



Welcome to the Womyn's Agenda for Change

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Welcome to WAC

GETTING HERE

Arriving in Phnom Penh

Although it is possible to enter Cambodia by road and sea, we assume you will arrive in Phnom Penh by air. Phnom Penh's airport, Pochentong, is newly renovated and has an ever expanding range of facilities.

Your Cambodian Visa

Most visitors to Cambodia get their visas at the airport on arrival, however you can get one before you arrive if your country has a Cambodian Embassy. If you are visiting as a tourist or simply to attend a conference, you should get a tourist visa (US\$ 20). This is valid from one month from the date of arrival and can be extended *only once* for a period of one month, after this time you will have to leave the country. If you plan to stay for longer apply for a 1-month business visa (US\$ 25) which can be extended indefinitely.

Note that the date of expiry on the visa is the date that your overstay commences. If you leave on the date of expiry, you will be charged one day overstay, at US\$5 per day for every day overstayed.

Validity: Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the date of entry and must contain at least one completely empty page for the visa stamp. It is better to ensure that you have several empty pages.

Passport photos: You will need one passport photo for your visa and you should bring several more passport photos with you as they are often required for things like the entry pass to the Angkor temples. It saves time if you are able to fill out your visa application on the airplane (however visa forms are not always available on the plane). You should also complete the immigration form (both sections: for entering *and* leaving the country) and customs form that you are given on the plane. Be ready to hand the customs form to the customs officials at the airport exit if requested.

To get your visa at the airport: as you come down the stairs to enter the Arrivals Hall you will see counters in front of you. Put your completed visa application form plus photo into your passport and hand it in; do not put the visa fee into the passport. Keep track of your passport as it slowly travels down the row of officials. When your passport reaches the end of the row, the last official calls your name and gives you the passport with the visa stamped in it. At this point, hand over the fee.

You should not be asked for, and you should not make, any other payment. Try to have the exact amount needed for the visa you are applying for as this saves time and any problems with large denomination notes (see below). You should also receive a receipt for payment when you make it.

Then pass through the Immigration booths to the right of the Visa issuing counter. The departure part of the immigration form, which the Immigration Officer slots/staples into your passport, is very important and must not be lost. If it is lost, this can delay your exit from the country and you may be charged a fee to replace it (generally starting at US\$10). Note: We suggest that you have

the data page, visa and entry stamp pages of your passport photocopied when you arrive in case of problems when you leave the country.

On the right immediately after Immigration are the baggage carousels. Once you have collected your baggage, proceed through the customs area near the exit door. Hand your declaration form to the officials and proceed through to the exit. Only passengers are allowed in the arrivals building, so you have to leave the building before we can meet you – if this has been arranged.

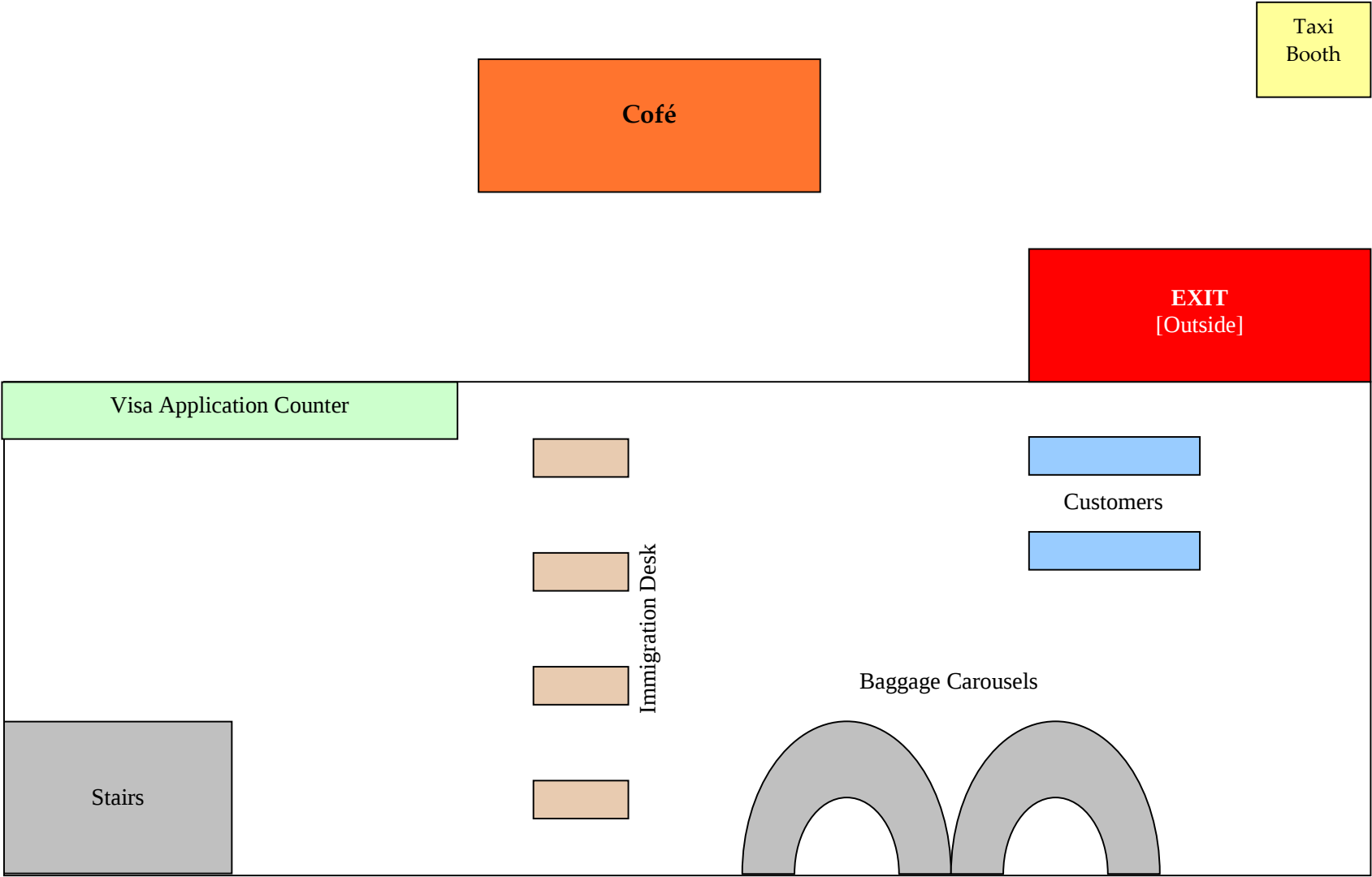
If we have not arranged prior to pick you up, you should take an airport taxicab into town. Taxis at the rate of US\$7 to Phnom Penh from the airport are 'booked' from a booth about 20 meters directly out in front of the exit area. You pay the driver at the end of the trip. The airport parking exit fee is paid by the taxi driver and included in the fare. It is better to take an official taxi, even though you may be offered a cheaper fare by an 'unofficial' driver. Many taxi drivers speak little English, but they should recognize the name of your hotel. It is useful to show the office or hotel address written in Khmer script, which we will have provided you with.

If you are traveling light, you can take a Motorbike Taxi from the airport to the city for US\$2. These operators have a blue sleeveless jacket on with 'Taxi' in white written on the back – do not mistake them for Taxi – car drivers. Drivers should have a helmet for their passengers and again you pay at the end of the trip. This option is not generally recommended as it is not as safe as the car option and during the wet, if you do not have a raincoat, you can get quite wet.

The drive from the airport to the hotel or the WAC office takes 20-40 minutes, depending on the traffic conditions.

Note: When you leave Cambodia you have to pay an airport tax of US\$ 25. See below for a layout plan of the airport arrivals hall.

Phnom Penh International Airport Area Map



THE WAC OFFICE

Our office is located on a boat on the Tonle Sap river (see map). The normal office hours are 8 am - 12 noon; 2 pm - 5.30 pm (note that Cambodians take a 2-hour lunch break), but there is usually staff in the office from 7 am and we stay open until about 6.00 pm in the evening.

