TRAVEL

Where Is Cambodia On The World Map

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Introduction: Understanding Cambodia’s Place on the Planet

For many travelers, historians, and geography enthusiasts, the question **“Where is Cambodia on the world map?”** arises out of a desire to understand one of Southeast Asia’s most culturally rich and historically significant nations. Cambodia is a country that punches well above its weight in terms of global recognition, thanks largely to the majestic Angkor Wat temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site that draws millions of visitors each year. Yet, despite its fame, many people struggle to pinpoint its exact location relative to its neighbors or the broader Asian continent. This article will provide a detailed, clear, and informative answer to that question, exploring Cambodia’s geographical coordinates, its bordering countries, its physical landscape, and the strategic and cultural importance of its location. By the end, you will not only know **where Cambodia is on the world map**but also appreciate how that location has shaped its history, economy, and identity.

Cambodia’s Geographic Coordinates and Continental Position

To answer the question **“Where is Cambodia on the world map?”**with precision, we begin with its absolute location. Cambodia is situated on the mainland of Southeast Asia, within the southern portion of the Indochinese Peninsula. Its geographic coordinates are approximately 11.55° North latitude and 104.92° East longitude. This places Cambodia firmly within the tropical zone, just north of the equator, which explains its warm, monsoon-influenced climate year-round.

In terms of continental context, Cambodia is located in the southern half of Asia, west of the South China Sea and east of the Gulf of Thailand. It lies entirely within the tropics and is part of the Greater Mekong Subregion, a geographic area that includes parts of China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. When you look at a standard world map, you will find Cambodia in the southeastern corner of Asia, nestled between Thailand and Vietnam, with a small coastline along the Gulf of Thailand. Its position makes it a natural crossroads for trade, migration, and cultural exchange in the region.

Relative Position Within Southeast Asia

Zooming in from the continental level to the regional level provides a fuller picture of **where Cambodia is on the world map**. Cambodia is one of the eleven countries that make up Southeast Asia. Within this region, it is considered part of the mainland subregion, often referred to as Indochina. Its neighbors are Thailand to the west and northwest, Laos to the northeast, and Vietnam to the east and southeast. To the southwest, Cambodia has a coastline of about 443 kilometers along the Gulf of Thailand, a marginal sea of the Pacific Ocean.

This location is strategically important. It places Cambodia at the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, giving it direct access to both maritime and terrestrial trade routes. The Mekong River, one of the world’s great rivers, flows through Cambodia from north to south, providing a vital artery for transportation, irrigation, and fishing. The river enters Cambodia from Laos and exits into Vietnam, eventually emptying into the South China Sea. This riverine connection ties Cambodia intimately to the economic and ecological systems of its neighbors.

Surrounding Countries and Their Shared Borders

A clear understanding of **where Cambodia is on the world map**would be incomplete without a detailed look at its international borders. Cambodia shares land borders with three countries and has a coastline along the Gulf of Thailand. The total length of its land borders is approximately 2,572 kilometers.

The Border with Thailand

Cambodia's longest border is with Thailand, stretching approximately 817 kilometers along the western and northern sides of the country. This border runs through a variety of landscapes, including dense forests, the Cardamom Mountains, and lowland plains. The border region has historically been a zone of both conflict and cooperation, with the famous Preah Vihear temple complex being a point of contention for decades. Despite tensions, the western border is also a major corridor for trade and tourism, with popular border crossings at Poipet and Koh Kong. The proximity to Thailand means that Cambodia's western provinces share cultural and linguistic influences with their Thai neighbors.

The Border with Vietnam

To the east and southeast, Cambodia shares a border with Vietnam that extends for about 1,228 kilometers, making it the second-longest border. This border is largely defined by the Mekong River delta region in the south and the Central Highlands in the north. The border with Vietnam is economically vital, as it connects Cambodia to major ports and markets. The Mekong River, as it flows into Vietnam, facilitates trade and movement between the two countries. Many Cambodians and Vietnamese live in the border regions, leading to a rich blend of cultures. The border is also historically significant, as Vietnam and Cambodia have a long and complex shared history, including periods of both alliance and invasion.

The Border with Laos

Cambodia's shortest land border is with Laos, stretching approximately 541 kilometers along the northeastern edge of the country. This border is relatively remote and sparsely populated, dominated by forested highlands and the Mekong River. The border region is home to a diversity of ethnic minority groups who maintain traditional lifestyles. While the border crossing at the Trapeang Kriel checkpoint is not as busy as those with Thailand or Vietnam, it is an important link for local trade and for tourists traveling between the two countries. The area is known for its natural beauty, including the stunning Khone Falls in Laos, just north of the border.

The Coastline and Maritime Borders

To the southwest, Cambodia has a coastline along the Gulf of Thailand. This coast is about 443 kilometers long and features beautiful beaches, mangrove forests, and offshore islands. The coastal region includes popular tourist destinations like Sihanoukville, Koh Rong, and Kep. The Gulf of Thailand also provides Cambodia with access to maritime trade routes and fishing grounds. Cambodia claims an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles from its coastline, giving it rights to explore and exploit marine resources. The maritime boundary with Thailand in the Gulf of Thailand is the subject of ongoing negotiations, as both countries seek to delineate their respective zones to manage oil, gas, and fishing rights.

