

Oxen and Transportation in Cambodia



Today, some people in the Asian country of Cambodia drive cars. But others still travel in the old way, by oxen. The word “oxen” is used when referring to more than one ox. An ox is about the size of a cow. It cannot walk as fast as a horse, but it has stronger legs, so it can pull heavy things across rough roads and farmland.

In Cambodia, many farmers grow corn, beans, and rice. For hundreds of years, farmers there have used oxen to pull heavy plows so that they can plant seeds. When the crops are ready, the farmers load their harvest into carts. They attach each cart to a team of oxen, which pull the carts to markets so that the farmers can sell their crops.

Can you see how valuable an ox is to a Cambodian farmer? With oxen, farmers can plow more land, carry heavier things, and sell their crops in markets far from home. That helps them make more money than they could by themselves. Some Cambodian farmers use modern tractors and trucks, but oxen are still cheaper to buy and use.

For people who live in cities, though, an ox isn’t always a good choice. In Phnom Penh, Cambodia’s capital city, there’s little grass for an ox to eat. And unlike farmers, many people who live in cities don’t transport things that weigh hundreds of pounds. But the average person in Cambodia earns only a few thousands of dollars every year, so many Cambodians cannot afford to buy cars.

A common choice: motor scooters. Walking down a sidewalk in a Cambodian city, it’s common to see entire families riding to school and work on a single scooter. The father usually drives, the mother rides behind him, and the children sit on the handlebars and the back of the seat.