

Sihanoukville 90-Day Survival Guide

Long-stay city guide for budget nomads.

For The Lean Nomad — Built 2026-07-16

How to Use This Guide

This guide is for someone landing in Sihanoukville with no local knowledge and no support network. Everything has been researched for the 2026 landscape: visa rules, transport, housing, food, healthcare, safety, and real costs. Confirm casino zones, hospital contacts, and ferry schedules directly before travel.

0. City Overview & Quick Facts

The Hard Numbers

Fact	Detail
Location	Southwest Cambodia, Gulf of Thailand
Population	~67,000 urban; ~90,000 municipality
Province	Preah Sihanouk
Established	22 November 1957
Named after	King Norodom Sihanouk
Elevation	15 m
Currency	US Dollar (dominant); Cambodian Riel for small change
Timezone	UTC+7 (Indochina Time)
Calling Code	+855 (country)
Airport	Sihanouk International (KOS)
Climate	Tropical savanna

What This City Actually Is

Sihanoukville (also Kampong Saom / Preah Sihanouk) is Cambodia's only deep-water port city. It has undergone dramatic transformation: what was once a laid-back backpacker beach town is now heavily Chinese-invested, with casino resorts and construction dominating the central city. It remains the gateway to the beautiful Koh Rong islands.

Critical warning: Sihanoukville has gained notoriety as a base for organized crime, including scam centers and human trafficking. Travelers must exercise extreme caution, especially around casino zones and isolated job offers.

Why come here: Cambodia's only deep-water port; beaches (Sokha, Independence, Otres, Ochheuteal); gateway to Koh Rong and Koh Rong Sanloem.

Named Places Profiled

- **Sokha Beach** — Private resort beach, cleanest in town.
 - **Independence Beach** — Public beach, local food vendors.
 - **Ochheuteal Beach** — Busy tourist beach, bars and guesthouses.
 - **Otres Beach** — Quieter backpacker area south of town.
 - **Victory Hill** — Older ex-pat area, budget accommodation.
 - **Downtown / Ekareach Street** — Casinos, shops, banks.
 - **Koh Rong** — Large island ~45 minutes by ferry; party and resort beaches.
 - **Koh Rong Sanloem** — Quieter island neighbor.
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1. Landing — First 72 Hours

Airport Arrival

Sihanouk International Airport (KOS): Located ~20 km from town.

Getting to town: - **Taxi:** \$15–25; 30–40 minutes. - **Tuk-tuk:** \$8–15; longer and less comfortable. - **Hotel transfer:** Often included in resort bookings.

First Night Options

Budget: Otres Beach guesthouses — \$8–18/night. **Mid-range:** Independence Beach or Victory Hill hotels — \$20–45/night. **Upscale:** Sokha Beach Resort or casino hotels — \$80–200/night.

Getting Your Bearings

1. Check into accommodation; Otres is quieter, downtown is noisier.
 2. Get a SIM (Cellcard, Smart, Metfone) — \$1–3 for SIM plus data packs.
 3. Download PassApp/Grab for transparent tuk-tuk pricing.
 4. Walk the beachfront to orient yourself; avoid casino-zone backstreets at night.
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2. Visa & Immigration

Visa Types Available

Tourist Visa (T-class): 30 days, extendable once for 30 days. **\$30–36** on arrival or e-visa.

Ordinary Visa (E-class): 30 days, extendable for 6 or 12 months. **\$35** on arrival; required for long stays.

E-Visa: Available online before travel. **\$37** including processing; valid 30 days.

Extensions

Tourist extension: 30 days, once only. **\$45–50**; 3–7 days processing.

Ordinary extension: 6 or 12 months multiple entry. **\$100–300** depending on type and agent.

Where to extend: Immigration office in Phnom Penh, or agents in Sihanoukville who courier passports.

3. Money & Banking

Currency

US dollars are dominant. Riel is used for change under \$1. ATMs dispense dollars. Check bills carefully — torn or worn notes may be rejected.

Costs to Expect

Item	Typical Price
Local meal	\$2–5
Western meal	\$8–20
Beer (local)	\$1–2.50
Coffee	\$1.50–4
Tuk-tuk short trip	\$1.50–3
Tuk-tuk cross-town	\$3–5
Motorbike rental	\$5–10/day
Scooter taxi	\$1–2
SIM + data	\$5–10/month
Island ferry (return)	\$15–35

Cost-Saving Strategies

1. Negotiate monthly rates (30–50% off daily rates).
2. Eat at local Khmer restaurants (\$2–4/meal vs \$10–20 Western).
3. Use PassApp/Grab for transparent tuk-tuk pricing.
4. Buy water at supermarkets (\$0.50/L vs \$2 at hotels).
5. Avoid casinos — designed to extract money.
6. Book island tours directly at Otres Beach.
7. Travel off-season May–October for lowest prices.

4. Neighborhoods & Housing

Where to Stay

Otres Beach: Quieter, backpacker and mid-range guesthouses, access to beach bars. **Victory Hill:** Older expat area, budget rooms, some construction noise. **Downtown / Ekareach Street:** Casino hotels, busy, convenient for services. **Sokha Beach area:** Upscale resorts, private beach. **Independence Beach:** Mid-range hotels, public beach access.

Renting Long-Term

- **Budget fan room / local apartment:** \$200–350/month.
- **Modern 1BR apartment or mid-range hotel:** \$500–900/month.
- **Beachfront resort or serviced villa:** \$1,500–3,500/month.

Inspect Wi-Fi, water pressure, and power stability before signing. Many buildings have spotty infrastructure.

5. Transport

Tuk-tuks

- Short trips: \$1.50–3
- Cross-town: \$3–5
- Airport: \$8–15

Motorbike Taxis

- Within area: \$1–2
- Cross-town: \$2–4

Apps

- **PassApp:** Cheapest option; tuk-tuks and taxis.
- **Grab:** Reliable, slightly more expensive.
- **Nham24:** Local alternative.

Ferries to Islands

- **Koh Rong / Koh Rong Sanloem:** \$15–35 return; 45–90 minutes depending on boat.
 - Operators: Speed Ferry Cambodia, Island Speed Ferry, GTVC.
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6. Food & Dining

Local Food

- **Amok trei:** Steamed fish curry in banana leaf.
- **Bai sach chrouk:** Grilled pork with broken rice.
- **Kuy teav:** Pork noodle soup.
- **Lok lak:** Pepper beef with rice.
- **Fresh seafood:** Crab, squid, prawns — best at Otres or local beach shacks.

Budget Eats

Local Khmer restaurants: \$2–4. Beach shacks: \$4–8. Street fruit shakes: \$1.

Western / Tourist Food

\$8–20 per meal in beachfront and hotel restaurants.

7. Remote Work & Coworking

Coworking Spaces

Sihanoukville has limited dedicated coworking. Most nomads work from cafés or hotel Wi-Fi.

- **WorkSpace Cambodia:** No Sihanoukville branch as of 2026; nearest in Phnom Penh.
- **Hotel lobbies and cafés:** Sokha, Independence Hotel, Brown Coffee-style chains.

Internet

Home fiber is available in newer buildings; older areas use LTE. Test speeds before signing a lease. Mobile data is cheap and often more reliable in beach areas.

8. Healthcare

Hospitals

Sihanoukville Provincial Referral Hospital - Public hospital with 24/7 emergency and basic care. - Ekareach Street, Sihanoukville.

International Clinic / Private Clinics - Canbypublications.com and local expat groups list English-speaking clinics downtown. - For serious conditions, evacuate to Phnom Penh (Royal Phnom Penh Hospital) or Bangkok.

Pharmacies

Pharmacies are common downtown and at beaches. Bring prescriptions and consider travel insurance with evacuation cover.

9. Dental

Basic dental clinics exist downtown; complex work should be done in Phnom Penh or Bangkok. Prices are low but verify sterilization standards.

10. Safety & Emergency

What Actually Happens Here

Most common risks: 1. **Bag snatching** — the #1 crime against tourists; perpetrators on motorbikes. 2. **Petty theft** — phones/wallets left unattended on beaches or in cafés. 3. **Motorbike accidents** — #1 cause of serious injury. 4. **Scams** — casino/job/romance scams; isolated areas around casinos can be dangerous.

Where to Be Careful

- Casino zones and construction areas, especially at night.
- Isolated beaches after dark.
- ATMs at night — use inside malls or hotels.
- Tuk-tuk drivers offering unsolicited tours to unknown locations.

Emergency Numbers

- **Police:** 117
 - **Medical emergency:** 115
 - **Fire:** 118
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11. Weather by Month

Dry Season (November–April)

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rainfall
November	31 deg C (88 deg F)	24 deg C (75 deg F)	130mm
December	31 deg C (88 deg F)	23 deg C (73 deg F)	25mm
January	31 deg C (88 deg F)	23 deg C (73 deg F)	15mm
February	32 deg C (90 deg F)	24 deg C (75 deg F)	10mm
March	33 deg C (91 deg F)	25 deg C (77 deg F)	40mm
April	34 deg C (93 deg F)	26 deg C (79 deg F)	90mm

Rainy Season (May–October)

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rainfall
May	33 deg C (91 deg F)	26 deg C (79 deg F)	200mm
June	32 deg C (90 deg F)	26 deg C (79 deg F)	260mm
July	31 deg C (88 deg F)	25 deg C (77 deg F)	300mm
August	31 deg C (88 deg F)	25 deg C (77 deg F)	340mm
September	31 deg C (88 deg F)	25 deg C (77 deg F)	380mm
October	31 deg C (88 deg F)	25 deg C (77 deg F)	280mm

Best time: November–February for dry, cooler weather. Avoid peak rainy season July–September.

12. Shopping & Daily Life

Malls & Supermarkets

- **Lucky Supermarket / Angkor Market:** Imported goods, higher prices.
- **Local markets:** Fresh produce, household items, cheaper.
- **Casino mall areas:** Overpriced convenience stores.

Daily Supplies

- Bottled water is essential; do not drink tap water.
 - Power outages are common; carry a power bank.
 - ATMs dispense USD; keep small bills for tuk-tuks and markets.
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13. Groceries, Markets & Meat

Markets

- **Phsar Leu / downtown market:** Fresh vegetables, meat, seafood, household goods.
- **Beach vendors:** Fruit, snacks, drinks.
- **Supermarkets:** Higher prices but consistent quality.

Meat & Seafood

Pork, chicken, and beef are widely available. Fresh seafood (crab, squid, prawns) is a local specialty but buy from busy vendors and eat cooked.

14. Language & Local Etiquette

Languages

Khmer is official. English is widely spoken in tourism. Chinese is increasingly common around casinos.

Useful Phrases

English	Khmer phrase (pronunciation)
Hello	suos-dey
Thank you	or-kun
Yes (male/female)	baat / jah
No	te
How much?	tom-lai pon-man?
Too expensive	thao-pehk
Where is the toilet?	bong-kon nov ai-na?

Etiquette

- Dress modestly away from the beach.
 - Remove shoes at temples and some homes.
 - Do not touch people's heads.
 - Show respect for the monarchy and Buddhism.
 - Return the sampeah greeting when offered.
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15. History & Culture Snapshot

Brief History

- **Pre-1955:** Area known as Kampong Saom, a regional trading port.
- **1957:** Established as Sihanoukville under King Norodom Sihanouk.
- **1970s–1990s:** Declined during Khmer Rouge era and civil war.
- **2000s:** Became backpacker beach destination.
- **2010s–2020s:** Massive Chinese investment transformed the city into casino/resort construction zone.
- **Present:** Gateway to Koh Rong islands; controversial reputation due to crime and scam centers.

Cultural Identity

A mix of Khmer coastal culture, Chinese business influence, and international tourism. The islands (Koh Rong, Koh Rong Sanloem) retain a more traditional backpacker vibe.

16. Tourism & Day Trips

Beaches

- **Sokha Beach** — cleanest, resort-controlled.
- **Independence Beach** — public, relaxed.
- **Ochheuteal Beach** — busy, touristy.
- **Otres Beach** — quieter, backpacker favorite.

Islands

- **Koh Rong** — party beaches, hiking, bioluminescent plankton at night.
- **Koh Rong Sanloem** — quieter, Saracen Bay, Lazy Beach.
- **Koh Ta Kiev** — undeveloped island, rustic bungalows.

Day Trips

- **Ream National Park** — mangroves, wildlife, boat trips.
 - **Kampot** — colonial riverside town, pepper farms, ~2 hours.
 - **Kep** — crab market, Rabbit Island, ~2.5 hours.
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17. Master Links

Resource	URL / Contact	Use For
Cambodia eVisa	evisa.gov.kh	Visa application
Tourism Cambodia	tourismcambodia.org	Official travel info
Speed Ferry Cambodia	speedferrycambodia.com	Island ferries
Sihanouk Provincial Referral Hospital	sihanoukreferralhospital.com	Public hospital
Wikivoyage Sihanoukville	en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Sihanoukville	Travel guidance

18. Final Budget Table

Monthly cost-of-stay estimates for Sihanoukville, in USD. FX rate used: **4,100 KHR = 1 USD**.

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Room	\$250 (fan guesthouse / local apartment near Otres or Victory Hill)	\$750 (modern 1BR apartment or mid-range hotel with pool)	\$1,800 (beachfront resort, serviced villa, or high-rise condo)
Food	\$180 (street food, local Khmer restaurants, market meals)	\$350 (mix of local + Western cafés + occasional seafood restaurant)	\$750 (daily restaurants, imported groceries, alcohol, room service)
Transport	\$60 (tuk-tuk + occasional Grab + motorbike rental)	\$150 (regular Grab/tuk-tuk + private transfers)	\$350 (private driver / car on call + island ferries)
Coworking	\$0 (cafés / hotel Wi-Fi)	\$80 (monthly hot desk or café spend)	\$200 (dedicated desk / private office)
Insurance	\$70 (travel insurance)	\$130 (travel + outpatient)	\$220 (comprehensive nomad insurance)
Visa	\$40 (e-visa + one extension amortised)	\$80 (e-visa + extensions / agent)	\$150 (longer-stay visa path / agent)

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Entertainment	\$90 (beaches, local islands, night market, temple visits)	\$250 (island tours, snorkeling, boat trips, spa)	\$600 (private boat charters, diving courses, casino/sport entertainment)
Buffer	\$20	\$40	\$80
TOTAL / month	\$710	\$1,830	\$4,150
90-DAY TOTAL	\$2,130	\$5,490	\$12,450

Budget Notes

- Sihanoukville is Cambodia's cheapest coastal city. Lean requires discipline and local eating; premium is well above typical expat spending.
- Casino zones have inflated prices; avoid them unless that is your purpose.
- Island trips (Koh Rong, Koh Rong Sanloem) add \$20–80 per visit.
- Private beaches and resort restaurants are priced for tourists, not locals.

19. Glossary of Local Terms

Term	Meaning
Tuk-tuk	Motorcycle with covered carriage; common taxi.
Moto	Motorbike taxi.
PassApp	Local ride-hailing app.
Sampeah	Palms-together greeting.
Otres	Quiet beach area south of town.
Koh Rong	Large party island offshore.
Koh Rong Sanloem	Quieter island neighbor.

20. Sources & Credits

Data compiled from Wikivoyage, Cambodia e-visa information, local expat reports, ferry operators, Numbeo cost-of-living estimates, and tourism board materials for 2026. Confirm casino-zone safety, hospital hours, and ferry schedules directly before travel.