

Introduction Of Pai Lin Province

Pai Lin is a small municipality in the West of Cambodia very close to the border of Thailand. The provincial capital is called Pai Lin City and is known to much of the world as being the area where many of the Khmer Rouge leaders came from and retreated after their fall. Until the year of 2001 Pai Lin was part of the Battambang Province, but was then elevated to city status and thus became a province and autonomous zone of its own.



The city was during the 1980 and 1990 a major Khmer Rouge strongpoint and resource centre. Even after the death of their brutal leader Pol Pot in 1998, many Khmer Rouge leaders still remained there. Some of the leaders went into hiding in fear of punishment for their crimes, although other leaders or henchmen lived openly in the province. It is said that almost 70 percent of the area's older men were fighters for the Khmer Rouge, but unfortunately none of the regular fighters have yet been brought to justice.

As of September 2007, Pai Lin's remaining Khmer Rouge leaders were being rounded up to face justice by an international tribunal, including Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea. So after years of the governmental dump contemplation regarding the crime of the Khmer Rouge, its time for lasting enlightenment of what has happen.

Poi Pet is now more and more becoming a boomtown attracting Cambodians from around the country seeking to make their fortune, or at least a better salary than back home. Pai Lin was the major revenue producer for the Khmer Rouge guerrillas, being a major gem producing area as well as a prime logging area.

While gem production seems to have tapered off a bit, other business opportunities and the lifestyle have attracted prospectors to the town. Up until the surrender deal of Khmer Rouge's number three men, Ieng Sary, in 1996, the townsfolk lived under the strict rules of the KR hierarchy, with little freedom of expression and most aspects of life being completely controlled by the paranoid regime.

Pai Lin is just another Wild West town of Cambodia and like the gold-rush days of California, people seem to be everywhere in the hills sifting through mud puddles and scratching at the dirt, looking to strike it rich with the find of a nice gem. Still, there is more control of some aspects of life than in other areas of Cambodia.

But this seems to have attracted people rather than kept them away. Several people, who had moved to Pai Lin from Phnom Penh, gave this as the main reason they made the move. They liked the idea that criminals did not enjoy the same impunity that they seem to enjoy in Phnom Penh. The influx of residents from other parts of the country has produced a friendlier Pai-Lin. Nowadays the mixed lot of Pai Lin residents seem happy to see foreigners coming in for holidays and check the place out, realizing that their presence means that normalcy and revenue are arriving in Pai Lin.

Even the Vietnamese residents seem to have been accepted, which is truly amazing given the hatred the Khmer Rouge have generally shown them. Pai Lin is worth checking out. The town is nestled in a beautiful valley with picturesque sunsets over the mountains that separate Cambodia and Thailand close by.

Wat Gohng-Kahng is very famous and features the much-photographed landmark gate of Pai Lin town that you face as you arrive on the highway from Battambang. This wat is the centre of holiday festivities these days in Pai Lin and was the scene of the official Pai Lin reintegration ceremony in 1996, after the Ieng Sary faction of the Khmer Rouge worked out surrender and semi-autonomy deals with the Cambodian government.

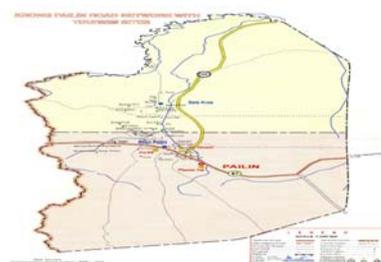


Geography

Pai Lin City municipality is the second smallest so-called province in Cambodia with 803 square kilometres. It's located in the West of the country surrounded by Battambang province and bordering Thailand to the West. In the North, the small municipality consists of the typical plain wet area for Cambodia, covering rice fields and other agricultural plantations.

Pai Lin City itself is located on the foothills of Chuor Phnom Kravanh (Cardamon Mountain Rank), an extension of the Kardamom Mountains, which range until here. The South of the municipality is quite hilly and tops with the highest altitude of 1164m. The province also

features some smaller rivers coming from the mountain range.



Pai Lin History



Pai Lin was originally a small forest zone full of animal and several precious stones. Pai Lin is the transform word from the original *Pan Len* referred by a tale about around the 18th or 19th century, there were a group of hunters who chased the wild animals farther and farther until they reached the present-day Pai Lin where, then, was of jungles of high trees and some fields by the canal which was called small river such as Tong small river. The hunters saw otters that were swimming and they ran away when they saw people. Then, the hunters went to see the place where the otters played together. They saw small bright rocks and everybody took a rock to show their friends and their relatives in their home land. Arriving in the home land, there were residents (it was said they were [Kula](#) people in [Chanthaburi Province Siam](#)) knew that the rocks were valuable so they took and broke the rocks to polish into gems with good purity. That was why they went to buy gems from the hunters. The hunters knew that it was way of earning a living; they often tried to go to take the rocks from the old place. At that time, Pai Lin began to faced as the business place.

The frequent going and coming from that place made them call *Phee Leng* due to the playing of the otters that they saw at the first time. But the residents in Siam pronounced Phee as Phai and Leng as Len or Lin with their Siamese sound as *Pea Lean* During the control of France of that area, it was written in Latin with the sound and morphology of the words as Phai Lin. Later the word was shortened as Pai Lin by omitting "H"aim of a difficult pronunciation.

In the late 1970, Pai Lin was a prosperous town stemming from the extensive gem deposits in the surrounding countryside. Because of its resources, it was one of the first cities invaded by the Khmer Rouge when they began their major offensive against the national government. The city offered no resistance and the Khmer Rouge soldiers were greeted as liberators as they marched into town. At this point, the deposed king had allied himself with the KR and most residents believed that the KR was fighting to restore him to power. It was not long, though, before most residents were rounded up for a forced march to the countryside to work in rice paddies. Those believed to have connections to the government were killed. The KR used proceeds from mining in the Pai Lin area to fund their offensive and later their government once they gained national power. When the invading Vietnamese Army threw them from power, they retreated to Pai Lin, where many former KR leaders remain today.

Some leaders went into hiding in fear of punishment for their crimes, although other leaders lived openly in the province. It is said that 70% of the area's older men were fighters for the Khmer Rouge, who but none of the regular fighters have yet been brought to justice. Citation needed as of September 2007, Pai Lin's remaining Khmer Rouge leaders were being rounded up to face justice by an international tribunal, including [Khieu Samphan](#) and [Nuon Chea](#).

In the recent years, Pai Lin suddenly meet the decline of Economy and Business. However, a new wave of tourism began found depend on its ancient temple, natural forest, animals and especially the precious stones.

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 (22-28c)
- Hot season: March - May (27c-34c)
- Rainy season: May - October (24-32c, with humidity up to 90%)

Pgpopulation:



The current population in this municipality is about 35,234 people or 0.25% of the country's total population (14,363,519 person in Cambodia, 2007, provincial government data), with 19,059 male and 16,175 female. The population density is therefore 44 people per square kilometre.

Economy:

The surrounding area of Pai Lin City was rich in a variety of gemstones which were mined almost clean to support the Khmer Rouge. They also logged the area to create personal wealth with no regard for the effect on the environment. Nowadays all you can find is low-quality, cheap, hand-faceted gemstones at the market in Pai Lin downtown.



After the exploitation of the natural resources available, the Khmer Rouge invested their money in the Casinos around Pai Lin. Pai Lin is located in the most heavily mined area in the world, so especially unaware travelers are cautioned to stay only on marked roads. Citizens of Pai Lin will accept Baht, Riels and US dollars, though US dollars are preferred.

Shopping:

As it is quite common in Cambodia even small cities, such as Pai Lin City have at least one market. You may also find a market in Pai Lin City centre, which is very busy with local shops dealing the local daily consumer products, like fish, fruits, vegetables, meats and packed products mostly from Thailand. Most of the food and drink shops are surrounding the market. To take something special from this province along, buy some small gems from the gem shops, but be aware of fakes.



Tourist Attractions in Pai Lin

Pai Lin is the smallest city among the Cambodia's 4 cities. Following the footprint of Poi Pet, Pai Lin is home to though not as many as in Poi Pet some casinos that are enjoying fruits of profit, most of which is from Thai gamblers. There are also attractive places to visit in this lively tiny city, and the best example is Phnom Khieu Waterfall. Stretching along the lower reaches of Chuor Phnom Kravanh, this swimming hole is about 20 km away from the town to the southwest. The site may promise to make the city worth visiting.

