

# CUC PHUONG NATIONAL PARK ADVENTURE

5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS

**Tour Code:** VNWN02

**Short description:** Established in 1962, Cuc Phuong, as the oldest National Park in Vietnam, is nestled between the 3 big provinces of Ninh Binh, Hoa Binh and Thanh Hoa. Comprising 22,200 hectares of primary forest and represents a typical limestone forest ecosystem with the highest concentration of biodiversity in Vietnam, Cuc Phuong boasts engaging cultural and wildlife heritage and enchanting scenery. Magnificent limestone mountains rise up majestically from the green rice-terraces and traditional stilt houses of the Muong hill-tribe. Covered in a dense forest, they form a habitat for some of Asia's rarest species.

**Bird species:** Palcaniformes; coconiiformes; anseriformes; falconiformes; podicipediformes; galliformes; gruiformes; galliformes; charadriiformes; columbiformes; psittaciformes; cuculiformes; strigiformes; apodiformes; coraciiformes; piciformes; Passeriformes.

**Wildlife:** Macaque, Gibbon, Francois' Leaf Monkey, Slow Loris, Bat, Porcupine, Flying Squirrel, Small Striped Squirrel, Belly-banded Squirrel, Black Giant Squirrel, Asiatic Black Bear, Wild Dog, Tiger, Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Jungle Cat, Bar-backed Partridge, Scaly-breasted Partridge, Silver Pheasant, Red Junglefowl, Grey Peacock Pheasant, Laughing Thrushes, Red-vented Barbet, Green-eared Barbet, Scimitar-billed Babbler, Brown Hawk Owl, Scarlet Minivet, Racket-tailed Drongos, Racket-tailed Treepie, White-winged Blue Magpie, Thrushes, Flycatcher, Tit, Finches, Pipit and Hornbill.

**Location:** Lying at the south-eastern extent of limestone range that runs north-west, The Cuc Phuong National park is located in Nho Quan District, Ninh Binh, Hoa Binh and Thanh Hoa Provinces, Vietnam and 150kms from Hanoi international Airport (or more than 3 hours by car).

**Activities:** Caving, River Rafting, Trekking, Night-spotting, Bird Watching and Biking.

**Best Time to Visit:** All year round, but strongest recommendation is from early November to end of February.

## DAYS 2 & 3 CUC PHUONG NP (B/L/D)

Dedicated in 1962, Cuc Phuong was Vietnam's first national park and is one of the few remaining areas of lowland and limestone forest left in the north. We will have two full days to explore the forests and trails within the Park's karst ecosystem. We will begin each day at dawn when animal activity is at its peak, take a break during the heat of the day and continue exploring in the late afternoon and early evening. We will also take a few night game drives in hopes of glimpsing some of the nocturnal mammals that inhabit the park. Mammals are difficult to see in the Park, but birds are common and we should observe some reptiles as well. We will have our meals and overnight at the Cuc Phuong Guesthouses.

## DAY 4: CUC PHUONG NP AND VAN LONG NATURE RESERVE, HANOI (B/L/D)

This morning we will visit the Endangered Primate Rescue Center located near Park Headquarters. The Center is home to around 14 species of primates, mostly gibbons and langurs that have been rescued from the illegal wildlife trade. The Center not only rescues the animals, but is breeding them for eventual reintroduction back into the wild. Vietnam is home to a fantastic array of primates most of which are endemic or near-endemic. They are almost all endangered as well so the Center is doing really important conservation and education work. Our visit will also likely be our only chance to see some of these animals.

The exception to this may be the rare Delacour's langur which is endemic to the region in and around Cuc Phuong. After lunch we will travel to Van Long Nature Reserve to hopefully observe these fantastic black and white primates as they scamper up and down the limestone pinnacles and cliff faces. When we arrive at Van Long we will board traditional reed boats that will take us to the edge of the towering cliffs that rise up out of the water. The langurs are most active in the late afternoon and early evening and it will truly be a privilege to observe them in the wild. The boats are operated by the local community providing a sustainable income that also promotes wildlife protection. As the sun slips behind the mountains we will boat back to our bus and return to Hanoi. Tour ends. Cuc Phuong for dinner and overnight.

## DAY 5 – WEDNESDAY, MAY 20: CUC PHUONG NP TO HANOI

We will take the resting time before heading back to Hanoi. Tours end.

## DAY 1 HANOI TO CUC PHUONG NATIONAL PARK (-/L/D)

After an early breakfast we will depart for Cuc Phuong National Park. Our drive will take us past a mosaic of rice paddies, rural hamlets, limestone cliffs and green mountains. Located south of Hanoi, the forested limestone slopes of Cuc Phuong protect an impressive variety of animals and plants. It is home to some spectacular primates including gibbons, macaques and rare and endemic Delacour's leaf monkey. The Park is also home to some fantastic birds including red-collared woodpeckers, limestone wren-babblers, fork-tailed sunbirds and many others.

During April and May, just before the onset of the rains, the Park is filled with literally millions of butterflies. We will arrive at Cuc Phuong in the early afternoon and will visit the Park's Turtle Conservation Center. This sanctuary was established to protect and breed many species of Asian turtles and tortoises all of which are endangered from over-harvest for the food markets of China and Taiwan. In the late afternoon we will have our first chance to look for wildlife along the Park's main road before we settle into our rustic, but comfortable, accommodations at the Cuc Phuong Guesthouse. We will have dinner and overnight at the Cuc Phuong Guesthouse.

