



Welcome and congratulations on your decision to participate in our Cambodian workshops! We know that you will take away a wealth of new knowledge and the feeling to have succeeded under often challenging circumstances. Sharing your skills will make you new friends and improve the lives of many indigent people. Traveling to a new country can often be a daunting experience, and this pack will ensure you arrive in Cambodia ready and prepared for your volunteering placement and your adventure. If you still have questions once you have read this guide then do not hesitate to contact us by email at; medicorps@medicorps.org.

Our Objectives: We want you to learn as much as possible about the real healthcare system in a poor country, with all its frustrations and challenges, and share your knowledge with your Cambodian counterparts to create a network of knowledge, skills, friendship and compassion for the indigent suffering population.

Your professional assignment: Medicorps will select the optimal assignment for you based on your experience (CV) and expressed wishes. We will not be able to give you an exact location and length at that institution until your arrival since foreign visitors, volunteers from other organizations, local trainees etc. may interfere with the professional attention we want you to get. We can, however, assure you that you will be placed in a major, accredited, university affiliated health-care facility and/or a

village outreach and development project. Throughout your stay we will monitor your progress and change your assignments if you wish to do so. We will also make recommendation for a change of venue, particularly if you stay for a longer period of time.

Please, keep an ongoing diary of your experience for your own, MC's and future workshop participants' benefit. Take as many pictures/videos as you can! Generally Cambodian patients do not object to this, particularly if you ask permission with the help of Cambodian personnel. Not all Cambodian physicians speak English, and if they do, it may be hard to understand clearly. French will go a long way, but we will provide an English speaking companion for you. Patients, nurses and allied health-care personnel will rarely speak any foreign language at all, so make the maximum use of the time spent with English speakers. Do not make any unsolicited suggestions during your first few days! Observe first and ask questions! Once you have gained their trust they will most likely want to learn from you. If you have any question before your departure, send us a note at medicorps@medicorps.org. We are here to facilitate every step of your way!

What you should do now

- **Check your passport!** It must be valid for your trip and you know what visa's you will need. Make sure there are at least 2 free pages left.
- **Book your flights!** The sooner you do the better the price, especially at peak times. Please notify us of your flight details once you have booked so that we can pick you up upon your arrival.
- **Get all your vaccinations!** Inform your doctor that you are traveling to Cambodia so they can advise which shots you should get.
- **Arrange your travel insurance!** You likely will be covered by your insurance policy at home, but it is wise to get a standard travel insurance package that includes evacuation to your home country.
- **Try to solicit support for your trip!** You may be able to obtain a scholarship from various sources. Also, you may want to organize a fundraiser for your trip and ask family and friends for contributions
- **Collect some donations for the Cambodian hospitals and Medicorps!** Medical books, used laptop computers and accessories, used cell phones with SIM card capabilities, medical supplies and instruments, pharmaceuticals are all welcome.
- **Send a passport picture as an email attachment to Medicorps!** That way you will have your MC badge ready upon your arrival.
- **Prepare your cell phone for overseas roaming if possible!** We want you to be able to be in touch with us 24/7.

1. Prior to departure

Check the 'Kit List' (see chapter 6)! Buy what you need to take with you! We advise to bring at least \$100 USD with you in cash, and, of course, have your ATM or credit card. Make sure everyone that you wish to keep in contact with has an e-mail address for you and they all know you're going. Photocopy important

documents, passport, insurance documents, larger currency and travelers checks, credit cards etc. Get some passport photos as you will need them for your Visa!

Visa requirements: Visas are easily available on arrival at Siem Reap and Phnom Penh international airports and via land borders with Thailand and Vietnam (not with Laos). A tourist visa should be US\$20. - by law, but immigration agents often ask for \$30 or more. It is up to you how persistent you want to be in your refusal. After 30 days you can easily extend your visa in with travel agencies for 30 more days more for \$40 USD. A business visa costs US\$25 for 30 days and can be extended for an indefinite period of time (a 6 month visa costs US\$150). If you are staying for less than 2 months then all you need to get is a tourist visa; state that your visit is for tourism. If you plan to stay for more than 2 months then your best option is to get a business visa and extend while in the country. You will also need to provide immigration with a passport size photograph. You can also get your visa via the internet, if you want to save a bit of time on arrival: <http://evisa.mfaic.gov.kh/e-visa/vindex.aspx>. Please note when leaving Cambodia via air you will need to pay a departure tax of \$25 USD.