The office language is English/Khmer. All staff can speak some English.

The office has one computer set up for visitors to use. You can access your web based emails and work on documents while you are here on this computer. Ask the network administrator to give you the login details.

You can also make phone calls and photocopies in the office and have mail posted. You should ask the Office Administrator to arrange these for you. Note that although prices have fallen recently, international calls and postage from Cambodia remain very expensive. A cheaper option is by using the Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP – services like Net2Phone) technology available at most internet cafes in the city. Call costs vary, but around 500 Riels a minute (US\$0.12) is what you will pay to most countries for one of these calls.

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

There are a range of hotels and guesthouses spread throughout the city. If arranged, the details will be given to you beforehand. Prices vary from place to place; US\$2-\$6 per night for a guesthouse, US\$12 - \$30 for a mid price hotel, and US\$45 upwards for the higher priced establishments. Basic guesthouses all have a fan and a shared bathroom, more expensive may include a TV and an attached bathroom. Most hotels have air conditioning, TV, restaurant, and a refrigerator; higher prices may have an exercise room or pool. The higher priced ones include all the usual services and facilities.

EATING AND DRINKING

Phnom Penh offers a very wide range of inexpensive cafés and restaurants so you should have no difficulty in finding something to suit you. Most popular ones are located along the riverfront (see map). We do not recommend buying food from street vendors. See also notes below on health.

It is customary when eating Cambodian, Thai or Chinese food for one person to order for the whole party and for guests then to help themselves from the communal dishes. Take only a little, and keep an eye on your Cambodian neighbor to see which plate/bowl to use. Rice, which is the standard accompaniment to all Cambodian food, often does not arrive until after you have begun eating the meat and vegetables. Soup is served towards the end of the meal and is usually a clear broth with pieces of meat/fish and vegetables in it.

Cambodians usually eat with a spoon and fork; some restaurants may offer you chopsticks. Knives are provided only in western restaurants.

If you have any special dietary requirements, please let the office staff know so that we can take your needs into account when planning menus. It can be tricky finding vegetarian food, but many restaurants offer tofu and mixed vegetable dishes.

Many 'western' canned soft drinks are sold in Cambodia, eg Coca-Cola, Sprite, and there is also a wide range of local flavors such as winter melon, soybean milk etc. Several brands of beer are available by the can; bottles of some brands are also available. You can also buy wine (usually French or Australian) and spirits.

It is quite normal to carry a bottle of water with you. Although when purchasing these, check to see that the plastic seals are still intact. 950 mL opaque bottles are the cheapest at 500 (US\$0.12) Riels each warm – expect to pay more if they are chilled. Clear plastic water bottles vary in size and price, but are generally dearer starting at 1000 Riels per bottle (US\$0.25).

CURRENCY

The Cambodian unit of currency is the riel, however most transactions take place in American dollars (US\$ 1 = about 4,100 riel). Larger dollar bills (\$50, \$100) are accepted only if they are in good condition. You will need some small denomination riel to give to people who help you, for tips etc, but do not change dollars into riel at the airport - you will get a poor rate of exchange. The office will arrange to change small quantities of dollars into riel for you. Riel comes in 100, 200, 500, 1,000 and 5,000 (and upward) riel notes; there are no coins. When paying bills at restaurants and supermarkets in US dollars, the smaller change (the cents) will be given to you in Riels. Exchange rates vary between 3800 - 4000 Riels to the dollar at these establishments.

Cambodia is a cash-based society; however there are no external ATM machines so you cannot get cash using a cirrus/debit/credit card. Note also that only a few restaurants and hotels accept credit cards. Most banks and currency exchange businesses will perform cash advances on Visa and Mastercards at a US\$5 or 2% fee (whichever is greater).

Travellers' cheques – generally Amex in US currency can be cashed at these banks also. Check any credit card slips for the correct value *before* signing and count your money *before* you leave the counter. Amex and Diners cards can be hard to access and use.

It can be simply easier to bring dollar bills, of small denominations.

TRANSPORTATION

There is no public transport within Phnom Penh. A few taxis are available but you cannot simply hail a taxi on the street; you have to reserve by telephone. The office may arrange to transport you to and from meetings etc. Otherwise, accommodation will be booked at or within easy walking distance of the venue.

The usual forms of transport around town are the 'moto' (motorbike taxi) and 'cyclo' (bicycle rickshaw); given the traffic conditions in Phnom Penh both are dangerous. We recommend that our visitors do not use motos; cyclos are slightly safer but still hazardous. Fares range from 500 Riels for short distances to up to US\$1. Fares are always higher if you are heading to areas frequented by expatriates and foreigners. The office is not one of these places. Expect to pay more at night. Settle the destination and fare *wherever* possible before you get on.

Streets are named and numbered in Phnom Penh – although most people do not know the names of most minor streets. Streets running north-south are *odd* numbers and east-west are *even* numbers. Odd numbering commences at 1 from the riverfront, and even numbering commences at 2 from the northern end of the city. Find out the name of the nearest market – *psar* or Temple –

wat nearest to your hotel as most moto and cyclo drivers will use these as points of reference. If you are ever lost and need to come back to a point of reference that all moto/cyclo/taxi drivers in Phnom Penh know, ask to go to the FCC. This is marked on the map below and is the acronym for the bar-restaurant for the Foreign Correspondents Club of Cambodia.

HEALTH

Ensure that you have proper health insurance that includes cover for Cambodia; and it *must include emergency evacuation cover*. Leave a copy of your health insurance certificate with the Office Administrator. Medical evacuations are done generally to Thailand or Singapore.

Water

The water that comes out of the taps in Cambodia is getting better, but in most instances it is not clean. You should not drink tap water or use it to clean your teeth; bottled water is always available. Although it is safe to bathe in the water, you should try to avoid getting water in cuts or grazes. Note that small wounds often take a long time to heal in the tropical climate. See the notes above on purchasing bottled water.

Ice

If you are here for a short time only, it is best not to consume ice in your drinks. If you really want an iced drink, be sure that the ice looks like small cylinders - this is reasonably safe and expatriates don't worry about it. It is made from purified water and is bagged and transported in relatively hygienic conditions. The ice that comes hacked off large blocks can not be guaranteed as safe.

Stomach upsets

Stomach upsets are often caused not by bad food but by problems the body has in adjusting to the climate. It can be very hot in Cambodia, especially around March -June. If you are not used to this sort of climate, try not to do too much when you first arrive but give your body time to adjust. Rest in the middle of the day. Avoid walking around the streets - not only is it very tiring but often the pavements/sidewalks are uneven, full of holes, and quite dangerous.

If you are prone to stomach upsets you might want to bring your preferred medication with you, however many of the common drugs are available in Phnom Penh pharmacies. If you bring any drugs into the country with you, make sure that they are clearly labelled to avoid misunderstandings at Customs.

Try to ensure that you eat only at places that look clean; the office staff can recommend the most suitable restaurants. It is perfectly acceptable to wipe bowls, cutlery, glasses etc with a tissue to ensure that they are dry before you use them. Do not eat food sold by street vendors.

Mosquito-borne diseases

It is very important to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. If you sit outside in the evenings you should wear long sleeves and trousers and apply anti-mosquito creams etc liberally. If you find mosquitoes in your hotel room, ask the staff to spray or to give you a mosquito coil to burn. In less expensive hotels, mosquito nets are often provided.

Malaria: Malarial mosquitoes usually attack after the sun goes down, but malaria is not considered a problem in Phnom Penh and people here do not normally take anti-malaria drugs. Outside Phnom Penh, for example at the Angkor temples, anti-malaria drugs are recommended.

Dengue fever: This can be a problem in Phnom Penh but there are no anti-dengue drugs. Dengue mosquitoes attack during the day. The best defense is long sleeves/pants plus anti-mosquito creams.

