



discovering CAMBODIA

Nearly 20 years of continuous war and violence has left the country in ruins. Still, hope shines in the “Land of Smiles.” Cambodia is located on mainland Southeast Asia between Thailand to the west and north, and Vietnam to the east and southeast. It shares a land border with Laos in the northeast.

Since the early 1990s, Cambodia has struggled to emerge from two decades of conflict, including almost four years (1975–1979) of terror under Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge. An estimated 1.7 million Cambodians died during the reign of Pol Pot, many from exhaustion or starvation. Others were tortured and executed.

All around the country, you will see mass graves and ruined structures, the latter as a result of a conscious, coordinated campaign by the Khmer Rouge to smash the country’s pre-Revolutionary culture. Only now is the country beginning to bring the surviving leaders of the genocide years to justice.

You will also notice under-populated towns and cities whose inhabitants are slowly emerging from a nightmare that claimed the lives of parents, spouses, siblings and children.

Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in the world; it struggles to rebuild, especially in the poverty-ridden countryside. The majority of Cambodia’s rural population continues to suffer from most of the inter-related problems associated with poverty. Food insecurity and fatalistic attitudes are common problems.

The effect of Khmer Rouge on Christianity has been severe. Only one Christian pastor within Cambodia’s borders was reported to have survived Pol Pot’s reign. Today, mature leaders are scarce, and Christian materials in Khmer language are non-existent or in short supply. Despite these circumstances, it

Note: Recognizing that information on Cambodia is readily available on the Internet, we encourage you to learn as much as you can about the political background, history, geography, economics and culture of this amazing country. This document provides a general overview, with some specific information that will help short-term teams appreciate Cambodia even more and understand our work. Going to Cambodia as part of a short-term team is different from a leisure trip or traveling for business. The information provided here can help you prepare for a potentially life-changing experience. Sources used for some country facts include CIA: The World Factbook and BBC News.

is estimated that some 20,000 Christians are scattered throughout the country. National church leaders and international organizations are endeavoring to rebuild the church and bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every corner of Cambodia.

QUICK FACTS

Full Name: Kingdom of Cambodia

Population: 15 million (UN, 2010)

Capital and Largest City: Phnom Penh

Area: 181,035 sq km (69,898 sq miles)

Major Language: Khmer

Major Religion: Buddhism

Life Expectancy: 61 years (men), 65 years (women) (UN)

Monetary Currency: Riel

Main Exports: Clothing, timber, rubber

GNI Per Capita: \$650 (World Bank, 2009.)



WEATHER

The country has a tropical climate – warm and humid. In the monsoon season, abundant rain allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops. The climate is distinguished by four major seasons. The most pleasant is the cool, dry season from November to February during which temperatures are cooler (average 68–82° F). The hot, dry season lasts from March to May (average 86–95° F). From June to August is the rainy season, during which temperatures are relatively cool (average 72–86° F). And from September to October is the cool-wet season (average 77–86° F).

PASSPORT / VISA

A passport and visa are required for all travelers to Cambodia. All information regarding obtaining a passport can be found at the U.S. Department of State's National Passport Information Center: [wwwtravel.state.gov/passport](http://www.travel.state.gov/passport). This site will detail current fees, acceptable forms of identification, downloadable applications, and passport acceptance facility locations. It takes approximately 6 to 10 weeks for processing. Please allow additional time for gathering necessary documents (photos, birth certificate, etc.).

For an additional fee, the process can be expedited. Information can be found on the above website on "How to Get Your Passport in a Hurry."

In addition to a passport, some countries require a visa for entry. A visa is a special permit issued by a country's government to allow a foreign citizen into the country. At this time, a visa is required for Americans travelling to Cambodia. This visa can be obtained in advance or upon arrival in the country. Cambodia offers online visa processing at <http://evisa.mfaic.gov.kh>. Tourist and business visas are valid for one month beginning with the date of entry into Cambodia. Tourists and business travelers may also obtain



a Cambodian visa at the airports in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and at all major border crossings. Both methods of obtaining a Cambodian visa require a passport-sized photograph and a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months beyond the date of entry into Cambodia. A departure tax is charged on all domestic and international flights. This tax (usually \$25) must be paid in U.S. dollars.

