services connecting Phnom Penh with Chau Doc and the Mekong Delta in Vietnam, see p327.

The fast boats to Siem Reap (US\$20 to US\$25, five to six hours) aren't as popular as they used to be now that the road is in such good condition. When it costs US\$5 for an air-conditioned bus or US\$20 to be bundled on the roof of a boat, it is not hard to see why. It is better to save your boat experience for elsewhere in Cambodia if you have the choice.

Several companies have daily services departing at 7am and usually take it in turns to make the run. The first stretch of the journey along the river is scenic, but once the boat hits the lake, the fun is over as it is a vast inland sea with not a village in sight.

Express services to Siem Reap are overcrowded, and often appear to have little in the way of safety gear. Most tourists prefer to sit on the roof of the express boats, but don't forget a head covering and sunscreen as thick as paint. Less-nimble travellers or fair-skinned folk might prefer to be inside. Unfortunately, not everyone can sit inside, as companies sell twice as many tickets as there are seats! In the dry season, the boats are very small and dangerously overcrowded, to the point that one or two have sunk.

Bus

Bus services have improved dramatically with the advent of revitalised roads in Cambodia, and most major towns are now accessible by air-conditioned bus from Phnom Penh. Most buses leave from company offices, which are generally clustered around Psar Thmei or located near the northern end of Sisowath Quay.

Leading bus companies:

Capitol Transport (Map p79; ☎217627; 14 St 182)

Services to Battambang, Poipet, Siem Reap & Sihanoukville.

GST (Map p79; ☎012 895550; Psar Thmei) Services to

Battambang, Poipet, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville & Sisophon.

Hua Lian (Map pp74-5; ☎880761; 217 Monireth Blvd)

Far-flung services include Ban Lung and Sen Monorom in the northeast, plus Battambang, Kampot, Kompong Cham, Kratie, Poipet, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, Svay Rieng and Takeo.

Mai Linh (☎211888; 391 Sihanouk Blvd) Vietnamese company with buses to Siem Reap, plus Ho Chi Minh City.

Mekong Express (Map p79; ☎427518; 87 Sisowath Quay) Upmarket services to Battambang and Siem Reap (both US\$9) complete with in-drive hostesses. Plus Ho Chi Minh City.

Neak Khorhom (Map p79; ☎219496; 24 St 108) Services to Battambang, Poipet, Siem Reap and Sisophon.

Paramount Angkor Express (Map p79; ☎427567; 127 St 108) Double-decker buses to Siem Reap and Sihanoukville.

Phnom Penh Sorya Transport (Map p79; ☎210359; Psar Thmei) Most established company serving Battambang, Kampot, Kep, Kompong Cham, Kompong Chhnang, Kratie, Neak Luong, Poipet, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, Stung Treng and Takeo.

RAC Limousine Bus (Map p79; ☎884179; 81 St 130) Luxury limousine bus serving Siem Reap (from US\$10).

Rith Mony Transport (☎991329; 137 St 118) Buses to Kompong Cham, Kratie, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville and Stung Treng.

Virak Buntham (Map p79; ☎012 322302; St 106) Buses to Krong Koh Kong via NH48 and Cardamom gateway communities.

Most buses charge a similar price, with the exception of premium services. The following list of destinations includes price, duration and frequency: Ban Lung (US\$17.50, 12 hours, one daily), Battambang (US\$4, five hours, frequent until midday), Kampot (US\$3, three to four hours, several per day), Kompong Cham (US\$2.50, two hours, frequent until 4pm), Kompong Chhnang (US\$1.50, two hours, frequent), Kratie (US\$5, five hours, several in the morning), Neak Luong (US\$1.25, two hours, frequent), Poipet (US\$7, eight hours, several early departures), Sen Monorom (US\$10, 10 hours, one daily), Siem Reap (US\$5, six hours, frequent until midday), Sihanoukville (US\$4, four hours, frequent until midday), Stung Treng (US\$9, seven hours, twice daily) and Takeo (US\$2, two hours, frequent).