Medical treatment

If you want to see a doctor while in Phnom Penh, ask one of the office staff to arrange an appointment for you.

Emergencies

If you have a serious emergency health problem, call the office or one of the contacts given to you. Phnom Penh has limited services and you will likely be flown to Bangkok or Singapore for emergency treatment.

SECURITY

Cambodia no longer has a problem with guerrillas/civil war so the security precautions you take here are similar to those in most other cities.

- Do not go out alone in the evenings. Cambodians tend to go to bed early and most streets other than main thoroughfares are deserted by 8-9 pm.
- Avoid being out on the streets late at night.
- Do not take motos or cyclos late at night, if you do, stick to major streets which are lit and know the location of the nearest large hotels or Embassies. If you feel you are being followed, head there.
- Never get on a moto unless you know *exactly* where you are going to (carry a map). The 'moto-dop' is unlikely to speak much English and may not understand what you ask for, but he will set off as if he knows where he's going. He is unlikely to be able to read a map.
- Do not walk around displaying jewellery or carrying expensive computers/cameras etc. Likewise, money belts should be secured inside your clothing and not be visible.
- Do not provoke soldiers, policemen, drivers of expensive cars, drunks etc. They carry guns and often use them.
- Carry only photocopies of your important documents (passport, air ticket, insurance documents) and put the originals in the office or hotel safe.
- Carry only a few dollars around with you (max. US\$ 30).
- If you are unlucky enough to be robbed on the street,
 - hand over your valuables without making a fuss.
 - do not make any sudden movements
 - do not look the robbers in the face

WHAT TO WEAR

The general dress code for visitors to Cambodia is casual-tidy. You will see that Cambodians are very neatly dressed, both in and out of the office, and although they make allowances for foreigners it is best to dress in order to fit in.

As it is so hot, bring loose cotton clothes for comfort. Note, however, that meetings are often held in rooms that are fiercely air-conditioned, so you also need some sort of wrap/jacket. A Cambodian *Krama* - a checkered scarf that you can buy very cheaply in the market - is a useful multipurpose item for both men and women.

Men do not wear ties and jackets except at the most formal events. Shorts are not acceptable in the office for men or women. Very short skirts and skimpy tops are also unsuitable in the office (and you are less likely to be bitten by day-flying dengue mosquitoes if your arms and legs are covered).

Shoes should be well polished (it is not difficult to keep your shoes polished as many restaurants have shoeshine boys vying for your custom). Although you should remove your shoes when entering private houses (see below), you normally keep your shoes on in many offices, but the WAC office has a 'shoes off' policy. If you see other people's shoes outside when visiting other offices, remove yours too - the office staff will invite you to keep your shoes on if it is not necessary to take them off.

Hats of all types are available very cheaply in the market. Cambodians usually use a *krama* to protect themselves from the sun.

CAMBODIAN CULTURE

Greeting: It is polite to greet Cambodians with a smile and a *sompeah* - a slight bow of the head with the hands placed palms-together and held just below nose height. Cambodians do not normally shake hands, although they may offer to shake hands if they are used to meeting westerners.

Cambodian names: Cambodians usually write their family name first, then their given name(s). It is usual to address people by their given names, therefore our Office Administrator, Choun Leng, should be addressed as Mr Leng.

Remove your shoes when entering a Cambodian home (and some offices, see above). It is extremely impolite (and unhygienic) to wear your shoes indoors, especially in living or food preparation areas, when others have removed theirs.

Once you have removed your shoes, do not sit with the soles of your feet pointing towards people. This is considered rude. If you are sitting on the floor, men should sit cross-legged and women tuck their feet to the sides.

It is also rude to point. If you need to indicate something, keep the palm down and the fingers together. Use a similar gesture to call a waiter.

TIPPING

Remember that even in the largest hotels and restaurants the Cambodian staff earn very little money, so they are very grateful to receive tips. For small services, a drink or a cup of coffee, if you feel so inclined you can give 500 riel; give the money discretely when the waiter brings your change. For a US\$ 10 meal, one dollar would be reasonable. If you have an expensive meal at a western restaurant, you can leave up to US\$ 5; put the money into the folder in which the bill was presented.

