

## **Vietnam & Cambodia**

### **& Angkor Wat**

Vietnam's sublime landscapes range from the immense Mekong Delta to the hill stations of the Annamite Mountains, and from the vibrant elegance of Hanoi to the Rainforests and rivers of southern Tonkin.

Vietnam's national parks preserve a fabulously varied fauna and we concentrate on the finest, Cuc Phuong in the north and Cat Tien in the south, as well as the marvellous Ba Vi and Tam Dao. Though we shall look at all fauna and indeed flora, the raison d'être for our visit is the simply sensational butterflies and also the magical variety of moths, bugs, beetles, stick insects and orthoptera.

### **A Greentours Itinerary**

#### **Day 1**

#### **Depart UK**

#### **Days 2-4**

#### **Ba Vi Mountain**

Rising dramatically above the surrounding Red River Delta, Ba Vi National Park protects the numerous streams, waterfalls, and springs that flow down from the three prominent mountain peaks which dominate the landscape. Though only reaching 1300m these mountains support a lush vegetation with forests ranging from tropical to montane in just a few kilometres. The varied elevations and micro-climates allow a remarkable range of plant communities to thrive within a relatively compact area and so too a diverse fauna, in particular amongst the butterflies, which are simply sensational in May. Top-billing probably goes to the Jungle Queens. There are two species of Jungle Queen here, *Stichopthalma suffusa tonkiniana* and *Stichopthalma fruhstorferi*, and both are large slow-flying butterflies. The underside of the hindwing displays a distinctive row of ten concentric eyespots that mimic a vertebrate's eye to deter predators. Impressive Red Helens and Great Mormons are a common sight. There's the Large Faun, the Staff Sergeant, Dot-Dash Sergeant, Common Archduke and the fabulous Gaudy Baron, whose colours when seen in the sun are quite remarkable. Both the Straight-line Mapwing and the Common Map visit mud-puddling groups and we'll see several rather elegant bamboo browns too. The Punchinello, pin-pricked with metal, and the Circe, the Popinjay, and the Sullied Brown Sailor are amongst some of the more imaginatively-named butterflies here. The bird life at Ba Vi is also impressive. Golden-throated and Blue-throated Barbets maintain a continual background chorus, whilst Red-headed Trogon's keep quiet in thickly shaded forest. Highlights might be Green Cochoa, Red-billed Blue-Magpie, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Rufous-cheeked Laughingthrush, Indochinese Yuhina and two gorgeous Sunbirds, Ornate and Fork-tailed.

## Days 5 - 7

### Cuc Phuong National Park

From Cuc Phuong's HQ a 20km paved road takes us through beautiful forest where the Golden Birdwing, Painted Jezebel and the Red Helen are amongst the multi-coloured butterflies frequenting roadside shrubs. 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, Green-eared Barbet, Japanese Tit, 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.

May is a fantastic time for butterflies in Cuc Phuong. We'll see more of those stunning Jungle Queens here this time joined by the Jungleking *Thauria lathyi*. Thronging to the best mud-puddling spots are masses of Crow and Tigers, Striped, Chocolate and Orange Albatrosses (that's Chocolate, and Orange, not Chocolate and Orange!), Plain Puffin, Red-base Jezebel and a host of swallowtails. Those gorgeous little mini-swallowtails with improbably long tails, the Green and White Dragonails, are both abundant here, often mud-puddling together. Altogether larger are the Yellow Helen and the dark beauty that is the Spangle. Jays and Bluebottles such as Common Bluebottle, Great Jay and Tailed Jay often join the dragonails for a sip. We will also see another swallowtail relative, the Zebras in the forest at Cuc Phuong, notably Spotted, Great and Malayan Zebras. Large powerful Nymphalids are a feature of these forests. Any walk down the forest tracks in May is likely to result in impressive Common Cruiser, Common Yeoman, or the handsome Red-spot Duke flashing past. There are others who like to sit quietly, perhaps on some rotting fruit, such as the Common Duffer, Common Earl and White-edged Blue Baron. Hiding amongst the leaves are Autumn Leaf, Orange Oakleaf, and the Large Assyrian whose upperwings have a flash of the most vivid blue imaginable. Back out on the sunny rides Tawny Charaxes seek civet dung, whilst Common Jester, Marbled Mapwing, Common Maplet, Spotted Sawtooth, Great Orange-tip, and the beautiful Leopard Lacewing keep the cameras clicking. The crazy variety of butterflies continues with Spotted and Blue-striped Palmflies, Scarce Catseye, Powdered Baron, Common Nawab, the exquisite Shan Nawab, Indian Fritillary, Black Prince, and amongst the 'blues' Restricted Purple Sapphire, the fabulous Centaur Oakblue, and the golden *Yasoda androconifera*. There are some special skippers such as Chestnut Angle, Marbled Flat, Atkinson's Bob, Sikkim White Flat and Narrow-banded Velvet bob with a flash of deep orange-red on its forewings.

On the forest floor we'll look for Bar-bellied and Blue-rumped Pittas as well as secretive Limestone Wren Babbler. Tiny Pied Falconets watch for prey from the tallest trees and overhead soar Mountain Hawk-Eagle and Crested Goshawk.

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.

## **Day 8**

### **Van Long**

Vertiginous limestone pinnacles rise from paddyfields in a sublime 'Guilin-like' landscape. 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. One of the rarest, and most beautiful primates in Asia, they have a striking black and white pelage, and a long bushy tail, unique among the region's langurs. During our boat trip we'll see Black-backed Swampheens and plenty of egrets and herons, as well as Yellow Bittern and Asian Openbill. We've a good chance of seeing White-browed Crake too.

## **Days 9 - 11**

### **Tam Dao**

The Hill Station at Tam Dao is situated within a mountainous national park whose luxuriant forests are home to a bewildering variety of butterflies. Numbers and diversity are huge! Joining throngs of albatrosses and grass yellows are swallowtails such the impressive Noble's Helen, the Southern Chinese Peacock, sumptuous Blue Peacock and the Common Peacock, resplendent in such lustrous colours that only half its name seems appropriate. The elegant red and black Common Windmill is a frequent sight, and there's both Common Batwing and Lesser Batwing too. Two very atypical swallowtails are found here, the Brown Gorgon and the Yellow Gorgon, both with wings largely yellow, brown or tan. Perhaps the most exciting of all though will be the golden Kaiser-i-Hind – sometimes known as the 'Queen of Butterflies' so elegant and beautiful is it. Swallowtails' predilection for mimicry is well illustrated by the Mimes. Blue-striped Mime mimics the blue-striped crows whilst the Great Bue Mime is an excellent mimic of various species of *Euploea* – the Blue Crows.

If the swallowtails seem varied then the Nymphalids are unbelievably diverse at Tam Dao. There's the Tabby, the Constable, the Assyrian, the Pasha, Courtesan, White Commodore, Green Skirt Baron and a whole bunch of *Euthalia*s (Barons) such as *anosia*, *aconthea*, *alpheda*, *bunzoi*, *omeia* and *shinkaii*. We'll look for the emperor-like Purple Duke and the rare Tytler's Emperor.

The Tawny Rajah is found throughout most of southern and southeastern Asia, but here it is joined by some less well-known *Charaxes* such as Yellow Rajah, the Scarce Tawny Rajah and Variegated Rajah. Hiding in the understory are wonderful butterflies such as the Yellow Dryad, the Banded Duffer and the simply glorious Jungle Glory, all

camouflage until you disturb it when the incredible blue uppers flash through the ferneries, luring you deeper... Pretty forest floor satyrids include the Starry Diadem, Yellow Kaiser, the very elegant Tailed Red Forester, striking Striped Ringlet, and the cryptic Black-spotted Labyrinth

Around the atmospheric old hill resort we'll explore the broad-leaved evergreen forest 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, Ratchet-tailed Treepie, David's Fulvetta, White-browed Piculet and Ratchet-tailed Treepie. Crested Serpent Eagle and Besra are amongst the raptors we'll encounter and by streams we'll look for Slaty-backed Forktail. The variety continues with Mugimaki Flycatcher, Golden-throated Barbet, Grey Laughingthrush, Black-chinned Yuhina, Chestnut Bulbul and Silver-eared Mesia and the lovely White-browed Shrike-Babbler. There's some excellent bamboo forest with Short-tailed Parrotbills, Scimitar Babblers, White-hooded Babbler or Blue-naped Pitta.

