

# BEST OF VIETNAM



**Jan 11- Feb 1, 2019**

**22 Days / 21 Nights**

Hanoi ♦ Cuc Phuong National Park  
Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park ♦ Bach Ma  
National Park ♦ Lo Xo ♦ Mang Den ♦ Yok Don  
National Park Dalat ♦ Cat Tien National Park ♦ Ho  
Chi Minh City

Starting at **\$3955** (group of 10)

Price varies with group size

Single Supplement \$545

Many people still associate Vietnam with war and hardship. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Vietnam today is a fast-developing country with good infrastructure and extremely friendly people. Apart from the birding, Vietnam also has a very rich culture, a wide diversity of people, and great scenery, making it worthwhile to visit for both birders and non-birders alike.

Vietnam is 1,600 km long with over 3,000 km of coastline and has a wide variety of habitats. Although much of the forest that once covered Vietnam has been destroyed, the remnants are protected in national parks where excellent birding opportunities abound. With somewhere in the neighborhood of 850 species, Vietnam must rank as one of the prime countries in Asia for bird watching. It harbors ten endemics, the largest number in mainland SE Asia. By concentrating our efforts in national parks and covering as many of them as possible in our three weeks, we expect to see in excess of 300 species on this tour, most of which will be life birds for birders who have not birded extensively in Asia.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1, Jan 11: Arrive Hanoi

Arrive at Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport, where a driver will meet you and transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure in Hanoi.

**Overnight Hong Ngoc Cochinchine Hotel, Hanoi (D)**

## Day 2, Jan 12: Hanoi to Cuc Phuong National Park

Depart Hanoi after breakfast for 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 center 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 Cuc Phuong HQ Guest House, Cuc Phuong National Park (BLD)**

## Days 3 & 4, Jan 13-14: Cuc Phuong National Park

Two full days of birding at Cuc Phuong where specialties include 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 Cuc Phuong HQ Guest House, Cuc Phuong National Park (BLD)**

## Day 5, Jan 15: 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. This is mostly a travel day, so dress comfortably, sit back and relax as you take in the views.

**Overnight Saigon-Phong Nha Hotel, Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (BLD)**

## Day 6, Jan 16: 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 specialties at Phong Nha as well as an endangered primate, the Ha Tinh Langur.

**Overnight Saigon-Phong Nha Hotel, Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (BLD)**

## Day 7, Jan 17: 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 HQ accommodation, there should be time for some afternoon birding.

**Overnight Bach Ma Summit Guest House, Bach Ma National Park (BLD)**

## Day 8, Jan 18: 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 Be Chau Giang Hotel, Kham Duc (BLD)**



### Day 9, Jan 19: 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 specialties 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 Hung Yen Hotel, Mang Den (BLD)**

### Days 10 & 11, Jan 20-21: Mang Den

Two full days for birding at Mang Den where the recently-discovered and seldom-seen endemic, Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush, is the main target. Other specialties of the Mang Den area include the scarce Pale-capped Pigeon, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Black-hooded Laughingthrush and Indochinese Wren-babbler.

**Overnight Hung Yen Hotel, Mang Den (BLD)**

### Day 12, Jan 22: Mang Den to Yok Don National Park

Depart Mang Den after an early breakfast for the long drive south to Yok Don National Park in Daklak Province. 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. Specialties 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 HQ Guest House, Yok Don National Park (BLD)**

### Day 13, Jan 23: 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 late afternoon in time to make the first of several visits to the Ta Nung Valley, a small but bird-filled area of remnant evergreen forest 10 km from Dalat. This is the most accessible site for two rare Vietnamese endemics, Grey-crowned Crocias and Orange-breasted Laughingthrush. In addition to these two beauties, the very distinct local subspecies of Blue-winged Siva, Black-headed Sibia and Black-throated Sunbird can found here. **Overnight**

**Dreams Hotel, Dalat (BLD)**

### Days 14, 15 & 16, Jan 24, 25, 26: Dalat

There are several excellent birding sites around Dalat. At Mount Lang Bian, a 2,169 meter-high peak 20 minutes from Dalat, Hume's Treecreeper, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Grey-crowned Tit, Vietnamese Cutia and Black-crowned Fulvetta are 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 outside of town, is a great place to look for some of the local pine specialists including



Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Slender-billed Oriole, Burmese Shrike, Red Crossbill and Vietnamese Greenfinch. **Overnight Dreams Hotel, Dalat (BLD)**

### **Day 17, Jan 27: Dalat to Cat Tien National Park**

Leave Dalat after a final morning of birding and continue to bird 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 is home to 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 Cat Tien HQ Guest House, Cat Tien National Park (BLD)**

### **Days 18, 19 & 20, Jan 28, 29, 30: 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, 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 and 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, a dozen species of Woodpecker, three species of Broadbill and the Indochinese-endemic Grey-faced Tit-Babbler.

**Overnight Cat Tien HQ Guest House, Cat Tien National Park (BLD)**

### **Day 21, Jan 31: 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 hotel. Farewell dinner.

**Overnight Bong Sen Annex Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City (BLD)**

### **Day 22, February 1: Departure**

Take the hotel shuttle to Tan Son Nhat International Airport for departure flights. Most flights to the US depart early in the morning, so you may need to leave the hotel before they begin serving breakfast.

**End of tour (B)**

### **INCLUDED IN THE PRICE:**

- ~ Services of expert bilingual birding guide/tour escort throughout
- ~ Arrival transfers by private car
- ~ Transportation in air-conditioned private tour bus
- ~ All accommodation
- ~ All meals
- ~ Bottled water throughout
- ~ All entrance fees & permits
- ~ Boat hire at Van Long Nature Reserve
- ~ Jeep hire at Dalat & Cat Tien National Park
- ~ Services of 2 Cheepers Birding on a Budget tour leaders, Jim and Cindy Beckman
- ~ Pre-trip gift packet, including customized checklist
- ~ Post-trip electronic checklist and photo collection

### **Tour exclusions:**

- ~ Vietnam visas. Please ensure you have a valid visa before your departure for Vietnam. Visas are available from your nearest Vietnam embassy or consulate or on arrival with prior arrangement through [www.vietnamvisacenter.org](http://www.vietnamvisacenter.org)
- ~ Personal travel insurance. Note it is essential to take out a travel insurance policy that includes medical evacuation for travel in Vietnam

- ~ **International flights to/from Vietnam**
- ~ **Drinks (other than bottled water)**
- ~ **Telephone calls, laundry, tips and any other expenses not mentioned under 'Tour inclusions'**