



## Public holidays and events throughout the year 2010

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### **January 7<sup>th</sup> National Day**

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One of the more recent additions to the festival calendar, this day marks the end of the Khmer Rouge Regime. However for many Khmers it also marks the start of the Vietnamese regime seen as another period of foreign occupancy.

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### **January 30<sup>th</sup>. Meak Bochea Day**

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A Buddhist holiday, is celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Magha, the third lunar month of the year, to commemorate the preaching of the Buddha, when 1250 monks had assembled spontaneously; he summarized his teachings into three main principles:

- **Do not do evil**
- **Do good**
- **Purify your mind**

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### **February 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Chinese New Year**

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Due to the large number of people of Chinese descent who run much of Cambodia's business enterprises; and also Vietnamese immigrant communities, the Chinese New Year is widely celebrated, especially in Phnom Penh. No Chinese festival would be complete without fireworks and this time of year is no exception with many wealthy families organizing their own private displays which light up the skies for all to see.

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### **March 8<sup>th</sup> International Women's Day**

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### **April 5<sup>th</sup> Ching Ming**

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Ching Ming (Clean and Just) rituals not only include weeding of the area, cleaning of the headstone, and replacing the wilted flowers with fresh ones, but also the lighting of incense and burning of imitation paper money. The burning of the imitation money is for the deceased to use in the afterlife.

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### **April 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> Khmer New Year**

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Celebrated at the same time as the Thai New Year all over the country, this festival marks the turn of the year based on the ancient Khmer calendar and also marks the end of the harvest done during the year. Cambodians decorate their homes to please the Heaven God and many people can be seen on the streets armed with small bags of water and water pistols to bless people passing by. This festival is one of the happiest times of the year with joyous smiling faces everywhere you turn. Cambodians do recognize International New Year on 1 January but there are no celebrations then.



**April 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Visak Bochea Day**

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The anniversary of the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha

**May 1<sup>st</sup>**

**International Labour Day**

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**May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Royal Ploughing Day**

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Cambodia has a deep connection with the Earth and farming, and there is a deep astrological belief that the Ox has an instrumental role in determining the fate of the agricultural harvest each year. Every year, in May, this cultural ceremony takes place in the large park next to the Royal Palace and in front of the National Museum. The King plays a key role in driving the Ox and depicting real ploughing activities in the process of growing rice. The Ox is given a selection of foods and beverages to consume and the royal soothsayers interpret what the Ox has eaten. For this festival both men and women can be seen wearing brightly colored traditional Khmer costume.

**May 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>**

**King Norodom Sihamoni's Birthday**

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**June 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk's Birthday**

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**August 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Hungry Ghost Festival**

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The fifteenth day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar is called **Ghost Day**, in which ghosts and spirits, including those of the deceased ancestors, come out from the lower realm. On Ghost Day, the deceased are believed to visit the living.

**September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Moon Cake Festival**

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Is a popular harvest festival celebrated by people in the Chinese influenced world. It is a date that parallels the autumnal equinox of the solar calendar, when the moon is supposedly at its fullest and roundest. The traditional food of this festival is the mooncake, of which there are many different varieties.

**September 24<sup>th</sup>**

**Constitution Day**

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**October 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>**

**Pchum Ben**

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This is the most culturally and religiously significant event of the year and is celebrated in September. This festival of souls concentrates on blessing the souls of ancestors, relatives, and friends who have passed away. All Buddhist temples, especially Wat Phnom, are the focal points for this festival and most Cambodians visit the temples to make traditional offerings and pray.

**October 29<sup>th</sup>**

**Coronation Day**

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**October 31<sup>st</sup> King Norodom Sihanouk's Birthday**

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This celebration revering the country's influential king take place in late October or early November. People from all over the country come to the capital to join in celebrations and festivities held throughout the capital. Often the King's birthday and Water festivals coincide resulting in a mammoths celebration in front of the Royal Palace and along the riverfront. Provincial villagers who would ordinarily have no reason to visit Phnom Penh will save up and make this occasion their sole visit to the capital.

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**October 31<sup>st</sup> Halloween**

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Halloween is a new but popular event celebrated in bars and restaurants around town.

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**November 9<sup>th</sup> Independence Day**

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This important ceremony takes place at the site of the Independence Monument at the junction of Norodom and Sihanouk Boulevards. This ceremony celebrates Cambodia's gaining of independence from France in 1953. All over the city flags adorn the shop fronts and bunting stretched over all the main thoroughfares as a sign of national pride.

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**November 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> Water Festival**

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This vast festival is probably the most extravagant festival in the calendar. Over three days starting with the last full moon day in October or the beginning of November up to a million people from all walks of life from all over the country flock to the banks of Tonle Sap and Mekong Rivers in Phnom Penh to watch hundreds of brightly colored boats with over 50 paddlers battle it out for top honors. The boat racing dates back to ancient times marking the strengths of the powerful Khmer marine forces during the Khmer empire. In the evening brightly decorated floats cruise along the river prior to and complimenting the fireworks displays. there is often a parallel festival at Angkor Wat and although it is smaller in scale it is just as impressive due to the backdrop of Angkor Wat.

The festival marks the changing of the flow of the Tonle Sap and is also seen as thanksgiving to the Mekong River for providing the country with fertile land and abundant fish. It is at this time when the river flow reverts to its normal down stream direction. The remarkable phenomenon that is the Tonle Sap sees the river flowing upstream during the rainy season and then change direction as the rains cease and the swollen Tonle Sap Lake empties back into the Mekong River leaving behind vast quantities of fish.



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**December 5<sup>th</sup> International Half Marathon in Angkor Wat**

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Race types include 21 km International Half Marathon, 10 km Road Race, 5 km Fun Run, 3 km Family Course, 21 km Wheel Chair, 10 km Artificial Limbs.

Additionally, on Saturday 4 December 2010, there will be arranged Angkor Wat Bike Race and Rally where options include a 30 km bike race that will take you around the magnificent temple complex and an 80 km race that will take you around a second loop. Due to popular demand, a cycle race has been introduced as an exciting new event where teams can rent cycles that later will be used as a pro-poor tourism initiative which creates employment opportunities.

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**December 10<sup>th</sup> International Human Rights Day**

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**December 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve**

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Celebrated at the Soria Moria, with a Norwegian style Christmas dinner and entertainment from the Sangkheum Center for Children.

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**December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day**

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**December 31<sup>st</sup> International New Years Celebration**

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On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December Pub Street in Siem Reap is converted into a big celebration area for tourists and locals alike.