

## The remarkable architecture and planning of Phnom Penh make it unique amongst South East Asian cities.

Founded in the 14th century, Phnom Penh became the capital of Cambodia in 1422 and again in 1866.

A French protectorate from 1864, Cambodia gained its independence in 1953. Between the mid 1950s and the mid 1970s Cambodia sought new ways to express itself as a modern, progressive nation. In architecture a distinct 'movement' developed, now by some referred to as 'New Khmer' architecture. Architects experimented with ideas and forms, often innovative and dynamic; they adapted international idioms and combined these with Cambodian references, while responding to local climate and custom.

The results were wholly Cambodian and unique in the development of modern architecture.

### The buildings included on the maps

While KAT's main interest is in the architecture of the 50s and 60s, these maps are about understanding and appreciating the city as a whole and so include buildings from various periods.

We have not tried to be historically comprehensive but aim to offer interesting walks which pick up the special qualities of some of the ordinary buildings and streets as well as some important landmarks.

Information on the main pagodas (wats) and well-known historic buildings (Royal Palace, etc) can be found in easily-available guide books and, due to limited space, are generally not included here.

### Further information

The Municipality of Phnom Penh has compiled an inventory of historic buildings ([www.phnompenh.gov.kh](http://www.phnompenh.gov.kh)). The Ministry of Tourism lists some details of some buildings on its web site ([www.mot.gov.kh](http://www.mot.gov.kh)). HeritageWatch, a local NGO, is developing a public-awareness project ([www.heritagewatch.org](http://www.heritagewatch.org)). UNESCO promotes the preservation of urban heritage. And see KATours website for a short bibliography.

### Feedback

Please tell us about any errors on [contact@ka-tours.org](mailto:contact@ka-tours.org)

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to: Tobias Olsson (extensive on-the-street foot-slogging research and route planning; without him there would be no maps) and Keat Toby (data on Colonial buildings from the Municipality's inventory).

Published by Khmer Architecture Tours® These maps are copyright. They are free to copy for personal use, but reproduction for commercial purposes is not permitted.

Edition 3 October 06.

