



Best of Southern & Central Vietnam Birding

**16 Days: Cat Tien National Park ♦ Di Linh ♦ Dalat
Mang Den ♦ Lo Xo ♦ Bach Ma National Park
Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park**



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Grey-crowned Crocias

Day 1: Arrive Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City to Cat Tien National Park

Arrive at Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport and transfer by road to Cat Tien National Park, 150 km to the north. Cat Tien National Park contains the largest remaining area of lowland tropical forest in southern Vietnam and an incredible diversity of birds and mammals. Endangered birds found at Cat Tien include Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Green Peafowl and the very elusive Orange-necked Partridge while the mammal list includes Leopard Cat, Lesser Mousedeer, Sambar, Gaur and two endangered primates, Black-shanked Douc Langur and Buff-cheeked Gibbon. Overnight at Cat Tien National Park.

Days 2, 3 & 4: 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 is a great place to look for the near-endemic Germain's Peacock-pheasant, Blue-rumped and Bar-bellied Pittas while Siamese Fireback can often be seen on an early morning drive through the park. Among the many other avian treats to be found at Cat Tien are Scaly-breasted Partridge, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant, White-bellied, Great Slaty, Pale-headed, Black-and-buff and Heart-spotted woodpeckers, three species of broadbill and the Indochinese-endemic Grey-faced Tit-Babbler. Overnight at Cat Tien National Park.

Day 5: Cat Tien National Park to Di Linh

There is time for some final early morning birding at Cat Tien National Park before heading up Highway 20 to Di Linh. A short drive from Di Linh town a forested mountain pass known as Deo Suoi Lanh is an excellent site to look for several Dalat Plateau specialities including Black-hooded, White-cheeked and Orange-breasted Laughingthrushes and the near-endemic Black-crowned Parrotbill. After an afternoon's birding at Deo Suoi Lanh return to Di Linh for the night. Overnight at Di Linh.

Day 6: Di Linh to Dalat

An early morning visit to Deo Suoi Lanh to look for other exciting possibilities that could include Blue Pitta, Indochinese Green Magpie, Spotted Forktail and Green Cochoa, before continuing along Highway 20 to the cooler climes of Dalat. In the afternoon 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 the rare and endemic Grey-crowned Crocias and Orange-breasted Laughingthrush. In addition the very distinct local subspecies of Blue-winged Siva, Black-headed Sibia and Black-throated Sunbird are common here. Overnight at Dalat.



Indochinese Green Magpie

Days 7, 8 & 9: Dalat

There are several other excellent birding sites around Dalat. At Mount Lang Bian, a 2,169 m high peak 20 minutes from Dalat, Hume's Treecreeper, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Grey-crowned Tit, Vietnamese Cutia and Black-crowned Fulvetta can be 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 out of town, is a great place to look for some of the local pine specialists such as Indochinese Cuckooshrike, Slender-billed Oriole, Burmese Shrike, Red Crossbill and Vietnamese Greenfinch. Overnight at Dalat.

Day 10: Dalat to Mang Den

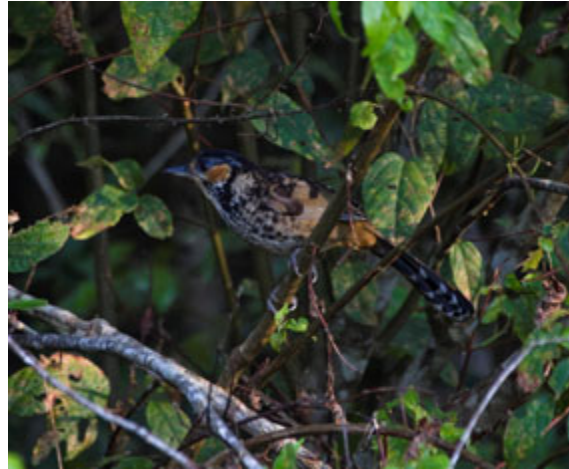
Depart Dalat after an early breakfast for the scenic drive north to Mang Den in Kontum Province. There should be time for some late afternoon birding around Mang Den on arrival. Overnight at Mang Den.

Day 11: Mang Den

A full day's birding at Mang Den where the seldom-seen endemic, Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush, is the main target. Mang Den is the most reliable site in Vietnam for three other scarce birds, Pale-capped Pigeon, Yellow-billed Nuthatch and Black-hooded Laughingthrush. Overnight at Mang Den.

Day 12: Mang Den to Lo Xo/Kham Duc

There is time for some final early morning birding at Mang Den where other birds that are rarely seen elsewhere in Vietnam include Rufous-faced Warbler, Pale Blue Flycatcher and Grey-headed Parrotbill. Leave Mang Den mid-morning for the four hour drive northwards up the Ho Chi Minh Highway to the Lo Xo Pass. Late afternoon birding at Lo Xo Pass where the main target is the Indochinese endemic Black-crowned Barwing, only discovered in 1996. Overnight at Kham Duc.



Chestnut-eared Laughingthrush

Day 13: Kham Duc/Lo Xo to Bach Ma National Park

Return to the Lo Xo Pass in the morning where in addition to Black-crowned Barwing White-winged Magpie, Yellow-billed Nuthatch, Red-tailed Minla and Red-tailed Laughingthrush can be found. Return to Kham Duc at midday and continue northwards to Bach Ma National Park. Overnight at Bach Ma National Park.

Day 14: Bach Ma National Park to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park

Morning birding at Bach Ma National Park where local specialities include the endemic Annam Partridge, Red-vented Barbet, Indochinese Wren-babbler and Masked Laughingthrush. In the afternoon leave Bach Ma for the long drive north to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. Overnight at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park.

Day 15: 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 specialities as well as an endangered primate, the Ha Tinh Langur. Overnight at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park.

Day 16: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park to Ho Chi Minh City/Hanoi via Hue

Leave Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park after breakfast for the drive south down Highway One to Hue Airport for departure flight to Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat International Airport or Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport.