

Introduction Of Kep Province



Kep, a province on Cambodia's southern coast, is a former resort town known throughout Cambodia for its relaxed, sun-dappled beaches and mouth-wateringly fresh crabs. In recent years, the province has undergone a revival, with many foreign and domestic visitors making the trip to indulge in its luxurious beachside resorts, tropical islands, and toothsome seafood.

During Cambodia's golden years before 1970, this lush coastal region was a seaside playground for affluent. Although Kep's beaches may not be in the same league as those in Preah Sihanouk, travelers seek out its tranquil atmosphere and unadulterated coasts.

A small section of the beach doubles as a regular crab-trading depot and the Crab Market (Psar Kdam) on the water's edge serves as a popular tourist destination. Fishermen bring in baskets of crabs by the boatload, and waterfront restaurants cook them fresh, usually boiled with a few fragrant sticks of famed Kampot pepper. Fish, squid and prawns are also on offer, often cooking slowly over coals at the front of all the restaurants.

For a relaxing day trip, visitors often travel to a nearby island such as Rabbit Island (Koh Thonsáy), which is only a short boat ride off Kep's coast. Here, you'll find beautiful seaside views, bamboo platforms and basic bungalows, and plenty of rustic charm. A boat back during the evening sunset is not to be missed.

Those looking to take a break from beachside lounging may wish to visit some of the local limestone caves, some of which contain holy shrines.



Kep City is a municipality in Cambodia with the status of a province. Kep is just a few kilometres from the border with Vietnam located and used to be Cambodia's most popular beach town but has fallen on hard times in recent years (especially due to the Khmer Rouge). Many of Kep's, mostly French villas are abandoned, but some of the town's former splendour is still apparent.

The sea is lined with huge sidewalks and some large statues that now seem largely out of place. The King built a palace overlooking the Gulf of Thailand, but it was never furnished and now sits empty. A good, paved road connects the small town with the 15km far away Kampot. The slightly darker beaches than in Sihanouk Ville are mostly scattered with mangroves and black rocks, but Koh Thonsay (Rabbit Island) is just a short boat ride away (approx. 1/2h).

Kep appears to be experiencing something of a renaissance, with several mid-range and luxury guesthouses and bungalows recently opened or still under construction. The seafood is cheap, plentiful and delicious - particularly the quite famous crabs. Kep is also home to an extensive national park covering some mountains with deep green jungle.

The French established Kep City during the colonial time in 1908. Today Kep is mainly popular to the domestic tourists, who choose Kep as their holiday destination. What's more, Kep offers great seafood and magnificent views of the mountains and the beaches.

Taking a boat to the nearby islands is also a breathtaking experience. Another itinerary, which must not be missed, is an excursion to the serene waterfalls of "Teuk Chhou" situated about 10 km from Kampot. Kep City is located in the Southwest of Phnom Penh. The city is accessible by the National Road No 3 from Phnom Penh via Kampot province (173 km) or by the National Road No 2 from Phnom Penh via Takeo province.



Especially during the Sixties, during the time of Sang Kum Reas Ni Yum the city was developed as a beautiful seaside tourist resort for the rich and government. The story related to the name of Kep said that there was a King named Sa Kor Reach, who had a mighty spell. He put a sleeping spell on a commander at AngKor Thom, than stole the commander's white horse and fled together with his troop to the Southwestern seaside.

When he took a rest at the seaside, he was overhauled by the commander's troops, who chased him from behind. Suddenly, he got on the horseback; the horse reared, and made him fall down on the ground together with the saddle. Then, he got on the horseback again and fled away without picking up the saddle, because the commander's troops almost approached him. So that's why this area was called "Kep She" meaning "the saddle", nowadays it's only called "Kep".

Geography



Kep City municipality is 336 square kilometres big. It's located in the South of the country and is bordering to the North, East and West with Kampot and to the South with the Gulf of Thailand. The province has not so much typical plain wet area like other provinces of Cambodia, as there are some foothills from the Elephant Mountains coming from Kampot province. You can see not so sparse grey limestone hills akin to the Vietnamese ones. Nevertheless there are areas covered with rice fields and other agricultural plantations.