Wat Phnom Yaht:



Wat Phnom Yaht built by Shan migrants from Myanmar in 1922, is a holy place for worship in the heart of Pai Lin with includes an old pagoda, similar to the Kola pagoda. With loads of folk tales and legends in the area, the Wat is the centre of popular devotion, for residents of Pai Lin and visitors alike upon many ancient structures on Phnom Yat, including big and small stupas and Asroms or hermitages, places for meditation. The building up of the place is originally coming up with a folk tales about at that time, there were a husband and a wife who had the same names, Yart. They worked as gem miners in Pai Lin area. When they grew old they went to take meditation on a mountain which is now called Phnom Yart. The Pai Linnners who often went to sell gems in Siam bought some hand guns and rifles in order to protect their property and residence. When they were bored, they took guns and went to hunt animals in the wood for pleasure. Such pleasure hunting made all spirits living in the forest surprised.

One day the most powerful spirit transformed him to meet grandfather Yart and grandmother Yart so as to send verbal message to ask the grandparents to tell the hunters not to fire at animals all over the woods which caused all spirits to be frightened, lose their children and grandchildren. " So, stop firing, we will help you with finding precious stone, " the spirit said, " in order to become rich and prosperous." " But if you become the rich, build a pagoda at this mountain site and then play music with peacock dance every holyday, " said the spirit. The spirit disappeared soon after telling, Grandpa Yart and grandma Yart took the message and went to inform all residents. The residents obeyed the spirit's advice.

Border Crossing & Casino Area:

Border Crossing & Casino Area the locals refer to this area as simply Pbrohm. This was a main lifeline of the Khmer Rouge during the years of fighting with the government. Food, supplies and weaponry were brought over from Thailand here. The action today is of the gaming type with the Flamingo Casino open for business and another under construction. The casino sees a lot more business than the one in town, as the Thai people that represent the vast majority of customers like the idea of staying within spitting distance of Thailand. So if you like tossing money away, you have several choices in Pai Llin. There are also a few seedy looking karaoke bars with ladies working near the casinos and border. As for using Pai Lin as a border crossing to and from Thailand: The Thais have no problem with it and will issue you a Thai visa or stamp you out between 7 am and 5 pm. The problem is on the Cambodian side as the immigration police say that it's not an officially sanctioned crossing and there is no way that a foreigner can cross here. So for now it's best to sticks with Poi Pet and Koh Kong for land crossings. Getting to the border is the interesting part. About 5 km on the way from Pai Lin is a small wooden bridge going over the Oh-chah-rah River. The water coming down from the mountains is clean, so a swim here is an inviting prospect. You also pass by the bombed shell of a tank, reminding you which side of the border you are on. Tank bodies just sit where they die in Cambodia and simply become another part of the landscape. The border is easy to get to—just the one turn on the map. It takes just under a half hour and is around 180 baht for roundtrip moto-taxi.



Waterfall:



Waterfall like all waterfalls, the rainy season is the best time to go with the water flowing best then. But there are still pools of clean water to cool off in during the dry season and the heavily forested hills provide nice scenery. Locals and folks on holiday from Battambang come here on weekends and holidays and the well-worn pathways and picnic spots are safe for your use. Hiking to the upper level brings you to more pools. Your best bet for getting out here is to take a moto-taxi or have one lead the way, as there are several turns on unmarked small roads. For the round trip, 120 baht should do it.

Bah Hoi Village:

Bah Hoi Village You will pass through an internal refugee camp from different areas of the country that were formerly under Khmer Rouge control and are now in the areas of the hands of the government. The people feel safer around their own kind (ex-Khmer Rouge) and with the Pai Lin faction of the Khmer Rouge still having effective control of the area; they don't worry about government soldiers hassling them. The people are quite friendly and don't mind a chat.



Goh-Ay Mountain:

Goh-Ay Mountain the destination here is a river that's great for a swim. Definitely for the dry season if you want to be a bit more adventurous and see more of the area. Your best bet is to talk to the guys' at the English school next to the Hotel Sang Phi Run if you want to venture out this way, as they can help with direction or take you out there. Definitely stay on the worn trails by the river area. There are landmines around.



Cesar Casino:



The casino and pub located in the same complex are open off and on these days. As mentioned earlier, the Thais prefer the Flamingo Casino with its border location. If they book a group of Thais to come to town they open the casino.