Most of the long-distance buses drop off and pick up in major towns along the way, such as Kompong Thom en route to Siem Reap or Pursat on the way to Battambang. However, it is necessary to buy tickets in advance to ensure a seat, plus a premium is usually charged for this service.

For more details on bus services between Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, see p331.

Taxi, Pick-up & Minibus

Taxis, pick-ups and minibuses leave Phnom Penh for destinations all over the country,

but have lost a lot of ground to cheaper and more comfortable buses as the road network continues to improve. Vehicles for Svay Rieng and Vietnam leave from Chbah Ampeau taxi park (Map pp74-5) on the eastern side of Monivong Bridge in the south of town, while those for most other destinations leave from around Psar Thmei. Different vehicles run different routes depending on the quality of the road, but the fast share taxis are more popular than the bumpy pick-ups and overcrowded minibuses. The following prices are those quoted for the most commonly used vehicle on that particular route, but are indicative rather than definitive, as even Khmers have to bargain a bit.

Share taxis run to Sihanoukville (20,000r, 2½ hours), Kampot (15,000r, two hours), Kompong Thom (15,000r, 2½ hours), Siem Reap (30,000r, five hours), Battambang (25,000r, four hours), Pursat (20,000r, three hours), Kompong Cham (12,000r, two hours) and Kratie (30,000r, five hours).

It is also possible to hire share taxis by the day. Rates start at US\$25 for around Phnom Penh and nearby destinations, and then go up according to distance and the language skills of the driver.

Pick-ups still take on some of the long-distance runs to places such as Mondulhiri (US\$12, nine hours), but it is better to cover the good roads by bus and then switch to pick-ups for the shorter bumpy legs.

Minibuses aren't much fun and are best avoided when there are larger air-con buses or faster share taxis available, which is pretty much everywhere.

Train

There are currently no passenger services operating on the Cambodian rail network, but this should be seen as a blessing in disguise, given that the trains are extremely slow, travelling at about 20km/h. Yes, for a few minutes at least, you can outrun the train!

Just for reference, Phnom Penh's train station (Map p79) is located at the western end of St 106 and St 108, in a grand old colonial-era building that is a shambles inside.

GETTING AROUND

Being such a small city, Phnom Penh is quite easy to get around, although traffic is getting worse by the year and traffic jams are common around the morning and evening

rush hour, particularly around Monivong and Norodom Blvds.

To/From the Airport

Phnom Penh International Airport is 7km west of central Phnom Penh, via Russian Blvd. Official taxis from the airport to the city centre cost US\$7 and unofficial taxis are no longer allowed to wait at the terminal. Taxi drivers will take you to only one destination for this price, so make sure that they take you to where you want to go, not where they want you to go. Official *motos* into town have been fixed at US\$2, but if you walk outside the airport you can pick up a regular *moto* for more like US\$1 to US\$1.50. The journey usually takes about 30 minutes.

Heading to the airport from central Phnom Penh, a taxi should cost no more than US\$5 to US\$6 and a *moto* between US\$1 and US\$1.50. *Remorque-motos* can be had for about US\$4.

Bicycle

It is possible to hire bicycles at some of the guesthouses around town for about US\$1 a day, but take a look at the chaotic traffic conditions before venturing forth. Once you get used to the anarchy, it can be a fun way to get around, if a little dusty.

Bus

Local buses don't exist in Phnom Penh. Most Cambodians use *motos* or *cyclos* to get around the city. With the long, straight boulevards crisscrossing the city, it would be perfect for trams or trolley buses, but developments like these are still some years away.

Car & Motorcycle

Car hire is available through travel agencies, guesthouses and hotels in Phnom Penh. Everything from cars (from US\$25) to 4WDs (from US\$60) are available for travelling around the city, but prices rise if you venture beyond.

There are numerous motorbike hire places around town. Bear in mind that motorbike theft is a problem in Phnom Penh, and if the bike gets stolen you will be liable. Ask for a lock and use it, plus only leave the bike in guarded parking areas where available, such as outside popular markets (300r). The best places for motorbike hire are **Lucky! Lucky!** (Map p79; ☎212788; 413 Monivong Blvd) and **New! New!** (Map p79; 417 Monivong Blvd), right next door to each

other on the main drag in town. A 100cc Honda costs US\$4 per day or US\$25 per week and 250cc dirt bikes start at US\$9 per day or US\$50 a week.