Background of Kep City

Kep is a seaside tourist city located 173 Kilometers south west of Phnom Penh. Visitors from Phnom Penh take National Road 3 via Kampot province or National Road 2 via Takeo province. In addition, the train from Phnom Penh to Sihanouk Ville stops at Damnak Chang Eur Station, about 7 Kilometers from the city. Foreigners coming from Vietnam can enter Cambodia via the Ha Teang Prek Chak border checkpoint, about 40 Kilometers from Kep, or they can travel by boat from Vietnam or Sihanouk Ville to the Kep City Port.

Kep is a small city. The beach, which is suitable for swimming; it only 1,000 meters long, and the sand, is not white as in Sihanouk Ville. However, Kep is a big seafood market.

The city was founded in 1908 during the French colonial times. It was renovated into a beautiful seaside resort in 1960s during then-Prince Norodom Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime. The name Kep is derived from the French words *le cap*, or cape in English. A cape is a point of land that just into water, especially a headland significant for navigation.



Khmer legend offers another explanation for the name. There once was a prince named Sakor Reach who possessed great magical powers. One day, Sakor Reach used his magic to hypnotize a commander of Angkor Thom before stealing the commander's horse and escaping to the southwest part of the country. While Sakor Reach was relaxing at the seaside, the commander's troops caught up with him. Nervous, the prince suddenly hopped on the back of the commander's horse. The horse reared back, however, and fell on the prince losing its saddle in the process. The prince got back on the horse and rode off, leaving the saddle there. Hence, the area was called Kep Seh. Later it was shortened to Kep.

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 (20-26c)
- Hot season: March - May (29c -34c)
- Rainy season: May - October (22-30c, with humidity up to 90%)

Population

The current population in this municipality is about 40,280 people or 0.3% of the country's total population (14,363,519 person in Cambodia, 2007, provincial government data), with 20,130 male and 20,150 female. The population density is therefore 119 people per square kilometre.

Economy

Beside the profitable fruit cropping such as durian, mango or coconut Kampot Pepper, which is also grown in Kep, has been renowned for decades as one of the best peppers in the world. This pepper has a very distinct flavour and smell, especially when it's fresh harvested.

It develops an enthralling aroma, strong, delicate and aromatic. Therefore it is famous in the world and exported to many countries. Kep also tries more and more to focus on the tourist sector, as there is quite a lot of interest by local people and by foreigners, who still can discover Kep and it's rural countryside as a very natural, remote and docile place being situated on the beautiful costal line of Cambodia.

Shopping

If you would like to shop some food, especially seafood you should head for the daily market next to the water's edge. This is currently the only place you can find the basic needs for you household. Local shops deal the local daily consumer products, like fish, fruits, vegetables, meats and some packed products. If you need something special, e.g. medicine you'll have to go to Kampot. To take something special from this place along, buy the famous pepper.



Tourist Attractions in Kep

[Kep Beach](#)



Kep Beach is a famous seaside resort with twelve months of sunshine, which is 1,000 meters long. The beach is different from the beach of Sihanouk Ville because it has black sand.

Visitors can see attractive Rocky Mountains and winding lanes toward the beach. A sightseeing tour of the city is very popular with them. Additionally, they can sunbath, swim, and picnic there.

From Kep, it takes 30 minutes to reach the nine other islands located on its opposite side by boat. Over there, one can enjoy splendid mountainous scenery and beautiful sea birds.

[Koh Ton Say Resort](#)



Koh Ton Say Resort
How to go: Location: Description: Is the natural resort located at the Southeast of Kep town in 4.5-kilometer distance from the town, and has two beaches suitable for swimming because they have white sand and shallow water. At the bottom of the sea, there are varied fish, plant and coral, which enable the research on ecology. The name "Koh Ton Say" comes from the word "Rum Say" meaning "Spread out". Because when the King, Sakor Reach is hopeless for struggle due to his troop and parties break off, he leads the remaining troop acrossing the sea to an island in front of Kep town, then his troop spread out there. So that we call the island "Koh Rum Say", after that we call "Koh

Ton Say" until now. Koh Ton Say has two-square kilometer land area. Before, prisoners were sent here for correcting and defending the island. The tourist infrastructures at the island were constructed during the Sang Kum Reas Ni Yum time such as path of horse cart around the island, wooden motel and restaurant, clean-water system and other administrative buildings etc. But, because of the past more than two decades of war and natural disaster, these infrastructures have almost completely been damaged. Nowadays, the island settled by seven families, who earn their living by small fishing and maintaining coconut plantation.

[Phnom Sar Sear](#)



Phnom Sar Sear is a nature and cultural site located about 14 Kilometers southwest of Kep city. This mountain is called Phnom Sar Sear because, according to Khmer legend mentioned above, when Prince Sakor Reach led the troops to this place, he got off his horse and moved furtively ahead of his pursuers along the mountainside, where at that time there was an island to which he fled. Thus, the mountain was called Phnom Sar Sear.

Phnom Sar Sear is composed of three small mountains about 1.5 square kilometers. It is about 40 meters high. The site features two natural caves-Phnom Domrei Sar and Phnom Ach Prochiev-which tourists can explore. In Phnom Damrei Sar cave, there is a beautiful mountain well called Viel Sre Muoy Roy. In the past, this site was also popular with filmmakers.

At the foot of the mountain are a number of small halls where clergymen and nuns meditate. Along the way to the mountaintop, there is a Buddhist pagoda where monks live. On the mountaintop sits a colorful, finely sculpted stupa built in 1964 by Prince Rasmei Sophean. A place of worship, it also houses a Buddha relic.

The fresh air and beautiful natural scenery make Phnom Sar Sear popular with tourists throughout the year. From the mountaintop, visitors have an excellent view of rice pad-dies, the islands and the sea below, as well as the distant mountains. Buddhists go there to pray for good fortune.

Most Tourists and even expats know that head for Sihanoukville (Kampong Som) when they want to get away to the beach for the weekend. However, find it too crowded, too noisy, and too full of obnoxious tourists fresh out the bar and looking to "chat it up" on what was supposed to be relaxing weekend getaway. Not to mention how disgusting the beach is the day after Khmer New Year, literally lined with trash. There is a much better alternative if having seclusion, peace and quiet on a picture perfect beach are what you are after...Rabbit Island, or "Koh Tonsay" in Khmer, is where you need to be.

This tiny island is only 2 square kilometers in size, and just a 25 minute boat ride from the beach in Kep. There are about 7 or 8 local families who actually live on the Island, making their living from fishing and growing coconut trees. These families also make a little extra by renting out the thatched huts along the beach to any visitors that happen to stop by. At any given time, you are not likely to have more than 15 or 20 people to share the entire island with.

There are two beaches on this island, one of which you must hike to access (but is well worth the hike, not only for the gorgeous beach but also for the hike itself). The main beach is just as pretty as any postcard, with coconut palms lining the white sand, with lush jungle covered hills in the background. There is no electricity except on a generator from 6-10 pm, no motorized vehicles, no karaoke bars, no litter along the beach, just picture perfect, peaceful isolation.

The huts are fantastic if you like "roughing it" a little bit...when we got to our, we found nothing inside but a mattress on a rustic bed frame and a mosquito net. The bathrooms are about a minute's walk behind the huts, and the "shower" is not much farther. The huts are up on stilts, and the whole thing is constructed of bamboo strips which filter in the light beautifully. These huts all cost \$5-10 per night for a double "room."

The food is amazing, being fresh crab or prawns fried with famous Kampot pepper. The average cost is \$5 per plate, which isn't cheap by Phnom Penh standards, so bring over an ice chest with your own food if you're on a budget.

The swimming is ideal, since the water is warm but not too hot, gentle waves and the entire beach on a gradual slope which means you can walk out very far and still only have it at your knees. Careful though, I stepped on a Sea Urchin (the non-poisonous kind) and if it hadn't been on the last day, would have ruined the trip! I suggest wearing some water shoes. Also, there are tons and tons of beautifully colorful fish around the rocky areas, which makes for great snorkeling...

The hiking is an absolute must...we even lost the trail and got ourselves lost for a good hour or more, but we got to see some of the best scenery ever encountered. You will encounter a mandrake grove growing in a "bog" (claylike mud that is almost impossible to walk through... because we walked through it. Don't recommend it.) There were local fisherman and kids hanging around this area fishing/farming seaweed and highly recommend that you get one of them to paddle you to where the trail starts back up again. A little knowledge of Khmer here would help, but were sure holding up a few dollars and using hand motions while pointing to the boat will do the trick. Don't forget your camera, this hike is incredibly beautiful. You can also see some of the local people busy at their daily work, and their homes... great photo opp's.

Not much else to do in the day except lounge in the hammocks and read, nap or just enjoy the view... this isn't the place to come if you're after some wild nightlife. At night, you can get a fire going right on the beach and do a traditional Khmer BBQ over the little coal stove, if you want. The sunsets saw here were some of the best has ever seen.

To get to Rabbit Island, just take a bus to Kep (actually, you have to take a bus Kampot, and whichever closest village the bus stops at, then take a tuk tuk over to Kep. Easy enough to arrange) where would love to interject some commentary here on all of the cool things to see in Kep. It was the ultimate getaway of the French Colonists in the 50's, and the decaying villas lend an intriguing and eerie presence to the town. Anyways... back to the point. Once you get to Kep, you can arrange with any of the guesthouses along the beach for a boat ride there and back for around \$10-20 return trip (per boat, not per person.) Or, if you speak enough Khmer, go to the Pier and try to arrange directly with the boat operator.

You can choose to go out just for the day and return to Kep for the evening, but it would be a shame to miss the beautiful sunset and the lovely dusk views of the island. Just don't forget your snorkeling gear! Hurry and visit before development hits and this becomes the next Sihanoukville.

Phnom Sar Sear Resort



Phnom Sar Sear Resort How to go: Location: Description: Is the natural and cultural resort locating at the Southeast in 14-kilometer distance from the provincial town of Kam Pot. When the King, Sakor Reach and his troop arrive at the seaside area, he gets off the horseback and move furtively along the mountain side (at that time the mountain was an island) for fleeing. So that, We call the mountain "Sar Sear" means "move furtively". Phnom Sar Sear consists of three-small mountains having approximate 1.5-square kilometer land area. The mountain is with approximate 40-meter height.

Tourists can enjoy themselves in the mountain caves such as the cave of Phnom Ach Pro Chiev and especially the cave of Phnom Dam Rey Sar where we found a great architecture of Veal Sre 100 inside. On the mountaintop of Sar Sear there is an artistic and color full Stupa built in 1964 by the princess, Rasmey Sophoan. The Stupa is the worshipping place where we believe in the three sacred objects of Buddhist and the cremated ash of Buddhist also kept. From the mountain foot to the top, there are meandering stairs, pagodas with monks, and many cottages for nuns and laymen. Phnom Sar Sear has beautiful natural scenery for all seasons.

On the mountaintop, we can view the scene of rice fields, forest, local villages, island, vast sea etc. The mountain is also the worshipping place for people who go there for praying and wishing for happiness and other fortunes in Buddhism.

Salt Enterprise



A natural resource needed in anyone's diet, salt is produced in the coastal areas of Kampot province and Kep province. Cambodia used to import Vietnamese "Bassac Salt" as they were unable to produce salt. In 1930s, a Chinese Salt Producing Expert, Kong Phu Tong from Vietnam was hired to train Khmers the tricks of the salt producing trade. The number of salt producers increased rapidly and the 1960s, a salt producing cooperative was established, led by Heng, a man well known around Kampot as a salt entrepreneur in the region near the coast, salt enterprises have been established, such as Beoung Rung, Beoung Tuk, Ses Sor, and Treuy Koh. The salt producing area covers 421,805 hectares and the annual salt production is

roughly 800,000-900,000 tons, for local needs and export. Salt production require high temperatures; therefore salt is produced in the hottest months between December and May. To increase the salt production, more land is being made available and techniques are being continually improved.

