



## Bracelets For Buildings Inc. (B4B)

### Practical Travel Advice

**Dress down!** Make no mistake – everyone will know you’re a tourist at a glance, but don’t wear a Rolex watch, designer clothes, or jewelry that calls attention to you. Many married couples leave their wedding rings at home in a safe and wear plain silver bands. Don’t carry large handbags or expensive camera equipment. Be discreet. The majority of people you encounter are kind and honest, but don’t tempt the few that aren’t. Wear closed shoes that are sturdy and comfortable for walking. Streets and sidewalks can be uneven and dirty (or just made of dirt!).

Cambodia is hot and humid. When visiting construction sites in rural areas you will get dirty! Most people find loose fitting long pants or shorts most comfortable. Cotton t-shirts breath well and will absorb sweat. You may even want to bring an extra t-shirt to the construction site, just in case. There may be very little or no shade at the construction sites, so a hat and sunglasses are imperative. And closed shoes at the construction site are a MUST!

There are laundry services or self-serve laundry facilities available throughout Siem Reap.

**Money:** US dollars are the preferred currency in Cambodia. However, Cambodians don’t use US coins, so local shops and restaurants will give you change in the local currency (Cambodian Riel). 1000 riel = 25 cents US. Generally, they are quite fair. You’ll want to bring small denominations – don’t expect to break a \$20 for a 50-cent purchase. Bills that are torn or overly abused may be rejected. There are money changers available in the city who are certified by the government, and ATMS are available with a service charge of \$3 to \$6 per transaction.

**Sunscreen and insect repellent** are not readily available for purchase, and if you can find them they might be quite expensive. Come prepared for long, hot days in the sun, and insects.

**Anti-bacterial hand wipes, hand sanitizer, and toilet paper** are highly recommended assets to carry in your handbag, day pack, or pockets. In town and at tourist sites, public restrooms may not have these supplies. There may be no facilities available at rural construction sites.

**Jet lag** can cause some people to feel a bit ill the first few days after they arrive. The best solution is to try to adjust your schedule to the time zone you’re in as soon as possible. Go to bed at night, and get up in the morning, even if you don’t feel like it. Sensible exposure to sunlight can help the body adjust. A short nap in the afternoon may help.



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**Food** is a huge part of exploring a new country and culture, and there's a lot of great food in Cambodia. Exercise caution – they do not have the same health and food safety handling practices that you are accustomed to in the western world, and your digestive system may not be used to the same “bugs” that are being cultivated in Cambodia. So, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- If there's not a place for you to wash your hands, there's not a place for the person handling your food to wash his/her hands.
- The safest foods are those that are cooked in front of you and served hot, which kills the bacteria.
- Avoid fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Drink bottled water. Use bottled water to brush your teeth.
- Ice may be safe because it's made in factories, but it comes with risk.
- Avoid milk and juices being served from pitchers or drink dispensers – you have no idea how long they've been sitting, or at what temperature. Order drinks that are served in individual serving size containers, and sealed. If the outside of the bottle/can is wet, dry it before opening it, and wipe clean any surface that will come into direct contact with your mouth.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk products such as cheese.

### Getting Around Town

Tuk-tuks, which are two-seat carriages pulled behind a motorcycle, are the most common way to get around in Cambodia. Here are a few things to keep in mind before you jump in that tuk-tuk:

- Most drivers don't know street names, but they do know the major markets and pagodas (called “wats” in Khmer). So, it can be very helpful to know a local landmark near where you want to go. You may also want to have a local map so you can follow along, and maybe give directions. However, don't assume the driver knows how to read a map. Words for giving basic directions are included in the language section.
- Negotiate the price in advance. Walk away if you don't feel you're being offered a fair deal. If the price drops when you walk away, you probably weren't being offered a fair deal, but the price doesn't drop you probably offering too little. Remember, the driver has to pay for gas, etc.
- Be alert! If you are riding in a tuk-tuk, you may be a target for young guys on motos riding by and grabbing your bag or smartphone from your hand. Keep your valuables tucked close to you, or at your feet.



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### General Safety

The crime rate in Siem Reap is relatively low, but it is not completely crime free. Be aware of your surroundings. Stay in areas that are well-lit, and where there are other people around. If you feel uncomfortable, leave.

Pay attention to what your team leaders and locals say about going out at night, and areas to be avoided.

Don't make yourself a target. If you are confronted, do not resist – give up your valuables. The most common type of robbery is someone on a motorbike ripping a handbag off the arm of a tourist who is walking, or backpack from a tourist on a motor bike.

If you are on the ground floor of a guest house/hotel, do not leave valuables in sight, or near a window where someone can reach in with their hand (or a homemade fishing pole).

Avoid contact with dogs, cats, and other animals as they may carry rabies or other diseases.

There are snakes and some disagreeable insects in Cambodia – mainly scorpions and centipedes. Snakes tend to be most active at night and in warm weather. As a precaution, boots and long pants should be worn while walking outdoors in snake-infested regions. Most snakes will not bother you if you don't bother them. Both scorpions and centipede like to hide under things like old wood piles. Be cautious when moving or hanging out near potential hiding places.

And who knew geckos will bite? They will generally do everything they can to avoid biting you, but if you back them into a corner, they may lash out. And they don't give you a quick nip – they latch on and pump you full of nasty bacteria. So, better to leave them alone!