

CAMBODIA: PAINFUL PAST AND HAPPY FUTURE



The historically unfortunate and very violent past of Cambodia is the first thing many tourists associate with this diverse country. Local people try to bury the past and open themselves up more to the future and the rest of the world. However, the drastic communist regime had a bloody impact on almost every family in Cambodia.

Tourism is one of the major income industries and Cambodia's officials try to make the most out of it. The country's capital, Phnom Penh is gradually attracting more and more tourists. The city of 13 million people is quite striking and shocking at once. Thousands of little children wonder around the streets and beg for money; what is most surprising about them is their perfect English.

The level of services in Phnom Penh is rather high. Tourists may stay at 5-star hotels or backpacker's places for some \$ 3 per night. The entertainment possibilities are wide and locals are happy to assist whenever they can.

Courageous visitors who wish to learn about the horrific past of this country head for the S21, or the Tuol Sleng [Genocide](#) Museum. This former high-school was turned into a security prison. It is a chilling experience which however contributes to the overall understanding and appreciation of this country and its people.

To balance out the deep impact of the recent brutal history, travelers should head for the former capital of Angkor. It is a haven of outstanding temples which - so far - remain undiscovered by the huge tourist crowds. The marvelous Angkor Wat temple is still considered one of this world's wonders. The very demanding construction lasted more than 30 years - yet the result is well worth the praise.

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