

Kbal Spean

Kbal Spean lies 50 kilometers northeast of Siem Reap provincial town or about 18 kilometers from Banteay Srei on a dirt road. It takes from one to two hours to get there from the provincial town.



The original River of Thousand Lingams, Kbal Spean is an intricately carved riverbed deep in the foothills of the Cambodia jungle. Lingams are phallic representations sacred to Brahmanism as symbols of fertility, and hundreds of them are carved into the rock here, as are several carvings of

gods and animals above the small waterfall. The area was rediscovered in 1969, when French researcher Jean Boulbet was shown the carvings by a local hermit.

A visit to Kbal Spean, a reference to the natural rock bridge, is one of the easiest ways to take a short jungle trek in the Angkor area. It is a 30-minute walk to the carvings through steamy forest and some curious rock formations. It is best to try to visit between July and December, at other times of year the river rapidly dries up. The access to the trail is not permitted after 3:30pm. Food and drinks are available at the base of the trail.

Beung Mealea



Beung Mealea temple lies at the foot of Phnom Kulen's eastern extreme, about 70 kilometers from Siem Reap provincial town. It takes two to three hours to get there via either Banteay Srei or Dam Dek on National Road 6. It is the most accessible of Angkor's lost temples, a mirror image of

the mighty Angkor Wat, but totally and utterly consumed by the jungle. Constructed by King Suryavarman II (AD 1113-1150), the builder of Angkor Wat, nature has triumphed here, and it is hard to get a sense of the monument's shape amid the daunting ruins. Like Angkor Wat, Beung



Mealea was enclosed by a large moat, which would have measured 1,200 by 900 meters. Once inside the complex, visitors climb over heaps of stones, edge along dark and damp corridors and through dense foliage—this is not one for the fainthearted. The atmosphere, however, is something special. Beung Mealea can be combined with a visit to Banteay Srei and Kbal Spean or Phnom Kulen. Food and drinks are available near the temple.

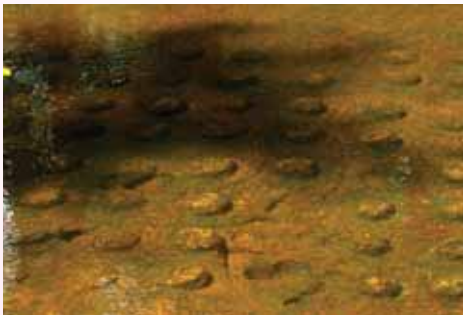
Phnom Kulen



Phnom Kulen is in Svay Leu and Varin districts, about 60 kilometers from Siem Reap Provincial town and 25 kilometers from Banteay Srei. Phnom Kulen, originally called Mount Mahendraparvata, is the holy mountain where, when King Jayavarman II (AD 802-850) proclaimed independence from Java in 820, the Angkorian Empire was born.

This mountain plateau served as the capital of the first Khmer Empire for more than half a century before it relocated south to Hariharalaya, known today as Roluos. As many as 20 minor temples are found around the plateau, including Rong Chen temple, the first pyramid built by an Angkorian King, but many of them are difficult to reach. Numerous important sites lie scattered across the mountaintop, which is accessible by foot or by car. They include:

1,000 Lingams



One thousand lingams are located on the top of the mountain, along Stung Siem Reap. The site features



impressive riverbed rock carvings include innumerable scores of yoni and lingam that sit on the bottom of a stream from which water flows year round.

Preah Ang Thom

Preah Ang Thom is located on the mountaintop and attracts Khmer pilgrims during religious festivals. Built in the 16th century, it features a large statue of the reclining Buddha reaching nirvana. The statue is 7.5 meters tall and 8



meters long, carved into a huge sandstone boulder. The site also offers spectacular views across lush jungle. There are two Champa trees at the site, and local people worship there because they believe the site holds great power. Preah Ang Thom is close to Chhat Ruot, a multilayered umbrella; Preah Bat Choan Tuk, footprints of Buddha; and Peung Chhat, Peung Eyso and Peung Eysey, overhanging rocks.

Phnom Kulen Waterfall

Phnom Kulen waterfall farther downstream, is a good spot to cool off after explorations. It has two levels. The first level is 4 to 6 meters high and 10 to 15 meters wide, depending on whether it is the dry or rainy season. The second level is 15 to 20 meters high and 6 to 8 meters wide, depending on the season. Near the waterfall is a small jungle-covered laterite temple called kraol Romeas temple.



West Baray

West Baray is the largest man-made body of water at Angkor. Visitors can hire a boat to take them to the island in the middle where West Mebon temple once stood. Today, only traces of it remain. But the island is a pleasant spot for a picnic or just walking around when water level is low. Alternatively, visitor can also go for a refreshing swim.

