

# Birding Ecotours



## CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN VIETNAM: ENDEMICS AND SPECIALTIES

14 – 28 MARCH 2023



*Bar-bellied Pitta, one of the stunning targets on this exciting tour (photo Phuc Lee)*

This exclusive small-group (maximum six people) birdwatching tour of Central and Southern Vietnam starts and ends in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon. The tour focusses on finding as many of the endemic and specialty birds of the region and provides excellent opportunities for anyone wanting to photograph Asian birds.

We will visit the well-known sites of Cat Tien National Park, the Da Lat and Di Linh Plateaus, Mang Den, and Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve as well as some less-well-publicized sites for specific target birds. By being in a small group we will be able to utilize a series of bird blinds (hides), which will allow for some excellent photographic opportunities and close-up views of some of the key species outlined below. A small group will also be beneficial when birding within the forest environment, enabling everyone to stand a higher chance of gaining great views of the many birds that are possible on this very exciting tour.

Some of the key species we will look for during the tour include, but are certainly not limited to, **Bar-bellied Pitta, Blue-rumped Pitta, Blue Pitta, Rusty-naped Pitta, Siamese Fireback, Silver Pheasant, Green Peafowl, Germain's Peacock-Pheasant, Orange-necked Partridge, Pale-headed Woodpecker, Indochinese Barbet, Necklaced Barbet, Green Cochoa, Orange-breasted Laughingthrush, Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush, Golden-winged Laughingthrush, Red-tailed Laughingthrush, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, Black-hooded Laughingthrush, Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, Red-tailed Minla, Indochinese Fulvetta, Dalat Shrike-Babbler, Black-crowned Barwing, Indochinese Wren-Babbler, Indochinese Green Magpie, Ratchet-tailed Treepie, Vietnamese Greenfinch, Vietnamese Cutia, Grey-crowned Crocias, Yellow-billed Nuthatch,** and plenty more.



*The striking Indochinese Green Magpie is often seen on this tour (photo Phuc Lee).*

## Itinerary (15 days/14 nights)

### Day 1: Arrival in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

We'll arrive at Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport and transfer to our hotel, with the rest of the day at leisure. We will have a group welcome meal in the evening.

Overnight: Ho Chi Minh City

### Day 2: Travel from Ho Chi Minh City to Cat Tien National Park

After breakfast we will head northeast to Cat Tien National Park, one of the best-protected lowland forest reserves in Vietnam and all of Indochina. We will arrive for our three-night stay at lunchtime, and we will have the afternoon to start our exploration of the area.

Overnight: Cat Tien National Park

### Days 3 - 4: Cat Tien National Park

Cat Tien was the first national park to be established in southern Vietnam. The park has an impressive list of bird species, more than 300 species, including several globally endangered species and Indochinese endemics, such as **Blue-rumped Pitta**, **Bar-bellied Pitta**, **Siamese Fireback**, **Green Peafowl**, **Pale-headed Woodpecker**, **Banded Kingfisher**, **Grey-faced Tit-Babbler**, **Germain's Peacock-Pheasant**, and (with luck) **Orange-necked Partridge**.



*Seeing **Banded Kingfisher** is always a highlight.*



We will look for **Blue-rumped Pitta** during the tour (photo Phuc Lee).

Other species we will hope for during our stay include **Orange-breasted Trogon**, **Banded Broadbill**, **Black-and-red Broadbill**, **Dusky Broadbill**, **Violet Cuckoo**, **Great Hornbill**, **Blue-bearded Bee-eater**, **Woolly-necked Stork**, **Lesser Adjutant**, **White-crested Laughingthrush**, **Great Eared Nightjar**, **Large-tailed Nightjar**, and **Blyth's Frogmouth**. In addition to birds Cat Tien's forests are an important refuge for **Black-shanked Douc**, one of the most colorful and least-known primates in Asia, and **Red-cheeked Gibbon** and we will look for both.

Overnight: Cat Tien National Park

### Day 5: Cat Tien National Park to Da Lat

We will have a final morning birding at Cat Tien National Park before we head north to the Da Lat Plateau during the afternoon. We will arrive in time for our evening meal.

Overnight: Da Lat

### Days 6 - 7: Da Lat Plateau

We have two full days to explore the excellent birding sites around Da Lat, and we will focus on Ta Nung Valley, Ho Tuyen Lam (Tuyen Lam Lake), and Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park.

Ta Nung Valley is a small remnant evergreen forest patch, where we will look for the rare and endemic **Grey-crowned Crocias** along with **White-cheeked Laughingthrush**, **Blue-winged**

**Minla** (a distinct local subspecies), **Rufous-backed Sibia**, **Black-headed Sibia**, and **Black-throated Sunbird**, all of which can be found here.

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is one of the five largest national parks in Vietnam. Vietnamese endemics found here include **Black-crowned Fulvetta** and **Collared Laughingthrush**. Other target birds in this national park include **Rusty-naped Pitta**, **Yellow-billed Nuthatch**, **White-spectacled Warbler**, **Chestnut-crowned Warbler**, **Kloss's Leaf Warbler**, **Mrs. Gould's Sunbird**, **Spotted Forktail**, **Hume's Treecreeper**, **Grey-bellied Tesia**, and a very distinctive endemic subspecies of **Red Crossbill**.



