



## About Phnom Penh



Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, sits at the confluence of the Mekong, Tonle Sap, and Bassac rivers, a location that has shaped its history and culture for centuries. Founded in the 15th century, the city rose to prominence when King Ponhea Yat established it as the royal capital. Over time, it flourished under French colonial rule, which left behind elegant boulevards and colonial architecture that still mark the cityscape. Though Phnom Penh endured hardship during the Khmer Rouge era, today it has reemerged as a vibrant hub of politics, culture, and commerce.

Culturally, Phnom Penh is a blend of Khmer traditions and modern influences. The Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda highlight Cambodia's regal heritage, while Buddhist temples such as Wat Phnom reflect the city's spiritual life. The National Museum preserves ancient Khmer art, offering insight into the Angkorian legacy. Modern art spaces and youthful nightlife add to its evolving identity.

Food is central to Phnom Penh's culture. Local markets overflow with fresh herbs, tropical fruits, and street foods like kuy teav (noodle soup) and nom banh chok (rice noodles with fish curry). Upscale restaurants reinterpret traditional Khmer dishes, while French cafés nod to colonial heritage, making Phnom Penh a true culinary crossroads.

## Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge

Pol Pot, born Saloth Sâr in 1925, led the Khmer Rouge, a radical communist movement that seized power in Cambodia in 1975 after years of civil war. Seeking to create a classless agrarian society, the regime emptied cities, banned religion, abolished money, and forced millions into rural labor camps. Intellectuals, monks, and perceived “enemies” were executed or left to die from starvation and disease. Between 1.5 and 2 million people — about a quarter of Cambodia’s population — perished during this period, now remembered as the Cambodian Genocide. The Khmer Rouge was overthrown by a Vietnamese invasion in 1979, and Pol Pot died in 1998 without ever facing trial.

If you have just **48 hours in Phnom Penh**, you’ll want to balance history, culture, food, and relaxation. Here’s an **optimized itinerary**:

### Accommodation

#### Luxury (5-star & Iconic)

- **📍 The Reverie Saigon** Ultra-luxury, Italian-inspired design, rooftop pool, incredible views over the Saigon River.
- **📍 Park Hyatt Saigon** Classic, colonial-style luxury with lush gardens, great dining, and spa.
- **📍 Hôtel des Arts Saigon - MGallery Collection** Chic, art-inspired boutique luxury with a rooftop pool and bar.

#### Boutique & Mid-Range

- **📍 Fusion Suites Sai Gon** Minimalist, wellness-focused hotel with in-room kitchenettes, spa treatments included.
- **📍 Villa Sông Sài Gòn** Riverside boutique hotel in District 2, peaceful retreat away from the chaos, but with a free boat shuttle into town.
- **📍 The Myst Dong Khoi** Stylish design, rooftop pool, and rooms with quirky Vietnamese touches, great location near the Opera House.

#### Budget & Cool Hostels

- **📍 The Hideout Hostel Saigon** Social backpacker hostel with a lively atmosphere.

- **📍 The Common Room Project** Boutique hostel with a quiet, community feel (not a party spot).
- **📍 MEANDER Saigon** Modern capsule hotel + co-working vibe, great for digital nomads.

## Day 1: History & Culture

### Morning

- **📍 Royal Palace of Cambodia** (8 AM – 10 AM) – Explore Cambodia's royal residence with its golden spires and the stunning Silver Pagoda.
- **📍 National Museum of Cambodia** (10:30 AM – 12 PM) – See an impressive collection of Khmer art and artifacts.

### Lunch

- **📍 Friends the Restaurant** A social enterprise serving excellent Cambodian and fusion dishes.

### Afternoon

- **📍 Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum** (1:30 PM – 3 PM) – A sobering but essential visit to understand Cambodia's tragic history.
- **📍 Choeung Ek Genocidal Center** (7:30 AM – 5 PM) – A memorial site about 30 minutes from the city, offering a deeper historical perspective.

### Sunset & Evening

- **📍 Preah Sisowath Quay** (5:30 PM) – Walk along the Mekong Riverfront.
- **Drinks at the 📍 The Foreign Correspondents' Club Of South Asia** Classic spot with river views.
- **Dinner at 📍 ភោជនីយដ្ឋាន រំដេង - Romdeng Restaurant** Another social enterprise restaurant serving delicious Khmer cuisine, including tarantula if you're adventurous.
- **Optional Nightlife** – Check out **📍 Bassac Lane** for trendy bars or try a rooftop bar like Eclipse Sky Bar.

