

Vietnam & Cambodia

Itinerary

Days 1-3

Sightseeing in Hanoi

Vibrant Hanoi will be our first taste of Vietnam. After a lunchtime arrival we'll spend an afternoon exploring sites such as the Ngoc Son Temple and the One Pillar Pagoda. Hanoi's Old Quarter is a photographer's dream with the characteristic hustle and bustle of Indochinese life colouring the hectic streets. During Day 3 we'll transfer to Cuc Phuong.

Days 4-7

Cuc Phuong National Park

From Cuc Phuong's HQ a 20km paved road takes us through beautiful forest en route to the Bong Substation where we'll stay for 4 nights. Common Birdwing, Painted Jezebel and the Red Helen are amongst the multi-coloured butterflies frequenting shrubs around the substation and along the road we'll find the magnificent greeny-blue and black Papilio paris. Five-bar Swordtail, Striped Blue Crow and the Grey Count will be attracted to damp patches. Playful Yellow-throated Martens may cross the road in front of us and so too the immaculate Silver Pheasant. Along the entrance road we'll encounter some of Indochina's most beautiful birds - Red-headed Trogon, brilliant gold and black Sultan Tit and Common Green Magpie. The rarer Indochinese Green Magpie is also here along with Ratchet-tailed Tree-pie and White-winged Magpie. On the forest floor we'll look for Bar-bellied and Blue-rumped Pittas as well as secretive Streaked and Limestone Wren Babblers. Tiny Pied Falconets watch for prey from the tallest trees and overhead soar Mountain Hawk-Eagle and Crested Goshawk.

Vertiginous limestone pinnacles rise from paddyfields in a sublime 'Guilin-like' landscape as we make the short journey to Van Long. This is truly photogenic rural Vietnam with kids riding water buffaloes and locals wearing the typical conical hats and with such marvellous scenery for a backdrop. We'll take punts downriver passing spectacular wooded limestone cliffs where we'll look for the endangered Delacour's Langur. This beautiful black and white langur is one of many localised primates in Vietnam, many of them now extremely rare. At Cuc Phuong the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre works to return confiscated pets to the wild - a great place to learn something of the plight of these beautiful animals. Amongst the dozen or so species here is the world's most endangered primate, the Cat Ba Langur, which is now down to less than

100 animals in wild. On Day 7 we'll catch a flight from Hanoi southwards to Ho Chi Minh City and then transfer to Cat Tien National Park

Days 8-12

Cat Tien National Park

The centrepiece of our tour to Vietnam, Cat Tien offers high quality wildlife watching in a mix of habitats that though dominated by forests also includes ponds and open grasslands. The mammal life is rich and varied, particularly the primates. Acrobatic Yellow-cheeked Gibbons swing through the foliage in spectacular fashion. Rather more sedate are the Long-tailed, Stumptail and Pig-tailed Macaques while near beautiful Heaven's Rapids we'll find the endangered Black-shanked Douc Langur. On optional night drives Sambar, Palm Civet and Wild Boar will be seen and we'll hope to observe Leopard Cat, Siamese Hare and Binturong. Large-tailed Nightjar and the impressive Great-eared Nightjar are both quite common at Cat Tien. Ruby-cheeked and Crimson Sunbirds, Yellow-vented Flowerpeckers and Little Spiderhunters peruse flowering shrubs around our accommodation, and a nearby streambed attracts mud-puddling butterflies - swallowtails such as Bluebottle, Common Jay, Great Zebra and the Five-bar Swordtail are numerous and the elegant Common Nawab too. English names for Southeast Asian butterflies very much reflect the era in which they were named and so here we can admire the Redtail Marquis, Common Yoeman, Chain Swordtail and Great Archduke as well as numerous 'crows', 'oakblues' and occasional Birdwings. The birdlife is just as colourful with Scarlet Minivet, Green-eared and Blue-eared Barbets, Vernal Hanging Parrot and Red-breasted Parakeet among the commoner species. Some trees are leafless at this season, making it easier to pick out the variety of woodpeckers that include Great Slaty, Black & Buff, impressive White-bellied, and the very cute Heart-spotted, as well as feeding flocks of orioles, leafbirds, drongos, ioras and mynahs. Red Junglefowl, Siamese Firebacks and Germain's Peacock Pheasant appear occasionally on the tracks though we'll have to search harder for the endangered Green Peafowl. Fabulous Great Hornbills noisily flap overhead following groups of hardly less spectacular Oriental Pied Hornbills to fruiting figs where already Thick-billed Green Pigeons and Green Imperial Pigeons will have been gorging themselves. Grey-headed Fish-Eagles hunt over ponds where we can watch Watercock and Lesser Adjutant, Cinnamon Bittern and Painted Stork. Orange-breasted Trogon, Banded Kingfisher, Black Baza, Golden-crested Myna and White-crested Laughingthrush are amongst the more beautiful species we'll see.

Days 13-15
Dalat

From the atmospheric old hill resort at Dalat we'll explore the excellent broad-leaved evergreen forest at Ta Nung where mixed feeding flocks continually cross our trail. Grey-chinned and Long-tailed Minivets and noisy Racket-tailed Drongos are perhaps the most obvious birds but a closer look will reveal the sumptuous Asian Fairy Bluebird and elegantly marked Long-tailed Broadbill. The list of exotic-looking and sounding birds here is long - Red-billed Scimitar Babbler, Black-hooded and White-cheeked Laughingthrushes, Speckled Piculet, Blue-winged Minla, Mountain Fulvetta and Grey-headed Parrotbill. Jerdon's Baza and Besra are amongst the raptors we'll encounter and by streams we'll look for Slaty-backed Forktail. Many danaid butterflies will be on the wing and we're sure to encounter the lovely Leaf Butterfly too. At Lang Bian Mountain the strikingly marked Cutia is part of a rich cast of birds that includes Large Niltava, Golden-throated Barbet, Black Eagle, Yellow-billed Nuthatch and the lovely Silver Pheasant.

Days 16-20
Angkor Wat, Cambodia

A morning flight takes us to Ho Chi Minh City and thence to Siem Reap in Cambodia. Close by are the world-famous ruins at Angkor Wat - the central temple complex at Angkor Wat itself has an 800m long series of bas-reliefs on the outside walls. Siem Reap contains many outstanding archaeological sites not least the fabulous ten square km fortified city of Angkor Thom. The roads leading to the south and east gates are lined with continuous ranks of statues - a truly amazing sight. The gateways have marvellous stone elephants and the central Bayon temple is second only to Angkor Wat in magnificence - it has 54 'gothic towers' decorated with intricate Avalokiteshvara faces and many fine bas-reliefs. Ta Prohm has been left un-excavated deep in the 'jungle' and Preah Khan has wonderful Garuda figures on the outer walls. There'll be wildlife to enjoy too with visits to wetlands at Ang Trapeang Thmor conservation Area and Prek Toal Biosphere Reserve. Several hundred Sarus Cranes will be in residence along with Black-necked Stork, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, Peaceful Dove, Oriental Pratincole, Black-collared Starling and a range of open country butterflies.

Day 21
Return to the UK

Trip reports are available from previous trips. If you would like to see a copy, or to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please contact us on 01298 83563 or email on enquiries@greentours.co.uk.