



## TOUR INFORMATION FOR CAMBODIA

*These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.*

**ENTERING CAMBODIA:** Please ensure that the passport you are travelling with is the same one you supplied us with on your booking form.

United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for at least six months beyond the date of departure, and a one-month Tourist Visa. The visa must be applied for individually. At the time of writing The Royal Embassy of Cambodia is located at 64 Brondesbury Park, Willesden Green, London, NW6 7AT. (Tel: 020-8451-7850). Their website is <http://www.cambodianembassy.org.uk> Citizens of other countries may need a visa and should check their nearest Cambodian embassy. It is essential that you allow sufficient time for the visa to be processed.

Although we always advise clients to obtain a visa BEFORE the tour, it is possible to obtain a one month tourist visa on arrival. At present the cost is about USD \$20 and a passport photograph is required. If you do not have a passport photograph, you will be charged an extra USD \$2, and the process will take a little longer.

There are visa service agencies that can provide you with an information pack on how to obtain a visa. They will also process your application for you however they will charge a handling and processing fee. One such company is Trailfinders Visa Service <http://visas.trailfinders.com> (Tel: 0207 368 1504).

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

**INTRODUCTORY MEETING:** There will be an introductory meeting at 18.00 in the lobby of our first night's hotel, followed by dinner. This informal meeting gives the leader the opportunity to introduce everyone to each other and to let you know generally what to expect on the trip. Please do your best to attend. You may wish to consider arriving a day early to ensure you can attend this meeting.

**LANGUAGE:** The official language of Cambodia is Khmer (Cambodian) – ninety percent of Cambodians speak it. At least a little English is spoken by many younger people. French, the language of the colonists of Indochina, is still spoken by some older people.

**CURRENCY:** The local currency is the Riel (r). The Riel is accepted in remote areas but the de facto and preferred currency is the U.S. dollar. Change is often given in Riel. Visa, MasterCard, Diners Club and American Express are accepted at the larger hotels. ATMs dispensing US dollars are available in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh.

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**CLIMATE:** Cambodia is generally hot with high temperatures approaching 90° F (32° C) and the forests do not offer a great deal of shade. Night temperatures can be warm in the north but generally cool enough, 70° F (22° C) for a light jacket. Humidity averages from 70-80% year round; our visit in December coincides with a period of lower humidity at just below 75%. It is unlikely that we'll encounter any rain at this time of year; that said, there is always a possibility.

**PACE OF THE TOUR:** We'll be in the field at or before dawn (around 06.30) so that we can hear the birds singing as the day starts up. For some very critical species such as the Giant Ibis, this may be our only opportunity to discover if they are present or not. Typically we'll return to our hotel or lodge for lunch and then rest up during the heat of the day when bird activity is virtually nil, before going out again in the late afternoon.

Our longest walks will be at Bokor, in coolish climes, and at Tmatboey when we search for the Giant Ibis. At Tmatboey, we'll depart before dawn and walk through short grassland on indistinct trails, the area is flat but the surface can be very uneven at times. It is important to bring a flashlight, and a hiking stick may be helpful. The distance we will walk depends on how quickly we find the ibis but will be between one to three miles. On one day, we will explore Angkor and there will be opportunities to either bird around or explore the ruins, depending upon your interests. We will take a boat trip at Kratie where we use two six seater motorized boats to explore the Mekong River with its many islands.

Otherwise we'll be walking on level ground either on paved or unpaved roads or tracks and occasionally trails. There is some walking through grassland but very little uphill walking even at Bokor, where we will be on a plateau. Where there is, this will always be at a gentle pace with regular stops.

**HEALTH:** **It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting.** Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

There is no risk of Yellow Fever transmission in Cambodia and therefore a Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is not required to enter Cambodia, unless you are travelling via another infected country. Click here for a map of the regions affected:

[http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-details.php?cnt=39#Vaccine\\_recommendations](http://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-details.php?cnt=39#Vaccine_recommendations)

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. It is further recommended that most travellers have protection against Hepatitis A and Typhoid.

Malaria preventative and up-to-date inoculations are strongly recommended as malaria is present, including the chloroquine-resistant strain. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/malaria/prevention>

Insects such as mosquitoes and sand-flies can be a problem although scarce in the dry season. Insect repellent (preferably with a high percentage of diethyltoluamide, DEET) will provide adequate protection.

Tap water should be avoided. In smaller towns and rural areas, assume the water is unsafe and stick with bottled or boiled drinks. This will be provided throughout the tour. Sanitation throughout Cambodia is relatively good compared to most tropical areas of the world.

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It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website [www.masta-travel-health.com](http://www.masta-travel-health.com)

**ACCOMMODATION:** At Tmatboey and Prey Veng we'll stay in small lodges with individual huts and private if very simple bathrooms. The beds are equipped with good quality bedding and mosquito netting. Towels are provided. The toilets are western style but with a bucket flush. There is solar powered electricity available but we cannot guarantee that it will be sufficient for regenerating batteries. *Please do not wear your shoes inside the room or the dining area.* These accommodations are very simple yet peaceful and refreshing.

Elsewhere our hotels are modern and comfortable with all the amenities one would expect.

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Laundry services are available at most places. It is more expensive at the larger hotels. At Tmatboey the local women provide a very good, inexpensive laundry service and by using this you help the local economy!

**ELECTRICITY:** 230 volts, 50 cycles. Two types of outlet are typically found – the North American/Japanese 2-blade flat pin outlet and the European 2-pin outlet. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

**FOOD:** The food in Cambodia is always fresh and tasty. The staple is rice, and this will be served with every meal. If you do not like rice, not to worry, there is enough food in the form of vegetables and meat. Most of our meals will consist of chicken or fish dishes as well as a variety of vegetable dishes. Vegetarians can be catered for but please understand that this is a rather foreign concept to most Cambodians. Breakfasts are usually Western style with coffee, bread and eggs. At the remoter lodges though, breakfast will be fried rice or similar. Western food is available at our hotels in the bigger towns and cities.

