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Australians Warned as Thailand-Cambodia Border Clashes Escalate

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Australian tourists face urgent travel warnings as deadly clashes erupt along the Thailand-Cambodia border, disrupting travel and threatening regional economic stability. The conflict, rooted in a century-old territorial dispute, has led to border closures and heightened risks, prompting concerns about the impact on tourism and trade.

On July 24, 2025, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) updated its Smartraveller website, urging Australians to reconsider travel to Thailand's Buriram, Si Saket, Surin, and Ubon Ratchathani provinces and Cambodia's Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey provinces due to armed conflict (Smartraveller, 2025). The violence, which killed at least 11 Thai civilians and one soldier, began near the Ta Muen Thom temple, with both nations accusing each other of firing first (The Guardian, 2025). Thailand's

retaliatory airstrikes and Cambodia's shelling have escalated tensions, with landmines wounding Thai soldiers and forcing evacuations (The Washington Post, 2025). Australian Olivia Tedeschi, stranded in Cambodia, told ABC News, "You physically couldn't get from Cambodia to Thailand by land," highlighting the chaos as bus services halted (ABC News, 2025).

The border closures have crippled tourism, a vital economic driver for both nations. Thailand, a top destination for Australians, has banned land crossings into Cambodia, impacting access to Siem Reap's Angkor Wat (Euronews, 2025). Cambodia's ban on Thai fruit and fuel imports, which supplied 30% of its gasoline, threatens local economies (AP News, 2025). The opposition has criticized the Australian government's slow response, arguing it fails to protect travelers and businesses reliant on Southeast Asian trade. Shadow Foreign Minister Simon Birmingham called for stronger diplomatic engagement to safeguard economic interests (The Australian, 2025).

The conflict, fueled by nationalist fervor and disputes over colonial-era maps, risks further economic fallout. With Thailand's \$5.7 billion defense budget dwarfing Cambodia's, the imbalance could prolong instability, disrupting regional trade (Al Jazeera, 2025). Australians planning travel should avoid border regions, monitor local media, and consider safer destinations to protect their safety and wallets.