



Child's Dream Foundation

238/3 Wualai Road
T. Haiya, A. Muang
Chiang Mai 50100
Thailand

A non-profit organisation
supporting children in need
in the Mekong Sub-Region

Tel. +66 (0)53 201 811
Fax +66 (0)53 201 812
info@childsdream.org
www.childsdream.org

DOs & DON'Ts in Cambodia

Cambodians are quite tolerant of most kinds of behaviour as long as it doesn't insult the two sacred cows of monarchy and religion.

King & Country

Cambodian people have a traditional reverence for the Royal Family. Every visitor should be careful to show respect for the King, the Queen and the Royal Children. Criticising the government even Cambodia culture is 'OK' but it's considered a grave insult to nationhood as well as to the monarchy not to stand up and be quiet when you hear the royal or national anthem. When attending a public event where a member of the Royal Family is present, the best guide on how to behave is to watch the crowd.

Religion

Correct behaviour in temples entails several considerations. The most important is to dress neatly (long trousers, no sleeveless shirts) and to take your shoes off when you enter any building that contains a Buddha image or object (It's also strictly forbidden to pose in front of them for pictures or to climb them).

Hats and head scarves should be removed before entering a temple.

Monks are not supposed to touch or be touched by a woman.

Some larger temples charge entrance fees. In other temples, a small donation is appropriate.

Social gestures & Attitudes

Cambodians greet each other with a prayer-like gesture by putting the palms together with fingers under the chin, known as a **Sampaeh**. For older people or those with high positions, the hands are held with fingers under the nose. If someone **Sampaeh** you, you should reciprocate.

When handing things to other people use both hands or your right hand only (the left hand is reserved for toilet ablutions).

Losing your temper means a loss of face for everyone present. Talking loudly is perceived as rude. Keeping cool is the paramount rule.

It is considered impolite to refuse an invitation (be it for a meal or a short visit).

Public displays of affection between men and women are frowned upon, but these days holding hands has become pretty normal.

Hats should be removed when meeting older people as a sign of respect.

Feet & Head

The feet are the lowest part of the body (spiritually as well as physically), so don't point your feet at people or at things, don't prop your feet up on chairs or tables and never step over someone.

Likewise, the head is the highest part of the body. Never touch Cambodians on the head.

Dress

Shorts (except knee length walking shorts), sleeveless shirts, tank tops and other beach attire are not considered appropriate dress for anything other than sports or the beach.

Sandals or slip-on shoes are ok for almost any but the most formal occasions.

Show respect to Cambodian culture by dressing neatly at all times.

Topless bathing is highly inappropriate in Cambodia

Shoes

Shoes are not worn inside people's homes, nor in some guesthouses and shops. If you see a pile of shoes at the entrance, you should respect the house custom.

Chiang Mai, 16 March 2010