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

**DRINKS:** Tap water should be avoided. In smaller towns and rural areas, assume the water is unsafe and stick with bottled or boiled drinks. This will be provided throughout the tour. A bottle will be provided to fill from a larger water container; please bring your own bottle if you prefer. Sanitation throughout Cambodia is relatively good compared to most tropical areas of the world. Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea.

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**INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS:** Internet access is generally available in almost every corner of the world, and wireless (Wi-Fi) is increasingly common in hotels, airports, restaurants and cafes. In the hotels in the main towns free Wi-Fi is generally available. Most require a password which we'll receive on check-in.

Mobile phones can be useful while on tour but keep in mind that many countries operate on a different cellular technology. Your phone may be incompatible with the local system, so please check with your local carrier. Fortunately, with the advent of smartphones, it is easy to download applications such as Skype or Google Voice which can make calling home free or very inexpensive. Another option is replacing the data ("SIM") card in your phone in-country. Two or three providers have shop fronts at the exit of the airport. The SIM cards, including data, are very cheap. You can expect to pay from \$5 to \$25 depending on the amount of data you require. If you wish to use this option you will need to check that your smart phone has a SIM card slot (usually located behind the battery or on the right side of your iPhone).

**FIELD CLOTHING:** Asian forest birds are shy. Please avoid bright colours or loud, crackling plastics. Bring light-weight and predominantly perspiration-wicking field clothing; a light sweater; a hat with a good brim to keep the sun off while you are in the field or seated in a canoe; a waterproof poncho, jacket or similar; and comfortable boots with rugged soles. Casual dress is acceptable throughout. This is a rather conservative country so it is not considered acceptable for men to go shirtless. Neat casual clothing is recommended for meal times. The following items are basic:

Perspiration wicking shirts	Light-weight rain clothes
Light-weight wind-proof jacket	Sturdy walking shoes
Sweater or heavy sweatshirt	Sun hat
Long trousers, suitable for hot, sweaty conditions	

**MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:** You may find the following items useful:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack/day pack	Sunglasses and sunscreen
Insect repellent	Bandanna
Small travel umbrella	Laundry soap/Laundry bag
Water bottle	Pocket knife with bottle opener
Personal medication	Earplugs if you are a light sleeper
Small LED headlamp or torch (with spare batteries) for early morning walks and for use in some of our accommodation.	

**Optional:** Although a telescope and tripod may be useful at a couple of sites there will be no opportunities for scanning through ducks, waders or gulls as the vast majority of birding will be within forest where binoculars are sufficient and a telescope a hindrance. The leader will always carry a telescope where necessary. Taking a camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), and a field guide would be useful.

**Note:** The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry.

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This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

**LUGGAGE:** Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

**LEADER'S EQUIPMENT:** The leader will have a telescope, sound playback equipment, a spotlight, a laser pointer, a first aid kit and copies of the more important field guides and references and maps.

**TRANSPORT:** Transportation is by a small minibus or 4-wheel drive vehicles suited to the terrain. There are no internal flights. There are several long drives but these are broken by stops for birdwatching and rest stops. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in our tour vehicle. We cannot guarantee that couples will always be seated together, although we will try to accommodate on most days. There is one day where we will use boats to get to our birding spot (see above). Life jackets are provided.

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Scenery shots will be easy to obtain but it will be difficult to photograph birds. Taking good photographs of forest birds is very difficult as light is often limiting.

Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. Be sure to bring enough memory storage if taking digital photographs. If you wish to use a digital camera to digiscope, please make sure you also bring a telescope and tripod. The leader's telescope will not be available for this activity.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. We suggest you carry such items as part of your carry-on luggage. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency or the cancellation of a trip. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

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**SMOKING:** Smoking is not permitted in the mini-buses or when the group is gathered for meals, checklist, etc. If you share a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room.

**TIPPING:** All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Robson, Craig. *A Guide to the Birds of Southeast Asia*. Bloombury, 2014. This is the field guide to use on tour in Cambodia.

Arlott, Norman. *Birds of South-East Asia*. Collins, 2015. A new field guide that strangely also covers parts of China and Taiwan.

Francis, Charles M. *A Guide to the Mammals of Southeast Asia*. Princeton University Press, NJ, 2008.

Keown, D. *Buddhism – a very short introduction*. OUP: Oxford, 2000. Quite useful when travelling in this country so influenced by Buddhism, and compact enough to fit in your pocket.

McNeely, J. and P. S. Wachtel. *Soul of the Tiger*, 1988. An exceptional book, quite unlike anything ever written. Put together by two international conservationists who know the people and nature of Asia as well as any.

Rooney, D. *Angkor – An Introduction to the Temples*. Passport Books. 1997. Excellent – easy to read and superbly illustrated.

**OBTAINING BOOKS:** Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd  
Tel: 01803-865913  
[www.nhbs.co.uk](http://www.nhbs.co.uk)

WildSounds  
Tel: 01263 741100  
[www.wildsounds.co.uk](http://www.wildsounds.co.uk)

**MAPS:** Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop  
Tel: 01684 593146  
[www.themapshop.co.uk](http://www.themapshop.co.uk)

Stanfords  
Tel: 020 7836 1321  
[www.stanfords.co.uk](http://www.stanfords.co.uk)

**ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB:** The Oriental Bird Club publications (*Forktail* and their Bulletin) regularly include information about Vietnam. Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at [www.orientalbirdclub.org](http://www.orientalbirdclub.org)

**FINAL DEPARTURE INFORMATION:** Final departure information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions about the trip, please contact us.