THINGS TO DO IN CAMBODIA

Sightseeing

If you have time, you should certainly visit Angkor Wat while in Cambodia. This world-famous temple complex is located at the northeastern end of the Tonle Sap lake, close to the town of Siem Reap. You need to allow at least three days to visit Angkor, including travel by air or boat. If you are interested in visiting Angkor, the office staff can assist or point you to a travel agency for you make the necessary arrangements.

Phnom Penh itself is a small town and there are not many sightseeing attractions. The most popular places to visit are Tuol Sleng (a memorial museum to victims of the Khmer Rouge), the Royal Palace and Silver Pagoda, and the National Museum. An afternoon boat trip on the river is fun if you get can get a group together.

Shopping

General: You can buy most things in Phnom Penh but you should be aware that many items that look at first like brand-name goods are fakes. It is usually quite easy to spot the difference if you look closely. There are several 'western' supermarkets, and many pharmacies. For general shopping and supplies the best place for visitors is the Russian Market (*Psar Tuol Toom Poong*) or the Central Market (*Psar Themey*). Tourists usually pay more than local people do. Bargaining is ok, but remember that the vendors have to make a living.

Souvenirs: For souvenir items most visitors go to the 'Russian' market. As well as a large range of pirated CDs, the market stocks souvenirs such as silk clothing and lengths of Thai, Viet Nameese, Chinese and Cambodian silk, wood and stone carvings, and silver trinkets and other jewellery. Both Russian and Central markets stock some genuine brand-name clothes, which come from the factories around Phnom Penh where they are made. These garments are usually 'seconds', however, so you should check them very carefully before you buy.

MISCELLANEOUS

Population: There are 11.4 million people in Cambodia (Census 1998), although estimates in 2002 put the figure at around 13 million. Over 1 million live in Phnom Penh and 45% of the population is under the age of 18.

Language: Cambodia's official language is Khmer. Some of the older people speak French. Although many Cambodians speak no English at all, there is usually someone around who can speak enough to help you out.

It is a good idea to learn some basic words before you arrive:

aw-kun	- thank you
somm	- please
somm-toe	- sorry
joom reep sua	- formal hello
sok sabaii	- how are you

Religion: Although religion was banned during the Khmer Rouge period (1975-1979), today most Khmers are Buddhist again. There are also small numbers of Cham (Muslims); and hill-tribe people, who practice animist religions. The Chinese and Vietnamese community religions include Christianity, Taoism and Confucianism.

Time zone: Cambodia is in the same time zone as Bangkok: GMT +7.

Weather: It is always hot in Cambodia and humidity is high. April and May are the hottest months (up to 35 deg C); January is the coolest month (down to 21 deg C). The rainy season runs from June to October, with light 'mango rains' in March. For the rest of the year the lack of heavy rain means that the streets are very dusty.

News: while you are in Cambodia it is worth buying the *Cambodia Daily* (1,200 riel) and the *Phnom Penh Post* (3,800 riel, every two weeks) to get a taste of life here. Both newspapers can be bought from the 'paperboy' vendors right outside the restaurants along the riverfront.

The extensive cable and satellite TV networks give access to CNN, BBC etc.

WAC STAFF

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Phnom Penh is a hand phone society. Landline communications in Phnom Penh are prefixed with the area code of 023. Mobile phones are prefixed with the area codes of 011, 012, 015, 016, 092 and 099. When dialing one similar prefixed hand phone you can drop the 0xx part of the number.

Calls to hand phones from hotel rooms do not reflect the true rates. At many locations throughout the city, at almost every corner, you will find small aluminium booths that have all the telephone prefixes written on the side along with a number (in the hundreds). If the booth says **012 – 500**, this means you can use their phone to call a 012 phone for a rate of 500 Riels per minute (or part thereof). If you have the number, this is the cheapest and easiest ways to make a call, although check the location for background noise before calling.