Kbal O'tavao Resort:



Kbal O'tavao Resort How to go: Location: Description: Is the natural resort full of beautiful scenery with clear-water canal, and locates at Sangkat O'Tavao, Khan Pai Lin in five-Kilometer distance from Pai Lin town.

Kbal O'Chra:

Kbal O'Chra how to go: 5 km (15mn) From Provincial Town. Location: Description: Nature & Wildlife Preserves, Location: O'chra Leu Village, Tuol Lwea Commune, Khan Pai Lin.



O'Eb Resort:



O'Eb Resort is the natural and ancient resort with waterfall and many big trees. It locates at Sangkat O'Chras, Khan Pai Lin in 10-Kilometer distance from Pai Lin town by the road to Bor Ya Kha and Bor Tang Sou

Phnom Kiev Waterfall:

Phnom Kiev Waterfall (Blue Mountain waterfall): Local at Sangkat Steung Kach, Khan Saha Krau in 20-Kilometer distance from the Pai Lin town, set on the nearest border of Thailand among some parts are already been through to the Thai area. The rainforest and highly source of natural with an extremely popular tropical zone in Pai Lin, Faced the famous history during Khmer Rouge, Phnom Kiev Waterfall was a place for Khmer rouge killer to be hide and escape beyond 1979 and now collaborates with foreign tourist for becoming their adventure area. It provided several different kinds of birds and animal which lived beneath the forest and the waterfall. No any Tiger and dangerous animal to be found. However, snakes are common as some small cobra and a large python revealed to be stayed in. This natural resort is a specific tourism place after Wat Phnom Yat.



Phnom Yat Resort:

Phnom Yat Resort is the cultural and historical site with ancient pagoda built as Ko La pagoda's style. Phnom Yat locates at Pai Lin City and can be reached by the Road No 10. Phnom Yat, the site worshipped by the local people and the passers by who have very strong abstract belief. It also has most precious stone among other sites in Pai Lin City.



Stung Kiev:

Is the natural resort with beautiful scenery of natural forest and river, and locates at Sangkat Steung Kach, Khan Sala Krau in 20-Kilometer distance from the Pai Lin town.



Wat Rattanak Sophoan:



At the foot of Phnom Yat is another pagoda, Wat Rattanak Sophoan. On the walls of the enclosure surrounding the pagoda is a bas-relief depicting the Hindu saga of the churning of the Ocean of Milk.

LANDMINES:



"Objects of death whose characteristics is that of never being seen – they wait their entire life and are born only for a second to die with you."
(Pedro Rosa Mendes)

The Ottawa Treaty defines landmines as "mines designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person, and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons."

Nearly three decades of war left Cambodia as one of the countries most severely contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Contamination includes unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO), including (cluster) submunitions, and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO).

In most cases, even the soldiers who planted the mines did not record where they were placed. Now, Cambodia has the one of the highest rates of physical disability of any country in the world. While census data for Cambodia are sketchy, it is generally accepted that more than 40,000 Cambodians have suffered amputations as a result of mine injuries since 1979. That represents an average of nearly forty victims a week for a period of twenty years.

Cambodia's society and cultural attitudes are strongly influenced by the dominant religion, Buddhism, in which the concept of karma is central. A karmic worldview implies a strong belief in predestination and that a person's fate is a direct result of his or her "good" or "bad" actions in this and/or a former life. Therefore, in addition to the obvious strains of coping with permanent disability and lasting mental trauma, Cambodian landmine survivors and disabled people in general are often regarded both by themselves and others as having "bad karma" as a just punishment for former transgressions in deeds or attitudes.

While the Khmer Rouge were the worst offenders, deliberately targeting the civilian population with mines and booby traps, all sides have shown blatant disregard for the long-term consequences of the use of mines. Furthermore, the blame extends beyond the warring factions. Their Cold War patrons China, the Soviet Union and the USA and a host of smaller nations continued to supply the weapons with indifference to the effects of their actions. Mines found in Cambodia have been manufactured in the US, China, Vietnam, the former USSR and East Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, India, Chile, South and North Korea, Thailand, Iran, Iraq, South Africa, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland.

Most of these countries have since stopped producing and stockpiling landmines in accordance with the 1997 Ottawa Treaty for the global ban on landmines. However, as of 2008, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) identifies the following landmine-producing countries:

China, Cuba, India, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, USA and Vietnam.

