

Cambodia to ban elephant rides at Angkor temples

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Cambodia's Angkor Wat complex attracts a large number of tourists, and many opt for elephant rides around the ancient temples

Cambodia will ban all elephant rides at the country's famed Angkor temple park by early next year, an official said Friday, a rare win for

conservationists who have long decried the popular practice as cruel.

The Angkor archaeological complex in northern Siem Reap attracts the bulk of the kingdom's foreign tourists—which topped six million in 2018—and many opt for [elephants](#) rides around the [ancient temples](#).

But these rides "will end by the start of 2020", said Long Kosal, a spokesman with the Apsara Authority, which manages the park.

"Using elephants for business is not appropriate anymore," he told AFP, adding that some of the animals were "already old".

So far, five of the 14 working elephants have been transferred to a community forest about 40 kilometres (25 miles) away from the temples.

"They will live out their natural lives there," Kosal said.

The company that owns the elephants will continue to look after them, he added.

Cambodia has long come under fire from animal [rights groups](#) for ubiquitous elephant rides on offer for tourists, also seen in neighbouring Thailand, Vietnam and Laos.

The elephants are broken in during training and rights groups have accused handlers of overworking them.

In 2016, a female elephant died by the roadside after carrying tourists around the Angkor Wat [temple](#) complex in severely hot weather.

The animal had been working for around 45 minutes before she collapsed.

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