



Grand Vietnam Birding

24 Days: Cuc Phuong National Park ♦ Van Long Nature Reserve ♦ Tam Dao ♦ Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park ♦ Bach Ma National Park ♦ Lo Xo Mang Den ♦ Dalat ♦ Di Linh ♦ Cat Tien National Park



Bar-bellied Pitta

Suppalak Klabdee

Day 1: Arrive Hanoi. Hanoi to Cuc Phuong National Park

Arrive at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport and transfer directly to Cuc Phuong National Park, a three-hour drive south of Hanoi. The first national park to be established in Vietnam, Cuc Phuong is an area of limestone hills covered in primary rainforest. The best birding is in the centre of the park where there are several excellent trails including the Loop Trail and the Valley Trail. The main road through the park can also be very productive especially for over-wintering thrushes early in the morning. Overnight at Cuc Phuong National Park.

Days 2 & 3: Cuc Phuong National Park

Two full days of birding at Cuc Phuong where specialities include Silver Pheasant, Pied Falconet, Bar-bellied, Blue-rumped and Eared Pittas, Silver-breasted Broadbill, White-winged Magpie, White-tailed Flycatcher, Fujian Niltava and Limestone Wren-babbler. Overnight at Cuc Phuong National Park.

Day 4: Cuc Phuong National Park to Tam Dao

Leave Cuc Phuong after breakfast for the journey back to Hanoi stopping off at Van Long Nature Reserve en route. Take a sampan through flooded rice fields to the dramatic limestone cliffs that are home to the largest population of one of Vietnam's critically endangered primates, Delacour's Langur. During the winter months large numbers of waterfowl can be seen here as well as a raptor or two. Continue on to Hanoi and Tam Dao, a hill resort 60 km by road from the capital. Tam Dao's specialities include several species that are more usually associated with China and cannot be seen elsewhere in South-East Asia such as the attractive Chestnut Bulbul and Grey Laughingthrush. Overnight at Tam Dao.

Days 5 & 6: Tam Dao

Two days to explore the trails above Tam Dao town leading through nice montane evergreen and bamboo forest. Specialities at Tam Dao include Chestnut Bulbul, Grey Laughingthrush, Coral-billed and Streak-breasted Scimitar-babblers, Rufous-headed and Short-tailed Parrotbills. Winter visitors that may turn up here between December and March include Black-breasted, Japanese, Eyebrowed and Grey-backed Thrush as well as Fujian Niltava. Overnight at Tam Dao.



Sooty Babbler

Day 7: Tam Dao to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park via Hanoi & Hue

There is time for some early morning birding at Tam Dao before transferring to Hanoi's Noi Bai Airport for the short flight to Hue, in Central Vietnam. On arrival in Hue transfer by road to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. Overnight at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park.

Day 8: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park

A full day to explore the limestone forest of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. The main targets here are the Indochinese endemic Sooty Babbler, which lives on the limestone outcrops, and the recently-split Limestone Leaf-warbler. Red-collared Woodpecker and Northern Brown Hornbill are among the other specialities as well as an endangered primate, the Ha Tinh Langur. Overnight at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park.

Day 9: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park to Bach Ma National Park

Leave Phong Nha after an early breakfast for the long drive south to Bach Ma National Park. Bach Ma, where the Annamite Mountain Range meets the sea, is home to several Vietnamese and regional endemics including Annam Partridge, Red-vented Barbet, Indochinese Wren-babbler and Masked Laughingthrush. Afternoon birding and overnight at Bach Ma National Park.

Days 10: Bach Ma National Park to Kham Duc/Lo Xo

Leaving Bach Ma National Park after some early morning birding it is a four hour drive south to Kham Duc on the newly constructed Ho Chi Minh Highway. In the afternoon bird at the nearby Lo Xo Pass where the main target is the Indochinese endemic Black-crowned Barwing, only discovered in 1996. Overnight at Kham Duc.



Black-crowned Barwing

Day 11: Kham Duc/Lo Xo to Mang Den

Return to the Lo Xo Pass in the morning where in addition to Black-crowned Barwing White-winged Magpie, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Red-tailed Minla and Red-tailed Laughingthrush can be found. In the afternoon it is four hour drive south to Mang Den. Overnight at Mang Den.