- 1 **Villa**  
1900–1910 Fine, though decaying, example. Said to be the home of a previous Prime Minister.
- 2 **Old Royal Villa**  
1900–1910 One of the few remaining Royal Villas around the Palace; now used as offices.
- 3 **National Museum**  
Architect: Georges Croslier  
1917–1920 A highly regarded reworking of the traditional Khmer pagoda form to suit a new 20thC function.
- 4 **Public toilet**  
1959 One of a pair; modern structure; French manners.
- 5 **Apartment building**  
1940's Moderne style block, partly restored in the 1990's; stairs off the street lead to a rear passage (ie not the common 'shop-house' type).
- 6 **Japanese de-constructivism**  
A peace gift from the people of Horoshima; engineering students come and build more of this crazy, unfinished structure in Wat Onnalum.
- 7 **Apartment buildings**  
1960's Nos 41–55; fine example of in-tact 4 storey block, built by 4 developers to a consistent style; subtle!
- 8 **Apartment buildings**  
Nos 28–48; similar to above, together forming a model urban street setting.
- 9 **Corner block**  
With well considered details from 40's, 50's and 60's. Note the concrete roof pergola and the vertically louvred stairs.
- 10 **Street 19**  
A lively variety of residential types from different periods; from a 1960's 5–storey block to 2–storey Colonial; including the Popil photo gallery.
- 11 **Moderne apartments**  
1960's Notable details; block forms a strong corner; cafe below.
- 12 **Capitol Cinema**  
Architect: Vann Molyvann  
1964 No longer a cinema, the splendid exterior is fairly original; inaugurated by showing Vadim's 'And God Created Woman' (1957) in the presence of the architect.
- 13 **Prom Bayon Cinema**  
1960's A cinema integrated into an apartment block.
- 14 **Apartments**  
1900–1910 Decayed but intact example of what used to be a series of 2–storey apartment buildings on this street.
- 15 **Deco apartments**  
1935–45 Bold design, probably part of the Cinema Lux development originally.
- 16 **Cinema Lux**  
1935–45 Still in use as a cinema; the facade has been almost totally altered.
- 17 **No 50, Norodom Blvd**  
Use of framed 'brise-soleil' shading and free-form roof pavillion.
- 18 **Ministry of Water Resources**  
1915–1925 What was once a Colonial villa with massive entrance steps; enthusiastically renovated.
- 19 **Villa**  
1915–1925 A small and elegant Colonial residence.
- 20 **Forestry administration**  
1960s Balcony-access offices, similar in style to Leroy and Mondet's *Royal University of Phnom Penh*. Note the three-storey *bas-relief* panel.
- 21 **Offices**  
1980's? Example of trying to adopt a 60's style, but too heavy in its detail and closed-in on the street.
- 22 **Offices**  
1960's Imposing curved corner entrance; with distinctive square panels and a perforated wall.
- 23 **Single storey houses**  
19th C? The roofs, including ventilation chimneys, are still visible above the shops.
- 24 **Apartment block**  
1960's Unusual use of a whole urban block to create apartments with an internal courtyard – which may originally have been a garden and is now mostly built-over. Main entrance on St 154 with notable ceiling design.
- 25 **Blue glass and pink paint**  
2004? An indication of how vulgar architecture in Phnom Penh could become!
- 26 **Police offices**  
Architect: Vann Molyvann  
1959, DEMOLISHED 2006. Extraordinary building with full height 'brise soleil' sun shading; reported to be one of Vann Molyvann's first buildings in Phnom Penh.
- 27 **Phnom Penh police office**  
Architect: J Desbois  
1930–35, DEMOLISHED 2006. Fine 'moderne' example with a curved corner, horizontal lines and zigzag air vents.
- 28 **Apartment buildings**  
Walking up street 53, various styles can be seen. Modern from the 1960's (first one on the right side), moderne (opposite, and several others) and an older French one at the end of the street, probably the oldest building surrounding the market.
- 29 **Central Market**  
Architect: Chauchon  
1938 Innovative, monumental Art-Deco structure marking the centre of Phnom Penh. Ventilation was a key factor; the four arms stand on columns without walls, but now are closed in. Restoration is planned.
- 30 **Corner cafe**  
1960s Charming corner block with fine windows and old signs; note roof-top pergola in concrete, typical of the period.
- 31 **Intersection in Style Moderne**  
1935–45 Four houses in the same style though altered. On axis with the central market.
- 32 **Peugout Garage**  
1935–45 Once Peugeot occupied the whole building; today there is only a small shop in the back.
- 33 **Customs office**  
1920's Building with Art-Nouveau influences; details unusual in Phnom Penh.
- 34 **Old administrative building**  
1890's Unusual colonial style with an interesting roof. Looking for a new use
- 35 **Villa**  
Now a government office, the fine facades originally had an external corridor, for shade.
- 36 **Offices**  
1960's? Interesting facade on what used to be a white building. A similar building can be seen at the intersection north from this one. The intersection south (136/19) offers two modern (almost identical) apartment buildings.
- 37 **Apartment building**  
1940's? Unlike any other French building in Phnom Penh, this one bears a resemblance to Mediterranean French architecture.
- 38 **Hemakcheat Cinema**  
1950's? This large cinema, in brutalist/modern style, is today a home to many people who live in desparate conditions. The apartment building attached is interesting.
- 39 **Intersection**  
1900–1980 All buildings on the intersection have different styles. The very well kept and interesting French building is from 1900–1910. The opposite French building in style moderne dates back to 1935–45 and the more modern building is from the early 1980's.
- 40 **Intersection**  
This intersection is constituted by an old French house, slowly swallowed by new development and three examples of apartment buildings from the 1940's and 1960's.
- 41 **No 86**  
1940s? Four-storey narrow shop-house; curved balconies and fine ironwork (building on the right is interesting too).
- 42 **Blue glass facade**  
Recent What can one say...?
- 43 **Old Hotel International**  
1900–1910 Altered many times and no longer a hotel, although the old signs are still readable.
- 44 **Apartment building**  
1918 This decayed but very beautiful building has a unique style for Phnom Penh. Presently under partial restoration
- 45 **Apartment building**  
1910's Originally for 'Bureau Dumarest D'Indochine'.