

## Introduction of Kampong Thom Province



Kampong Thom is Cambodia's second largest province by area. Its capital is named Kampong Thom, a picturesque town on the banks of the Stung Saen River. The Sambor temple and Prei Kuk temple are the two main temples in Kompong Thom as well as other less significant Angkorian sites. Kompong Thom was a very powerful capital in Southeast Asia during the Funan period. Later on, during the French rule, the province was home to a large group named the Stieng, but they have long been assimilated into Khmer society. Kampong Pous Thom was the original name of the present called Kampong Thom. Because originally long time ago, at the dock of the Sen River next to a big natural lake, there was a big cave with a pair of big snakes inside. The people living around this area usually saw these big snakes every Buddhist Holiday.

Time after that, the snakes disappeared, and the people of that area called it Kampong Pous Thom. Then, only short words Kampong Thom. During the French colony in Cambodia, the French ruled and divided Cambodian territory into provinces, and named them according to the spoken words of the people Kampong Thom Province. The provincial capital Kampong Thom is another bustling town on the banks of the Stung Sen River. The town itself is strategically located on the National Highway No 6 between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. It's more a stopover to have a break from driving long distances or to eat something on the way to Siem Reap or Phnom Penh, than a very touristic place. Despite the town itself people come to explore the pre-Angkorian Chenla capital Sambor Prei Kuk, the remote temples of Preah Khan and Prasat Preah Vihear.

## Geography

Kampong Thom is a province located at the central point of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The province has a total land area of 15,061 square kilometres divided into 8 districts, 81 communes and 737 villages. The province borders in the North with Preah Vihear and Siem Reap, to the East with Kratie, to the South with Kampong Cham and to the West with Kampong Chhnang.



The province is divided into two parts:

- Eastern part of National Road 6: Covers 70% surface consisting of forests and plateaus, which are rich in natural resources for a good and profitable agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry.
- Western part of National Road 6: Covers 30% surface consisting of plain area extending to the famous Tonle Sap Lake. This area is one of the best areas in Cambodia for rice cultivation and fishing to support the needs of the province and to additionally export them to other areas or Countries. Two of the three core areas in Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve are located in Kampong Thom: Boeng Chhmar (14,560 hectares), and Stung Saen (6,355 hectares).

## Kampong Thom History

Kampong Pous Thom (*Port of the Great Snake*) was the original name of the present province called Kampong Thom. Originally long time ago, at the dock of the Sen River next to a lake, there was a big cave with a pair of big snakes inside. The people living around this area usually saw these big snakes every Buddhist holiday. Time after that, the snakes disappeared, and the people of that area called it Kampong Pous Thom. Then, only short words, Kampong Thom came later. During the French colony in Cambodia, the French ruled and divided Cambodian territory into provinces, and named them according to the spoken words of the people.

Kampong Thom was a powerful capital in south-east Asia during the Funan period. Kampong Thom has Prasat Sambor Prei Kuk that was famous during the Chenla Era.

## Climate

The country has a tropical climate warm and humid. In the monsoon season, abundant rain allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops. This year-round tropical climate makes Cambodia ideal for developing tourism. Travelers need not to fear natural disasters such as erupting volcanoes or earthquakes, and the country is not directly affected by tropical storms.

Climate: Cambodia can be visited throughout the year. However, those plans to travel extensively by road should be avoided the last two months of the rainy season when some countryside roads may be impassable. The average temperature is about 27 degrees Celsius; the minimum temperature is about 16 degrees. December and January are the coolest months, whereas the hottest is April.

General information about the provincial climate:

- Cool season: November - March (20-28c)
- Hot season: March - May (30c -35c)
- Rainy season: May - October (23-30c, with humidity up to 90%)

At this time of year it rarely rains in the morning: most precipitation comes in the afternoon, and even then, only sporadically. Rainfall varies considerably from area to area, whereas the seaward slopes of the Southwest highlands (Kompong Som and Kampot provinces) receive more than 5,000 mm of rain per annum, the central lowlands average only about 1,400 mm.

