

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

CAMBODIA

Country name in English (PCGN recommended name)	Cambodia
Country name in Khmer (romanized in brackets) ¹	កម្ពុជា (Kâmpŭchéa)
State title in English (PCGN recommended name)	Kingdom of Cambodia
State title in Khmer (romanized in brackets)	ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា (Preăh Réachéanachâkr Kâmpŭchéa)
Official language	Khmer (khm) ²
Script	Khmer
Romanization System	BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Khmer
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	KH/KHM
Capital (conventional name)	Phnom Penh
Capital in Khmer (romanized form in brackets)	ភ្នំពេញ (Phnum Pénh) ³
Population	15,552,211 ⁴

Introduction

Cambodia is in southeast Asia, bordered to the west and northwest by Thailand, to the northeast by Laos, to the east by Vietnam and to the southwest by the Gulf of Thailand. A former protectorate of France, and occupied by the Japanese during World War II, Cambodia gained independence in 1953 when it became the Kingdom of Cambodia. The government was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge in 1975, and in 1976 the ruling authority designated the country Kampuchea—the Khmer-language form—for international use, though this name was not adopted by HMG. In 1979 the People’s Republic of Kampuchea was established after the Khmer Rouge was defeated. In 1989 the country was named the State of Cambodia, until 1993 when the monarchy was restored and it became the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Geographical names policy

It is PCGN policy for Cambodia to romanize Khmer names, taken from official sources, ideally produced by the *General Department of Geography and Cadastre*, according to the BGN/PCGN (1972) Romanization System for Khmer (a modified version of Cambodia’s Service Géographique Khmère (SGK) 1959 system), with the exception of the names of provinces and province centres, for which PCGN recommends using anglicised

¹ Using the BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Khmer:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693723/ROMANIZATION_OF_KHMER.pdf

² ISO 639-2 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

³ It is PCGN policy is to recommend using the conventional name Phnom Penh rather than the romanized-Khmer spelling on HMG products.

⁴ Cambodia National Institute of Statistics, 2019 figure <https://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/km/>

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(simplified) spellings⁵.

In 1995, the Ministry of Land Management and Urban Planning of Cambodia, Department of Geography, developed a new romanization system (modified in 1997) that is similar to the 1959 SGK system, but with no diacritical marks and a number of differences in the treatment of vowels. This new romanization system has not yet been implemented in Cambodia and it will not be considered for adoption for HMG use until PCGN finds evidence that the new standardised system is officially in place and is being consistently used as a means of romanizing Khmer geographical names.

Additionally, anglicised forms are commonly found in Cambodia, and until the new romanization system has been widely adopted, PCGN recommends that these anglicised spellings be used on HMG products for first-order administrative divisions and their administrative centres. In 2025, the *General Department of Geography and Cadastre* published a [dataset](#) including Khmer language and ‘English’ names for administrative divisions and settlements numbering some 14,000 features. As noted, the English names can be used for the provinces and their centres, and the Khmer forms romanized for smaller features.

The [NGA GEONet Names Server \(GNS\)](#) may also be used as a source for names in Cambodia⁶.

Language

Khmer is the official language of Cambodia⁷. It is spoken by the majority (96.3 %⁸) of the population. French, which was once the language of government, is now only spoken by some older Cambodians. English is used in the press and is the medium of instruction in some universities; street signs are often bilingual in Khmer and English.

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁹):

The [BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Khmer](#) contains the basic Roman letters plus the following letter-diacritic combinations:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ă	0102	ă	0103
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ě	0114	ě	0115

⁵ A list of the recommended anglicised spellings can be found on page 3.

⁶ Note that the PCGN-recommended anglicised names for the provinces (ADM1s) and centres (PPLAs) are recorded in the GNS as Conventional (C) names.

⁷ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5a40.html>

⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cambodia/>

⁹ See www.unicode.org

Characters can be manually input into Microsoft Word documents by typing in these character codes and then holding down the ALT key and pressing /x/. The code will change to the required character. The letter can be copied and pasted into other programmes if required. Alternatively, the ‘Insert – Symbol’ command can be used; the code can be entered into the ‘Character code’ box which will show the corresponding letter. A GeoNames Soft-Copy Keyboard can be downloaded from the NGA website and used to enter the required letter-diacritic combinations for a particular region: http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/gns_services.html

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Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ī	012C	ī	012D
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ǿ	014E	ǿ	014F
Œ	0152	œ	0153
Ě	0152+0306*	ě	0153+0306*
Ů	016C	ů	016D

*There is no single Unicode encoding for these letter-diacritic combinations.

