CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN VIETNAM: ENDEMICS AND REGIONAL SPECIALS

EXTRA-SMALL, SMALL GROUP BIRDING TOUR

GENERAL INFORMATION



*The spectacular **Red-tailed Laughingthrush** can be found in Central Vietnam.*

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TOUR OUTLINE

Our **Central and Southern Vietnam: Endemics and Regional Specials** extra-small, small-group birdwatching tour – with a maximum of just five participants (and also departs with just four participants) gives a fantastic personalized tour experience. This Vietnamese birding tour concentrates on finding the endemic and special birds of the region, with top targets including **Bar-bellied Pitta**, **Blue-rumped Pitta**, **Germain's Peacock-Pheasant**, **Orange-necked Partridge**, **Golden-winged Laughingthrush**, **Black-hooded Laughingthrush**, **Black-crowned Barwing**, **Indochinese Green Magpie**, **Vietnamese Cutia**, and many more!

We will spend time birding in forest on foot and patiently sat in bird blinds (bird hides) waiting for secretive species to show themselves, as this is the best way to see these most-wanted of birds, and will also provide excellent photographic opportunities for those wishing to get photos of great Asian birds. The tour covers a range of altitudes and habitats to maximize the number of species recorded. We consider Vietnam to be one of the best birding destinations in all of Asia and we are confident you will agree, after experiencing it on this wonderful tour.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

This is a birding tour that also offers excellent bird photography opportunities. The tour moves at a moderate pace with early morning starts on most days. Time will be spent birding on forest trails and from bird blinds waiting for more secretive species to show (such as pittas, pheasants, partridges, and laughingthrushes). We will spend considerable time within the bird blinds on certain days in specific locations as this is the best way to see many of our top target birds. While we are waiting for the secretive birds to show, we will have lots of opportunities for bird photography and close-up views of these great birds. Please note that even if not everyone/anyone is interested in photography we will still spend lots of time in the bird blinds as they do offer the best chances (and only chances in some cases) for many difficult pittas, pheasants, partridges, babblers, laughingthrushes, and more.

The bird blinds are basic non-permanent structures constructed within the forest to allow us to get views of tough birds. We will bring small stools into the blinds for sitting in place (some have basic benches for seats). The blinds are usually constructed with tarpaulin or a tight mesh material and most will have a "roof" overhead. Each participant will have a "window" to see out of for viewing the area directly in front of the blind.

The heat and humidity in the south of the country is likely to be tiring for most people. There will be a fair bit of walking involved, with hikes of around 2.5 miles (four kilometers) on most days, but these are considered fairly easy and are on tracks, roads, and trails, with frequent birding stops made. There will be a few incline sections while we are birding in the mountains, such as for 0.6 to 1.2 miles (one to two kilometers). We will always take these slowly so that most people will be able to manage them. We will be in the lowlands for part of the tour (e.g. at Cat Tien National Park), but we will also be birding at higher elevations, such as when we are birding at Da Lat and Ngoc Linh (e.g. up to an elevation of around 6,500 feet / 2,000 meters). Several of the bird blinds we visit are very easily accessible with short walks on flat surfaces, however a couple of them do require more effort to reach, such as at Da Lat (short hike but steep in places) and Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve (longer hike and steep with uphill and downhill sections). We will take these hikes slowly and they may take 30-60 minutes to reach in some

cases and walking sticks/hiking poles will be useful for anyone not great with balance. It is possible to hire a porter to help carry your belongings, such as photography equipment (for a small extra fee) should you wish.

We will usually have an early and basic breakfast before birding, or we will take a boxed breakfast into the field. Our birding days will usually begin at around 05:30-06:00 hrs. Bird activity usually wanes during the middle of the day, and we will usually take a break at this time to have lunch and refresh, rest, and relax (particularly when at Cat Tien National Park, where it is very hot from mid-morning until mid-afternoon). We will then usually have an afternoon birding session prior to our group dinner. On a couple of occasions during the tour, we are likely to go out after dinner (or push dinner a little later back) to look for owls and other nightbirds. Most walks will be optional, and should you wish to sit out any activities you will be able to rest at the accommodation (on occasions when we are coming back to the same accommodation).