If you have a passport from a country other than the U.S., you may need to take extra measures to ensure smooth entrance into and exit from Cambodia. Consult the host country consulate to find out what measures need to be taken. For the most up-to-date information about travel from the United States to any foreign country, please visit the Department of State's website at www.travel.state.gov.



VACCINATION INFORMATION

In addition to applying for a passport, you will also need to research vaccinations for your trip well in advance as some vaccinations take time or need to be given in a series to be effective. The best advice regarding vaccinations and any other medications can only come from a qualified physician. Please make an appointment with your family doctor and share with him/her where you are going, how long you will be there and what activities you will be participating in. In consultation with your doctor, you can decide which vaccinations and/or medications will be best for you.

To better familiarize yourself with travel health, please visit the Center for Disease Control's website at www.cdc.gov/travel prior to your visit with your doctor.

*Please do not bring
the following:*

- Shorts
- Tight or revealing clothing (pants, jeans and shirts)
- Low-cut shirts (scoop neck or V-neck)
- Tank tops
- Excessively low-rise jeans or excessively baggy pants
- Shirts that reveal the midriff
- Clothing that has inappropriate or questionable words or pictures
- Clothing with rips, holes or stains

LUGGAGE

Luggage should be limited to one checked bag and the allowed carry-on for each team member. While most airlines will allow two checked bags, large amounts of luggage are difficult to transport while in-country. Any extra bags should be used to transport ministry supplies. Please refer to your teams training materials for a packing list.

CLOTHING

Our dress code is a sign of respect for the people you will be working with, as well as to convey a conservative Christian lifestyle. The general rule of thumb for dress in Cambodia is "Be conservative." Wearing appropriate clothing will open the door for establishing good relationships with the community members.

While in the community, team members should wear long pants and loose-fitting T-shirts. (Capri pants are



okay.) If the team is attending a church service, ladies should wear long skirts and loose-fitting blouses, and men should wear long pants and collared shirts. As shoes are often taken off upon entering buildings, it is appropriate and convenient to wear sandals; however, it is advisable to also bring a pair of good walking shoes or tennis shoes as the team will do a lot of walking on some days. During tourism days, it is okay for both men and women to wear long, loose-fitting shorts and sleeveless shirts.

ELECTRONICS

You may bring cameras (disposable, standard or digital), iPods, cell phones and other small electronic devices; however, you assume all risks of damage, loss or theft of your belongings. Keep in mind that you will be kept quite busy, and there will not be a lot of time to use many electronic devices. Also, electricity may not always be available to recharge electronic equipment, including cameras and camcorders. Please bring extra batteries. When in public, don't display expensive electronic items or any items that may just appear expensive.

PHOTO POLICY

All photos or videos should be taken with utmost discretion. Upon arrival in the country, your Team Coordinator will explain the country's photo policy. Some considerations:

- Make sure the focus is on relationships and the ministry, not pictures.
- When possible, ask before taking pictures.
- Designate a photographer. Rather than taking the same picture on 12 different cameras, take the picture with one or two cameras and share when you get back.
- Be sure that any picture you take conveys dignity for the person in the picture. If you will not remember the names of the people in the story or the significance of the photo, re-consider the need for taking a photo.
- If taking a picture of a monk, especially while in Siem Reap, it is customary for the monk to expect a small amount of money for the picture.

FOOD

Your Team Coordinator will have arranged breakfast, lunch and dinner for your team either at your hotel or another restaurant. You will have the opportunity to sample a variety of food while in Cambodia, mostly traditional Cambodian dishes and Thai dishes. Meals will be served "family style" – a variety of dishes are brought to the table and those at the table share the dishes. The staple for the Cambodian diet is rice, and it is served at every meal.

