



Cambodia 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Human Trafficking; Cyber; Drug Trafficking; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hurricanes; Counterfeiting; Bribery; Disease Outbreak; Fraud

East Asia & Pacific > Cambodia; East Asia & Pacific > Cambodia > Phnom Penh

5/2/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Endemic corruption within the Cambodian National Police (CNP) and the judicial system compounds issues of safety and security.

Post Crime Rating: Critical

Crime Threats

Criminal activity remained high in 2015, with approximately the same level of violence and frequency of incidents involving U.S. Embassy personnel as in previous years. The majority of the crimes are opportunistic and for financial gain. Although Westerners are specifically targeted for crimes motivated by financial gain, intentional violence/physical harm to the victim remains relatively low. Transportation centers, market areas, special events, the river front area, and crowded buses traveling to the provinces are prime areas for pickpockets.

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Pickpocketing and purse snatching are commonplace, especially while riding in tuk-tuks (three-wheeled vehicle commonly used for local transportation).

Motorbike thefts most often occur while the bike is being ridden. The bike is pushed over or the rider is struck by thieves. When the bike goes down, a thief jumps on it and rides away. These crimes, along with theft of cell phones and other petty thievery, continue at critical levels, and resistance is often met with escalating violence.

Violent crimes, especially armed robberies, continued to occur. While the chances of being a victim increase dramatically at night, daytime robberies are also very common. The frequency of armed robberies involving weapons continues at high levels. There were numerous reports of shootings and stabbings during armed robberies.

Many of these crimes are committed by youth gangs operating virtually unimpeded throughout Phnom Penh. These gangs can be violent and are known to attack each other over turf battles or perceived insults. Innocent civilian bystanders have been injured/killed in these confrontations.

Random gunfire incidents, as well as gunfire exchanges due to traffic accidents, also occurred throughout 2015.

National and transnational organized crime, especially involving human trafficking, continues to plague Cambodia.

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Public perception regarding the responsiveness and abilities of the Cambodian National Police and justice system often leads to civilian vigilante-style justice, particularly when a thief is caught in the act or shortly after the incident by neighbors or vendors in the vicinity of the crime.

Cybersecurity Issues

While cyber crime is not a major concern, crime involving technology (credit card cloning, ATM skimming) are slowly becoming more common place, as the country evolves from a strictly cash society.

Other Areas of Concern

Phnom Penh can be dangerous after hours, so late-night movement should be avoided. Although no establishments are “off-limits,” U.S. Embassy employees are prohibited from frequenting establishments that exist primarily to support the sex trade.

Embassy employees are also prohibited from ordering food items from local restaurants that contain marijuana or other illicit ingredients that are usually marketed under the term “happy,” particularly “happy pizza.”

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Travelers should exercise caution in crowded areas, especially in the bar district on Street 51.

Transportation-Safety Situation

While road infrastructure in major urban areas is acceptable, drivers must exercise extreme caution. Vehicles run the gamut from expensive sports cars, SUVs, and luxury vehicles to small motorbikes with multiple passengers and a wide range of cargo, hand-drawn vendor carts, bicycles, and pedicabs. Temporary visitors driving a vehicle must have a valid driver's license from their country of residence and local third-party insurance, while foreign residents must also have a locally-issued license.

Road safety is a major issue, with an average of five vehicle-related deaths per day. The majority of victims are motorcyclists, two-thirds of whom suffer head injuries. Although there has been increased regulation of vehicle safety standards, traffic accidents continue to be a significant threat and a primary cause of fatalities in Phnom Penh. Most Cambodians lack driver training, can be extremely negligent, and often drive at excessive speeds. Basic traffic rules are routinely violated, to include driving into oncoming traffic, failure to stop at intersections, failure to turn on lights at night. Lanes may also be obstructed by vehicles that are double or triple parked. As traffic congestion diminishes, speeds dramatically increase, very often with the driver under the influence of alcohol, contributing to the large number of vehicle accidents and fatalities.

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U.S. Embassy personnel are prohibited from driving outside of major urban areas at night, and rural roads often deteriorate due to rainy season flooding. Rural roads usually lack lighting, painted dividing lines, proper guard rails, and are plagued by other hazardous driving conditions (livestock, the lack of operational headlights on other vehicles).

