

TRAVEL

NORTHEAST CAMBODIA

KOMPONG CHAM
KRATIE
MONDULKIRI
RATANAKIRI
STUNG TRENG

HARVEST
SEASON ISSUE
NOV-DEC 2013

ACCOMMODATION
EATS
VISITS
MAPS
TRAVEL INFO








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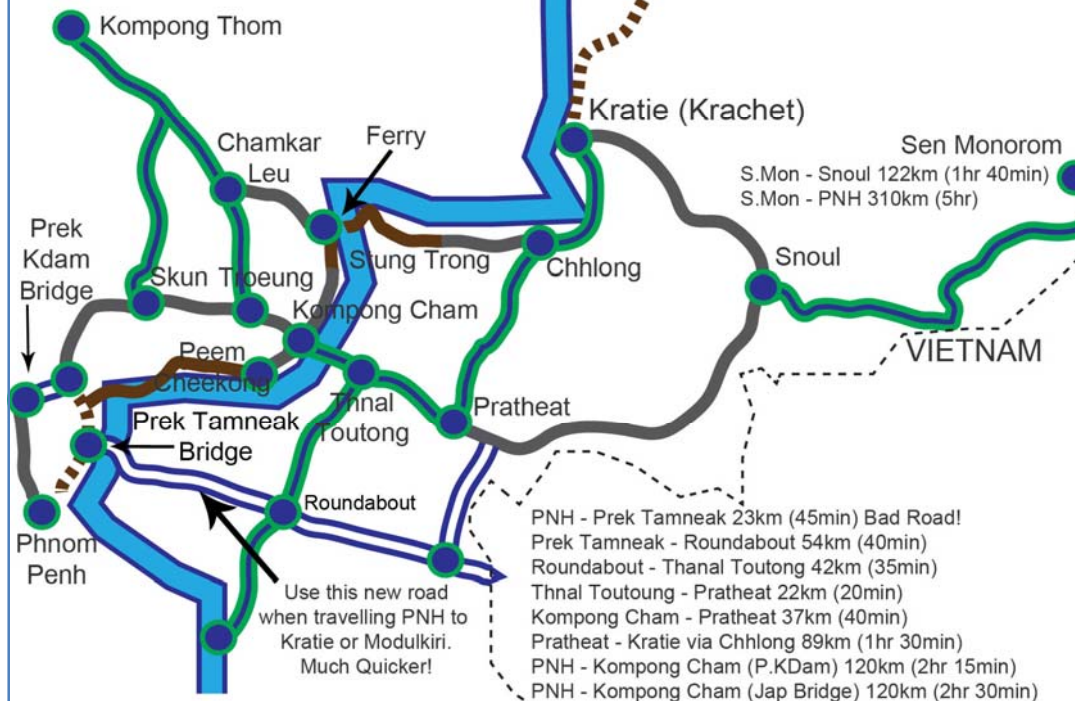


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Northeast Cambodia Road Conditions - Travel Times November 2013

The road times listed are what can be considered normal in a car or minivan. Buses are slower, and taxis are faster because they drive like complete idiots!

-  Excellent
-  Okay (for Cambodia)
-  Sealed but Poor
-  Dirt
-  Absolute Crap



TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - WELCOME

Welcome to Northeast Cambodia - Cambodia's Best Kept Secret

This really is the road less travelled. For two decades we've had Northeast Cambodia to ourselves, but with the highways now (mostly) paved and the bridges finished, Cambodia's best kept secret is opening up to the world. We'll share what we know, and pass on any information you'd like to contribute. The guide & website TravelNortheastCambo.com showcases Cambodia's five most Northeast provinces; Ratanakiri & Mondulakiri up in the mountains, as well as Stung Treng, Kratie (sometimes written as Krachet) & Kompong Cham along the Mekong River. It is lovingly put together at the offices of BrandPlusPlus in Phnom Penh, by staff that not only come from the area, but love travelling there too. If you have any suggestions or would like to contribute, please drop us an email. jim@brandplusplus.com!