## **Day 12(am)**

### **Hanoi To Ho Chi Minh City and Cat Tien**

A morning flight takes us from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City from where we'll head to the centrepiece of our tour to Vietnam, Cat Tien National Park.

## **Days 12(pm) – 17(am)**

### **Cat Tien National Park**

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 (they are super-common!), 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, Lesser 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 Yellow Jezebel, Common Yeoman, The Knight, Chain Swordtail and Great Archduke. As well as many of the swallowtails we'll have seen elsewhere Cat

Tien has Banded Swallowtail and the widespread Common Rose. Mud-puddling Orange Gulls are joined by a variety of Crows such as Blue-spotted Crow, Striped Blue Crow, Long-branded Bue Crow and Magpie Crow. There's some choice nobility on offer such as Blue-spot Archduke, the Archduke, Red-spot Marquis, the Black Prince and the rare Elusive Prince. One of the most spectacular of all understory butterflies, the Koh-i-Noor is resident in Cat Tien, and hardly less spectacular is Autumn Leaf. Amongst the blues the Purple Leaf Blue is particularly common and other species we should see are Tailed Disc Oakblue, Fluffy Tit, Yamfly, Common Posy, and the brilliant Slate Flash.

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 Rufous, Bay and Laced, 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, Dusky Broadbills and Black-and-Red Broadbills will have been gorging themselves. Grey-headed Fish-Eagles hunt over ponds where we can watch Watercock and Lesser Adjutant, Cinnamon Bittern and Woolly-necked Stork. Violet Cuckoo, Blue-eared Kingfisher, Golden-crested Myna and Blue-winged Pitta are amongst the more beautiful species we'll see. Tokay Gecko loudly announce their presence, whereas Green Pit Vipers sit silent. We'll see Flying Lizards and Siamese Crocodiles too.

### **Day 17(pm)**

#### **Depart Ho Chi Minh City**

An evening departure from Ho Chi Minh City

### **Day 18**

#### **Arrive UK/Europe**

OR....

#### **Angkor Wat Extension**

### **Day 17(pm)**

#### **fly on to Siem Reap in Cambodia**

An evening flight takes us to Siem Reap for the Cambodia Extension.

## **Days 18 & 19**

### **Angkor Wat, Cambodia**

Close by our hotel 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 unexcavated 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 where several hundred Sarus Cranes will be in residence along with Painted Stork, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, Peaceful Dove, Oriental Pratincole, Black-collared Starling and a range of open country butterflies such as Lime Swallowtail, Common Bluebottle, Common Mime, Common Tiger and Common Leopard.

## **Day 20**

### **Phnom Kulem**

Phnom Kulen is an isolated chain of small mountain plateaux lying south of the Dângrêk Mountains. The forests are home to Silver Langurs and Pileated Gibbons as well as a rich variety of birdlife with Golden-fronted Leafbird, White-throated Rock Thrush, Black Baza, Rufous-winged Buzzard, Indochinese Roller, Black-headed Woodpecker and White-crested Laughingthrush all found within the park. Black & White Helen and Red Helen are common, Great Mormon even more so, and at mud-puddling spots we'll encounter Spotted Jay, Common Jay, Tailed Jay and Chain Swordtail. Other butterflies of note will be Spotted Zebra, Common Yeoman, Commander, the Knight, the elegant Grey Count, Colour Sergeant and the distinctive Yamfly.

## **Day 21(am)**

### **Beng Mealea**

Hidden in the forests ninety minutes away from Angkor Wat lies Beng Mealea a temple contemporary with Angkor Wat. No restoration work has been carried out beyond cutting back some of the encroaching vegetation: the temple's central gallery has collapsed, vines strangle the walls and passages, and tree roots squeeze between the stones. Wildlife is in control! Within the mix of deciduous dipterocarp and semi-evergreen forest patches there's birds a-plenty including White-bellied Woodpecker, Lineated Barbet, Green-billed Malkoha, Hainan Blue Flycatcher and Red-breasted Parakeet. Butterflies are abundant and include species such as Five-bar Swordtail, Burmese Raven and the Clipper.

## **Day 21(pm)**

### **flight to Ho Chi Minh City and departure on international flights**

Beng Mealea is close to the airport so we'll make a short journey there at lunchtime and catch a flight to Ho Chi Minh City where we'll have dinner before departing on the international flights.

## **Day 22**

### **Arrive UK/Europe**

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