Always remove the keys when you exit a vehicle. Keep car windows closed and doors locked. Vehicle break-ins are a frequent occurrence in Phnom Penh. Criminals will steal mirrors, spare tires, lights, trim, and accessories off of expensive vehicles.

Public Transportation Conditions

Travelers are encouraged to avoid transport by motorcycle taxis. When using taxis, it is advised not to use one that are already occupied.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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Concerns persist over the potential for Muslim extremist-related terrorist activity throughout the region. Very porous borders allow potentially easy travel by terrorists.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Most Cambodians regard Americans and Westerners in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners. Cultural and personal ties between the U.S. and Cambodia are strong and growing, and there is very little evidence of anti-American sentiment. There were no anti-American terrorist attacks reported in Cambodia during 2015.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

Cambodian political activities have turned violent, and the possibility for politically-motivated violence remains. Recent years have seen an increase in the intensity of demonstrations over labor, land, and political disputes. Security forces, whose members lacked meaningful training in controlling large demonstrations, were ill-equipped to deal with many of these situations, resulting in lack of enforcement in some cases and prompt escalation to deadly force in

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others.

Over the past decade, demonstrations had been limited to a designated city block near the U.S. Embassy, and they were tightly regulated. During political demonstrations in 2013, protestors became violent. In an effort to gain control, police/military units resorted to live fire, resulting in deaths and injuries. Following the disputed July 2013 national elections, however, demonstrations by opposition party activists and others attracted unprecedented numbers of supporters. Although opposition-related demonstrations remained peaceful, a bystander was shot during a clash between security forces and civilians at a road block in September 2013, and clashes took place between security forces and labor protestors in November 2013 and again in January 2014, resulting in numerous injuries and up to seven deaths.

While there was a marked reduction in 2015 demonstrations and political violence, tensions remain high. In November 2015, for example, pro-government demonstrators assaulted two opposition party parliamentary members outside of the National Assembly.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

During the monsoon season (May-October), heavy rains can cause sporadic flooding in parts of the country and along Phnom Penh city streets, making many roads and bridges impassable.

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Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

There is an abundance of pirated merchandise readily available from street vendors.

Privacy Concerns

The significant construction boom of high-rise buildings in Phnom Penh has led to an increase in privacy concerns for residents. Lack of zoning laws has resulted in tall buildings being constructed in residential areas, which inhibits privacy.

Drug-related Crimes

Cambodia has a significant and growing illegal drug problem that includes increasing levels of consumption, trafficking, and production. Recent trends indicate that Cambodia produces narcotics destined for local and regional markets. Arrests for drug trafficking continue at a steady pace.

Police Response

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Police are poorly paid, poorly trained, and lack the resources/equipment to perform their duties effectively.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police routinely stop foreigners and Cambodians alike for minor traffic violations, both real and alleged, and ask for bribes.

Crime Victim Assistance

Foreign victims of crime often have a difficult time navigating the confusing jurisdictional authorities to file an official report/complaint with the appropriate office. Even when victims are successful in identifying the correct office, police routinely charged a filing fee, resulting in many crimes going unreported and official crime statistics being artificially low. Even so, the U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens to report crimes to the local police station and to notify the Embassy's Consular Section.

(The country code for Cambodia is 855. If using the country code to call from overseas, drop the initial "0" of the telephone number.)

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EMS: 119

Phnom Penh (Municipal Central Command Post): 012-999-999/011-567-656

Siem Reap: 017-808-886

Sihanoukville: 077-222-277 or 097-7222-277

Police/Security Agencies

There are several private security services operating in Phnom Penh. None are associated with the U.S. Embassy Guard Force.

Medical Emergencies

Medical and ambulance services are minimal and well below U.S. standards but are improving. While most ambulance services are operated by private hospitals, they only provide transportation and not emergency treatment.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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Royal Phnom Penh Hospital (good ambulance service)

Tel: 023-991-000

SOS International Clinic (for medical and dental emergencies)

Tel: 023-216-911, 023-215-911, 023-216-959

Calmette Hospital (a local government hospital, not to Western standards)

Tel: 023-426-948

Note: Calmette Hospital is the primary teaching hospital and opened a new neurology building in 2015.