*Collared Laughingthrush is a beautiful Vietnamese endemic (photo Phuc Lee).*

Ho Tuyen Lam (Tuyen Lam Lake) is a man-made lake just outside the town. Vietnamese endemics found here include **Vietnamese Cutia**, **Grey-crowned Crocias**, and **Vietnamese Greenfinch**. Other target birds from this area could include **Yellow-billed Nuthatch**, **Black-headed Sibia**, **Black-headed Parrotbill**, **Burmese Shrike**, **Black-collared Starling**, **Vinous-breasted Starling**, and **Slender-billed Oriole**, as well as many others.

Overnight: Da Lat

### Day 8: Da Lat Plateau to Di Linh (Nui San Pass)

We will have a final morning of birding around the Da Lat area. Later we will drive to Nui San Pass (Deo Suoi Lanh near Di Linh town), a forested pass along the road from Di Linh to Phan Thiet. This is the most reliable site for the endemic **Orange-breasted Laughingthrush** and the near-endemic **Black-headed Parrotbill**, along with **Blue Pitta**, **Black-hooded**

**Laughingthrush, White-cheeked Laughingthrush, Red-vented Barbet,** and hopefully one of the most beautiful birds in the region, **Indochinese Green Magpie.**

Overnight: Di Linh

### Day 9: Di Linh (Nui San Pass)

We will have a full day birding at Nui San Pass to look for **Blue Pitta, Indochinese Green Magpie, Black-crowned Parrotbill, Black-hooded Laughingthrush, Red-vented Barbet, Bar-backed Partridge, Collared Babbler, Yellow-vented Green Pigeon, Silver Pheasant, Rufous-backed Sibia, Maroon Oriole, Red-billed Scimitar Babbler, and Red-headed Trogon.**

Overnight: Di Linh



*Blue Pitta is a stunning bird, and we hope to see it during the tour (photo Phuc Lee).*

### Day 10: Di Linh to Mang Den (via flight between Ho Chi Minh City and Pleiku)

We will make the most of a final morning of birding at Nui San Pass. After lunch we will drive back to Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport to connect with our flight to Pleiku airport, Kon Tum Province in Central Vietnam. After arrival at Pleiku we will drive to Mang Den, our first birding stop in Central Vietnam.

Overnight: Mang Den

### Day 11: Mang Den

We will spend a full day birding at Mang Den, where the recently discovered endemic **Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush** is the star bird and the main target. Other specialties of Mang Den, of which there are many, include **Stripe-breasted Woodpecker**, **Yellow-billed Nuthatch**, **Black-hooded Laughingthrush**, **Indochinese Wren-Babbler**, **Ratchet-tailed Treepie**, **Rufous-faced Warbler**, and **Grey-headed Parrotbill**.

Overnight: Mang Den



*We will search for **Black-hooded Laughingthrush** while at Mang Den (photo Phuc Lee).*

### Day 12: Mang Den to Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve

There will be time for some early morning birding at Mang Den before we head north to Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve. This is a really special area where two species new to science (**Golden-winged Laughingthrush** and **Black-crowned Barwing**) were described as recently as the 1990s! These new species were originally found by BirdLife International expeditions to the remote Mount Ngoc Linh (2,598m), which is the highest peak of the Central Highlands.

Overnight: Tu Mo Rong

**Day 13: Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve**

We will have a full day of birding at Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve. The main targets here are **Black-crowned Barwing**, **Indochinese Fulvetta**, **Red-tailed Laughingthrush**, and the very elusive **Golden-winged Laughingthrush**. Other specialties are possible, including **Green Shrike-babbler**, **Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler**, **Red-tailed Minla**, **Black-throated Parrotbill**, **Green Cochoa**, **Golden-breasted Fulvetta**, and **Rusty-capped Fulvetta**.

Overnight: Tu Mo Rong



*One of our targets at Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve is **Black-crowned Barwing** (photo Phuc Lee).*

**Day 14: Ngoc Linh National Park to Son Tra Peninsula**

After some final birding in the Ngoc Linh area we will drive to the Son Tra Peninsula near the city of Da Nang. Here we will look for one of the most spectacular monkeys on the planet, the **Red-shanked Douc**. There are bound to be plenty of birds around too.

Overnight: Da Nang

**Day 15: Son Tra Peninsula to Ho Chi Minh City, tour concludes**

The final morning of the tour will be spent bird and mammal watching at the Son Tra Peninsula. After lunch will drive back to Ho Chi Minh City, where the tour will conclude back at Tan Son Nhat International Airport in the midafternoon.

Overnight: Not included



*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

**Duration:** 15 days  
**Group Size:** 5 - 6  
**Dates:** 14-28 March 2023  
**Start:** Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City  
**End:** Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City  
**Prices:** US\$5,439 per person sharing – based on 5 - 6 participants 2023  
**Single Supplements:** US\$540 2023

**Price includes:**

Meals (from evening meal on day 1 until lunch on day 15)  
Bottled water (2 bottles per day per person)  
Accommodation (based on 2 sharing)  
Guiding fees  
All entrance fees to national parks, nature reserves, bird blinds/hides etc.  
All ground transport while on tour  
Internal flights  
Tolls

**Price excludes:**

International Flights  
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts  
Alcoholic and soft drinks  
Personal insurance  
Gratuities