Typically, a meal will include soup, a few vegetables as well as meat and fish dishes. Most dishes are heavily spiced

Foods and drinks served in Cambodia:

- ✓ Rice, Fish curry
- ✓ Bananas
- ✓ Khmer coffee (iced coffee with condensed milk)
- ✓ Bok choy
- ✓ Coca-cola



with lemongrass, cumin, pepper, chili and salt. Cambodians like to add additional pepper, lime, and chilies or fish sauce to their food. Be sure to sample your food before doctoring it up like the locals do! Delicious tropical fruits are usually served after meals and as snacks.

In Siem Reap, your team may have the opportunity to eat at one of the many Western restaurants that cater to tourists. While some foods may be unfamiliar, please come with an open mind and

be willing to try new foods. Avoid eating foods that have not been provided or approved by Food for the Hungry staff. Eating something from a local vendor or street market could lead to sickness.

If you have any food allergies or special dietary needs, please communicate those to FH/US ahead of time. Our field staff will need time to arrange other options for you.

Your Team Coordinator will also have a supply of bottled water for your team. Drink bottled water only. Also use it to brush your teeth and take medicines. If you are served ice in a drink, please verify that the water is okay by consulting with your Team Coordinator.

TRANSPORTATION

Your Team Coordinator will have arranged transportation the entire time your team is serving with Food for the Hungry. In Cambodia, most long-distance travel will be done in an FH vehicle with a staff member as the driver. When going to communities from the FH office, it is likely that you will ride with a staff member on their motorbike. For this reason, helmets will be purchased for all the team members and it is imperative that they be worn when riding on a motorbike.



Driving in Cambodia will probably be a new experience for you. The roads are bumpy, winding and unpaved for the most part. You may feel that the vehicle you are in is uncomfortably close to the vehicle or pedestrian beside it. Streets may seem overwhelmingly crowded. Traffic signs may not always be followed. People will honk their horns a lot as a way of communicating with other drivers. Remember that you are in good hands. Your driver is a professional and used to the traffic conditions. Keep your hands, feet and belongings inside the vehicle at all times.

If you experience carsickness, especially for the long drives between Siem Reap and Anlong Veng, sit in the front or take an appropriate medicine for motion sickness.

COMMUNICATION

You will likely be without telephone and/or e-mail access during your time in Cambodia. While these services may be readily



available, especially in a tourist area like Siem Reap, your schedule will be packed with activities. This will help you to focus your energy and attention on the transformative work of the Lord and to help maintain a cohesive group dynamic. We encourage you to leave your cell phone at home and inform your family and friends that you will be unavailable until you return to the States.

If there is an emergency in the country or community where you are serving, your Team Coordinator will contact your family and appropriate people at your home church. Before you leave the U.S. you will be given a U.S. phone number and other details, which you will pass on to your family and close friends. If there is an emergency in the U.S. while you're on the field, your family member or friend may call that number. Your Field Liaison will assess the call and facilitate communication with you or the field staff as necessary.

MONEY

While with Food for the Hungry, all transportation, food, lodging and water are covered by FH. You will only need money for souvenirs and shopping that you will do in-country and while traveling. A suggested amount for this purpose is \$100 to \$200. It is advisable to bring cash as U.S. dollars are widely accepted in Cambodia. Bring bills no larger than \$20 and be sure that the bills are crisp and new (no more than 5 years old) to ensure acceptance. Traveler's checks can be used, but they can only be exchanged in limited locations and extra fees always apply.



ADDITIONAL ARTICLES, LINKS AND RESOURCES

The following is a list of books, movies and articles that may be interesting and educational for short-term team members to Cambodia.