## Population

The total population of Kampong Thom is 708,398 person or 4.5% of the total population (14,363,519 person in Cambodia, 2007, provincial government data) with a growth rate of 2.4%, which is consisting of 343,478 person or 48.3% who are male

and 364,920 person or 51.7% who are female. The above number also consists of 517,072 persons or 85.0% who are farmers, 28,150 persons or 4.60% who are fishermen, 91,248 persons or 15% who are traders, 5,884 person or 0.97% who are government's officers.

## Economy

Kampong Thom is also a province, rich in tourism potentials to attract national and international tourists such as the exotic lakes, rivers, forests, mountains and more than 200 ancient temples. Much of Kampong Thom is located on the floodplain of Lake Tonle Sap. In 2003-04 it was a significant harvester of wild fish (18,800 tons) and the fourth largest producer of fish through aquaculture in Cambodia (1,800 tons). Most fish-raising is home production, with a growing segment devoted to rice field aquaculture.

Kampong Thom is also one of the largest producers of cashew nuts in Cambodia, with 6,371 hectares under production. The Riel is the local currency. However, the US Dollar is accepted (4,000 Riels=1U.S.D) and it is best to carry small denominations. Credit cards, Traveler's Cheques and foreign currencies are accepted in major hotels, souvenir shops and banks. Newly installed Credit Card Teller distribution machines are now available in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh.

## Shopping



**Stone Handicraft:** Located at Kor Koh Village, Kor Koh Commune, San Tuk District in 16-km distance from Provincial Town of Kampong Thom on National Highway No 6. The craftsmen take the rocks from the food of San Tuk Mountain to make statues and various figures for house decoration. This stone handicraft is served for domestically and internationally target markets. Beside stone handicraft, Kampong Thom has other handicrafts like Krama, Silk shirts, traditional Khmer clothing and handbags. There is also the common markets with all you may need (food, garments, etc.)

## Tourist Attractions in Kampong Thom

### Phnom San Tuk (San Tuk Mountain)

Phnom San Tuk is a cultural and natural site located in Kor Koh village, Ko Koh commune, San Tuk district, about 17 kilometers south of Kampong Thom provincial town. The site included four mountains: Phnom Srah Kmao or Phnom Tbeng, Phnom Penhum or Phnom Kraper, Phnom Champa and Phnom San Tuk.



Since the ancient time to the present, Phnom San Tuk Mountain has been called in many names as below:

- Phnom Thom (in history)
- Phnom Arth San Tuk (In history)
- Phnom Chorm Chong Kiri
- Phnom Krop Tuk
- Phnom Preah Bat Chann Tuk

The ancient heritages on the top of the mountain:

- Many Buddha statues were carved from great mountain rock including three big Buddha statues reaching Nirvana, each has more than 10-meter length.
- Prasat Touch of pyramid shape, made of sandstone, has three stories and three-meter height, and is located next to the ancient wooden temple (presently, it is made of cement) with a rectangular pond (10m x 4m).
- Preah Bat Chann Tuk statue was carved on the stone shaped as food of a sacred human, and there are many other small sculptures. By the stories, the construction and the statues were erected during the reign of Preah Ponhea Dharma Reacha (1474-1494) and have been maintained until now.

Phnom San Tuk has changed names to Chorm Chong Kiri and Phnom Krop Tuk. Chan Dare or Chan Chare are called two pieces of stone by local people that join all together in marked symbol and made in small hole, the passenger arrived there, they always dropped cash coins (ancient coins) into this small hole. When cash coins was dropped in, it make soft weak voice like a voice of the birds sing or music with happiness. So they did that since ancient period.

### Prasat Andet Temple



Prasat Andet is located about 27 kilometers northwest of Provincial Town of Kampong Thom, in Prasat Village, Sankor Commune, Kampong Svay District, Kampong Thom Province. The temple was built in second half of 7th century (627-707) during the reign of King Jayavarman I to dedicate to God Harihara, in Kampong Preah style and made of brick with masonry, laterite and sandstone. Prasat Andet had isolated plan, built on a 5.30-meter height artificial hill, and was form in rectangular shape with 7.50-meter length, 5.50-meter width and 1-meter thick (interior to exterior). It was facing to the East. The lintel of Prasat Andet was carved in the garlands and carefully done in the traditional khmer style.