At the current rate of progress, it may take as many as 100 years to clear all the mines in Cambodia, and the UN estimates that with current technology, it will take nearly 1,100 years to clear all the mines in the world.

PAI LIN:

[Land Mines and Sapphires](#)

[The Gem Market](#)

[Brother Number Two](#)

We are standing in the middle of an unlearned minefield.



Adam and I are doing our best to stay on the well-worn paths, shifting weight from foot to foot rather than taking a lot of unnecessary steps. Our translator is especially nervous. Several years ago, a man he was walking with stepped on a mine and exploded right next to him. "You can step here, here, here and here," he explains, motioning to the dirt around a stone embedded in the ground. "For weeks. Even months. Then one day you step here," he mimics stepping on the stone with his foot. "Problem."

This resource-rich province was given to the Khmer Rouge as part of a peace agreement when a faction of the movement finally defected in 1996. The remnants of the regime still rule this area, and, not surprisingly, this is where the movement's senior leaders have come to live out their peaceful retirement.



Pai Lin is described as "semiautonomous," a fuzzy description, the definition of which depends on who you ask.

One of Pai Lin's deputy governors insists that Pai Lin is a province like any other in Cambodia, one totally dependent on the central government. But no other place we visit has its own independent checkpoint. No other region is treated with such tender care and consideration by the Cambodian government. No other region's citizens get special preference for jobs and community projects.

We're here to talk to the remnants of the Khmer Rouge army. Many of them now struggle to make a living by digging for rubies and sapphires in Pai Lin's gem-rich hills. The northwestern part of Cambodia bordering Thailand, where we are standing now, is the most heavily land mine-contaminated region in the country. But these fortune seekers don't want to wait for the official demining teams to make this area safe.

Lev Mann is a former Khmer Rouge foot soldier. With a soft voice and a wild shock of Beatle-style black hair, he hardly looks like someone who just a few years ago was wielding a rifle and killing government troops. Lev says that he had no choice in joining the Khmer Rouge -- they threatened to kill 50 people for every one that refused. He says he doesn't even know what communism is. And he shows no loyalty to his former army. "The commanders, they are rich," he scoffs. "They are doing well. But the simple soldiers like us? We are not doing well."



Now that the war is over, Lev desperately scrabbles for gems on this dusty slope. He remembers laying mines nearby during the war. "Just a few," he says. "I was afraid of getting blown up." He works in a pit under the hot sun, scratching at the earth with a pickax. He tells me that he "checked over this area" before he started digging -- but it's hard for me not to flinch each time he scrapes the ground. With every swing of the ax, Lev might hit a mine, maybe even one that he himself once laid.



Behind us, a flatbed truck full of miners makes too wide a turn. The front wheel veers off the dirt road into the scrub brush. Our translator yells at them to be careful. They laugh and ignore him, backing the truck even further off the road to turn the vehicle around. "Oh, this is bad," the translator says, and he hunkers down in a squat facing away from the road, holding his head in his hands. He stays like that for a long time, until we can't hear the truck anymore.

Most of Lev's fellow miners seem pretty nonchalant about the possibility of imminent explosion. One dozes on the ground, splayed out behind a pit. So much of Cambodia has yet to be officially cleared that most people seem completely accustomed to tripping lightly along paths that are undoubtedly bordered by deadly traps. Farmers move into new, potentially hazardous plots, clear the land as best they can and take their chances. Each month in Cambodia, 60 to 70 people, most of them children, are injured by land mines and unexploded ordnance.



Lev admits that he's not quite as casual as he appears. "I'm afraid because I have to dig here. I'm afraid I'll get an arm or a leg blown off." He gives a shy, embarrassed smile. "But if I find a big stone I might be rich."

Lev hasn't found a stone in weeks and has been forced to borrow money just to buy rice for his family. He hauls up a big sack full of the dirt he has excavated and drags it down to a nearby stream. He dumps piles of the dirt into a bamboo sieve. He sits in the water and carefully sifts for any elusive treasures.

Somehow he manages to see the faint blue sparkle in the mud -- a small sapphire. We ask what he can get for it from the gem traders in town. He calculates. "Four hundred Thai baht." That's 50 cents. Lev ambles back across the river -- the day is early yet. There are mines, but there are also gems, and who knows what might lie under the next shovelful of dirt.