Day 12: Mang Den

A full day's birding at Mang Den where the seldom-seen endemic, Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush, will be the main target. Mang Den is also probably the best site in Vietnam for three other scarce birds, Pale-capped Pigeon, Yellow-billed Nuthatch and Black-hooded Laughingthrush. Overnight at Mang Den.

Day 13: Mang Den to Lo Xo/Kham Duc

Early morning birding at Mang Den. Other birds to be found here that are rarely seen elsewhere in Vietnam include Rufous-faced Warbler, Pale Blue Flycatcher and Grey-headed Parrotbill. There is time for late afternoon birding at the Lo Xo Pass en route. Overnight at Kham Duc.

Day 14: Lo Xo/Kham Duc to Danang. Danang to Dalat via Ho Chi Minh City

Leave Kham Duc after breakfast for Danang and transfer to the airport on arrival for the noon flight to Ho Chi Minh City. On arrival in Ho Chi Minh City transit to the afternoon flight to Dalat a former French hill station in the Central Highlands. On arrival in Dalat transfer directly to hotel. Overnight at Dalat.

Days 15, 16, 17 & 18: Dalat

There are several excellent birding sites to explore around Dalat. The Ta Nung Valley, a small but bird-filled area of remnant evergreen forest 10 km from Dalat is the most accessible site for the rare and endemic Grey-crowned Crocias and Orange-breasted Laughingthrush. In addition the very distinct local subspecies of Blue-winged Siva, Black-headed Sibia and Black-throated Sunbird are common here. At Mount Lang Bian, a 2,169 m high peak 20 minutes from Dalat, Hume's Treecreeper, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Grey-crowned Tit, Vietnamese Cutia and Black-crowned Fulvetta can be found in the remaining evergreen forest below the summit. The most sought-after species here however is the beautiful and skulking endemic Collared Laughingthrush. Ho Tuyen Lam, a man-made lake just out of town, is a great place to look for some of the local pine specialists such as Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Slender-billed Oriole, Burmese Shrike, Red Crossbill and Vietnamese Greenfinch. Overnight at Dalat.



Grey-crowned Crocias

Days 19: Dalat to Di Linh

There is time for some early morning birding around Dalat before heading down Highway 20 to Di Linh. A short drive from Di Linh town a forested mountain pass known as Deo Suoi Lanh is an excellent site to look for several Dalat Plateau specialities including Black-hooded, White-cheeked and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes and the near-endemic Black-crowned Parrotbill. After an afternoon's birding at Deo Suoi Lanh return to Di Linh for the night. Overnight at Di Linh.

Day 20: Di Linh to Cat Tien National Park

An early morning visit to Deo Suoi Lanh to look for other exciting possibilities that could include Blue or Rusty-naped Pittas, Indochinese Green Magpie, Spotted Forktail or Green Cochoa, before continuing south along Highway 20 to Cat Tien National Park, a couple of hours' drive away. Cat Tien National Park contains the largest remaining area of lowland tropical forest in southern Vietnam and an incredible diversity of birds and mammals. Endangered birds found at Cat Tien include Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Green Peafowl and the very elusive Orange-necked Partridge while the mammal list includes Leopard Cat, Lesser Mousedeer, Sambar, Gaur and two endangered primates, Black-shanked Douc Langur and Buff-cheeked Gibbon. Overnight at Cat Tien National Park.



Siamese Fireback

Days 21, 22 & 23: Cat Tien National Park

Three days birding at Cat Tien National Park. There are excellent trails starting right at the park headquarters and for areas further afield such as Crocodile Lake jeeps are used. The 5 km walk through semi-evergreen forest to Crocodile Lake is a great place to look for the near-endemic Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Blue-rumped and Bar-bellied Pittas while Siamese Fireback can often be seen on an early morning drive through the park. Among the many other avian treats to be found at Cat Tien are Scaly-breasted Partridge, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, White-bellied, Great Slaty, Pale-headed, Black-and-buff and Heart-spotted Woodpeckers, three species of broadbill and the Indochinese-endemic Grey-faced Tit-Babbler. Overnight at Cat Tien National Park.

Day 24: Cat Tien National Park to Ho Chi Minh City

There is time for some final early morning birding at Cat Tien before driving back to Ho Chi Minh City and transferring to Tan Son Nhat International Airport for departure flight.