Physical Geography: The Landscape of Cambodia

Now that we have answered **"Where is Cambodia on the world map?"**in terms of borders and coordinates, it is equally important to understand the country's physical geography, which plays a crucial role in its identity and development. Cambodia's landscape can be divided into three main topographical zones: the Central Lowlands, the Eastern Highlands, and the Southwestern Mountains.

The Central Lowlands and the Tonle Sap Basin

The heart of Cambodia is the vast Central Lowlands, which are dominated by the Tonle Sap Basin and the floodplains of the Mekong River. The Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, is a defining feature of this region. The lake's unique hydrological system—where it expands dramatically during the monsoon season and shrinks during the dry season—creates one of the most productive inland fisheries in the world. This area is the agricultural heartland of Cambodia, producing rice, corn, and other crops. The capital city, Phnom Penh, is located at the confluence of the Mekong, Tonle Sap, and Bassac rivers, a position that has been central to the country's history and economy. The lowlands are also home to the majority of Cambodia's population.

The Eastern Highlands

To the east, along the border with Vietnam, lie the Eastern Highlands. This region is characterized by plateaus, rolling hills, and dense forests. It is sparsely populated compared to the Central Lowlands and is home to many indigenous ethnic minorities. The land is less suitable for intensive rice cultivation but supports coffee, rubber, and cashew nut plantations. The Mekong River flows through the eastern part of this region before turning south toward Phnom Penh.

The Southwestern Mountains

In the southwest of Cambodia, along the border with Thailand, rise the Cardamom Mountains and the Elephant Mountains. The Cardamom Mountains are one of the last remaining wilderness areas in Southeast Asia, with extensive rainforests, high biodiversity, and remote villages. This range includes Cambodia's highest peak, Phnom Aural, which rises to 1,813 meters. The mountains act as a rain shadow, meaning the southwestern slopes receive heavy rainfall while the interior remains drier. This region is also known for its wildlife, including Asian elephants, tigers, and leopards, though their numbers are critically low. The coastline below these mountains features beautiful beaches and offshore islands that are becoming increasingly popular for tourism.

Why Cambodia's Location Matters

Understanding **where Cambodia is on the world map** is not just an academic exercise—it has profound implications for the country's history, culture, economy, and geopolitical relationships. Its location at the heart of mainland Southeast Asia has made it a crossroads of civilizations, a battleground for regional powers, and a focal point for international development.

Historical and Cultural Significance

Cambodia's location in the Mekong River basin made it the natural center of the Khmer Empire, which flourished from the 9th to the 15th centuries. The empire's capital at Angkor was strategically positioned to control the region's water resources and trade routes. The influence of the Khmer Empire extended across much of modern-day Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, and its legacy is still visible in the temples and infrastructure that dot the landscape. The location also exposed Cambodia to waves of influence from India, China, and later European colonial powers. The French colonial period made Cambodia part of French Indochina, linking it administratively with Vietnam and Laos. These historical ties continue to shape Cambodia's diplomatic and cultural relationships today.

Economic Implications

Cambodia's geographic position offers significant economic opportunities. The country is strategically located near major markets in Thailand, Vietnam, and China. The Mekong River provides a low-cost transportation route for goods, and Cambodia's coastline offers access to international shipping lanes. The country has been actively working to improve its infrastructure, including roads, railways, and ports, to better integrate with regional supply chains. Cambodia is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which gives it access to a

market of over 650 million people. Its location also makes it an attractive destination for foreign direct investment, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism.

Tourism and Travel

For travelers, the question **“Where is Cambodia on the world map?”**often arises when planning a trip to Southeast Asia. Cambodia’s location makes it easy to include in a regional itinerary. It is a short flight from major hubs like Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, and Hanoi. Overland travel from neighboring countries is also possible, with well-used border crossings from Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos. The country’s main tourist attractions—Angkor Wat, the Tonle Sap Lake, Phnom Penh, and the southern beaches—are spread across the country but are relatively accessible. The tropical climate means that Cambodia can be visited year-round, though the dry season from November to April is generally considered the best time for travel.

Geopolitical Dynamics

Cambodia’s location between larger and more powerful neighbors has always shaped its foreign policy. The country has historically navigated complex relationships with Thailand and Vietnam, and more recently with China. As a small nation, Cambodia has sought to maintain its sovereignty while benefiting from economic and political alliances. Its location on the South China Sea, albeit with a short coastline, also means it is part of the broader geopolitical dynamics of the region, including territorial disputes and maritime security issues. Cambodia’s membership in ASEAN provides a platform for multilateral diplomacy, but it also requires careful balancing of national interests with regional consensus.

Common Misconceptions About Cambodia’s Location

Despite the clarity of maps, there are several misconceptions about **where Cambodia is on the world map**. Some people mistakenly believe that Cambodia is an island nation, perhaps confusing it with Indonesia or the Philippines. Others think it is landlocked, overlooking its coastline along the Gulf of Thailand. These errors often stem from a lack of familiarity with Southeast Asian geography. In reality, Cambodia is a mainland country with a clear coastal presence, making it both a land-linked and sea-linked nation. It is also sometimes incorrectly thought to be part of China or to be located entirely within the Mekong Delta, whereas the delta is shared with Vietnam.

Conclusion

The question **“Where is Cambodia on the world map?”**leads to a fascinating exploration of geography, history, and culture. Cambodia is located in mainland Southeast Asia, bordered by Thailand to the west and north, Laos to the northeast, Vietnam to the

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