Riverside Moto (Map p79; ☎223588; www.riverside-motorcycletours.com; 30 St 118) More-serious adventurers should consider coming here, as this place specialises in upcountry touring, has well-serviced bikes and can provide a tool kit and spares.

Cyclo

They are still common on the streets of Phnom Penh, but *cyclos* have lost a lot of ground to the *moto*. Travelling by *cyclo* is a more relaxing way to see the sights in the centre of town, but they are just too slow for going from one end of the city to another. For a day of sightseeing, think around US\$6 to US\$10 depending on exactly where you go and how many hours of pedalling it includes. Late at night, *cyclos* would have to be considered a security hazard for all but the shortest of journeys, but most drivers are asleep in their *cyclos* at this time anyway. Costs are generally similar to *moto* fares, although negotiate if picking one up at popular spots around town.

It's also possible to arrange a *cyclo* tour through the **Cyclo Centre** (☎991178; www.cyclo.org.uk), dedicated to supporting *cyclo* drivers in Phnom Penh. This is a good cause, and themed trips are available such as pub crawls or cultural tours.

Moto

These are generally recognisable by the baseball caps favoured by the drivers. In areas frequented by foreigners, *moto* drivers generally speak English and sometimes a little French. Elsewhere around town it can be difficult to find anyone who understands where you want to go – see the boxed text, opposite. Most short trips are about 1000r to 2000r and more again at night, although if you want to get from one end of the city to the other, you have to pay up to US\$1. Prices were once rarely negotiated in advance when taking rides, but with so many tourists paying over the odds, it may be sensible to discuss the price first. For those staying in a luxury hotel, negotiation is essential. Likewise, night owls taking a *moto* home from popular drinking holes should definitely negotiate to avoid an expensive surprise.

Many of the *moto* drivers who wait outside the popular guesthouses and hotels have

good English and are able to act as guides for a daily rate of about US\$6 to US\$8 depending on the destinations.

Remorque-moto

Also commonly known as *tuk tuks*, these motorbikes with carriages have hit Phnom Penh in the past few years and are here to stay. They come in every shape and size from China, India and Thailand, plus the home-grown variety such as in Siem Reap. Average fares are about double those of *mos*, and increase if you pack on the passengers.

Taxi

Phnom Penh has no metered taxis of the sort found in Thailand or Vietnam. **Bailey's Taxis** (☎012 890000) and **Taxi Vantha** (☎012 855000) offer taxis 24 hours a day, but have a limited number of cars. They do the run from town to the airport for US\$5 and charge about US\$1 per kilometre elsewhere. Note the price for the journey from the airport to town is fixed at US\$7.

Private taxis tend to wait outside popular nightspots, but it is important to agree on a price in advance.

AROUND PHNOM PENH

There are several attractions around Phnom Penh that make good day trips, although they are kind of low key when compared with what's on offer in other parts of the country. The Angkorian temple of Tonlé Bati and hilltop pagoda of Phnom Chisor are best visited in one trip, and can be built into a journey south to either Takeo (p228) or Kampot (p215). Udong, once the capital of Cambodia, is also a potential day trip and can be combined with a visit to Kompong Chhnang (p234), known for being a 'genuine' Cambodian town.

There is a clean, comfortable and cheap bus network operated by Phnom Penh Sorya Transport (p110) covering most of the following places. For experienced riders, motorcycles (p111) are another interesting way to visit these attractions, as there are plenty of small villages along the way. If time is more important than money, you can rent a taxi to whisk you around for between US\$35 and US\$50 a day, depending on destination.

