



Grand Vietnam Birding

25 Days: Hanoi ♦ Tam Dao ♦ Ba Be National Park
Cuc Phuong National Park ♦ Phong Nha-Ke Bang
National Park ♦ Bach Ma National Park ♦ Lo Xo
Mang Den ♦ Yok Don National Park ♦ Dalat ♦ Di Linh
Cat Tien National Park ♦ Ho Chi Minh City



Grey-crowned Crocias by Chris Bradshaw

Day 1: Arrive Hanoi. Hanoi to Tam Dao

Arrive at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport and transfer directly to Tam Dao, a hill resort 60 km to the north. 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 2 & 3: Tam Dao

Two days to explore the montane evergreen, bamboo and pine forests around Tam Dao town. Resident species here include Red-billed Blue Magpie, Grey Treepie, Coral-billed and Streak-breasted s

Day 4: Tam Dao to Ba Be National Park

There is time for some final early morning birding at Tam Dao before driving north to Ba Be National Park where the star bird is the extremely rare White-eared Night-heron. Until the recent discovery of this site it was pretty much impossible to see this almost mythical species. Arriving mid-afternoon gives the first opportunity to search for White-eared Night-heron as the birds leave their day roost for their nighttime feeding sites. Overnight at Ba Be National Park.

Day 5: Ba Be National Park to Cuc Phuong National Park

Early morning birding to search again for White-eared Night-heron as the birds return to their roost in the pre-dawn half-light. Other species possible here include Mandarin Duck, Tufted Duck, Limestone Leaf-warbler, White-winged Magpie and Streaked Wren-babbler. Depart Ba Be mid-morning and transfer back to Hanoi and onto 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 at 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 6 & 7: Cuc Phuong National Park

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

Day 8: Cuc Phuong National Park to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park

Leave Cuc Phuong after an early breakfast for the long drive south to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, arriving in the late afternoon. Overnight at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park.

Day 9: 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 at Phong Nha as well as an endangered primate, the Ha Tinh Langur. Overnight at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park.

Day 10: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park to Bach Ma National Park

Leave Phong Nha after an early breakfast for the four-hour drive south to Bach Ma National Park. After checking in at the park accommodation there should be time for some afternoon birding. Overnight at Bach Ma National Park.

Day 11: Bach Ma National Park to Kham Duc/Lo Xo

A morning birding at Bach Ma National Park where targets include the endemic Annam Partridge and near-endemic Indochinese Wren-babbler. Leave Bach Ma National Park after lunch for the four hour drive south to Kham Duc on the newly constructed Ho Chi Minh Highway. In the late 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.

Day 12: Kham Duc/Lo Xo to Mang Den

There is time for a return visit to the Lo Xo Pass in the morning to look for other specialities of the area such as White-winged Magpie and Red-tailed Laughingthrush before continuing south down the Ho Chi Minh Highway to Mang Den. Overnight at Mang Den.

Days 13 & 14: Mang Den

Two full days for birding at Mang Den where the main target is the seldom-seen endemic, Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush. Other specialities of the Mang Den area include the scarce Pale-capped Pigeon, Stripe-breasted Woodpecker, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Grey-headed Parrotbill, Black-hooded Laughingthrush and Indochinese Wren-babbler. Overnight at Mang Den.

Day 15: Mang Den to Yok Don National Park

Depart Mang Den after an early breakfast for the long drive south to Yok Don National Park. Arrive in time for lunch at the park canteen before setting out to explore the banks of the Srepok River and the dry deciduous forests of Yok Don. Specialities here that are not easily seen elsewhere in Vietnam include Fulvous-breasted, Rufous-bellied and Black-headed woodpeckers, Alexandrine and Blossom-headed parakeets, White-rumped Pygmy-falcon, Rufous Treepie and the recently described and near endemic Mekong Wagtail. Overnight at Yok Don National Park.

Day 16: Yok Don National Park to Dalat

Early morning birding at Yok Don before the scenic drive south to Dalat, a former French hill station at the southern extreme of the Central Highlands. Arrive at Dalat in the afternoon and transfer

to the hotel. The Dalat Plateau is home to several of Vietnam's endemic bird species as well as many distinctive local subspecies. In the afternoon start exploring some of the exciting birding sites around Dalat. Overnight at Dalat.

Days 17, 18 & 19: Dalat

A full three days of birding includes visits to Mount Lang Bian, a 2,169 m high peak 20 minutes from Dalat, and the shores of Ho Tuyen Lam, a man-made lake just outside the town. Vietnamese endemics found at Dalat include Dalat Shrike-babbler, Vietnamese Greenfinch, Black-crowned Fulvetta, Orange-breasted & Collared laughingthrushes and Grey-crowned Crocias. Near endemics here include Grey-crowned Tit, Black-crowned Parrotbill, White-cheeked and Black-hooded laughingthrushes, and Vietnamese Cutia. Other target birds in this bird-rich area are the elusive Blue & Rusty-naped pittas, Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Slender-billed Oriole, Hume's Treecreeper, Yellow-billed Nuthatch and a very distinctive race of Red Crossbill. Overnight at Dalat.

Day 20: Dalat to Di Linh

Leave Dalat after a final morning of birding and head to Di Linh, a two-hour drive from Dalat. A short drive from Di Linh town a forested mountain pass known locally as Deo Suoi Lanh is an excellent site to look for several Dalat Plateau specialities including Black-hooded, White-cheeked & 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 21: 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 Pitta, Indochinese Green Magpie, Spotted Forktail and Green Cochoa, before continuing along Highway 20 towards Cat Tien National Park. 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 elusive Orange-necked Partridge while the mammal list includes Leopard Cat, Lesser Mousedeer, Gaur and three beautiful primates, Black-shanked Douc Langur, Silvered Langur and Buff-cheeked Gibbon. Overnight at Cat Tien National Park.

Days 22, 23 & 24: Cat Tien National Park

Three days of 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 park jeeps are used. The 5 km walk through semi-evergreen forest to Crocodile Lake can be good for the near-endemic Germain's Peacock-pheasant and Blue-rumped & Bar-bellied pittas while the beautiful Siamese Fireback can often be seen on an early morning drive to the start of the Crocodile Lake trail. 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 & Heart-spotted woodpeckers, three species of broadbill and the Indochinese-endemic Grey-faced Tit-Babbler. Overnight at Cat Tien National Park.

Day 25: Cat Tien National Park to Ho Chi Minh City

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