European Dental Clinic

Tel: 023-211-363, 023-362-656, 018-812-055

Naga Medical Center

Tel: 011-811-175

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

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Air ambulance services can be arranged out of Bangkok through SOS International or Royal Phnom Penh Hospital.

Recommended Insurance Posture

Travelers are strongly recommended to carry adequate medical evacuation insurance. The cost of a private medevac flight to Bangkok or Singapore can be extremely expensive.

Serious illnesses/injuries often require travelers to be medically evacuated where adequate medical attention is available. Such "medevac" services are very expensive and are generally available only to travelers who either have travel insurance that covers medevac services or who are able to pay for the service in advance. The cost for medical evacuation may range from U.S. \$40,000 to \$200,000.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Mosquito-borne diseases (dengue fever, malaria, Japanese encephalitis) are common and are considered major public health issues.

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During 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported at least 13 deaths stemming from the H5N1 virus, with a total of 24 confirmed cases, making Cambodia the hardest hit country in the world for that year.

There is a high prevalence of tuberculosis and hepatitis among the general population.

The prevalence of HIV is concentrated in high-risk groups.

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/cambodia?s_cid=ncezid-dgmg-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Phnom Penh Country Council meets quarterly. The points of contact are:

RSO Rebecca A. Dockery: Tel (office): 855-23-728-169, dockeryra@state.gov

ARSO Kurt Smolek: Tel (office): 855-23-728-207, smolekK@state.gov

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To reach OSAC's East Asia Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh

#1, Street 96, Sangkat Wat Phnom

Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh

Embassy Contact Numbers

(The country code for Cambodia is 855. If using the country code to call from overseas, drop the initial "0" of the telephone number.)

Embassy Switchboard: 023-728-000

Post One: 023-728-111

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Consular: 023-728-197

Regional Security Office: 023-728-110

Embassy after-hours Duty Officer: 012-814-800

Website: <http://cambodia.usembassy.gov/>

Embassy Guidance

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP enrollment gives U.S. citizens the latest security updates and makes it easier for the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate to contact them in an emergency. Those without Internet access may enroll directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department's website, where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for Cambodia. For additional information, refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" on the State Department's website. Contact the U.S. Embassy for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on Twitter and Facebook, and download our free Smart Traveler iPhone App to have travel information at your fingertips.

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Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

There have been numerous reports of people who target unwitting English speaking tourists by enticing them with claims of having discovered a system to beat the local casinos in card play. Victims are generally courted by the criminal actors with invitations to a residence to sample authentic local Khmer cuisine. Once there, the victims are encouraged to play a few hands of cards with real money. While the victim is allowed to win at first, the tables are reversed as the scam is enacted, ending with the victims being taken to an ATM to withdraw money for imagined debts owed. In nearly all of these instances, the victims had their cell phones taken from them at some point at the residence, and not only felt duress, but that they were not free to leave until the captors obtained what they deemed a satisfactory amount of money.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

U.S. citizens are advised to remain vigilant to their surroundings for their individual safety and security while traveling throughout Cambodia.

Avoid giving money to beggars and children, who are typically forced to beg by their parents to support a drug habit. Word spreads fast, and you may soon find yourself under siege by

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other people wanting money. Many are pickpockets working in groups. Keep a low profile. Report any incidents to the Embassy's Consular Section.

Individuals are advised to wear and carry only that which they are willing to lose and to take the path of least resistance if confronted by an armed robber. Avoid wearing expensive looking jewelry. Do not resist if you are the victim of a robbery. Criminals may use force, to include deadly force, when confronted with a victim who resists. Westerners have reported being threatened at gunpoint despite complying with the robbers. Avoid carrying wallets or passports in back pockets. If possible, purses should not be carried. If a purse or bag is carried, keep it closed and in front of the wearer.

Passports and ID should be photocopied and the original kept someplace safe. Do not walk the streets at night. Avoid dimly illuminated areas. Socialize at reputable restaurants and bars.

Credit cards are rarely used, except at major international hotels and restaurants, and it is best not to carry them with you.

Install metal grilles on all doors/windows. Keep all doors/windows closed and locked. Ensure the residence has adequate lighting around the perimeter. Know how to use alarm systems. Hire 24-hour guard protection from a reputable company. Americans who follow sound personal security procedures, including employing 24-hour residential guards and implementing basic physical security measures, are victimized far less often than the general population.

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