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## Day 2: Local Life & Hidden Gems

### Morning

- **Sunrise at** ♡ **Wat Phnom Daun Penh** (6 AM – 7 AM) – The city's founding temple, great for an early-morning visit.
- ♡ **Central Market** (7:30 AM – 9 AM) – Art Deco market with souvenirs, jewelry, and local snacks.
- **Breakfast at** ♡ **The Shop Tuol Korkor** ♡ **Backyard Cafe** Great Western and Khmer-style breakfasts.

### Midday

- ♡ **Toul Tompong Market (Russian Market)** (10 AM – 11:30 AM) – A fun shopping spot for textiles, handicrafts, and antiques.
- **Brunch at** ♡ **Eleven One Kitchen - BKK1** Organic Cambodian food in a garden setting.

### Afternoon

- **Boat Cruise on the Mekong** (2 PM – 4 PM) – Private or group tours available, some with drinks and snacks.
- ♡ **Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center** (4:30 PM – 5:30 PM) – For those interested in Cambodia's media, history, and culture.

### Evening & Departure

- **Final Dinner at** ♡ **Malis (Norodom Boulevard)** Upscale Cambodian cuisine with a modern twist. Malis is in the heart of the city's historic district, near notable landmarks such as the Independence Monument and the Royal Palace. The restaurant is celebrated for its serene courtyard setting, complete with lush greenery, a flowing fish pond, and elegant Khmer architecture framing both indoor and outdoor seating. Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner—from early morning to late evening (around 6:30 am to 10:30 pm)



## Where to Go for Street Food

- Russian Market (Tuol Tompoung) – Famous for breakfast and daytime street eats: kuy teav (noodle soups), grilled pork with rice, fresh sugarcane juice.
- Central Market (Psar Thmei) – Inside and around the Art Deco market, you'll find quick snacks, fried noodles, and tropical fruit.
- Night Market (Phnom Penh Night Market, Riverside) – Best for evenings: skewers, noodles, spring rolls, and a picnic-style atmosphere on mats.
- Street 51 & Street 63 (BKK1 area) – After dark, you'll see pop-up BBQ stalls and late-night eats.
- O'Russey Market – More local, authentic, and less touristy.

### Street Foods to Try

- **Nom Banh Chok** – Rice noodles with green fish curry, often called “Khmer noodles.”



- **Kuy Teav** – A fragrant rice noodle soup with pork, beef, or seafood, topped with herbs and lime.



- **Bai Sach Chrouk** – Grilled pork with broken rice, a popular breakfast dish.



- Lort Cha – Short stir-fried rice noodles with beef, egg, and veggies.



- Grilled Skewers (Sach Ang) – Pork, beef, or chicken grilled over charcoal with pickled veggie sides.



- Fried Insects – Crickets, grasshoppers, and even tarantulas — crunchy and seasoned with chili and garlic.



- Num Pang – Cambodia's version of the bánh mì sandwich, filled with pâté, pickled veggies, and meats.



- Fresh Sugarcane Juice – Pressed right in front of you, refreshing in the heat



## Getting Around

Grab is generally the best and easiest way to get around Phnom Penh these days, especially for short stays. Here's why:

### Why Grab Works Well

- **Reliable & Transparent Pricing** – No haggling with tuk-tuk or taxi drivers. You see the fare upfront.
- **Safety & Tracking** – You can share your trip and the route is GPS-tracked.
- **Choice of Vehicles** – Options include GrabCar (air-con cars), GrabTukTuk, or even GrabBike (motorbike taxis, fastest in traffic).
- **Cash or Card** – Pay however you like.

[Grab.com Apps on the App Store](#)

[Grab - Taxi & Food Delivery - Apps on Google Play](#)

## A Sim card

### Main Providers

- **Smart Axiata** – Most popular with travelers, fast 4G/LTE, good coverage in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville.
- **Cellcard** (CamGSM) – Strong local network, reliable in rural areas.
- **Metfone** – Good nationwide coverage, especially remote areas, but service can be slower.

## Cost & Packages

- SIM card: usually \$1–2 (sometimes free with package).
- Data plans: around \$5–10 for 7–15 GB valid 30 days.
- Example: Smart often offers \$6 for 8 GB plus calls/texts.

## Where to Buy

- At **Phnom Penh Airport (PNH)** – After baggage claim, you'll find official counters for Smart, Cellcard, and Metfone. Easiest if you want instant connectivity.
- Phone shops / kiosks in the city – Almost everywhere in Phnom Penh, but stick to official stores if you want proper registration.

## What You Need

- **Passport** – Cambodian law requires SIM registration. At airport counters, staff will take a photo of your passport and handle setup.

### Tips

- Grab a SIM at the airport for convenience; prices are similar to the city.
- If you travel to rural areas, Cellcard or Metfone may perform better. For city use and speed, Smart is usually best.
- eSIMs are available via apps like **Airalo**, but local SIMs are cheaper with more data.