WE'RE ON A ROAD TO NOWHERE

Taking a ride on a *remorque-moto*, *moto* or *cyclo* is not as easy as it looks. Drivers who loiter around guesthouses, hotels, restaurants and bars may speak streetwise English and know the city well, but elsewhere the knowledge and understanding required to get you to your destination dries up fast. Flag one down on the street or grab one from outside the market, and you could end up pretty much anywhere in the city. You name your destination, and they nod confidently, eager for the extra money a foreigner may bring, but not having the first clue of where you want to go. They start driving or pedalling furiously down the road and await your instructions. You don't give them any instructions, as you think they know where they are going. Before you realise it, you are halfway to Thailand or Vietnam. The moral of the story is always carry a map of Phnom Penh and keep a close eye on the driver unless he speaks enough English to understand where on earth you want to go.

Some of the more popular guesthouses offer inexpensive tours, with or without a guide, to most of the places covered here.

KIEN SVAY

ក្រីស្វាយ

Kien Svay is a very popular picnic area on a small tributary of the Mekong. Hundreds of bamboo huts have been built over the water and Khmers love to come here on the weekend and sit around gossiping and munching.

Kien Svay is a peculiarly Cambodian institution, mixing the universal love of picnicking by the water with the unique Khmer fondness for lounging about on mats. It works like this: for 5000r an hour, picnickers rent an area on a raised open hut covered with reed mats. Be sure to agree on the price *before* you rent a space and note that it should only be about 2000r if you buy food from the family. The tiny boat trip to the huts should be included in the price.

All sorts of food is sold at Kien Svay, although it is necessary to bargain to ensure a fair price. Prices generally seem reasonable thanks to the massive competition – there are perhaps 50 or more sellers here. Popular dishes include grilled chicken and fish, river lobster and fresh fruit. The area is pretty deserted during the week, but this can make it a calmer time to picnic.

Getting There & Away

Kien Svay is a district in Kandal Province, and the actual picnic spot is just before the small town of Koki, about 15km east of Phnom Penh. To get here from Phnom Penh, turn left off NH1, which links Phnom Penh with Ho Chi Minh City, through a wat-style gate at a point 15km east of the Monivong Bridge.

You will know you are on the right track if you see plenty of beggars and hundreds of cars. Buses regularly depart for Kien Svay from Psar Thmei and cost just 2000r. The local way to get there would be to take a *remorque-moto* from the Chbah Ampeau taxi park, just east of the Monivong Bridge. This would cost around 1000r or so, but the trip is very slow, if somewhat amusing. A round-trip *moto* should cost about US\$5.

UDONG

ឧទុង

Udong (the Victorious) served as the capital of Cambodia under several sovereigns between 1618 and 1866, suggesting 'victorious' was an optimistic epithet, as Cambodia was in terminal decline at this time. A number of kings, including King Norodom, were crowned here. The main attractions today are the two small humps of Phnom Udong, which have several stupas on them. Both ends of the ridge have good views of the Cambodian countryside dotted with innumerable sugar palm trees. Udong is not a leading attraction, but for those with the time it's worth the visit.

The smaller ridge has two structures and several stupas on top. **Ta San Mosque** faces westward towards Mecca. Across the plains to the south of the mosque you can see **Phnom Vihear Leu**, a small hill on which a *vihara* stands between two white poles. To the right of the *vihara* is a building used as a prison under Pol Pot's rule. To the left of the *vihara* and below it is a pagoda known as **Arey Ka Sap**.

The larger ridge, Phnom Preak Reach Throap (Hill of the Royal Fortune), is so named because a 16th-century Khmer king is said to have hidden the national treasury

here during a war with the Thais. The most impressive structure on Phnom Preah Reach Throap is **Vihear Preah Ath Roes**. The *vihara* and the statue of Buddha, dedicated in 1911 by King Sisowath, were blown up by the Khmer Rouge in 1977; only sections of the walls, the bases of eight enormous columns and the right arm and part of the right side of the original Buddha statue remain. The Buddha has been reconstructed and the roof is currently being rebuilt.

About 120m northwest of Vihear Preah Ath Roes is a line of small *viharas*. The first is **Vihear Preah Ko**, a brick-roofed structure that contains a statue of Preah Ko, the sacred bull; the original statue was carried away by the Thais long ago. The second structure, which has a seated Buddha inside, is **Vihear Preah Keo**. The third is **Vihear Prak Neak**, its cracked walls topped with a thatched roof. Inside this *vihara* is a seated Buddha who is guarded by a *naga*. (*Prak neak* means 'protected by a *naga*'.)