There will be some three-to-four-hour drives and a couple of longer drives (of around seven hours) during the tour as we move between different cities and birding locations. There are two domestic flights during the tour, the costs for these are included in the tour price and further details of these are provided in the "Domestic Flights" information further down this document.

SPECIES RECORDING (BIRD LISTS AND ANIMAL LISTS)

Ahead of the tour we will email you a detailed daily itinerary complete with meeting/arrival instructions. We will provide you with a printed blank diary page within the itinerary document so that you can note down any names of birding sites that you may want to log.

On arrival in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), you will be provided with a printed version of the same itinerary. Each evening your tour leader will go through this with you to let you know any specifics to be aware of for the following day (e.g. clothes and equipment needed, breakfast time, time for leaving hotel, key target birds we will be looking for, etc.).

Attached to the itinerary document will be a bird list and list of other animals possible on the tour (or a blank list to write them in as we go). We follow the latest IOC (International Ornithological Congress taxonomy) for birds and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for all other animals recorded during the tour so all itineraries and checklists follow these taxonomies.

Each evening we will go through the daily bird and animal lists, logging all the species from the day. The listing session is optional, we realize that some of our clients aren't fussed about the listing aspect, but others are. If you do not want to take part in the nightly bird list that is perfectly fine, but it is a useful way to remember what was seen during the day, so recommended.

Birding Ecotours leaders maintain eBird checklists from all birding activities during a tour (from unexpected roadside stops to planned birding activities). Tour leaders will share these eBird lists with all participants who use eBird, if desired. Just make sure to provide your eBird user details to the tour leader at the beginning of the tour for us to be able to do this, unfortunately we can't retrospectively go back and share past checklists after the tour.

After the tour you will be emailed a PDF copy of a trip report, this will be in the form of an illustrated daily diary and will include a complete checklist of all wildlife recorded. If the tour leader manages to get any interesting photographs these will be included in the trip report (if you

get pictures and are willing to share those with others, we can sometimes include some of those photos too). Leader photos will also be added to our Flickr page and will be added into a "trip report gallery" which you can view, download, and share.

PASSPORT AND VISA

Most visitors require a tourist visa to visit Vietnam, and these usually need to be obtained from a Vietnamese embassy or consulate in your home country, or online for an e-visa. Visa on arrival may be possible with entry into certain airports (e.g. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), but is not recommended for this tour. We recommend using the Vietnamese government website for an e-visa, there is a small fee for this, and it is usually issued within a few days. Please check specifics with your government/local Vietnamese embassy/consulate/the website. We can provide you with a letter from a local sponsor, which may be required for your application process, though an e-visa should be suitable for most visitors coming in and out of Ho Chi Minh City. We usually recommend starting the visa application process a couple of months before the tour start date.

Please make sure that you bring a photocopy of your passport with you on the tour, to be kept in a different location to your original passport, in case of loss/damage. This can be kept with other important documents such as vaccine certificate, emergency contact details, and insurance documents. Vietnamese law requires everyone to carry photo ID at all times, and the photocopy of your passport should be sufficient to satisfy this need. Your passport should be in a good (i.e. neat, clean, and tidy) condition, sometimes entry is refused or delayed if the condition of the passport is not considered appropriate by immigration officers.

Australian, United States (US), and United Kingdom/British (UK) citizens need to have at least six months' validity remaining in their passports (one month for Canadian citizens) and all nationalities should have at least one blank page for the visa stamp. Refer to the information here for US citizens, here for UK citizens, here for Canadian citizens, and here for Australian and please check these websites for any recent changes to ensure you are suitably covered.

Citizens of other countries should check their own governments' advice and contact their nearest embassies/consulates for up-to-date regulations and requirements.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

As per our standard Terms and Conditions, we strongly recommend that you buy trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against medical issues, accidents, illness, repatriation, loss of valuables or luggage, and travel interruptions or delays of all kinds.

HEALTH AND PESTS

Please consult your doctor/travel clinic regarding any vaccine requirements for visiting Vietnam.

All travelers should be up to date with routine vaccinations and boosters, such as the Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine and the Diphtheria-Tetanus-Polio vaccine. We also recommend that most travelers are vaccinated for Hepatitis A and Typhoid, while some travelers should be vaccinated for Cholera, Hepatitis B, Japanese Encephalitis, Rabies, and Tuberculosis, particularly those people with any underlying health issues. Please update yourself on the Covid-

19 vaccination entry requirements ahead of the tour. No Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is currently required for Vietnam. Please check with your government that this is still the case at time of travel.

Insect repellent with a high DEET content is highly recommended for some of the areas we visit, primarily for the nuisance factor of mosquito and other insect pests. There is a low risk of Malaria in Vietnam (please consult your doctor/travel clinic on what action to take). However, biting insects and ticks can also result in other issues, such as Dengue, Chikungunya, Leishmaniasis, Zika, and Scrub (Bush) Typhus (a rash from Chiggers). Cream for reducing itchiness of bites is recommended.

Scratches from plants and bites from insects should be cleaned, treated, and covered quickly to avoid infection.

Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website here for further health issues to be aware of in Vietnam. The UK "Travel Health Pro" website provides important information for UK travelers going to Vietnam, here. Both the linked pages are worth studying prior to joining the tour to be better prepared.

Sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) should be carried, and a hat should be worn to protect from the powerful rays from the sun, with sunglasses to help prevent glare. A plentiful intake of water (please bring a reusable water bottle which we can fill daily with safe drinking water) is essential to maintain hydration – it is likely to be very hot and humid when we are in the south of the country (e.g. particularly in the lowlands at Cat Tien National Park).

Poor air quality is a significant public health concern in many areas of the world and the cities (particularly) in Vietnam such as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi can suffer from poor air quality at some times of the year. Please be aware of this if you have any underlying (particularly breathing/respiratory) health issues.

The standard of health services in Vietnam is much lower than what you will be familiar with at home. Bringing a supply of some of the following could be beneficial: hand sanitizer, antiseptic cream/wipes, plasters, antacid, diarrhea medicine (e.g. Imodium or Pepto-Bismol), antihistamine, motion sickness medicine, cough drops, cough suppression/expectorant, decongestant, medicine for pain and fever (e.g. acetaminophen, aspirin, paracetamol, or ibuprofen), mild laxative, mild sedative, and saline nose spray. Earplugs are always useful if you are a light sleeper.

The CDC website provides a full and detailed list of suggested items to pack that may help with your health and safety in Vietnam, this can be found here.

Please also be sure to check the "Dangerous Animals and Plants" section below.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Please make sure that you are covered with suitable medical insurance in case of an emergency while on the tour, because without insurance the cost for medical care is likely to be extremely high. As per our general Terms and Conditions, we require you to notify us at the time of registering for this tour of any medical conditions that we should know about (these should include, but not be limited to, walking/mobility issues, allergies, heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, long-term illnesses etc.). At times on this tour, particularly in central Vietnam, we are in remote areas away from hospitals and medical facilities.

DANGEROUS ANIMALS AND PLANTS

There are several dangerous animals to be aware of in Vietnam, these include **Saltwater Crocodile**, **King Cobra**, **Malayan Pit Viper**, **White-lipped Tree Viper**, **Eastern Russell's Viper**, **Many-banded Krait**, **Vietnamese Giant Centipede**, **Yellow Sac Spider**, **Weaver Ant**, mosquito sp., **Gaur** (also known as Indian Bison), and bats (flying foxes). Care should be taken when walking in the forest, particularly where you put your hands and feet when moving through vegetation. Before putting your boots on in the morning check there is nothing hiding inside of them.

A special mention should be made for **leeches**. Our tour is during the dry season and therefore the chance of encountering them is much reduced (though never impossible). They are an annoyance rather than being a health issue. Insect repellent sprayed on shoes and ankles usually helps to keep them at bay (as well as other annoying ticks, mosquitoes, and chiggers). If you have "leech socks" they could be useful and can usually be purchased fairly easily online.

Many plants in the tropics protect themselves from being eaten by animals by growing sharp thorns, needles, and spikes, others use sharp appendages to allow them to grow and spread (e.g. some palms and creepers). Care should therefore be taken when walking through forest and not grabbing hold of any plants without first carefully checking them and watching out for clothes catching onto them.

FOOD AND WATER

Please do not drink the tap water while in Vietnam. Bottled mineral water is safe and available everywhere (though please bring a refillable water bottle to try and reduce the amount of plastic waste). Ice is considered safe in high standard restaurants and hotels but should probably be avoided in rural areas or on street stalls. Beer and soft drinks are usually inexpensive and widely available. Wines and spirits (which are imported) are generally more expensive. Vietnamese drip coffee is commonly found across the country, however if you want something quick and familiar it would be worth bringing some instant coffee with you. If you are a tea drinker, green and jasmine teas are commonly found in hotels and restaurants, but black tea is not as common, so it would be worth bringing your own black tea bags with you.

One free drink is included with each meal within the tour costs. However, please note this excludes wines and hard liquor (spirits), but does include beer, soft drinks (Coke, Diet Coke, Coke Zero, Sprite, Fanta, etc. depending on availability), water, fresh coconut, hot tea, ice tea, and coffee, etc. An ample supply of drinking water is available throughout the tour in our vehicle.

Vietnamese food definitely adds to the experience of a Vietnam birding trip and is usually fresh and healthy. Vegetarian food is widely available too. Dishes are usually rice or noodle based and served with chicken, pork, beef, shrimps, or tofu. These dishes usually contain a hearty supply of fresh vegetables. Pho (a rice noodle soup) and Banh Mi (a baguette with filling) are two of the most popular foods and we will likely get these frequently. Western food is available in tourist areas and cities such as in Ho Chi Minh City, Da Lat, and Da Nang, however in more rural and remote areas western food is not available. Breakfasts are often simple and consist of bread or noodles with eggs. Quite a few of our breakfasts will be simple (such as eggs in a baguette and fruit) and taken on-the-go, to not encroach too much into our precious early morning birding

sessions. Following the tradition of much of Asia at lunch and dinner, a variety of dishes will be placed on our table (a mix of meat dishes and vegetarian dishes) and the group will share the meal. Occasionally, depending on location, individual meals will be possible and food will be chosen from a menu.

Mealtimes are likely to be somewhat flexible depending on our birding/travel plans and so if you need to eat food at a specific time of day (e.g. to agree with medication you are on) you may need to bring snacks to supplement the above, such as cereal bars/protein bars, dried fruit etc. There are limited opportunities to purchase snacks from convenience stores on this trip, so if you want items that are familiar, it is probably best to bring these from home.

CURRENCY

The currency of Vietnam is the Vietnamese đồng (VND/₫/đ). It is in the top three weakest global currencies circulating (as of May 2023). Frequently used bank notes come in denominations of 500, 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, 100,000, 200,000, and 500,000 đồng. Lower denomination notes of 50, 70, 100, and 200 đồng are rarely used. Coins are no longer minted or in active use but are still legal tender with coins of 200, 500, 1,000, 2,000, and 5,000 đồng still occasionally floating about. At the time of writing (May 2023), one United States Dollar (USD/US$) is equivalent to approximately 23,500 Vietnamese đồng and one British Pound (GBP/£) equates to approximately 29,250 Vietnamese đồng.

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted at restaurants, shops, and hotels in major towns and cities and can be used for drawing cash from ATMs (bank charges may apply). Check with your card supplier whether you need to notify them of your trip to Vietnam, so you don't find your card doesn't work on your arrival in the country.

It will be possible to exchange or draw money at the airports and in some of the towns and cities we pass through during the tour. It is also possible to change money in banks, exchange bureaus, hotels, and even some shops, but it will be easier all round to either bring cash with you from home, or sort it out at the airport. A small amount of local cash will be useful for personal purchases for items not included in the tour costs and for any gratuities. See the full list of what is/isn't included in the tour cost in the itinerary document here and in the green box on the left side of the tour page on the website.

WEATHER/CLIMATE

Due to the location and size of Vietnam, the country has a complex climate. Our tour occurs during the dry season, which runs from December until April, though rain showers are always possible. This is considered the best time for birding in Vietnam.

In the lowlands, we can expect daytime temperatures in the region of around 86 – 95°F (30 – 35°C), with very high humidity likely. Nighttime temperatures will be lower, but still warm/hot. We will be birding at a range of elevations and therefore we are likely to experience a wide range of temperatures when at these higher elevations, such as 45 – 77°F (8 – 25°C) during the day, with cooler nighttime temperatures that may drop to as low as 40°F (5°C).

ELECTRICITY

In Vietnam the power plugs and sockets are of Type A, C, and D. The standard voltage is 110 / 220 volts (V), and the standard frequency is 50 hertz (Hz). Adaptors are needed for most visitors from overseas, you may also need a voltage converter and should be careful with certain appliances that may use a different frequency. For further information, including photographs of the different plug sockets and information on whether you will require an adaptor/converter, please check here.

COMMUNICATIONS

Cell (mobile) phone signal is likely to be available at most locations we visit on the tour (roaming charges might apply depending on your phone contract, check with your supplier that your phone will work in Vietnam). A less expensive alternative to using an international SIM card could be to purchase a local SIM card on your arrival at the airport, a local convenience store, or phone shop. Wi-Fi is available at most of the hotels we stay in, as well as in various, restaurants, shops, bars, and coffee shops, and should be sufficient for most people's needs.

TRANSPORTATION AND SEAT ROTATION

We use modern, comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles during our Vietnam birding tours, such as a 12-seater Ford Transit minibus or equivalent.

A seat rotation policy will be in place on this set departure tour, this will ensure everybody has equal opportunities within the vehicle throughout the tour. Motion sickness will not excuse you from our seat rotation policy and if you are prone to motion sickness you should ensure you bring the necessary medication.

We require that you are fit and flexible enough to maneuver yourself to the back of the vehicle when it is your turn to sit in that position. Tour participants should be mindful of the extra equipment they bring into the general seating area of the vehicle (rather than the luggage section) and should ensure they do not clog up general thoroughfare or extra seats with camera equipment, tripods, etc. from both a comfort and a health and safety perspective.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

There are two domestic/internal flights included within the cost of the tour. The first flight will take us between Ho Chi Minh City and Pleiku, the second flight will take us from Da Nang back to Ho Chi Minh City. Please be aware that these domestic flights will have a weight restriction of 44 pounds (lbs) / 20 kilograms (kg) for hold luggage and 15 lbs / 7 kg for hand luggage. If you exceed these limits your bag may be refused by the airline, or you might have to pay an additional fee (this fee will be the responsibility of the individual client and will need to be paid to the airline directly at check-in). Please note that when flying in Vietnam there are very strict rules about what you can and cannot pack in hold luggage (as well as the usual more widespread rules about hand luggage contents). All batteries and all electronic equipment must be packed in hand luggage. Ignoring these rules can get you pulled off the plane to take them out of your hold baggage, or can even get you removed from the plane and prevented from flying! So it is

strongly recommended to not ignore the rules!

LUGGAGE

Due to restricted space in the vehicles and domestic flight baggage weight allowances (see "Domestic Flights" information above), please pack as lightly as possible for this tour. A medium, soft-sided duffle bag (not the hard sided cases) usually works best for packing in the vehicles. A daypack should be used to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle or in the field.

ACCOMMODATION

We stay in a range of accommodation on the tour. Most of the accommodation is of a good standard, however the accommodation in Cat Tien National Park is rather basic. Some accommodation, such as in Ho Chi Minh City, Da Lat, and Da Nang is very nice and comfortable. All rooms (everywhere we stay) have air conditioning and/or a fan (air conditioning is not really considered necessary while staying in the mountains where it is cooler). Most rooms in Cat Tien National Park have mosquito nets. All rooms have private bathrooms with hot water, 24-hour electricity, and most (if not all) have Wi-Fi connections. We use "standard" rooms on this tour, as is typical of most group birding tours around the world, and these are deemed by us to be sufficient for most people. If you would like to upgrade to a higher standard of room, such as a "luxury" room, this might be possible, depending on availability in some, but not all locations. Please note that there would be an extra charge for upgrading your room, please contact us to discuss options when you book this tour. As is typical in Asia, most beds have a hard or very hard, often thin mattress, a couple of the more upmarket hotels in cities have slightly softer mattresses.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING

Loose, lightweight field clothing with green and brown colors works best for our birding activities and helps blend into the forest environments that we will spend most of our time in. Bright colors are to be avoided for birding attire, please (e.g. no pale colors, white, red, orange etc.). Given the potential insect issues (and fierce tropical sun) mentioned above, we recommend long pants/trousers and long-sleeved shirts (these can be rolled up should you get too hot). Shorts can be great for when you are relaxing around the accommodation but always be aware of biting insects and the strong rays of the sun.

You will also need to bring some warmer clothing, certainly a minimum of a warm fleece/jacket for early morning/evening when temperatures can be low, and when birding in the mountains. Something warm to sleep in for the nights when at higher elevation when temperatures could be cold is also advisable. Rain is always a possibility in Vietnam, so rain gear (and a small umbrella) is always useful to have on hand, particularly should we get a rain shower while birding in one of the bird blinds with no roof.

Casual and informal dress is fine in the hotels/accommodation. Sunglasses, sunhat, and sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) are essential.

We always recommend lightweight walking boots for when out on foot to give extra ankle support while walking and added protection against animal stings/bites. Sandals/trainers (tennis shoes) are useful for in the vehicles and for walking between your room and restaurant in the hotels and lodges, but not for when birding please.

WHAT TO BRING: OTHER ITEMS

Do not forget: Binoculars, field guide (see "Books" section below), flashlight (torch), prescription drugs (please bring the generic names for these drugs with you), toiletries, prescription glasses (and a spare pair), insect repellent, sunscreen, sunglasses, camera, batteries (for electronic equipment and chargers for the re-chargeable batteries, if required), converter plugs and plug adaptors if needed, alarm clock (or use your cell phone alarm setting), money pouch, suggested medical kit (as outlined in "Heath and Pests" section above), walking sticks/hiking poles, and daypacks.

Our tour leader/local guide will have a telescope for use during the tour. Most of the birding will be carried out in forest environments so we are unlikely to rely heavily on a scope during this tour, therefore we do not recommend bringing your own scope, unless you like to "digi-scope/phone-scope". The communal scope will be for everyone to look at the birds but not for taking photos through. With our small group (only four to five tour participants) there should be plenty of time for scope views of birds.

Other important items to remember to bring include: key travel documents, cash (or ATM/credit cards to draw money), passport, proof of vaccinations and your travel or health insurance cards – photocopies of all can be carried by the tour leader in case of emergency, US Dollars (US$) or British Pound Sterling (GBP/£) can be changed to Vietnamese đồng if you prefer not to simply draw from ATM's (such as at the airport), cash for anything of a personal nature that is not included within the tour cost.

To help with the checklist session, we recommend bringing two different colored pens and a 12-inch (30 centimeter) plastic ruler. Using different colors on alternate days makes the listing activity much easier!

Teabags and instant coffee could be useful items to bring, as well as snacks if you are likely to require any to supplement meals/take with medication at specific times etc.

We will spend lots of time in bird blinds. We will be sitting on low stools or bench seats, so if you need extra comfort you might like to bring a foam pad to sit on or a blow-up cushion for your seat/back. Alternatively, your fleece could double up for something like this.

You can read more on what to bring on a birding tour, on this blog post here.

CRIME

Vietnam is a relatively safe country and has been ranked as one of the safest countries in the world for travelers. However, petty theft is a legitimate concern in the big cities/tourist areas, with drive-by snatchings (with items such as cameras, cell phones, and wallets/handbags being the main targets) being a frequent issue (for locals too, not just tourists). Please use safety/lock boxes, when provided in hotels, for storage of personal possessions like passports, money,

jewelry, and any other valuable items and follow any advice given to you by the Birding Ecotours tour leader, our local guide, or the hotel staff.

If you arrive ahead of the tour or stay after the tour and would like to do some sightseeing by yourselves, please be aware of taxi scams (such as rigged meters, overcharging, short-changing, confusing currency, and fixed prices). If you would like us to help organize any city sightseeing, please let us know. If needed, two trusted taxi companies appear to be Mai Linh and Vinasun and they can be found at the airport and your city hotel should also be able to help with reliable people.

LANGUAGE

Vietnamese is an Austroasiatic language that originated in Vietnam, where it is the national and official language. French is the most widely spoken foreign language in Vietnam, but English has also attained popularity in the country, especially within the younger demographic. Our local guide will help translate between Vietnamese and English when needed.

BOOKS

There is one recently published field guide that we recommend for this tour. See our recommended field guide blog here, for further information covering the region:

Birds of Vietnam – Richard C Craik and Le Quy Minh (2018), Lynx Edicions. We suggest the Flexibound version of this book for use in the field during the tour, rather than the hardback version as it is less likely to get damaged when traveling.

Other bird books that feature Vietnam include:

Birds of South-East Asia – Craig Robson (2018), Helm (Princeton in US).

Collins Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia – Norman Arlott (2017), William Collins (HarperCollins imprint).

Pocket Photo Guide to the Birds of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – Peter Davidson (2016), Bloomsbury Publishing.

Other specific interest books:

Vietnam: A Natural History – Eleanor Jane Sterling *et al.* (2008), Yale University Press.

A Field Guide to the Reptiles of South-East Asia: Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Bali – Indraneil Das (2015), Bloomsbury Publishing.

A Photographic Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of the Lowland Monsoon Forests of Southern Vietnam – Anna B Vassilieva *et al*. (2016), Edition Chimaira.

Field Guide to the Mammals of South-East Asia – Charles M Francis (2019), Bloomsbury Publishing. Second Edition.

A Naturalist's Guide to the Mammals of Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – Chris R Shepherd and Loretta Ann Shepherd (2018), John Beaufoy Publishing.

Primates of Vietnam – Tilo Nadler and Diane K Brokman (2014), Endangered Primate Rescue Center, Vietnam.

Butterflies of Vietnam – Alexander L Monastyrskii and Alexey L Devyatkin (2016), Plan-o-rama Media Co. Ltd.

An Illustrated Guide to the Land Snails and Slugs of Vietnam – Dinazarde C Raheem *et al.* (2017), London Natural History Museum.

SOUND RECORDINGS

You can listen to and download many calls and songs of Vietnamese birds from the highly recommended xeno-canto website.

USEFUL APPS AND WEBSITE RESOURCES

Aves Vox – a good app that enables the downloading of bird songs and calls from the xeno-canto website onto your cell phone.

eBird – there is a wealth of information contained on this website and the mobile app is now excellent and useful too. Photo, video, and sound galleries are available for practically every species in the world through The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library.

Merlin – an app that can help you identify birds by sight (from photos) and sound (from recordings) and is a useful tool to aid bird identification. The app is getting expanded all the time with new data and regional information so is worth keeping an eye on.

IOC World Bird List – this website contains all the latest details on the world of global bird taxonomy. You can read about newly described species, splits (creation of a new species) and lumps (deletion of a species) of existing species, and plenty of other important information.

Lonely Planet – contains a wealth of information on Vietnam. If you are interested in extending your stay in the country before or after the tour, this will help you find some must-see places.