2. Contacts

Medicorps:

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Useful telephone numbers in Cambodia:

Cambodia country code - 855

Phnom Penh area code - 023

Siem Reap area code - 063

Police 117

Fire 118

Ambulance 119

Embassies, Phnom Penh:

- UK (023)427124
- USA (023)728000

- Australia (023)213470
- Canada (023)213470
- Germany (023)216381
- Sweden (023)212259
- Switzerland (023)219045

3. Locations:

Phnom Penh is the famous capital of Cambodia and is located in the center of the south of the country. Once referred to as the Paris of Asia, its once grand and stylish architecture is now only faintly reminiscent due to rapid development. Now becoming an industrial center, Phnom Penh is being pushed into the modern world and trying to regain some of its past glory.

Siem Reap lies just north of the western extent of the Tonle Sap lake, towards the north west of Cambodia. Siem Reap is a mix of both the old and new Cambodia, with temples alongside the restaurants, hotels and bars. The city is famed for being the gateway to the awe-inspiring Angkor War temple complex, only 5 km to the north.

Kampot is a picturesque, laid-back seaside town on the Gulf of Thailand close to the famous erstwhile royal resort of Kep. The balmy ocean waters and cool mountain reserves, such as Bokors, offer enticing outdoors activities, such as swimming, diving, hiking, biking etc.



4. Life in the country:

Accommodation: You will stay in a safe and comfortable guesthouse or small hotel close to the center of towns and in areas frequented by other NGO affiliates. Most of our choices have Internet access, safe deposit boxes, Western and Khmer breakfasts, private toilet, English speaking, friendly personnel, laundry and restaurant service. We will let you know the final choice shortly before arrival.

Languages: The official language spoken in Cambodia is Khmer. It's is not uncommon for the older generation to speak some French, and the rate of fluent English speakers is on the rise. Chinese and Vietnamese are also spoken.

Currency / Money: Khmer currency is called Riel. \$1US = 4,200riels (depending on the exchange rate). Generally it gets rounded to \$1 US = 4,000riels to make things more simple. The only place where this is not the case is in any Cambodian airports where they use the exact exchange rate. Riels come in note form only, no coins. US Dollars bills (not coins!) are used in most transactions and Riel is used as small change.

There are many ATMs dotted around town. Generally the banks charge a US\$2. - commission on cash withdrawals, but it is the easiest and safest way to obtain funds. Major currencies can also be handled by money changers. There is no need for you to get money changed into Riel.

Weather: Cambodia has two distinct seasons. The rainy season, which runs from June to November, can see temperatures rise up to 40 °C around April and is generally accompanied with high humidity. Rainy season does not mean perpetual rain, but expect frequent heavy showers, thunder storms, muddy/bumpy road conditions, cool evenings and high humidity. Have a set of sandals ready for flooded streets in the cities! The dry season lasts from December to June when temperatures can drop low in the night. You may want to have a jacket or sweater ready for the cooler days.

Cost of Living:

- **Food:** At a local market or stall a meal costs about \$1-2, in a restaurant it costs \$2 - \$20 depending on how up-market you want to go! Bottled water \$0.50, Beer \$1 - \$2.
- **Transportation:**
 - Backseat on a motorcycle or 'motodoop': Pending distance from 50 cents to 2 dollars.
 - Tuk-tuk (motorcycle with a carriage that holds up to 4/5 people): Twice the motorcycle. Hiring a tuk-tuk or moto all day to go site seeing is up to your negotiation skills, but our Cambodian personnel can assist.
 - You can also lease bicycles, usually 1 to 2 USDollars per day.

- Public buses are available to most popular destinations. We will be happy to assist.
- **Laundry** costs approx. US\$1 per Kilo.
- **Tap Water** water is not very safe for foreigners to drink. Bottled water is available from guesthouse, as well as on street stands, markets and shops all over the main towns.
- **Toilets** South-East Asian toilets utilize water douches for cleaning. If there is paper do not flush it down the toilets; there are bins in the bathrooms for that purpose.
- **Safety** Cambodia is a safe destination, but do not drop your guard, particularly at night and after alcohol consumption. Remember those rules from back home - do not walk alone at night down a dark alley, don't accept lifts from strangers and take care of your belongings. Landmines are a real danger only in remote locations. If you are working on a project within a rural community we stress to be sensible: Do not walk off in the fields / hills / jungle unless you know, or it is clearly apparent that the area is well trodden.
- **Keeping in touch with home:** Internet cafes are numerous around town and cheap, but often slow! WI-FI is also available in most hotels, bars and cafes. International calls in internet cafes are cheap, but Skype calls may be the best way to go. Connection isn't always as good as you may be used to at home but good enough to communicate. **Mobile phone:** You can bring your phone from home and use it in Cambodia - please check with your provider at home that you are set up with international roaming and your phone set is on the appropriate band wave. Check call and SMS rates before you go - it will be expensive! For local calls we can assist you to purchase a Cambodian SIM card (US\$10-15) allowing you to send international text messages and stay in touch locally.
- **Don't worry, you're never far from home!** All major cities are fully equipped with cable TV with English language programs. The Cambodian Daily and the Phnom Penh Post are the local English language newspapers.