The coronet (2.22 lengths) was ornamented around by the rings decorated, and at between of the rings we decorated with garland and bulb flowers surrounded, which are joining each other by the end of the decorations. In original former time, this temple contained Harihara Statue standing on a decorative Royal throne, and the statue was brought to be kept at Phnom Penh National Museum. The Harihara statue is a body side's Siva and another body side's Vishnu. The framed door had 1 m width, 2m height and 0.20m thick. On the northern framed door, we saw the marks of a cloven hoof of tiger cat that used to

go to the upper box of the door, which remained the marks until now.

### Bird Sanctuary of Boeng Tonle Chmar:

Boeng Chmar contains fishing lot 5 and lot 6, and is 30km far from Stong District town of Kampong Thom Province, there were villages of Nesat (fishing village), Kamong Kdei, Svay Kor, Mo Doung, Kampong Bradom and Msa Trang Tbong in Peam Bang Commune. The people living in this area with floating houses that are moving up and down according to the water levels in the jungle and flooded forest. The bird sanctuary of Boeng Chmar covers a land area of 400 hectares having an interconnecting network of water channels along the bank of Boeng Kla Lake, rich in flooded forests. This area is connected by two big river tributaries (Stong and Stung Chi Kreng) flowing down to Boeng Chmar. Boeng Chmar is the sanctuary for many kinds of birds.

### Prasat Kok Rokar (Preah Theat)



Prasat Kok Rokar is located in Rokar village, Srayov Commune, Stung Sen District, Kampong Thom province in a 14-km distance from Provincial Town of Kampong Thom. The temple was built of sandstone and laterite in Khleung style at the end of 11th century during the reign of King Suryavarman I to dedicate to Siva.

This isolated sanctuary (dimension: 6m x 5m; 8m height) was built on the hill and faced to the east. The body of the central temple has conical form with porches opening to the east, and a door reached from the eastern entrance (three other doors were the false doors). The diamond column has octagonal forms, and the three lintels have various forms. Based on the study to the site, the sanctuary was formed in rectangular shape. The outside rampart has 25m x 25m size and Gopura from the four directions which jointed to the surrounding laterite rampart. Outside the rampart, there were likely moats surrounded as we saw some marks remain until now. In observation to the temple's court, there were lintels and inscriptions available at the surrounding. The lintels has various style some in Sambor Prei Kuk, some in Prei Khmeng and some in Kulen style etc. This didn't mean that the artists built the mixed styles. According to the elderly resident there said that during the French colony in Cambodia, these ancient objects were brought from other temples to gather here in preparing to break into small parts that would then be used to pave the roads, but they didn't construct the roads yet due to the war happened in the Country that why these ancient objects remained there.

On the hill 1km from the temple, where they held midnight ceremony every full moon day with making virgin girls dancing around the fired place to pray for the rain. This ceremony could be participant by virgin girls only.

### Prasat Kuhak Nokor



Prasat Kuhak Nokor is located in Trodork Pong Village, Poug Ror Commune, Baray District, Kampong Thom Province and is in the complex of Wat Kuhak Nokor (Buddhist Pagoda). To reach there, passenger can take all kinds of vehicle on National Road 6, then turn west through the gate of Kuhak Nokor pagoda in a distance of 2km. It is 79km from Provincial Town of Kampong Thom. These sanctuaries were built on the flat ground, on a square terrace made of laterite and sandstone facing to the East with the rampart surrounding. This rampart has a 35m-length (East to West) and a 25m-width (North to South). There is surrounding rampart of one meter height and 0.8 meter thick with two gateways: Eastern gateway is 9m height divided into 3 rooms, and western gateway is small and has square shape.

The structures of the buildings are mixed, made of laterite and the decoration of sandstone. East of the temple, there are 2 ponds, the small one has about one-meter depth, 45-meter length and 20-meter width, and the big one has 160-meter length, 88-meter width and more than one-meter depth.

Prasat Kuhak Nokor comprises:

- The throne is square shape, made of sandstone and decorated by lotus flowers and pointed-diamond style, and has square hole at the middle.
- A male standing statue remains from thigh to shoulder.
- A male standing statue remains from thigh to the navel.
- A male coiling statue is difficult to be identified as the statue broke the end of the arm and the sole of the foot (local people called the statue Neak Ta Bark Kor).