Local Updates and Gossip for November/ December 2013

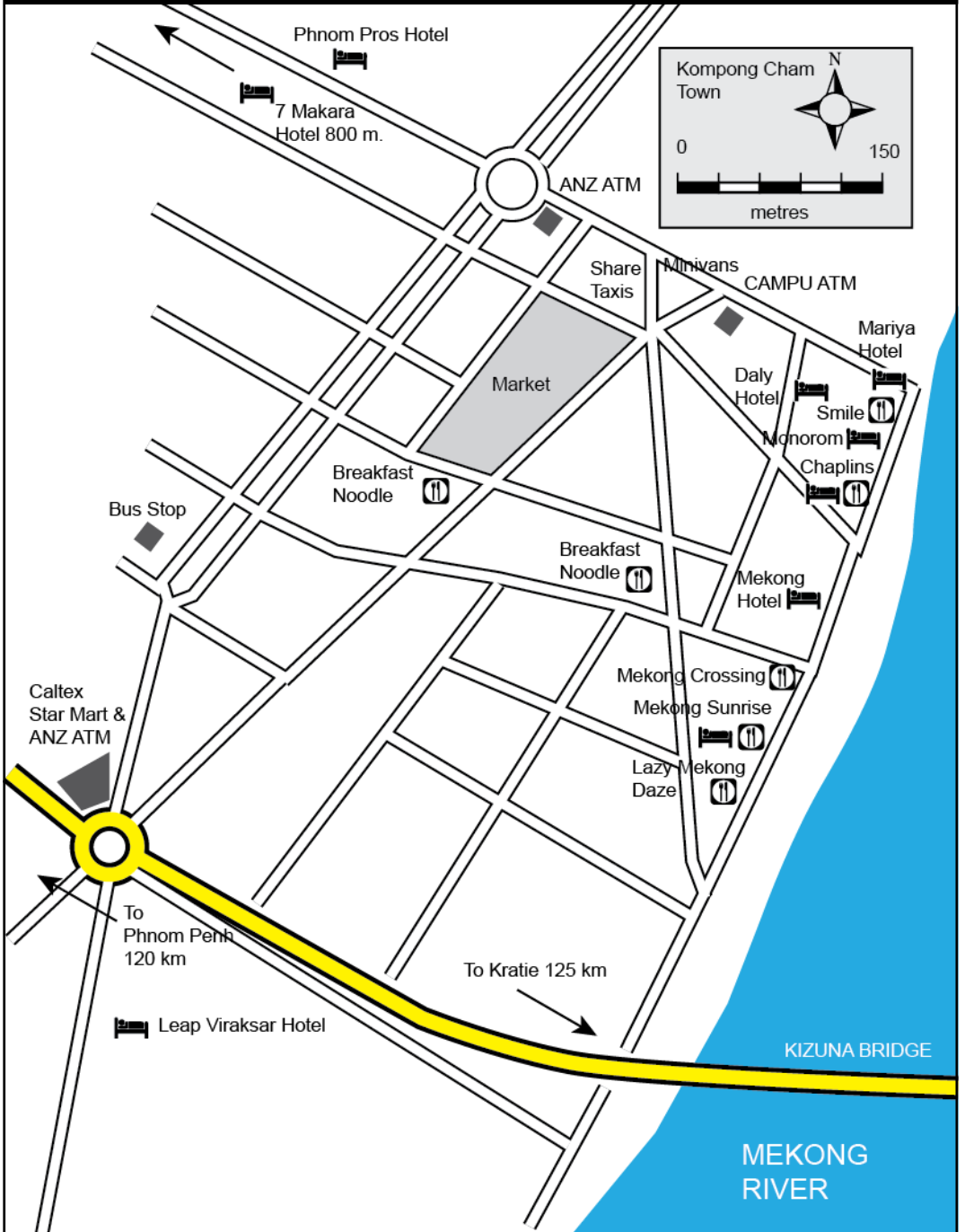
Well firstly the ***road from Kratie to Stung Treng has turned to absolute crap!*** It was built wrong by a dodgy construction company and fell apart straight away. Particularly bad is the first 90 km north of Krachet. That stretch now takes around 2 hours when it used to take only one. ***Tania has closed the Penguins of Angkor*** in Kompong Cham, so for European cuisine try Lazy Mekong Daze by the river, run by a French Frank, (love their steak and chips). ***The two Charlies have opened Chaplin's Restaurant right on the river in Kompong Cham***, probably the nicest place in the Northeast, A/C, cocktails, draft beer, great food. My new favorite late night hangout, you just gotta try it. (Chaplin's Ad is on the back cover). ***Crazy Chicago Joe has left the Red Sun Falling in Kratie*** and passed it on to Haky, same great place (now fully renovated), always my first port of call in Krachet. Speaking of Kratie, ***the Balcony has opened the Balcony 2*** (photos on the website), just a minutes walk north along the river from the original Balcony, another great travelers' hangout. ***Kompong Cham has a brand new hotel called the Daly Hotel***, very fancy and nice, (I checked the rooms) one street back from the river behind the Monorom VIP, treat yourself, you deserve it! ***Mr. Tol has taken over the Sunrise Guest House on the river in Kompong Cham***, so if you need a cheap backpacker room go see him first. ***The Gecko in Ratanakiri has moved*** or is still moving, (depends on when you read this) planned location down the hill then left, not far. Ask a moto taxi, they'll know. ***The Phat Gecko in Mondulakiri has moved too***, also now known as Happy Elephant Bungalows, go to the top of the main road, left at the airstrip roundabout, then straight ahead 80 m at the end of the airstrip, look for the sign on the right and follow the track down. Way cool and way cheap!