Time off:

- **Daytime:** During the day there are markets and many shops to visit, as well as cafes. There are also many attractions close at hand which will only take a couple of hours to visit, for example, some of the pagodas, riverside walks, small museums/exhibitions, wood/stone carving craft workshops or you could go and relax by getting a traditional Khmer massage!
- **Evening/Weekends:** In the evenings you are free to explore the restaurants, bars and clubs and meet other visitors and expats who work in town.

Obviously it is important to drink responsibly and abstain from drugs. Keep your primary purpose in mind: Learning and helping, a commitment which should come before other social aspects of the project.

- **Holidays:** During Cambodian holidays all work stops and all government agencies will be closed, often for several days. Travel costs will often increase 100% or more. Government services, including health-care, will be drastically reduced. Plan ahead!
- **Places to Visit:** Consult your friendly guesthouse employees, or leaf through your Lonely Planet or other guide books.

5. Cultural Observances / Responsible Travel

We are committed to ensuring that all our volunteers have a great experience but please **remember you are in someone else's country and ought to respect their rules and customs.** Cambodians are very friendly and a smile will go a long way. Always be respectful to elders as you would do in your own country, however in Cambodian society elders are held with even greater esteem. Always remove shoes and hats before entering a temple or someone's home and dress respectfully, especially when visiting temples.

Dress code basics

Cambodia is a conservative country and we ask that you show respect by dressing appropriately, especially in spirituals and religious environments. The basic rule is to **cover your knees and shoulders.**

Buddhist etiquette

The predominant religion in Cambodia is Buddhism. Buddhism is a flexible religion stressing that only aging, sickness and death are certain and unavoidable. Buddhism has no unique creed, no single authority, and no single sacred book. Monks are very highly regarded in Cambodia. There are some basic rules when working with **Buddhist Monks:**

- Wait until a Monk acknowledges you before you acknowledging him.
- For women it is forbidden to touch monks or even brush past his clothes. As a lady try not to make them feel uncomfortable by sitting next to them on public transport.
- A woman may not directly pass anything to a monk; you must place it on a table for him to pick it up or ask a male's assistance.

Please note: many teachers in schools are practicing monks. If they are in their robes please adhere to the rules of etiquette at all times!

Personal greetings

Placing the hands together and bowing ones head is the normal greeting in Cambodia although many people will now outstretch their arm to shake a tourist's

hand. After a few days you will learn the local way to greet people and earn respect by going that step further to immerse yourself into Cambodian culture. Never touch a female or offer your hand first!

Behavior

Cambodians believe that the head is holy and the feet are low and dirty. To touch someone on the head is an insult and to point your feet at someone is also an insult. Never show anger towards anyone. Do not show public emotions towards your partner, hugging and kissing is seen to be inappropriate public behavior. Try not to use your left hand for handshakes, eating or to exchange money or goods. Always ask permission before taking someone's photograph. Try to be courteous to hawkers selling gifts to tourists and a smile is usually all that is needed to be left alone. Please don't give money to panhandlers in tourist areas, we know this is often difficult but you are really supporting an exploitative industry by giving. Khmers will often give a small amount of money to beggars outside tourist strips where people have been forced into panhandling by grinding poverty.

Do avoid confrontations at any cost! No matter how big and strong you are you will never be a match for a knife or gun. People may misunderstand your attitude, feel threatened, insulted or provoked. Especially where alcohol is involved the slightest altercation may quickly turn into a life-threatening situation. Loss of face is a serious matter in Asia.

If you think you are right do not insist on defending your position. It is no loss of face for you to simply acknowledge the other person's point of view, let him/her 'win' and walk away safely. If you should be attacked, try to help from bystanders, police or similar authorities. Don't defend your belongings with your life. Things can be bought again unlike your health.

Our Cambodian staff will be happy to inform you on the safety of locations you may want to visit and to give you the appropriate cultural indoctrination. In case of trouble we are available 24/7.