Prasat Kuhak Nokor was built in 10th-11th century by the King Suryavarman I (1002-1050). But in the same year (1002), another document said there was a King named Preah Bat Jayviravarman who was also on throne (1002-1010). The two Kings claimed that they were on throne at the same year, this leading to war between King and King until 1006. Then the King Suryavarman I conquered Yasodharpura city, however the war still lasted for 04 years to end. In 1010, the King Suryavarman I gained success over the entire territory and had full power in the country.

### Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha statue



Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue, Kampong Thom serves as major tourist attractions of Kampong Thom. The Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue, Kampong Thom is a must in every itinerary to the place for its amazing beauty and the importance it played in the history of the place. The Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue in Kampong Thom is visited by thousands every year making it one of the favored places in the city. The historical site offers valuable knowledge about the way of living in the ancient era to the historians and the travelers.

The Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue, Kampong Thom was built in the 16th century and King Ang Chan I holds the credit for the making this structure. The Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue, Kampong Thom has played a pivotal role in

attracting tourists from the neighboring places. The attraction of the place lies in the architecture of the temple along with the serene surroundings.

The temple offers the opportunity to the visitors to enjoy the magnificence of the sculptures carved on the large ancient stones. The series of carvings narrates many a stories to tell. The carvings also stand as the narrator history of the place.

The Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue, Kampong Thom is also the place for the imposing Buddha Statue. The Buddha Statue is carved out on the large stones and has been on the place since 16th century. Log on to [www.travel.mapsofworld.com](http://www.travel.mapsofworld.com) which offers comprehensive information on Preah Bat Chan Tuk or Buddha Statue, Kampong Thom.

## Prey Pros



The Prey Pros, Kampong Thom is a must visit for travelers planning to visit Kampong Thom Tourist Attractions. The place is filled with the numerous Tourist Attractions in Kampong Thom which make the place attractive propositions for the travelers. The Prey Pros, Kampong Thom plays host as a natural site for enjoying the surroundings of the place along with its cultural insights. The Prey Pros in Kampong Thom is located at the Prey Pros Village which lies at the Prey Preal Commune, Kampong Svay District. The place is situated at a distance of 16 kilometers northwest of Provincial Town of Kampong Thom. The site has developed as major tourist attraction with its elements that brings the travelers very close to nature.

The Prey Pros, Kampong Thom is a man-made resort located at Prey Preal village. The area covered by the place is massive and offers loads for the tourists to enjoy. The resort has played host to various races making the time spent at the place an exciting one for the travelers. As a matter of fact the Prey Pros, Kampong Thom has been the venue for running race, bicycle race and other games. The resort is also the venue for the national festivals which attracts tourists from all corners of the country and the nearby countries as well. The tourists can also enjoy an array of various other recreational activities at the resort that features fishing, swimming and boating. The tourists can also choose to enjoy the blissful at the resting cottage at the resort which has been particularly built to provide the essence of luxury to the travelers.

Tourists coming down to the resort get the best of vacationing with the facilities and the amenities it provides. The travelers can enjoy great food along with drinks while staying at the resort. The topography of the resort features a river which adds to the charm and beauty of the place. The view of the surroundings is truly enchanting and the atmosphere is just the perfect one for the tired travelers to refresh.

## Sambo Prey Kuk



Sambo Prey Kuk is a cultural and historical site located in Sambo village, Sambo commune, Prasat Sambo district, about 25 kilometers northeast of Kampong Thom provincial town. The site was once an old capital named Isanapura and a religious center for the worship of Shiva Brahmanism.

Many temples were built in Sambo Prey Kuk during the reign of King Isanavarman I (AD 616- 635) in the 7th century. The temples of Sambo Prey Kuk constructed of solid brick, laterite and sandstone and decorated by bas-reliefs. The lintel, pillars and the door frames are all made of sandstone. So far, 140 temples have been discovered in the forest.

Sambor Prei Kuk, located near Kompong Thom, 150km south-east of Siem Reap, lies off the main road towards Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh. Kompong Thom is a sleepy little town. The only hive of activity was the market place next to the Stung Sen River where we bought some brown palm sugar and Cambodian fragrant rice. The local taxi was actually an open-air wooden cart pulled by an antiquated motorbike. Its owner was an elderly man wearing spectacles with thick lenses.