At the northwestern extremity of the ridge stand four large stupas. The first is the cement **Chet Dey Mak Proum**, the final resting place of King Monivong (r 1927–41). Decorated with *garudas* (mythical half-man, half-bird creatures), floral designs and elephants, it has four faces on top. The middle stupa, **Tray Troeng**, is decorated with coloured tiles; it was built in 1891 by King Norodom to house the ashes of his father, King Ang Duong (r 1845–59). But some say King Ang Duong was in fact buried next to the Silver Pagoda in Phnom Penh. The third stupa, **Damrei Sam Poan**, was built by King Chey Chetha II (r 1618–26) for the ashes of his predecessor, King Soriyopon. The fourth stupa was relocated in 2002 from in front of Phnom Penh railway station and contains a relic of the Buddha, believed to be an eyebrow hair.

An east-facing staircase leads down the hillside from the stupa of King Monivong. Just north of its base is a **pavilion** decorated with graphic murals depicting Khmer Rouge atrocities.

At the base of the ridge, close to the road, is a **memorial** to the victims of Pol Pot that contains the bones of some of the people who were buried in approximately 100 mass graves, each containing about a dozen bodies. Instruments of torture were unearthed along with the bones when a number of the pits were disinterred in 1981 and 1982.

Getting There & Away

Udong is 41km from the capital. Head north out of Phnom Penh on NH5 and turn left (south) at the signposted archway. Udong is 3.5km south of the turn-off; the access road goes through the village of Psar Dek Krom, and passes by a memorial to Pol Pot's victims and a structure known as the Blue Stupa, before arriving at a short staircase.

A cheap and convenient way to get to Udong is by air-con local bus (4000r, one hour) from Phnom Penh. Buses depart from near Psar Thmei and run regularly throughout the day. The bus drivers can drop you at the access road to Udong, from where you can arrange a *moto* to the base of the hill for US\$1. Buses to/from Kompong Chhnang (p234) also stop here, so you can combine your visit to the temples with a visit to a Cambodian town that sees few tourists.

A taxi for the day trip from Phnom Penh will cost around US\$40. *Moto* drivers also run people to Udong for about US\$10 for the day, but compared with the bus this isn't the most pleasant way to go, as the road is pretty busy and very dusty.

TONLÉ BATI

ទន្លេបាទី

Tonlé Bati (admission incl a drink US\$3) is the collective name for a pair of old Angkorian-era temples and a popular lakeside picnic area. Anyone who has already experienced the mighty temples of Angkor can probably survive without a visit, but if Angkor is yet to come, these attractive temples are worth the detour.

TA PROHM

តាព្រហ្ម

The laterite temple of Ta Prohm was built by King Jayavarman VII (r 1181–1219) on the site of an ancient 6th-century Khmer shrine. Today the ruined temple is surrounded by colourful flowers and plants, affording some great photo opportunities.

The main sanctuary consists of five chambers; in each is a *linga* (phallic symbol) and all show signs of the destruction wrought by the Khmer Rouge.

Entering the sanctuary from the east gate, 15m ahead on the right is a bas-relief depicting a woman, and a man who is bowing to another, larger woman. The smaller woman has just given birth and failed to show proper respect for the midwife (the larger woman).

The new mother has been condemned to carry the afterbirth on her head in a box for the rest of her life. The husband is asking that his wife be forgiven.

YEAY PEAU

យាយប៉ៅ

Yeay Peau temple, named after King Prohm's mother, is 150m north of Ta Prohm in the grounds of a modern pagoda. Legend has it that Peau gave birth to a son, Prohm. When Prohm discovered his father was King Preah Ket Mealea, he set off to live with the king. After a few years, he returned to his mother but did not recognise her and, taken by her beauty, asked her to become his wife. He refused to believe Peau's protests that she was his mother. To put off his advances she suggested a contest...for the outcome of this legend, see p283.