6. Kit list

This is not an exhaustive list, just some helpful suggestions. If you have any questions about whether it is advisable to bring something or not, just ask!

Clothing

Please Note – if you have large feet (above UK 11), or are of larger than average build, you will find it difficult to find clothes in Cambodia, as Cambodians tend to be shorter, slimmer and have smaller feet than Westerners

- A white doctor's or nurses coat, preferably with your name embroidered.
- Scrub suit of your size and head cap
- Stethoscope
- Flip flops (Tongs) for the operating room
- Sandals or are very appropriate particularly in the raining season.

- Walking shoes or sneakers for more official occasions such as hospital rounds and activities.
- Waterproof jacket and/or umbrella (in wet season).
- Long sleeved shirt / t- shirts and long trousers to protect you from mosquitoes at night.
- Something warm (if Jan-Feb)
- A hat is a must
- Sunglasses.
- Mosquito Nets are a must if you overnight in the countryside.

Other useful items

- Camera - you'll want tons of memories and we'd like to see your photos too. Camera accessories are usually cheap in Cambodia, but not always up-to-date.
- Flashlight - batteries can be bought locally, but usually not the best quality.
- A travel adapter plug and transformer if needed (local current 220V)
- Pocket knife

Personal Hygiene Most of this can all be bought locally but we all have our own favorites so you may want to bring your own, or at least enough for a few days;

- **Mosquito repellent**
- **Shampoo**
- **Deodorant**
- **Sun lotion**
- **Tooth brush and tooth paste**
- **Scissors**
- **Razors and shaving gel / oil**
- **Female hygiene products**

Meds

- Small selection of plasters
- Antihistamine cream (handy for mosquito bites)
- Painkillers
- Re-hydration salts (these can be bought locally - 'Royal D' is especially easy to stomach)
- Pepto-Bismol as a prophylactic, one teaspoon or one tablet a.m. and p.m.
- Antiseptic wipes
- Any personal prescriptions
- We would advise you to bring any medicines with you as Cambodia has been effected by fake medicines been produced illegally.

Important documents

- Photocopy of your passport
- Passport photos, at least 4
- A copy of any prescriptions / your glasses prescription
- Medical card
- Copy of your insurance

- Your project details / coordinator contact information

7. Personal health

Mosquitoes They are ever-present, often more active in the evening, and can become a real nuisance. Malaria and Dengue fever is transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* which feeds during the day and early evening. Therefore it is important to have insect repellent on at all times of the day and night. Insect repellent containing over 10% DEET should repel mosquitoes effectively. Impregnating cotton garments with 30ml of DEET in 250ml of water makes them repellent. This is something you can do if you wish to, for example, a cotton sleeping bag liner. If you feel you would want to take prophylactic medications be aware that there are side effects!

Immunization

There are no immunizations required for travel in Cambodia but you may think of Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A & B, Japanese Encephalitis and Rabies in case of a dog bite. It is assumed that all volunteers are up-to-date with Diphtheria and Tuberculosis vaccines, which are normally given in childhood. You may want to contact your GP or local travel clinic to get advice on what immunizations you need.

Notes on the diseases mentioned above:

- *Tetanus is contracted through dirty cuts and scratches and causes a serious infection of the nervous system.*
- *Typhoid and hepatitis A are spread through contaminated food and water. Typhoid causes septicemia and hepatitis A causes liver inflammation and jaundice. In high risk areas you should be immunized if good hygiene is impossible.*
- *Tuberculosis is most commonly transmitted via droplet infection. Those going to countries where it is common, especially those mixing closely with the local population and those at occupational risk, e.g. health care workers, should ensure that they have previously been immunized. Check with your doctor or nurse.*
- *Diphtheria is also spread by droplet infection through close personal contact. Vaccination is advised if close contact with locals in risk areas is likely.*
- *Hepatitis B is spread through infected blood, contaminated needles and sexual intercourse. It affects the liver, causes jaundice and occasionally liver failure. Those visiting his risk areas for long periods or at occupational risk should be immunized.*
- *Rabies is spread through bites or licks on broken skin from an infected animal. It is always fatal. Vaccination is advised for those going to risk areas that will be remote from a reliable source of vaccine. Even when pre-exposure vaccines have been received urgent medical advice should be sought after any animal bite.*

Mosquito borne diseases

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease present throughout the country including the areas around the famous temples of Angkor Wat near Siem Reap. Risk is minimal in major cities, the nearby Mekong river delta and in the rice growing areas around the large inland lake of Tonle Sap, but high in remote jungle locations. You cannot be vaccinated against malaria.