The journey to Sambor Prei Kuk was interesting in itself. We saw no other vehicles other than a lone villager cycling into town, his bicycle laden with hand-made straw baskets. The van kicked up thick red dust as we sped on the laterite road. A woman scrubbing her clothes nearby was oblivious to the dust that swept over her.

Lest you entertain images of grand temple ruins akin to the grandeur of the awesome Angkor Wat, you'd be disappointed. Sambor Prei Kuk is a group of ancient temple ruins scattered within a shady forest. Originally called Isanapura, it pre-dates Angkor Wat and was the capital city during the reign of King Isanavarman I, the son of King Citrasena.



Few tourists know of it. The only horde here was a group of Cambodian kids who rushed to the bus, hawking brightly-coloured homespun scarves at US\$1 (RM3.50) each. Built at the end of the 6th century, the ruins are touted to be some of the oldest structures in the country, covering an area of 5sq km.

About 100 small temples are scattered throughout the forest. Left in the open and not maintained, some of the structures are just mere remnants of their original building perhaps a broken wall here, a vine-choked edifice there. There are 52 temples in recognisable condition, and another 52 sites where the original structures are now buried in the ground, visible only as small hills.

All is not lost. The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts together with the Waseda University, supported by The Foundation for Cultural Heritage and the Sumitomo Fund have started the Sambor Prei Kuk Conservation Project to restore these ruins.

The main temple group known as Prasat Sambor is dedicated to Gambhiresvara, one of Shiva's many forms. Some of the towers still retain their carvings. Many are mere ruins now covered by vegetation.

As we walked further, enjoying the cool serenity of the shady trees, the small group of child peddlers had grown to 20. The original band selling scarves had been joined by older children hawking bracelets and trinkets. They were very persistent, dropping their prices to almost a quarter of the original as we neared the end of our visit. Sambor Prei Kuk does not match the splendour of Angkor Wat. Yet its serene forests and solitude make a much welcome change from the human masses of its famous cousin.



### Wat Kampong Thom



Wat Kampong Thom, also known as Wat Indrisamavora, is located in Kdei village, Prey Kahu commune, Stung Sen district, about 1 kilometer from the provincial town. This old temple is a holy place that covers 2,053 square meters. Statues related to the Buddha story can be found in the pagoda. The pagoda fences are painted in many different colors and styles. The pagoda offers a cool place for visitors to relax, especially during festivals.

### Wat Kdei Deum



Wat Kdei Deum is located in Kampong Chen village, Kampong Chen Tbong commune, Stong district about 52 kilometers northwest of the provincial town. A holy place, the features two ponds and includes an old temple similar in style to Banteay Srei temple in Siem Reap

### Wat Prasat



Located in Prasat Village, Prasat Commune, San Tuk District, Kampong Thom Province. This temple located in a 31 kilometers district from Provincial Town of Kampong Thom, and there is road from the southern direction of 500-meter length. This temple was built of brick, masonry and sandstone in 8th century (706) with Kampong Preah style to dedicate to Siva. It was a sanctuary built temple on the flat terrace without the false door and faced to the east. In the ancient period, the door was made by two wooden boards-one carved with sculptures of male divinities at another one carved with female divinities.

The southern framed door was inscribed with five lines of inscription, and its back was mostly erode. The lintel was ornamented by the garlands; the diamond column we carved with carousing motifs; and the upper corner of the temple contained the segments of Linga and Yoni. Southeast of the temple, there were other two more temples (at present, they became the small hills). South of the large temple, were a hill called Toul Samrong or Toul Nak Ta Samrong; and east of this hill, there was a Por tree in which the local people call Toul Nak Ta Deum Por (the hill of the body tree spirit). In ancient time, this place was the former Royal Palace where the Royal valuable were kept.

Then it was excavated and the valuables were taken away during the French colony. This sanctuary was in seriously ruined condition, in 1996 the brick of the southern and western towers dropped down due to the trees growing and the strong wind blowing on them. Besides, there was lack of conservation and protection leading to the serious damages caused by nature and aged existence at the sanctuary especially by the ignorant people.

Closed against the sanctuary where the Buddhism monks constructed the new temple. This could cause the damages to the ancient sanctuary. Beside the Prasat Phum Prasat (Prasat village), there was an inscription buried into the ground which its upper part was inscribed with six lines of Samskrit scripts. This inscription was found at six kilometers near the Police Post on National Road 6.