Jim Swa - November 2013



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - KOMPONG CHAM



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - KOMPONG CHAM

Kompong Cham

Situated on the Mekong River 120 km North of Phnom Penh, Kompong Cham Town is the capital of Cambodia's most populous province. Most activity happens along the riverfront during the late afternoon and in to the evening. While the boats no longer run since the opening of the Kizuna bridge across the Mekong, frequent bus, van and taxi transportation both North and Southbound is cheap and readily available.

Accommodation

With a plethora of medium and budget priced hotels located along the scenic Mekong River or close by, Kompong Cham is an oasis for the independent traveler looking for a bargain. Travelers looking for a pool should try the luxurious 7 Makara just 1.5 k inland, while the finest rooms in town can be had at the VIP Monorom on the riverfront. Seasoned travelers will find the Phnom Pros or Mariya great value, while large tour groups usually head for the Leap Viraksar Hotel by the bridge or Mekong hotel by the river. For those wanting to indulge themselves with western food & drink, Chaplin's Restaurant by the river has also recently opened a small guest house upstairs. For the really budget conscious (yes you backpackers!) try the Mekong Sunrise Guest House on the riverfront. *Update: Newly opened "Daly Hotel" behind Monorom VIP.

Eats

While a great feed in Northeast Cambodia can be hard to come by, the Kompong Cham riverfront boasts a few little gems that might tempt you to extend your stay for a few days. Chaplin's Restaurant is a cool and classy café where they cook a steak sandwich so juicy it will make you forget that you even in Cambodia. The Mekong Crossing's fish'n'chips are legendary, and the French style steak and chips at the Lazy Mekong have to be the best deal in town.

Visits

Ancient Wat Nokor Temple on Kompong Cham's northern fringe is the highlight of number of great "must see" locations surrounding the town. Head just seven kilometers on the highway back towards Phnom Penh to Phnom Pros (boy) and Phnom Srey (girl) mountains, or take a ride across the famous bamboo bridge at the south end of town to beautiful untouched Koh Penh Island in the Mekong, or maybe cross the new bridge to the ancient colonial tower and then explore the Chhup rubber plantations. *Expect the bamboo bridge to Koh Penh Island to be ready between Xmas and New Year. Till then a ferry operates, during daytime hours.



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - KOMPONG CHAM

Accommodation In Kompong Cham (*Room Rates Vary with Demand and Season)

Chaplin's Hotel - Beautifully appointed, new, clean, lovely rooms adjoining Kompong Cham's finest bar and restaurant. Right on the riverside just north of the Mekong Hotel. Very popular so best to book ahead. (See the ad on the back cover of this guide)

Room Rates: A/C \$15 and up, M: 078 688996, E: reservations@chaplingsguesthouse.com

Mekong Sunrise Guesthouse - True backpacker accommodation right by the river, bang slap in the middle of town. Cheap beer, food, pool table, and spartan rooms. If that's your deal, then this is your place! (See the ad inside the back cover of this guide)

Room Rates: Fan \$5 (1 Bed), \$8 (2 Beds), M: 011449720/0888502170

Phnom Pros Hotel - An old favorite, good bang for your buck. A/C \$12 - \$20, 042941444

7 Makara Hotel - Swimming pool, nice rooms, 1 km from river. A/C \$23 - \$20, 0426661333

Monorom VIP Hotel - Excellent rooms, riverside, pricey. A/C \$18 - \$30, 077774545

Mekong Hotel - Well used icon, balcony rooms are OK. Fan \$8, A/C \$18 - \$30, 042941536

Mariya Hotel - Friendly hotel "cornerside" on the river. Fan \$15, A/C \$18 - \$25, 0426411144

Leap Viraksar Hotel - Near the Kizuna bridge, mostly tour groups. A/C \$20 0426337778

Daly Hotel - Newest in town, great rooms, 1 street back from river. A/C \$14 - \$40 0426666631

Eats In Kompong Cham Town

Lazy Mekong Daze - The European and Khmer cuisine at this open air riverside café is excellent. Friendly staff, wifi, draft beer and free pool, makes this a favorite hangout for local expats and NGO workers. M: 092 307765, 011624048 E: lazymekongdaze@gmail.com

Chaplin's Restaurant - Outside on the riverfront terrace, or inside in the Aircon, Chaplin's sets a whole new standard for this part of Cambodia. The delicious food is truly European standard, plus cocktails, wifi, pool & draft beer. You wont want to leave!