Territorial and toponymic issues

Thailand and Cambodia dispute ownership of land near the 11th century border temple, Prasat Preăh Vihéar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site¹⁰. It is located in the Dangrek Mountains that form a natural border between Thailand and Cambodia. A 1962 International Court of Justice judgement awarded the temple to Cambodia and, as the dispute continued, this ruling was reiterated by a further ICJ judgement in 2013. On UK government products, the temple should be labelled using the Cambodian name **Prasat Preăh Vihéar** or with the English generic term **Preăh Vihéar Temple** if required.

The boundary alignment is also disputed in an area close to the Cambodian border town of Poipet¹¹. The Cambodian name with the conventional name in brackets **Paôy Pêt (Poipet)** should be shown.

Other boundary disputes exist between Cambodia and Thailand, particularly along the Dangrek Mountains. The *de jure* boundary should be shown in each of these cases with the correct local names used on either side of the *de jure* boundary.

¹⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1224>

¹¹ A town popular with Thai gamblers.

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Administrative structure

Cambodia is divided into 25 first-order administrative divisions (ADM1s): the capital autonomous municipality (Khmer: *krŏng*) Phnom Penh, plus 24 provinces (Khmer: *khet*). As mentioned in the Geographical Names Policy section on page 1, the PCGN recommended name is the locally found anglicised (simplified) name for these names.

<i>Province - PCGN recommended name</i>	<i>Province – Khmer</i>	<i>Province – BGN/PCGN romanization</i>	<i>ISO 3166-2 code</i>	<i>Province centre – PCGN recommended name</i>	<i>Province centre- Khmer</i>	<i>Province centre- BGN/PCGN romanization</i>	<i>Co-ordinates of centre</i>
Banteay Meanchey	បន្ទាយមានជ័យ	Bântéay Méan Choăy	KH-1	Sisophon	សិរីសោភ័ណ	Sěrei Saôphoăñ	13° 35' 09"N 102° 58' 25"E
Battambang	បាត់ដំបង	Bătdâmbâng	KH-2	Battambang	បាត់ដំបង	Bătdâmbâng	13° 06' 10"N 103° 11' 54"E
Kampong Cham	កំពង់ចាម	Kâmpóng Cham	KH-3	Kampong Cham	កំពង់ចាម	Kâmpóng Cham	11° 59' 36"N 104° 40' 00"E
Kampong Chhnang	កំពង់ឆ្នាំង	Kâmpóng Chhnăng	KH-4	Kampong Chhnang	កំពង់ឆ្នាំង	Kâmpóng Chhnăng	12° 15' 00"N 104° 40' 00"E
Kampong Speu	កំពង់ស្ពឺ	Kâmpóng Spœ	KH-5	Kampong Speu	កំពង់ស្ពឺ	Kâmpóng Spœ	11° 27' 12"N 104° 31' 15"E
Kampong Thom	កំពង់ធំ	Kâmpóng Thum	KH-6	Kampong Thom	កំពង់ធំ	Kâmpóng Thum	12° 42' 40"N 104° 53' 19"E
Kampot	កំពត	Kâmpôt	KH-7	Kampot	កំពត	Kâmpôt	10° 36' 37"N 104° 10' 53"E
Kandal	កណ្តាល	Kândal	KH-8	Ta Khmau	តាកែវ	Ta Khmau	11° 29' 00"N 104° 57' 00"E
Koh Kong	កោះកុង	Kaôh Kōng	KH-9	Koh Kong	កោះកុង	Kaôh Kōng	11° 36' 55"N 102° 59' 02"E

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<i>Province - PCGN recommended name</i>	<i>Province – Khmer</i>	<i>Province – BGN/PCGN romanization</i>	<i>ISO 3166-2 code</i>	<i>Province centre – PCGN recommended name</i>	<i>Province centre- Khmer</i>	<i>Province centre- BGN/PCGN romanization</i>	<i>Co-ordinates of centre</i>
Kep	កែប	Kêb	KH-23	Krong Kep	ក្រុងកែប	Krông Kêb	10° 28' 58"N 104° 19' 00"E
Kratie	ក្រចេះ	Krâchéh	KH-10	Kratie	ក្រចេះ	Krâchéh	12° 29' 17"N 106° 01' 08"E
Mondolkiri	មណ្ឌលគិរី	Môndôl Kiri	KH-11	Sen Monorom	សែនមនោរម្យ	Sênmonôurôm	12° 27' 21"N 107° 11' 17"E
Oddar Meanchey	ឧត្តរមានជ័យ	Ŏtdâr Méan Choăy	KH-22	Samraong	សំរោង	Sâmraông	14° 10' 54"N 103° 31' 03"E
Pailin	ប៉ៃលិន	Pailĭn	KH-24	Pailin	ប៉ៃលិន	Pailĭn	12° 50' 56"N 102° 36' 33"E
Phnom Penh	ភ្នំពេញ	Phnum Pénh	KH-12	Phnom Penh	ភ្នំពេញ	Phnum Pénh	11° 33' 45"N 104° 54' 58"E
Preah Sihanouk	ព្រះសីហនុ	Preăh Seihânŭ	KH-18	Sihanoukville¹²	ព្រះសីហនុ	Preăh Seihânŭ	11° 38' 09"N 103° 30' 06"E
Preah Vihear	ព្រះវិហារ	Preăh Vĭhéar	KH-13	Tbeng Meanchey	ត្បូងមានជ័យ	Tbêng Méanchey	13° 48' 26"N 104° 58' 50"E
Prey Veng	ព្រៃវែង	Prey Vêng	KH-14	Prey Veng	ព្រៃវែង	Prey Vêng	11° 29' 13"N 105° 19' 31"E
Pursat	ពោធិ៍សាត់	Poŭthĭsăt	KH-15	Pursat	ពោធិ៍សាត់	Poŭthĭsăt	12° 32' 20"N 103° 55' 09"E
Ratanakiri	រតនគិរី	Rôtânôkiri	KH-16	Banlung	បានលុង	Ban Lŭng	13° 44' 22"N 106° 59' 14"E