Veal Lumher



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now sits empty. A good, paved road connects the small town with the 15km far away Kampot. The slightly darker beaches than in Sihanoukville are mostly scattered with mangroves and black rocks, but Koh Thonsay (Rabbit Island) is just a short boat ride away (approx. 1/2h).

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Wat Samot Reangsey



Wat Samot Reangsey, Kep City is one of those sites which you should not miss while you are on your Kep City Tours. Kep is popular as a serene seaside city tucked away 173 kilometers to the south west of Phnom Penh. The city was founded in 1908 during the times of the French colonization. The city was received its seaside resort in the 1960s during the Prince Norodom Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime. It is interesting to know that the name of the city was derived from the French words 'le cap' or 'cape' in English. Wat Samot Reangsey, Kep City is one of the well known Tourist Attractions in Kep City.

Wat Samot Reangsey, Kep City is actually a historical site and its ancient buildings date back to years ago. Wat Samot Reangsey in Kep City is located in the Kep Village of the Kep Commune. Arriving here is easy and hassles-free and the most convenient route is the one from the provincial town. A journey of mere 2 km. will fetch you to this destination. It will take around 20 minutes to reach Wat Samot Reangsey, Kep City. This place remains a must visit for you as it will give you a fascinating insight into the history and culture of the land. travel.mapsofworld.com offers complete online information on Wat Samot Reangsey, Kep City

Zoo



Zoo, Kep City is one of the most visited sites among the various Tourist Attractions in Kep City. Kep is a seaside city tucked away 173 kilometers to the south west of Phnom Penh. History has it that it was founded in 1908 during the times of the French colonization. Kep City was transformed into a beautiful seaside resort during the Prince Norodom Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime in the 1960s. The name of the city is derived from the French words 'le cap' or 'cape' in English.

Today, Kep City has evolved into one of the major tourist destinations in Cambodia with its natural splendor and cultural sites. Zoo, Kep City is one of the most popular and most frequently visited places in this part of Kep City. Zoo Kep City actually refers to the Teuk Chhou Zoo which is a private zoo. It is located at a distance of 2.5 km away from the provincial town. If you are traveling from Kep, a 45 minutes' drive will take you conveniently to the zoo. This Zoo in Kep City is located in Thmei Village in the Prey Thom Commune in the Kep District. It is home to several species of plant and animal species which are native to the land.

Zoo, Kep City features different animals including lions and tigers and their cubs, elephants, monkeys of different species, snakes, deer, bears including a couple of sun bears, otter and many more. This is a wonderful place to spend a fun filled with your family and especially, the children are simply going to love the experience. The ticket for the entry includes a small charge if you want to drive your car through the zoo. The ticket includes access to the national park. Inside, you can even make a splash or take a cool dip in the crystal clear water of the Teuk Chhou River. Apart from the Zoo, Kep City, there are several other attraction sites which tourists can visit and these are Koh Ton Say Resort, Phnom Sar Sear, Veal Lumher and Wat Samot Reangsey.

A Kep Picnic - Resort town not to be missed

Every weekend, hundreds of Khmers pour out of Phnom Penh in trucks, pick-ups and taxis to travel the four hours south to Cambodia's forgotten beach resort of Kep. Their mission is simple – to enjoy a traditional pastime. To picnic

For a taste of real Khmer Culture, a picnic is an experience not to be missed. By 9am the first taxis are already pulling up at the famous Crab Market, the first market at which travelers arrive once they reach the ring road that circles Kep.

“What do you mean, 5000 riel for a kilogram of crabs?” a resident chides one of the krama-clad women weighing out the still-live blue swimmer crabs, each one carefully tied with rubber bands to stop them biting.

But the vendor only laughs. At just over \$1 for these hand sized crustaceans, she isn't about to lower her price, and soon steam is rising from the massive pots they use to cook the bounty while customers wait.