LAKEFRONT

About 300m northwest of Ta Prohm, a long, narrow peninsula juts into Tonlé Bati. It used to be packed at weekends with vendors selling food and drink, but their high prices have led most Phnom Penh residents to give the place a miss or bring picnics.

Getting There & Away

The access road heading to Ta Prohm is signposted on NH2 at a point 31km south of Phnom Penh. The temple is 2.5km from the highway.

Buses leave for Takeo at fairly regular intervals throughout the day and can drop passengers at the access road. The fare is 3500r. The first bus from Phnom Penh leaves at 7am and there are hourly services until 4pm. Buses returning from Takeo pass the turn-off regularly throughout the day. If you are heading to the wildlife sanctuary at Phnom Tamao, these services also apply.

PHNOM TAMAO WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

ភ្នំតាម៉ៅ

Cambodia's foremost wildlife sanctuary, **Phnom Tamao** (www.cambodianwildliferescue.org; admission US\$5) is a home for animals confiscated from traffickers or saved from poachers traps. It occupies a vast site south of the capital and its animals are kept in varying conditions that are rapidly improving with help from international wildlife NGOs. Spread out as it is, it feels like a zoo crossed with a safari park. The

way things are developing, Phnom Tamao is set to become one of the region's best-run animal sanctuaries in the coming years.

Popular enclosures include huge areas for the large tiger population, and there are elephants that sometimes take part in activities such as painting. There is also a walk-through area with macaques and deer and a huge menagerie, including some rare birds from around Cambodia.

The centre is home to the world's largest captive collections of pileated gibbons and Malayan sun bears, as well as other rarities such as Siamese crocodiles and greater adjutant storks. Wherever possible animals are released back into the wild once they have recovered and the centre operates breeding programs for a number of globally threatened species.

Cambodia's wildlife is usually very difficult to spot, as larger mammals inhabit remote and inhospitable areas of the country. Phnom Tamao is the perfect place to discover more about the incredible variety of animals in Cambodia.

If you don't like zoos, you probably won't like this wildlife sanctuary, but remember that these animals have been rescued from traffickers and poachers and need a home. Visitors that come here will be doing their own small bit to help in the protection and survival of Cambodia's varied and wonderful wildlife.

Free the Bears (Map p79; ☎017 794291; www.freethebears.org.au; 16A St 310) has just launched a 'bear keeper for the day' initiative to allow visitors a better understanding of the Asian black bear and Malayan sun bear. The full day visit includes the chance to feed and wash the young bears in their care.

Betelnut Jeep Tours (Map p79; ☎012 619924; www.betelnuttours.com; per person US\$30), based at the Lazy Gecko Café, offers day trips here from Tuesday to Saturday, including entry, a guided tour and a chance to meet some of the residents.

Getting There & Away

Phnom Tamao is about 44km from Phnom Penh, down NH2. Take a left turn after the sign for the zoo (37km), and it is 6km further down a sandy track. On weekends, you can combine an air-con bus ride with a *remorque-moto*, but on weekdays it may be easier to rent a motorbike or charter a taxi. See opposite for details on bus times and prices.

PHNOM CHISOR

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A temple from the Angkorian era, **Phnom Chisor** (admission US\$3) is set upon a solitary hill in Takeo Province (p227). Try to get to Phnom Chisor early in the morning or late in the afternoon, as it is a very uncomfortable climb in the heat of the midday sun.

The main temple stands on the eastern side of the hilltop. Constructed of laterite and brick with carved lintels of sandstone, the complex is surrounded by the partially ruined walls of a 2.5m-wide gallery with windows.

Inscriptions found here date from the 11th century, when this site was known as Suryagiri. The wooden doors to the sanctuary in the centre of the complex, which open to the east, are decorated with carvings of figures standing on pigs. Inside the sanctuary are statues of Buddha.

On the plain to the east of Phnom Chisor are the sanctuaries of **Sen Thmol**, just below Phnom Chisor, **Sen Ravang** and the former sacred pond of **Tonlé Om**. All three of these features form a straight line from Phnom Chisor in the direction of Angkor. During rituals held here 900 years ago, the king, his Brahmans and their entourage would climb a monumental 400 steps to Suryagiri from this direction.