M: 078688996 E: reservations@chaplingsgusthouse.com

Mekong Crossing - Kompong Cham's original expat restaurant, good food, reasonable price



Smile Restaurant - NGO run, friendly young staff, snacks, fruit shakes. Newly renovated

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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - KRATIE

Welcome to Kratie (Krachet)

A well known travel guide once described Kratie as “The End Of The Universe”, and nowadays that couldn’t be further from the truth. With the Laos border open, and the highway complete, Kratie has become one of the most popular stopovers on the Thai - Laos - Cambodia travel loop. While sadly the slow river boats have become a thing of the past, shortened travel times mean Kratie now tops the list as a base for towns further afield, like Banlung & Sen Monorom.

Accommodation: A variety of mid-range and budget hotels along a 500 meter stretch of the riverfront is where most independent travelers will find a place stay. Starting at an old favorite (if you can get a balcony room) the Heng Heng Hotel near the Kratie Port Office might do the trick. If not wander north and try the popular Santhepeap. A little further upstream the Morhautdom, Oudom Sambath and Riverside Hotels all offer similar cheap and plain rooms. Last but not least “The Balcony” has a variety of cheap rooms and is the “go to” place for backpackers. Those with more discerning taste (and possibly their own vehicle) may wish to move a street inland from the Balcony, and around the corner to the beautiful Luck Life World Hotel with its fine rooms and astonishing décor. Update: Balcony Two has also just opened, a little north of the original.

Eats: While it has never been known as a food hotspot, Kratie nevertheless has a few places that are worth a try for the hungry traveler. The “English Full Monty Breakfast” at the Red Sun Falling should get you going, not to mention their ridiculously cheap cocktails and daily board specials. A “Battle Royale” over customers between the Silver Dolphin and Mekong Hostel at the southern part of the riverfront will get you great local food at astonishingly low backpacker prices at either place. Best around late afternoon when you might score a happy hour or two! For something a little classy and upmarket, try “Le Bungalow” or just a few steps further north and have a meal and share stories with other travelin’ folks on “The Balcony”.

Visits: Krachet is flat! Really flat! So it’s a great little town to just rent a bicycle and go for a ride. Head south for a couple of clicks along the river track to Wat Rokor Kandal, and surroundings to see Krachet how it used to be. Hop on the ferry across to Koh Trong sand island for a bit of eco fun! Grab a moto north 20 mins to the hill temple of Phnom Sambok for a leg work out and a great view. Wander around the new market square (the old one burned down last year). And don’t forget to be back in town for the famous red sunset from the river side, with an accompanying cool beverage. Oh, and there are dolphins just 20 km north of town, (you knew that already)!



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - KRATIE

Accommodation in Kratie (*Room Rates Vary with Demand and Season)

Santepheap Hotel - Old Standard! A little worn but best of the bunch Fan \$8 A/C \$15 - \$20

Balcony Guesthouse - Backpacker Classic. Fun, food, drinks, balcony! Fan \$3 - 15

Balcony Guest House 2 - As above, but a little further north Fan \$5 - \$15

Heng Heng Hotel - Nice if you can get a river view room A/C \$15 - \$20

Morhautdom/Oudom Sambath - Similar cheap Khmer style hotels Fan \$8 - 10 A/C \$12 - \$20

Mekong Hostel - Cheapest on the riverside. Dorms. Cheap eats too! Fan \$2.50 - \$10

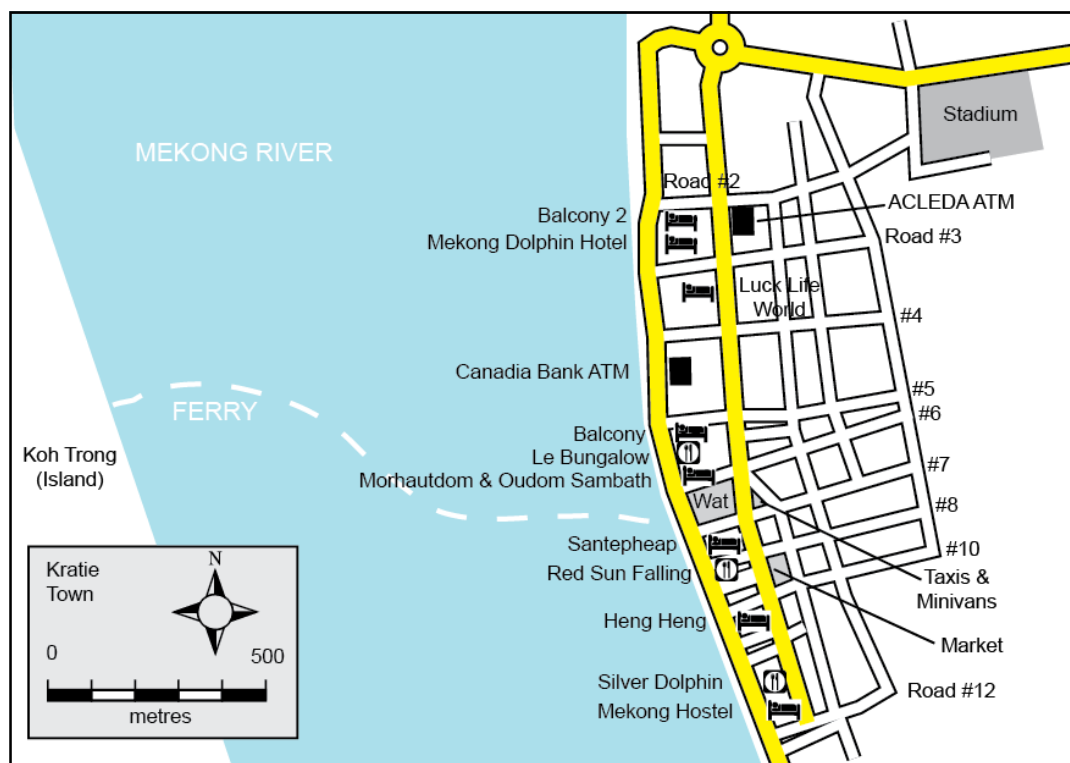
Luck Life World - Fancy with nicest rooms in town. Very Khmer. Very nice. A/C \$15 - \$40