Dengue fever is another serious, sometimes fatal disease with a peak occurrence in the rainy season. The course is usually self limited to 2 weeks. There is no known treatment other than symptomatic.

Japanese B encephalitis is a serious infection of the brain and vaccination is advised for those in risk areas unable to avoid mosquito bites, staying for long periods (e.g. more than 4 weeks) or visiting rural areas.

Precautions:

- Avoid mosquito bites by covering up with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers especially after sunset, using insect repellents on exposed skin, and, when necessary, sleeping under a mosquito net.
- If you travel in remote areas, carry an impregnated mosquito net with you.
- If you have been traveling in a high risk area and develop a fever seek medical attention promptly. Remember malaria can occur even up to one year after exposure.
- If traveling to high risk areas, remote from medical facilities, you may want to carry an emergency supply of malaria medication with you.
- Prophylactic malaria medications are often recommended, but you must remember that there may be occasionally severe side effects from such drugs.

Other illnesses: The most likely problem you'll have is stomach upset and diarrhea. This is caused by bacteria, their toxins and/or parasites in water or food. The locals have built up immunity to these problems but our stomachs are much more fragile and we have to take some precautions. An excellent way of prophylaxis is a teaspoon of Pepto-Bismol in the morning and at bedtime.

- Do not drink tap water - bottled drinking water is available everywhere.
- Use bottled water for brushing teeth.
- Always wash your hands after using the toilet and shaking hands
- Peel fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Do not eat raw vegetables other than in high end restaurants
- Make sure your food is served hot
- Do not eat raw meat or sausages
- Be cautious of ice in drinks; reputable restaurants have standard ice cubes, but be aware of any locally purchased supplies.

Many travelers fall ill to traveler's diarrhea if spending a long time abroad. The symptoms usually last for 48 hours and the most dangerous side effect is dehydration; drinking water and re-hydration salts will help. If the symptoms persist or you feel the need for help, then consult a doctor. (Your in country coordinator can help you to do this!). For any health problem contact MC staff for referrals.

9. Other Information Resources

Country Information (*CTRL + click on the red highlighted text*)

- **BACKGROUND NOTES**
- **MAPS AND DESTINATION INFORMATION**
- **READING GUIDE**
- **WEATHER INFORMATION**
- **WORLD FACTBOOK**

Literature

There many books out there that will give you an insight into Cambodia and Khmer culture, as well as the experiences of Khmer people during the Khmer Rouge Regime. You can purchase these books very cheaply in the cities, but be aware that they are unlicensed copies. Here are a few addressing the recent history:

- Cambodia 1975 to 1982 - Michael Vickery (*scholarly work based on thorough research*)
- First They Killed My Father - Loung Ung
- After They Killed My Father - Loung Ung
- Off The Rails in Phnom Penh - Amit Gilboa (*Fear & Loathing-esque*)
- Stay Alive, My Son - Pin Yathay
- Why Did They Kill?
- Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide - Alexander Laban Hinton (*Anthropological perspective*)
- Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot - David P. Chandler

10. Travel and Safety Links (*CTRL + click on the red highlighted text*)

Travel Preparation

[Passport Applications](#)

All Medicorps participants require proper passport and visa documentation. This is the best place to start, whether or not you are a U.S. citizen.

[Federal Aviation Administration](#)

Safety advisories, weather, and real-time airport status and delays are all available through this site.

[Transportation Security Administration](#)

All travelers should check this site frequently to avoid delays related to baggage issues and prohibited items. Baggage and carry-on limitations, tips for travel, and a wealth of other information can be found here.

[Travel Warnings](#)

Country-specific information of all types, from entry regulations to tips for traveling abroad, can be found here.

[Universal Currency Converter](#)

Daily exchange rates to help you decide how to budget your journey.

Health Information

[U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#)

Medicorps keeps updated via the CDC to identify current or emerging health threats in destination countries which might affect our workshop participants or their travel plans.

[World Health Organization](#)

This site provides detailed health information about destination countries as well as up-to-the-minute information on current health threats, recommended vaccinations, and other health tips for traveling internationally.

General Information

[Metric Conversion](#)

Most countries our delegates visit use the metric system.

[National Transportation Safety Board](#)

General information about air travel in the United States.

[U.S. State Department Travel Information](#)

Medicorps keeps updated via the State Department to determine current travel restrictions, warnings, and other information to help us provide a safe journey for our workshop participants.

[World Clock](#)

This site lists the time at major destinations around the world to help you and your family sort out the time difference and the best times to call.