

Geography:

Total Area: Approx. 69,900 sq. miles (181,035 sq. km.). This is slightly smaller than the state of Oklahoma.

Location: Southeast Asia; bordered by Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and the Gulf of Thailand.

Population (2004 Estimate): 13,107,000

Capital: Phnom Penh

Largest Cities: Phnom Penh, Battambang, Sihanoukville (Kompong Som), Siem Reap, Kompong Cham, Kompong Thom

Largest Lake: Tonle Sap

Major Waterway: Mekong River

Mountain Ranges: Cardamom, Dangrek

Highest Point: Phnom Aoral, 5,948 feet

Climate: Tropical, with two seasons, Rainy (May through October) and Dry (October through May). **Temperature rarely falls below 80 degrees Fahrenheit.**

Land and Land Usage: Mostly low, flat plains, with some small mountains in the north and southwest. About three-fourths tropical forest; roughly one-fifth arable land. Bulk of remaining land is composed of sandy and infertile soil.

Wildlife: Animals found in Cambodia include monkeys, water buffalo, tigers, elephants, leopards, and crocodiles.

Health and Education:

Infant Mortality Rate: 95.1 deaths per 1000 live births

Life Expectancy at Birth: 57 years

Literacy: Approximately 67.3% (57% among females, 79.5% among males). (Source: Royal Government of Cambodia Census, 1998).

Water Access: CARE estimates that only 36% of the population has access to safe drinking water. The Cambodian government's 1998 census estimates 29% overall, with 60.3% of urban households and 23.7% of rural households having access to safe water.

Government:



CAMBODIAN FLAG

Type: Cambodia is a Constitutional Monarchy. The government is headed by democratically elected Prime Minister; a National Assembly is composed of 120 representatives. The voting age is 18. The reigning monarch is King Norodom Sihamoni, but his duties are mainly ceremonial. The current Prime Minister is Hun Sen. The first democratically elected leader in recent times, Norodom Ranariddh, was overthrown in a coup staged by Hun Sen in July 1997. Hun Sen was subsequently elected Prime Minister in elections in July 1998, but the elections were severely flawed by a climate of violence and intimidation. Recently, the political situation has stabilized, but serious problems of corruption and impunity remain. Elections in 2003, though still far from perfect, were less violent than earlier polls. Hun Sen once again emerged victorious.

Economy:

Primary Occupation: Agriculture

Chief Products: Rice, rubber, wood and wood products, corn, garments, rubies

Monetary Unit: Riel

GNP Per Capita, 2002 \$1970 US

Culture:

Ethnicity: Khmer (approx. 90%); Chinese (approx. 5%); Vietnamese (approx. 5%); small minorities of hill tribes, Chams, Burmese, and Thai

Religions: Theravada Buddhism (95%); Islam; Christian; animism; atheism

Languages: Khmer (95%); some French, Vietnamese, Chinese, and English

Resources to consider:

- **The Tears of My Soul:** The Story of a Boy Who Survived the Cambodian Killing Fields by Sokreaksa S. Himm and Jan Greenough. Product Description: The haunting, first-person story of a boy who escaped the killing fields of Cambodia to eventually find Christ and the

power of His forgiveness. Review: "For any one struggling to forgive wrongs done to them in this life, this book could be a real help. At 12 years of age, the author witnessed the brutal murders of most of his close family by the Khmer Rouge insanity in Cambodia. Only he and his sister survived. 13 did not. The Khmers thought they had killed him but he miraculously survived. This book is his incredible tale of God's provision for him to escape, find Christ and help in his years-long struggle with the desire for revenge upon those who killed his family. Seriously recommended." (Dick Camp Biblical Ministries Worldwide)

- **First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers.** Amazon.com Review: Written in the present tense, First They Killed My Father will put you right in the midst of the action--action you'll wish had never happened. It's a tough read, but definitely a worthwhile one, and the author's personality and strength shine through on every page. Covering the years from 1975 to 1979, the story moves from the deaths of multiple family members to the forced separation of the survivors, leading ultimately to the reuniting of much of the family, followed by marriages and immigrations. The brutality seems unending--beatings, starvation, attempted rape, mental cruelty--and yet the narrator (a young girl) never stops fighting for escape and survival. Sad and courageous, her life and the lives of her young siblings provide quite a powerful example of how war can so deeply affect children--especially a war in which they are trained to be an integral part of the armed forces. For anyone interested in Cambodia's recent history, this book shares a valuable personal view of events.
- **Killing Fields Living Fields** by Don Cormac. Review: "Killing Fields, Living Fields stunned me. It is hard to know how to say anything at all about such heroism, such uncompromising faithfulness in the midst of unspeakable suffering." -- Elisabeth Elliot. A compelling and inspiring story about the Cambodian church! (Church Libraries). "This heartwrenching, heartwarming narrative prompts tears, prayers, praises, and hopes in turn. It is a long time since I read anything so poignant." -- J. I. Packer (this is a longer read (about 450 pages)

- **Journey to Joy: The Story of Norman and Marie Ens**. This gives some information about Cambodia, but is more about their life and ministry to the Cambodian people in Cambodia and France. Marie Ens is still living in Phnom Penh area and has a compound that supports children and the elderly...you may want to visit her if you get the chance.
- **Cambodia Now: Life In the Wake of War** This book is a bit dated (the information in it is about 10 years out of date), but it gives a good look at where Cambodia has come from in the last decade. Cambodia has never recovered from its Khmer Rouge past. The genocidal regime of 1975–1979 and the following two decades of civil war ripped the country apart. This work examines Cambodia in the aftermath, focusing on Khmer people of all walks of life and examining through their eyes key facets of Cambodian society, including the ancient Angkor legacy, relations with neighboring countries (particularly the strained ones with the Vietnamese), emerging democracy, psychology, violence, health, family, poverty, the environment, and the nation's future.

Along with print sources, research is drawn from hundreds of interviews with Cambodians, including farmers, royalty, beggars, teachers, monks, orphanage heads, politicians, and non-native experts on Cambodia. Dozens of exquisite photographs of Cambodian people and places illustrate the work, which concludes with a glossary of Cambodian words, people, places and names, and an appendix of organizations providing aid to Cambodia.

- **Culture Shock! Cambodia: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette (Culture Shock! Guides)** I don't know of anyone that has read this, but it looks good :-) give it a try and tell us what you think: With over three million copies in print, *CultureShock!* is a bestselling series of culture and etiquette guides covering countless destinations around the world. For anyone at risk of culture shock, whether a tourist or a long-term resident, *CultureShock!* provides a sympathetic and fun-filled crash course on the do's and don'ts in foreign cultures. Fully updated and sporting a fresh new look, the revised editions of these books enlighten and inform through such topics as language, food and entertaining, social customs, festivals, relationships, and business tips. *CultureShock!* books are packed with useful details on transportation, taxes, finances, accommodation, health, food and drink, clothes, shopping, festivals, and much, much more.
- **Movie: The Killing Fields**

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY:

As you begin to learn about Cambodia, please pray for the country and its wonderful people. Also, it is imperative that you take into account the fact that you are entering a different culture...one that might surprise you with some of what you see, hear, smell, taste, feel...etc. It is vitally important for you to suspend judgment and take any concerns to local staff/missionaries.

EXERCISE TO HELP:

THIS IS A FUN WAY TO LEARN TO BE CULTURALLY SENSITIVE.

Have 2 people from your group sit in chairs facing each other. Have a certain object (i.e. a door, another person, a lamp, a window...etc) behind one of them. Then as the leader, ask the first person, "Where is the door (or whatever the object is)?" The first person will answer "Behind me". Then ask the other person, "Where is the door?" "In front of me" ...ask each person several times to establish a pattern of disagreement. Then make the point that **neither of them is wrong**. It is simply a matter of perspective. For one, the object is behind them and for the other person, the object is in front of them.

In order for them to agree, one of them has to **shift their chair** or change their perspective. This is what we do on the mission field **every day**. We cannot look at our new culture through our American or western lenses. We need to look at situations from the native's viewpoint before we pass judgment. Of course there are things that are intrinsically wrong and must not be excused but most of what we encounter can be accepted by simply suspending judgment and taking the time to look at it from the other person's perspective...by **"shifting your chair"**.

Throughout your trip now you can ask each other **"Are you shifting your chair?"**

After completing this exercise, please take time to talk through the situations listed in the document **"Situations to Consider when Visiting Cambodia"**.