Eats in Kratie

Red Sun Falling - "The Original" Kratie hangout, now renovated. Cheap Cocktails. My Favorite!

Silver Dolphin - Good cheap food & friendly staff. Nice to be here around sunset.

Mekong Hostel - Huge variety. Cheap prices! Next to Silver Dolphin.



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - STUNG TRENG

Welcome to Stung Treng

For people coming down from Laos, Stung treng on the Sekong River (tributary of the Mekong) is probably your first port of call, and although many travelers bypass, or only stop for lunch, Stung Treng is definitely worth a stopover. Adventure tours, kayaking, boats, dirt biking, etc. are opening all the time, especially during the dry season, so ask along the riverside for more details. For a more relaxing time, hang out in this sleepy town for a day or two and unwind.

Accommodation

Most of the cheap places to stay are on the main drag heading away from the river, opposite the market. On my last check the Apsara would be first pick because of the very clean rooms. My favorite hotel is the Golden River which is the sister hotel to the beautiful Ratanak City hotel in Ratanakiri, not cheap, but great value. Right on the river corner, over a busy restaurant is the Sam Pheap, which is fun if you want to really experience Stung Treng local style. Most backpackers will usually hit the Riverside, which has the standard backpacker scene, food and rooms, if that's your thing.

Eats

Monika's Palace is a pleasant surprise after years of eating in local restaurants. Their selection of Indian, European and Khmer food is a little more expensive than the others I have tried in town, but also a whole lot better. If you need cash, there is an ATM right across the street. The Riverside Guesthouse has a very cheap menu and the food is reasonable, if not fancy. Tourism hasn't taken hold yet in Stung Treng so a wander down the main street could be in order. As always, if its crowded full of Cambodians digging in, the food is probably good and cheap.

Visits

The local market opens from dawn till around 5 PM, and can be a fantastic introduction to daily Cambodian life if you've just arrived. Bring a camera, there is some amazing stuff on sale. The "Umbrella Market" in the main strip, sells flowers and fresh goods if you're up early enough. Ferries leave at regular intervals across the Mekong to a very untouched part of the country, where you can visit ancient ruins, and experience Cambodia how it used to be. Worth a full day trip! During the late afternoon the river boulevard comes to life, check out the pagodas, get those Instagram sunset shots of monks you've been itching for, and grab refreshments at a riverside table.



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - STUNG TRENG

Accommodation in Stung Treng (*Room Rates Vary with Demand and Season)

Golden River - Finest in town, my pick if I have a few dollars to spare. A/C \$15 - \$80 012980678

Stung Treng Hotel - Big old fashioned, as Khmer as you can get. Fan \$6, A/C \$12 0885654433

Apsara - Really clean rooms, and a lovely chap running it. Fan \$7, A/C \$12 - \$20 012939162