There is a spectacular view of the temples and plains from the roofless gallery opposite the wooden doors to the central shrine. Near the main temple is a modern Buddhist *vihara* that is used by resident monks.

Curiously the US\$3 charge is not levied at the bottom of the hill, but at the temple, so it is technically free to visit if you pass on the old brick structure.

Getting There & Away

The eastward-bound access road to Phnom Chisor is signposted on the left about 52km south of central Phnom Penh and 27km north of Takeo town. It's about 5km from the highway to the base of the hill.

The cheapest way to get to Phnom Chisor is to take a Takeo-bound bus from Phnom Penh and ask to be let off at the turn-off from NH2. This costs 5000r and from here you can take a *moto* to the bottom of the hill for US\$1. Alternatively, you can charter a taxi for about US\$40 to visit both Phnom Chisor and Tonlé Bati, or a motorcycle in Phnom Penh.

KIRIROM NATIONAL PARK

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The hill station of **Kirirom** (entry US\$5), set amid lush forest and pine groves, has been established as a national park. It is popular with Khmers at weekends as it is 675m above sea level with a climate notably cooler than Phnom Penh. There are several small **waterfalls** in the park, which are popular picnic spots for Khmers, and a number of basic walking trails. For a more substantial walk, consider hooking up with a ranger (US\$5 or so) for a two-hour hike up to **Phnom Dat Chivit** (End of the World Mountain) where an abrupt cliff-face offers an unbroken view of the **Elephant Mountains** and **Cardamom Mountains** to the west. It is often possible to see wildlife on this trail, including black bears scavenging the pine trees for honey.

Kirirom is one of the few national parks to have a nearby community tourism programme. Set just beyond the park boundaries, **Chambok Community-based Ecotourism** (☎012 355272; ccben_cam@yahoo.com; www.geocities.com/chambokcbet/; entry per adult/child US\$3/1) programme is based in Chambok village, where attractions include a 40m-high waterfall, traditional ox-cart rides (Cambodia's original 4WDs) and nature walks. It is also possible to sample traditional Cambodian country fare at the small restaurant or arrange a local home-stay with a bit of notice. Originally established by local NGO **Mlup Baitong** (☎023-214409; mlup@online.com.kh), a percentage of the proceeds is pumped back into the local community.

Sleeping

There are two options for staying at Kirirom and they are poles apart. The very basic **Kirirom Guesthouse** (☎012 957700; r US\$20) is pretty run-down for such a stunning location, but the rooms have clean sheets, a fan and attached bathroom. However, the restaurant here is more memorable with outdoor pavilions offering superb views over the forest.

Kirirom Hillside Resort (☎023-982394; www.kiriromresort.com; camping incl tent US\$15, r from US\$40, bungalow from US\$55; ♿ ♿ ♿) is located just beneath the entrance to the national park. At first glance this is a kitsch place aimed at local and regional tourists wanting a taste of country life. The castlelike entrance and plastic dinosaurs put off most Westerners, but for families with children it offers plenty of activities such as biking, horse-riding and kayaking. Hidden

away at the back in the spacious grounds are some Scandinavian-style bungalows in various shapes and sizes, all well appointed with TV, minibar and hot showers. Facilities include a swimming pool, sauna and several restaurants. Budget travellers can get back to basics with a night in a tent.

Getting There & Away

Kirirom National Park is 112km southwest of Phnom Penh, located about 20km to the west of NH4. Unless you have your own transport,

it is not that easy to get here. One possibility is to catch a bus going to Sihanoukville and ask to be let off at Kirirom or Preah Suramarit Kossomak National Park (the full name in Khmer). However, it still requires a *moto* to get around the park itself. The best way to visit is to hire a motorcycle in Phnom Penh or get a group together and charter a taxi for about US\$60. Coming under your own steam, the turn-off for the park is about 85km from Phnom Penh, and is marked by a large sign on the right of the highway.

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