Another woman is turning bamboo sticks of squid and fish over a long charcoal grill. “If you don't like fish, we have other things,” She suggests, basting a plump chicken Maryland before replacing it, smoking, over the coals. Large, succulent banana prawns, too, lie on ice, waiting to be selected and prepared. But at around \$3 per kilogram, these delicacies are strictly for the wealthier patrons who can afford to indulge their bellies as well as feasting their eyes.

A stick of baby squid, char grilled, is as little as 500 riel, depending on their size and the time of day –early in the morning, the vendors know they have a good chance of selling them and are not so keen to discount their wares. After all, at that time of the morning, these women can barely cook these strange kebabs fast enough to keep up with demand. Most of the women are relatives of the fisherman who return periodically in their colorfully painted boats to unload more bounty from the holds into the baskets of the waiting families. The crabs then sit in traps near the shore, alive and well, until a customer buys them.

“My husband fishes near the shore. If there is not enough there, he will go out among the island. Sometimes, prices change, depending on how much they catch,” one of the women explains. “If the fishing is good, we charge less and prices go down.” Some of the city folk picks up the jars of Kep's famous pickled garlic, chili and other sundries on display, which the women prepare in their spare time. Mingling with the fishmongers, hawker girls peddle exotic snacks. Sticky rice and coconut wrapped in banana leaves is a perennial favorite, but others sell young coconut to drink, and others local souvenirs.

Customers can sit at tables in the market and watch life on the seashore unfold, dipping their food into bowls of lime juice thick with salt and pepper and sipping a cold drink.

But most choose to buy rice, crabs and sauces and continue around the corner, where woven mats under shady trees or tarps are laid out all along the beach for picnickers, some of whom take a swim between courses or simply enjoy the view across the ocean to the many islands which lie just offshore.

Sometimes, the local troupe of monkeys will venture down into the trees near the beach to play among the branches in the cool sea breeze, amusing the picnickers with their antics in the process.

Khmer love a picnic, and they like to make sure others enjoy their day too. Foreigners who sit by the shore are likely to be taken under the wing of the nearest family or bus load of local tourists.

The usual questions of “Where are you from? What is your name?” are often interspersed with offers of fruit and other food foreigners may not have ventured to taste on their own.

For those needing a little more lubrication than the ubiquitous sugar cane or coconut juices, men on bicycles peddle by intermittently, hollowed bamboo poles and cups hung from the back and sides. This is the local Teuk Thnaout Chou, or palm wine. Sweet and mellow, many a new covert has realized belatedly that it has a deceptive kick to it after a few 200 riel glasses in the tropical sun.

After a swim, it is an easy walk to wander along the shore road, examining the ruins of French colonial holiday homes left from Kep's glory days. And even a villa that King Norodom Sihanouk used on weekend. Be careful to take in these views from a polite distance, though. Most have been squatted by locals who may not always appreciate people stumbling into their homes unannounced.

By about three in the afternoon, the travelers are preparing to return to the city before dark.

More women carrying cooked crabs try to tempt the visitors into one last buy for the journey back, or even to take as gifts for friends at home. Kep crabs are famous in Cambodia for their quality and taste. Foreigners not in a hurry to rust back can spend the night. Kampot town is just half an hour's drive away, and in Kep itself now has an astonishing range of accommodation for such a sleepy place. Enjoy air conditioned comfort and a picture window view of the ocean from the stylish Champey Inn, which is also known for its fine French cuisine. The emphasis, of course, is on seafood, and the wine list compliments the food superbly. Champey Inn Annex boasts a swimming pool, or for more basic accommodation, the friendly family at Seaside Bungalows just before the market offers rooms from \$7 or possibly less, and Veranda Bungalows and Resort is in the same price range, high on the cool lush hillside.

Sunset brings a glowing orange luster to the place and peace as the last truck roars away. And then there are the stars to enjoy as you eat by lantern light (many places here still do not have 24 hour electricity). With no large city for miles, the night sky is dazzling. Kep is an unspoiled corner of Cambodia that should not be missed.