Sok San - Good value, try to get a window room. A/C \$12 - \$13 0746633000

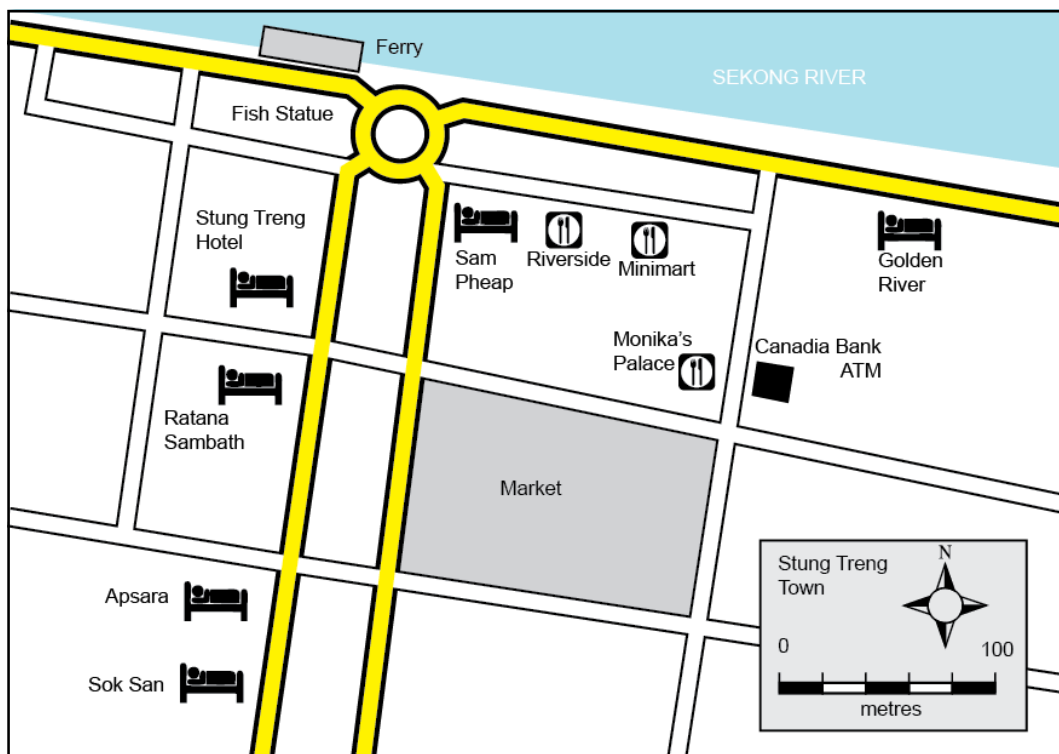
Ratana Sambath - Standard full amenities, opposite the market. A/C \$13 012755469

Sam Pheap - Central location, friendly staff, restaurant downstairs. Fan \$7, A/C \$13 092621776

Eats in Stung Treng

Riverside - Standard Backpacker fare, right on the riverfront, rooms too!

Monika's Palace - Indian, Khmer & Western food. In my book it's the best food in town.



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - RATANAKIRI

Banlung Town

Situated in the mountains about 460 km North of Phnom Penh, Banlung Town is the capital of Ratanakiri province. Most activity is centered around the market during the late afternoon and in to the evening, definitely worth a visit to see (and eat) some crazy stuff. Frequent bus, van and taxi transportation both to Stung Treng and Kratie - Phnom Penh, normally depart early in the morning (around 7 AM). A new bus station has been constructed on the highway about 1km from town, however most minivans are happy to pick you up from your accommodation.

Accommodation

With a bunch of great digs at reasonable prices, Banlung is rapidly becoming one of my favorite places to stay. Yaklom Hill Lodge, right in the rainforest about 10 minutes north of town is a laid back eco tourist paradise, while several hotels and guesthouses surrounding the lake in Banlung town are a great pick, with great water front views, for a quiet relaxing stay.

Eats

The Tribal Restaurant doesn't sound or look like the kind of place to find a great home-style pizza, but it's so good I just can't help going back all the time, and they have a ridiculously cheap cocktail list in case you feel like getting hammered in style, and on a budget. The Gecko is an old favorite, soon moving to a new location, not far from the old one so ask around. Breakfast I always do overlooking the lake at Pteas Bay Restaurant, very scenic and relaxing.

Visits

The Yaklom Crater Lake is not only a great place to swim, it's my favorite swimming hole in the whole county, for some reason the water is always warm, even in the cool season, but get there early 'cos they throw you out at sunset, admission is a couple of dollars for foreigners, next to nothing for Khmers. If you head back towards Phnom Penh for a few kilometers then left at the health center the road leads to Katieng waterfall, great view, local village and tourist elephant rides (around \$20 per beast, seating two people). Also close by is Kachang waterfall which is great for swimming, and has a couple of raised hill tribe huts for those photo ops. Hill tribe visits and trekking can be arranged by most guesthouses. The road to Vietnam is now in reasonable condition but you need a VN visa before you get there, guesthouses can arrange this with a few days wait. Cambodian visas are available at the border on entry. Don't forget your passport photo.



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - RATANAKIRI

Accommodation in Banlung

Yaklom Hill Lodge - True solar eco bungalows in the jungle. \$15 - \$20, 011790510

Ratanak City Hotel - Beautiful. Town center. Excellent rooms. A/C \$15 - \$45, 012222828

Mittapheap Guest House - Cheap rooms on the road to the lake. Fan \$6, A/C \$12, 012855466

Lakeside Chheng Lok - Wooden Khmer style. Value! Fan \$5 - \$10, A/C \$10 - \$15, 012957422

Prek Dara Guest House - Cheap, good digs. Next to Chheng Lok. Fan \$6, A/C \$12, 0977773082

Thy Ath Lodge - Delightful, friendly, down by the lake. Love it! A/C \$15 - \$30, 0978155559

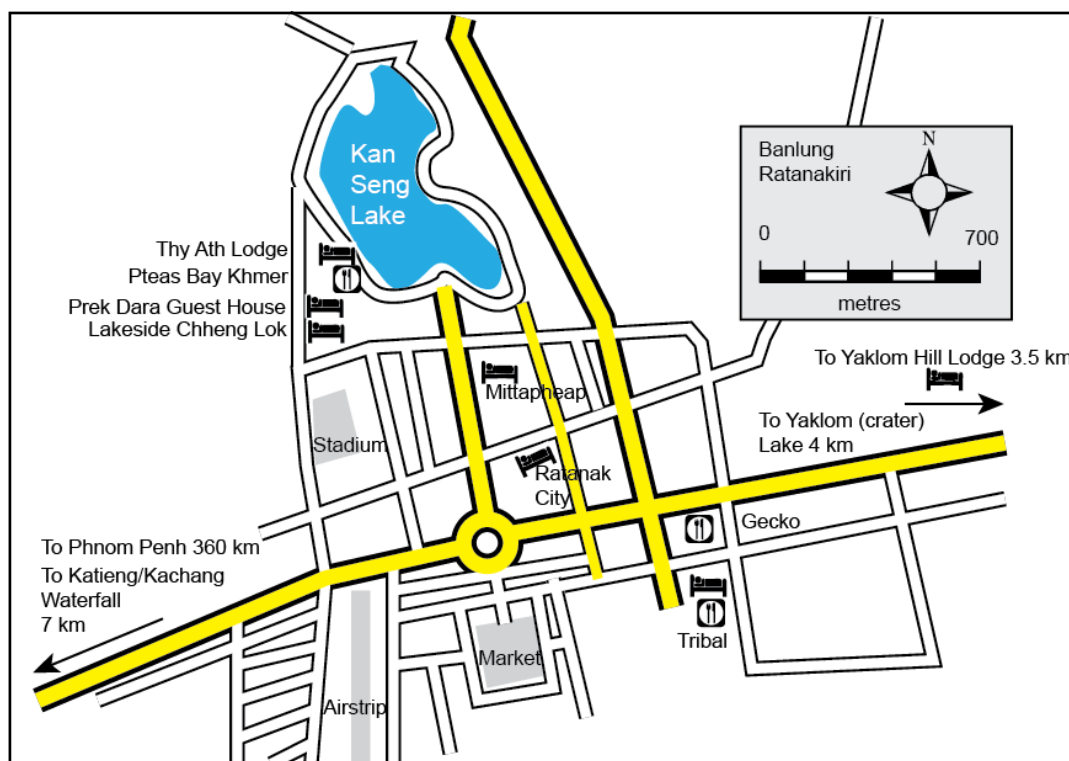
Ratanakiri Tribal Hotel - The first big wooden hotel in town. Fan \$7, A/C \$13, 0756508555

Eats in Banlung

Tribal Restaurant - Best Pizza Ever! Cheap Cocktails! Next to Tribal Hotel. 0756508555

Pteas Bay Khmer - Down by Kan Seng Lake beside Thy Ath. Great brekkie location. 08979157221

Ratanakiri Gecko Restaurant - Famous Expat hangout, moving soon, (close by!) 012422228



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TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - MONDULKIRI

Sen Monorom

This hidden country town is the capital of Cambodia's least known least visited, least populated, but biggest province (so they tell me). The fact that the power is now on 24 hours a day is a sign of the changes that have happened over the last few years. Share taxis and minivans are the choice means of transport with several vendors along the main road. I drove from Sen Monorom to the Japanese bridge in Phnom Penh (moderate speeds) in just on five hours, using the new road via Pea Reng and the Prek Tam Eak bridge, although buses may take a little longer, so its no longer the slog it once was. Don't forget take a jacket, it gets bloody cold at night!

Accommodation

Quite a few hotels and guest houses are centered around the main strip, and convenient to restaurants, however for those who would like something more laid back try the hippie hangout at Phat Gecko Bar & Happy Elephant Bungalows if you're on a tight budget, or a bit further out Nature Lodge if you have a few bucks to spare and want some creature comforts. If you are filthy rich, just drive your Range Rover out to Mayura Hill Resort you lucky bugger, (I promise not to be jealous). For us regular folk the Oeurn Sakona Hotel will do just fine.

Eats

Sen Monorom is no great culinary center but the food at the Greehouse is really cheap and pretty reasonable. Most people (including me) hang out at the Sovannkiri right in the middle of town for food, beer and fun. I say this again "If you are new to town go here first, to sort out room, food, trips etc." Its run by a kiwi who is a nice guy, and will help you out not rip you off.

Visits

About an hours drive towards Vietnam are Cambodia's highest (so they also tell me) and most spectacular, (I agree) Busra waterfalls. You came all this way, so you better head out there. There are smaller cuter falls very close town, with touristy elephants rides and such, a lot of fun too. But you really gotta get to Busra! A moto will take you just across the airstrip to the little temple atop Phnom Monorom overlooking town, lovely at sunset. There is an elephant camp nearby for rehab (not riding) old elephants, details from Sovannkiri or Greenhouse restaurants. Tours and treks are best organized by the folks at the Happy Elephant Bungalows if you want to head out into the jungle, its kind of their thing.



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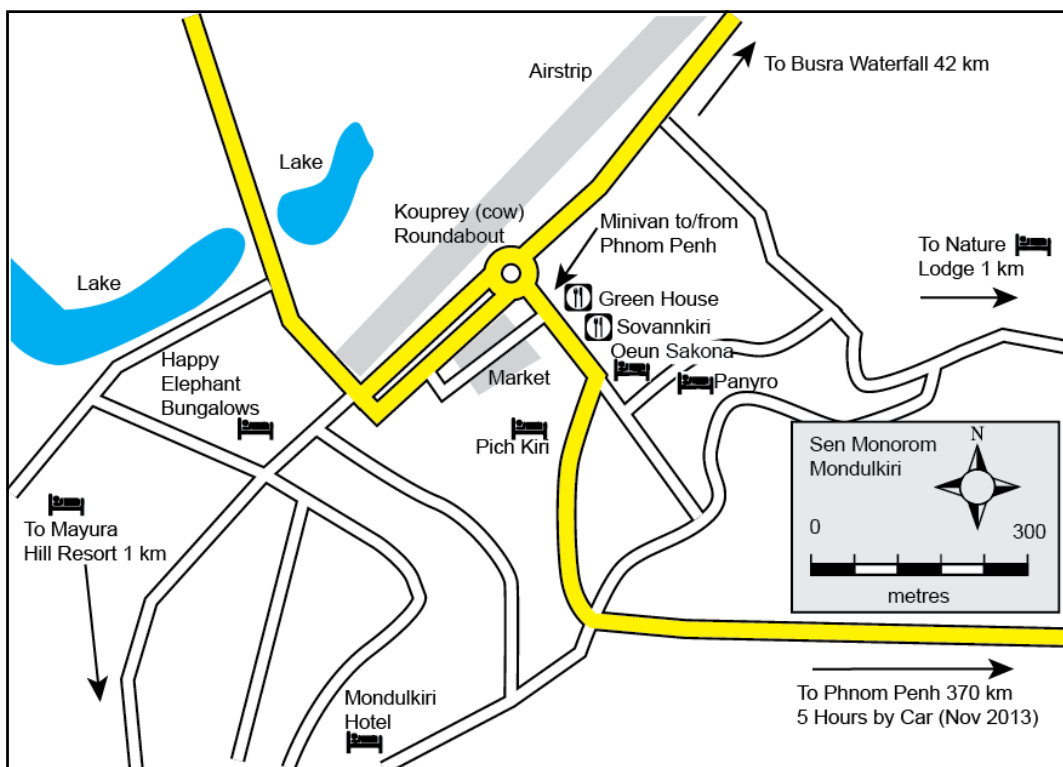
TRAVEL NORTHEAST CAMBODIA - MONDULKIRI

Accommodation in Sen Monorom (*Room Rates Vary with Demand and Season)

- Happy Elephant Bungalows - Run by crazy people, cheap bungalows & food. I love it! \$5 - \$10
- Nature Lodge - Very beautiful, eco-lodge. Hard to find, take a moto the first time! \$10 - \$40
- Oeun Sakona - Typical old style Khmer hotel, on main drag. My favorite. Fan \$10, A/C \$15 - \$20
- Phanyro Guest House - Bungalows at reasonable price, just off main road. Fan \$8 - \$12
- Pich Kiri Motel - Huge variety of rooms, friendly folk, on main road. Fan \$12 A/C \$20 - \$30
- Mayura Hill Hotel & Resort - Unbelievable that this place even exists. Beautiful! \$\$\$\$
- Mondulkiri Motel - Beautiful Gardens. Pricey rooms. A/C \$25 - \$50

Eats in Sen Monorom

- Green House - Thatched roof, on the main strip, cheapest steak'n'chips in the world.
- Sovannkiri Guest House and Restaurant - Run by a Kiwi! Go here first if you are new to town.



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MEKONG SUNRISE

**Guest House
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M: 011449720/0888502170**

Great Food
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