Books: *First, They Killed my Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers* by Loung Ung,
Terrify No More: Young Girls Held Captive and the Daring Undercover Operation to Win Their Freedom by Gary A. Haugen

Movie: "The Killing Fields"

Article: "The Banyan Tree: Untangling Cambodian History" <http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/banyan1.htm>

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY/CAMBODIA

FH started in Cambodia by partnering with Christian Outreach, which was working in the Thai-Cambodian border refugee camps between 1979 and 1981. FH/Cambodia has been involved in a variety of relief, rehabilitation and development projects. In 1990, during the rapid diminishment of the Khmer Rouge regime, FH assisted with relief efforts, distributing emergency kits to displaced people. In 1991, FH and Christian Outreach started a rural water supply program that provided wells for villages lacking reliable water sources.

In September 1992, FH/Cambodia established its own identity separate from the existing partnership with Christian Outreach with its own office in Phnom Penh. Up until this point, activities had been concentrated in Kampot Province (106 km southwest of Phnom Penh) and the neighboring District of Kiri Vong in Takeo Province.

In 1993, FH/Cambodia attempted work in community development through agriculture and school rehabilitation projects. One school in Chuuk district was built before political unrest threatened the staff's safety and brought all FH activities in the area to a halt. This period led to a new work established in the neighboring province of Takeo.



By the end of 1994, Khmer Rouge was no longer considered a threat to foreigners in the region. Non-local staff returned to work in Chuuk District. The child sponsorship program (CSP) was started in 1996 and is now known as the child development program (CDP). This was followed by the formation of the church leadership development program (CLDP) in 1997 when FH/Cambodia saw the need to develop a holistic approach.

In 2007, FH programs in the Chuuk District were successfully completed. The communities had

embraced the programs and were able to move forward on their own. The search began to determine where FH Cambodia could have the greatest impact. Based on program acceptance, community need, surveys and much prayer, FH/Cambodia decided to open a new field of activity in the Anlong Veng District.

When FH/Cambodia moved to Anlong Veng District, it reorganized the projects and the structure of the organization based on the experience of previous activities. From these experiences, we have learned that a concentrated and comprehensive approach can bring a total transformation within a community.

FH/Cambodia works with the poor by facilitating the formation of village development committees (VDC), which are responsible for putting together a village development plan based on the needs and available resources of their respective communities. Each VDC is composed of community leaders and volunteers who desire to see the poor overcome physical and spiritual poverty.

The tools that we use to support the process of development may change, depending on future needs. What is constant is that we will always work to equip families, leaders, churches and communities so they can achieve their vision for their communities.

There are **five main tools** that FH uses to help communities develop their plans:

- Child Development
- Agriculture
- Health and Sanitation
- Savings
- Networking



FACTS ABOUT CAMBODIA

Child Health

- 12 out of every 100 children will die before age 5, and nearly 10 will die before their first birthday.
- Almost half of all children are undernourished. It is estimated that malnutrition is linked to three quarters of the deaths in children under age 5.
- Chronic malnutrition, stunting and frequent illnesses impact education.

Education

- There are 47,000 primary school teachers, half of which did not complete primary school (5-6 years) themselves.
- Teachers spend less than three hours a day with their students.
- Families assume two-thirds of the costs of maintaining a public school system (possibly the highest rate in Asia); foreign aid helps with the rest.
- The government gives 8.1% of national budget, which barely covers the \$15/month wage for a teacher.
- Almost all teachers hold two to three jobs.
- Widespread bribery devalues the reputation of school certificates and diplomas.

General Health

- Tuberculosis, respiratory infections, diarrhea and malaria are common threats.
- The number of patients with tuberculosis is the worst in the world. (WHO)
- AIDS is the most serious epidemic in Asia, and Cambodia has the potential to become one of the worst affected countries in the world. (1997 Government report)

Water and Sanitation

- Fewer than 1 in 4 people living in rural areas have access to clean, safe drinking water; 1 in 10 people have access to adequate sanitation.
- 91 percent of Cambodians do not have access to a latrine.