¹² This is the most commonly seen conventional name, also encountered Kampong Saom and Preah Sihanouk

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Siem Reap	សៀមរាប	Siĕmréab	KH-17	Siem Reap	សៀមរាប	Siĕmréab	13° 21' 42"N 103° 51' 38"E
Stung Treng	ស្ទឹងត្រែង	Stǽng Trêng	KH-19	Stung Treng	ស្ទឹងត្រែង	Stǽng Trêng	13° 31' 33"N 105° 58' 06"E
Svay Rieng	ស្វាយរៀង	Svay Riĕng	KH-20	Svay Rieng	ស្វាយរៀង	Svay Riĕng	11° 05' 16"N 105° 47' 58"E
Takeo	តាកែវ	Takêv	KH-21	Takeo	តាកែវ	Takêv	10° 59' 27"N 104° 47' 06"E
Tbong Khmum¹³	ត្បូងឃ្មុំ	Tbong Khmǔm	KH-25	Suong	ស្ទឹង	Suǒng	11° 54' 42"N 105° 39' 30"E

¹³ The spelling for Tbong Khmum province and its centre, Suong, have been taken from maps produced by the National Institute of Statistics Cambodia in co-operation with the Statistics Bureau of Japan, and the reference to the Royal Decree in the Cambodia Monthly Legal Update, January 2014.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name	Local Names	Location (coordinates)	Feature Type
Angkor Wat	Prasat Angkor Voat (Khmer)	13° 24' 46" N 103° 52' 01" E	Temple
Dangrek Mountains	Chuor Phnum Dângrêk (Khmer) Thio Khao Phanom Dongrak (Thai)	14° 21' 30" N 104° 30' 30" E	Mountains
Gulf of Thailand ¹⁴	Ao Thai (Thai) Chhung Sâmŭtrôsiêm (Khmer) Teluk Siam (Malay) Vịnh Thái Lan (Vietnamese)	39°42'38" N 104° 17' 35" E	Gulf
Mekong ¹⁵	Mae Nam Khong (Thai) Mènam Khong (Lao) Lancang Jiang (Chinese) Mekong River (Myanmar) Mékôngk (Khmer) Sông Tiền Giang (Vietnamese)	41° 03' 26" N 102° 02' 36" E	River
Paôy Pêt (Poipet)	Paôy Pêt (Khmer)	13° 39' 29" N 102° 33' 49" E	Town
Phnom Aural ¹⁶	Phnum Aôral (Khmer)	12° 01' 55" N 104° 10' 14" E	Mountain
Preăh Vihéar Temple	Prasat Preăh Vihéar (Khmer) Khao Phra Wihan (Thai)	14° 23' 30" N 104° 40' 49" E	Temple
Tonle Sap ¹⁷	Bồeng Tônlé Sab (Khmer)	12° 55' 26" N 103° 54' 55" E	Lake

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile (no longer updated): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13006539>
- Cambodia 'Geographical List 2025': [Cambodia Geographical List 2025 | Data for the Economic and Financial Sector](#)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/>
- Languages: www.omniglot.com
- Cambodia National Institute of Statistics: <https://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/km/>
- Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/>

Compiled by PCGN
Reviewed and updated May 2026
www.gov.uk/pcgn

¹⁴ Historically known as the Gulf of Siam.

¹⁵ The Mekong flows south from China and Myanmar (Burma), along the Thailand/Laos border and then through Cambodia and Vietnam. The local language names may also be added to larger scale products.

¹⁶ Cambodia's highest peak. Sometimes spelt Phnum Aoral.

¹⁷ Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake.