

CAMBODIA

Phnom Kulen National Park



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Kbal
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FOREWORD



Thanks for downloading this FREE interactive travel guide. You've made an excellent choice if you plan on **GETTING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK** in (LOCATION). Before you delve into the content of this travel guide, please take a few minutes to read this foreword. It outlines how to make the best use of the information contained within.

First-hand experience: This travel guide has been put together using first-hand experience gained from traveling to, and exploring, all the locations presented within. The information and photos featured in my travel guides, have been collated over years of putting boots on the ground. There is no second-hand information, or information which is plagiarized from other travel sources, within this guide. Every cave, waterfall, river, viewpoint, jungle trail, temple site, guesthouse and restaurant presented, or promoted, I have been to and seen and/or experienced myself.

Getting off the beaten track: The primary focus of my travel guides is **ADVENTURE TRAVEL** (and activities) to locations which are non-mainstream tourist destinations. As an example, there is no information for the mainstream tourist locations of **CAMBODIA** (except as transit hub's before heading off to a more remote location) listed in this travel guide. As such, the information in this guide is directed towards travelers (not tourists)

who are keen for a bit of adventure - caving, climbing, jungle trekking, kayaking - in an off the beaten track location, of South East Asia. If these types of activities aren't to your liking, then this travel guide won't be much use to you. There's no information in here about the party towns in South East Asia.

Budget travel: Knowing the importance of making the most of your hard-earned currency, my travel links ([12GO ASIA](#)) and accommodation links ([AGODA](#)) are predominantly budget oriented. They provide a range of options for getting to a central hub, or base, from which you can make your daily explorations.

Independent sightseeing: Instead of going on group tours, I strongly promote the idea of renting your own vehicle (car or motorbike) and venturing out yourself. To help you get to the exact location, there's always a [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link to show the route from a hub (hotel or guesthouse) to the sightseeing attraction. If there's a local tour operator offering excellent adventure type tours, or activities, I'll provide links to their website. A good example of a great adventure tour operator is [GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS](#), who offer excellent caving, kayaking and trekking tours throughout Laos.

The Table of Contents: This is page four of the travel guide and has a sequential list of sections, which you can go to directly by clicking on the **GREEN** numbered tab.

YouTube Links: These take you directly to my YouTube Vlog ([Megaworld Asia](#)) where you can see short, high quality travel videos of the numerous attractions listed in my travel guides. If you enjoy the videos, please hit the like button and don't forget to subscribe to see my upcoming adventures.

Your next adventure is just one click away

Safe travels,

MEGA

Kulen National Park

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**Your Next Adventure
Is Just One Click Away**

How To Use This Interactive Travel Guide

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YouTube Links: These will take you to a short highlights video, of the sightseeing attraction, in the section you're looking at:



Other Links: These take you to ancillary services such as recommended restaurants, or car and motorbike rental agencies, in the location you're traveling to:

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Travel Links: This takes you to **12GO ASIA**, an excellent travel group which provides a range of options for getting around the region:



The Table Of Contents: To move back to the TOC, click on the **yellow arrows**, at the bottom of each Page: 

Google Maps Links: These provide a route from a designated location (e.g., a hotel) to a particular sightseeing attraction:



Information Links: These links take you to information sites, such as Wikipedia or Wiki-voyage, to provide more in-depth info on a particular subject or location:



Accommodation Links: This takes you to the Agoda website to check accommodation availability and make bookings:



It's Time To Get Off The Beaten Track



PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK - GENERAL INFO

About: The primary geographical feature of the national park is a sandstone, jungle covered plateau, located approximately forty-five kilometers northeast of Siem Reap. It's the only elevated geographical feature in the area and can be seen from a considerable distance, owing to the surrounding flat landscape of endless rice paddies. The national park, also known as Phnom Kulen Mountain, has several notable sightseeing attractions: **The Amazing Cliff; Kulen Waterfall; The 1000 Lingas; the Elephant Pond Loop; The Reclining Buddha.**

Getting there: If you have your transportation (rented motorbike) then getting to the park entry point is straight forward. The roads are sealed all the way and don't pose any difficulties. However, once you enter (go beyond the boom gate) the road becomes more degraded and most of it, at the top of the plateau, is red dirt. In the dry season, this isn't an issue. The rainy season is a different story though. From June to October, much of this road becomes a muddy, red bog. If you're inexperienced in riding over mud tracks on a motorbike, it might be better to go on an organised tour in a 4 x 4 vehicle. **Click the following link for directions from the Sidewalk Hotel:**



Entry Fee: The admittance price for foreigners is 20 USD. The ticket must be purchased at the Kulen National Park Office - [LINK](#) - prior to going up there. In years past, a ticket could be purchased at the park entry point (checkpoint) but this is no longer the case. If you don't have a ticket, you won't get in.

Note: A map at the park ticket office shows a spiderweb of roads, along the top of the plateau, leading to a considerable number of sightseeing attractions. During the rainy season, without an off-road bike, or 4 x 4 vehicle, there's no hope of getting to the more distant ones - over twenty kilometers of dirt road - on a Honda scooter. These more remote locations are best traveled to in the dry season.



PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK - THE AMAZING CLIFF

Entering the park: From the boom gate a sealed road winds up to the top of the plateau, from which point it turns into a dirt track. The road along the top of the plateau, to all the sightseeing attractions, is predominantly dirt most of the way. **Note:** During the rainy season this dirt track can turn into a mud filled bog.

The Amazing Cliff: The first easy stop on the sightseeing circuit is a location called THE AMAZING CLIFF. This is essentially a sandstone cliff line, providing views across the surrounding jungle covered terrain, just one hundred meters from the road. At the end of the rainy season, when everything is green and vibrant, it's a picturesque landscape and well worth a thirty-minute stop. **Click the following Google Maps link for the location:**



The Amazing Cliff

PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK - KULEN WATERFALL

About: From the Amazing Cliff, the next sight-seeing stop is KULEN WATERFALL, some eight km further along the road. This is the highlight attraction of a tour to Kulen National Park. The waterfall is quite impressive in the rainy season, when there's a good flow. The site is set up for mass tourism with restaurants, trinket sellers, and hawkers stalls in abundance on the upper level of the falls. **Click the following Google Maps link for the location:**



Onsite: As mentioned, the waterfall site - called the cascading waterfalls - in peak flow is well worth the effort of getting to. However, it's an absolute tourist trap with restaurants, hawker's stalls, and drink sellers everywhere on the path down to the falls. A properly constructed pathway leads down a series of levels to the primary waterfall at the bottom of a long stairway. At the bottom the volume of water coming over the falls (in the rainy season) is impressive. A boarded walkway allows sightseers to get closer to the face of the falls



An overhead view of the falls

PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK:



PHNOM KULEN NATIONAL PARK - 1000 LINGAS

About: This attraction is just a few hundred meters down the road from Kulen Waterfall. The site is easy to access and is nearby the road. The primary attraction of this site is the Lingam Carvings in the riverbed, which date back to the early 9th century. If the river level is low enough, and the water is clear, carvings which resemble square boxes around a circular dimple can be seen in the riverbed.

Note: During the rainy season the high flow of water can make it difficult to see anything. Click the following Google Maps link for the location:



The Holy Well: This is a natural spring of crystal clear water which is nearby the 1000 Linga Carvings. It's a place which is marked as the HOLY WELL on Google Maps. The spring is considered a holy place for the locals and there's often animistic celebrations taking place at the site. Click the following Google Maps link for the location:



THE ELEPHANT POND LOOP TOUR - GENERAL INFO

About: For anyone feeling adventurous, and wanting to get away from the above-mentioned mainstream tourist sites, this is an excellent way to see some ancient Khmer sites in the more remote areas of Phnom Kulen National Park. Starting at the Kulen Waterfall car park, the loop is a two hour circuit which takes in four sightseeing attractions:

1. Poeng Tbal
2. Ah Ram Rorm Chin Temple
3. Kror Bei Krab Temple
4. Sras Dom Ray (aka Elephant Pond).

The tour goes in a clockwise direction with the Elephant Pond being the final stop, before the ride back to the Kulen Waterfall car park.

Off the beaten track: This is not a mainstream tourist junket. To do this tour you'll need to hire a local guide, and his motorbike, and go as a pillion passenger. The tour price, including the motorbike hire, is sixty thousand Cambodian Rial (15 USD).

Warning: Do not attempt to do this circuit solo as there's a myriad of trails running through the jungle and little, or no, sign posting. The trails are dirt tracks which are only suitable for motorbikes. Only the local guides know the correct routes and without them, you will get lost.



THE ELEPHANT POND LOOP - PEONG TBAL

About: This is the first stop on the Elephant Pond Loop Tour. Most of the route, from the Kulen Waterfall car park, is a cement road. It's only the last couple of km which is a dirt track. What is noticeable on the way in is there's some directional signage along the track, but all of it has been bleached white by the weather. For this reason, it's highly recommended to do the tour with a guide and his motorbike. **Click the following Google Maps link for the location:**



Onsite: The temple site is set in a picturesque location, among large sandstone boulders. There are several locations with Hindu carvings on the rock faces which, according to Wikipedia, date back to the early 9th Century. There's two areas of carvings. The first one is under a rock shelter. The second one is about 100 meters walk from the first. **Note:** There are some local staff working there who can point you in the right direction. Unfortunately, none of them speak English. **Click the following link for more information:**



THE ELEPHANT POND LOOP - ARAM RONG CHEN

Aram Rong Chen Temple: This is the second stop on the Elephant Pond Loop Tour. The site is located a few hundred meters to the southwest of the Poeng Tbal Site. The trail between the two sites has a couple of steep sections where you may be required to get off the motorbike and walk for a few meters. **Click the following Google Maps link for the location:**



Onsite: There's no actual temple at this site, just a flat topped, stone construction which gives the appearance of a three step pyramid. From the top you can look down the sides and see another two levels of stonework, albeit in a broken up state, down to the base.

There is some kind of religious alter at the centre of structure but there's no indication if it's used for local ceremonies or merit making. The burnt incense sticks around the base suggest the locals may occasionally come here for worship.

Note: There is normally park staff on-site but unfortunately they don't speak English. Additionally, there are information placards on site but only in the Khmer language. This is an interesting site and worth a stop for a few minutes.



At the center



The top of the structure

THE ELEPHANT POND LOOP - DAMREI KRAB TEMPLE

Damrei Krab Temple: This is the third stop on the Elephant Pond Loop Tour. The site is located approximately two kilometers directly south of the Aram Rong Chen site. This is probably the best example of a Hindu Temple in this remote area, which remains reasonably intact. **Click the following Google Maps link for the location:**



Onsite: According to on-line information sources (Wikipedia) the structure dates back to the eight to ninth century and was part of a large kingdom, established on Kulen Mountain, prior to the advent of the Angkor Empire. The construction of this temple differs from the those around Angkor. Instead of the large sandstone blocks, much smaller red bricks were used in its construction. Once again, there are park staff at the site but there's no information available in English.



THE ELEPHANT POND LOOP - SRAH DAMREI

Srah Damrei: This is the final stop on the Elephant Pond Loop Tour, and it is definitely the best. The site is located approximately three km to the southwest of Damrei Krab Temple and the trail runs through dense jungle and farming areas. **Click the following Google Maps link for the location:**



Onsite: Also known as THE ELEPHANT POND, the main attraction of this site is the life size statues, carved from sandstone boulders. There are four large statues: an elephant, two lions, and giant frog. The site dates back to the eighth or ninth century and was part of a Kingdom established by Jayavarman II, on Kulen Mountain. Apparently, this Kingdom was the birthplace of the Khmer Empire, and it precedes the Angkor period.

High point: Approximately two hundred meters to the west of the figurines, is a lookout which gives unimpeded views across to Siem Reap. It's worth noting that this site is located on one of the high points of Kulen Mountain. Once you head back to the Kulen Waterfall site, you'll understand this very clearly. The trail descends through what is the worst section of jungle track on the loop. The guides go in counterclockwise direction to avoid having ascend this steep section of the trail.



KBAL SPEAN - ANCIENT HINDU ROCK CARVINGS

About: This is an off the beaten track waterfall and historical site, located 48 km north of Siem Reap - on route # 67. To get there from Siem Reap, the best options are by guided tour or independently on a motorbike. Note: To visit this site, you'll need the Angkor Pass. **Click on the following Google Maps link for directions from**



Hindu Carving: The main sightseeing attractions are the Hindu Rock Carvings, reportedly 1000 years old, which are located at a small, picturesque waterfall site. To see these attractions, you'll need to make a short hike (1.5 km) through a beautiful jungle landscape.

The Jungle Trail: From the parking area, there's a dedicated trail, with directional signage, which is easy enough to follow. The hike will normally take around thirty minutes as the first 800 meters is a steady incline. The trail eventually leads to the top of the waterfalls area where several Hindu Rock Carvings can be seen.

Note: If you visit during the rainy season, there'll probably be too much water flowing and you won't see the rock carvings.



The 1000 Lingas: From the upper level, follow the riverside trail down to the lower level where you can see the Lingam Carvings on the riverbed. According to on-line information resources (Wikipedia) the Kbal Spean site dates back to the early 9th century. It was the birthplace of the original Khmer culture, established by Jayavarman II on Kulen Mountain, and predates the Angkorian period.

The waterfall: At the very bottom of the riverside trail, down a wooden stairway, is the main waterfall. From the top of the stairway, the riverside trail veers back to the main trail and you can return to the parking area.



KBAL SPEAN - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to the right to see video highlights of KBAL SPEAN:



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