





### How to do... The Cu Chi tunnels

With your knees under your chin, you squeeze through the manhole into the darkened chute, disappearing from view and back in time. Around you are some 250km of tunnels, honeycombed beneath the ground where Vietnam's guerrilla army, the Viet Cong, concealed living areas, storage depots, landmine factories — even hospitals. With the flutter of bats, it's claustrophobic, and as you breathe the bitterly thick air, the brutality of the Vietnamese war effort truly hits home. There's even the chance to fire AK-47 rifles at targets, which some tourists do, pretending they're Charlie Sheen in *Platoon*.

History has clearly taught them nothing.

**Travel's tip:** Most tourists visit the Ben Dinh site, but it's a far quieter and more powerful experience at Ben Duoc (£4). Both are only about a 50km drive from Ho Chi Minh City. ▶

### You're dreaming of... Lounging on Cambodia's beaches

The night is milky with moonlight and stars so bright they light the long sweep of beach and the forest behind. You leave your bungalow and step onto silvery sand still warm from the sun. Cicadas sing. Waves beckon. Go on, peel off your clothes, plunge in. The sea soon glistens from the microscopic, bioluminescent plankton all around you. The next day, take a boat to the coral reef, to swim with languorous turtles and darting fish. An afternoon hike through the forest brings you to a fishing village where wooden houses huddle on stilts over the water, and people pray

in a wooden temple, or heave nets from brightly painted long-tail boats. That's if you don't want to stay on the sands — watching for hornbills and monkeys in the trees, or just curling up with a book in your hammock.

Cambodia certainly has beaches — on the mainland around Sihanoukville and on the half a dozen small islands a few kilometres offshore. Unlike in Thailand and Bali, where concrete buildings clamour for space, here the sands are empty, with resorts just sparsely scattered, and on the islands, almost no crime — leaving you safe to wander at will. Barefoot, backpacker-friendly hotels have fan-cooled rooms with a sweeping ocean view for less than £30 a night. Among the best are Kactus ([kactus-ktk.com](http://kactus-ktk.com); doubles from

£15, room only, with shared bathrooms), built between the trees on forested Koh Ka Tiev island, and Monkey Maya ([monkeymayaream.com](http://monkeymayaream.com); doubles from £40, room only), just outside Sihanoukville. Each has a beach to itself. More exclusive digs are found at the lavish Song Saa Private Island resort (pictured), set in a private reserve: it has huge air-conditioned villas, a lavish spa and an over-water restaurant serving succulent seafood ([songsaa.com](http://songsaa.com); doubles from £901, B&B).

Island-hopping is easy. Distances are short and ferries and fishing boats make several daily crossings from mainland Sihanoukville and between many of the islands (fares about £15 return). But come soon. The Chinese have big plans.