



TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE
Cuc Phuong National Park
Cuc Phuong commune, Nho Quan District, Ninh Binh
Province, Vietnam
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VOLUNTEER INFORMATION AT TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE, CUC PHUONG NATIONAL PARK

ABOUT TCC

The Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) is located at Cuc Phuong National Park, 120 km kilometers southwest from Hanoi, Vietnam. The TCC was established in 1998 as a rescue and holding centre for tortoises and freshwater turtles which were seen in the extensive illegal wildlife trade during the 1980's and 1990's. It was widely recognized that this trade, largely to China for consumption as food and for traditional medicines was entirely unsustainable and needed to be addressed.

The TCC rapidly developed into a conservation project supported by the Asian Turtle Program of Indo-Myanmar Conservation. Today, the TCC serves as a regional flagship for tortoise and freshwater turtle conservation efforts and for educating the public about the critical threat to the survival of turtles in Vietnam.

The centre encompasses an area of about 7,000 square meters comprised of enclosures, aquatic tanks, and specialized breeding and holding facilities for more than 1000 turtles representing 22 of Vietnam's 25 native species. Most animals at the TCC have been confiscated by wildlife protection authorities from the illegal trade or were hatched at the centre.

The TCC has now developed clear objectives to increase the centre's impact on turtle conservation activities in Vietnam:

1. Rescuing, holding and releasing turtles confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade

Currently housing over 800 animals of 19 native species the TCC has played a central role in ensuring turtles in the illegal trade can be rescued and cared for. Although large confiscations of turtles are becoming rare in Vietnam, the TCC still receives endangered and critically endangered turtles from the trade.

2. Awareness and education

In 2010 the TCC opened a section of the turtle centre to the park's 80,000 annual visitors as part of an initiative to enhance potential opportunities to raise public awareness. The visitor interpretation centre (VIC) includes underwater viewing tanks, an incubation viewing room, outdoor enclosures and large ponds where turtles can be seen in near wild settings. Throughout the VIC interpretive panels, photographs and sign-boards have been created to educate visitors, students, rangers and officials about the diverse and endangered turtle fauna of Vietnam. It has become a priority at the TCC to increase public awareness on the values of protecting wildlife as this is a fundamental first step to protect tortoises and freshwater turtles in Vietnam.

For this reason, the TCC also attaches special importance on training students and young professionals, preferably Vietnamese, to encourage the next generation of young turtle scientists and conservationists.

The centre has also established a program to give students and staff from international universities and zoos the opportunity to gain experience and exchange knowledge through conduction of short research projects or volunteering at the centre.

3. Captive breeding

It's a fact that too many Vietnamese tortoise and fresh-water turtle (TFT) species are under threat, with a shortage in facility and funding, it has been essential to identify priorities for conservation breeding activities. At TCC, captive breeding programs are prioritized for the most critical native TFT species of Vietnam, recognized by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. To date, TCC has succeeded in breeding 12 species at the centre.

WHO CAN BECOME VOLUNTEERS?

- TCC has no special requirements for the volunteers at the centre, volunteers only need passion for animals, enthusiasm, the ability to work well within a team and are able to take responsibility for the work that they do.
- TCC encourages those who are studying or have graduated from related fields, such as biology, zoology, environment, forestry, animal health, wildlife management in captivity and conservation biology.

WHAT WILL VOLUNTEER DO? /VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- Help staff to prepare food for turtles
- Clean the turtle enclosures
- Help to create an enriching environment within the enclosures.
- Update turtle care records through data entry.
- Assist in updating news, articles, pictures on the website and Facebook of TCC.
- Support the tour for visitors
- Support the treatment and medical care of the turtles if under the care of the veterinary department.
- Various other tasks as assigned by the TCC manager(s).

WORKING TIME:

Daily working hours are from 7:30 AM to 04:30 PM every day with the lunch break from 11:30 AM to 1:30PM. The volunteers are required to work five days per week and enjoy their free time to explore other places.

In some special circumstances, the volunteers may be asked to provide help during weekend.

REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Compliance with the working regulation at TCC such as working time, sanitation, security and order at the Cuc Phuong National Park.
- Volunteers always work under the guidance of ATP staff at TCC.
- Immediately report any issue which arise in their work to the Rescue coordinator and TCC manager.

GETTING HERE AND AWAY

Our centre is located in Cuc Phuong National Park, which is 120 km south of Hanoi. It takes 2 - 3 hours to get here from Hanoi depending on your choice of transportation.

Private taxi Hanoi - Cuc Phuong: 4 seats: \$ 65; 7 seats: \$75.

Bus Hanoi - Cuc Phuong:

Daily bus departs at 3:00 pm from Giap Bat Bus station, fare: \$ 4.00 USD

Bus plate number: 35H-0847, it's a dark pink bus, routine label: Nho Quan – Ha Noi, company: Phu Duyen

Time leaving: 3:15pm every day

Ticket price: 80,000VND. You will buy ticket at the number 1 ticket sale section.

Bus Cuc Phuong - Hanoi:

Daily buses depart at 5:30am, 09:00am and 12:30am from Cuc Phuong National Park Gate, fare: \$ 4.00 USD

There are also daily buses from Nho Quan town (12km from Cuc Phuong) to Hanoi (My Dinh and Giap Bat Bus station) and vice versa from 06am to 04pm. From Nho Quan, you can take motorbike Taxi (Xe om) or Taxi to Cuc Phuong, fare: \$4 - \$8 USD.

ACCOMMODATION

TCC has rooms for volunteers, including wifi, air conditioners, water heaters and private bathrooms. Volunteers must be prepared to share a room if required.

FOOD

Your volunteer fees cover three meals a day every day during your stay. There are shops in the village that sell some fresh fruits, tea, coffee, milk, biscuits, baguettes, toiletries and other 'essentials'. In addition, there is a market early in the morning (from 6am to 9am), which is easy to reach by bicycle and sell fresh foods, fruits, vegetables and meat. If volunteers have specific foods they would like, they should bring with them from their country or buy in Hanoi. Things like jam, butter, cereals and cheese can all be bought in Hanoi. Vegetarians are easily catered for.

COST

- One week – \$250/person
- Two weeks – \$450 /person
- Three weeks – \$600 /person
- Four weeks – \$750 /person
- Five to twelve weeks –\$160 per week

These prices include all accommodation and food during your voluntary. Costs do not include:

- Transportation
- Visa on arrival
- Beverages

HEALTH INSURANCE AND SAFETY

Volunteers need to check with their local travel clinic or doctor before coming to Vietnam, for recommended vaccinations. For all volunteer placements you will be required to undergo a health

check. The health check should be negative for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, HIV, rabies pre-exposure and TB, and provide evidence of an up to date Tetanus vaccination.

Volunteers are also required to provide proof of insurance that covers medical emergencies.

Cuc Phuong is not a malaria risk area, but if you plan on travelling in southern Vietnam or elsewhere in the region then consider malaria prophylactics. The additional medical kit in this list is for a forest survey, but you should consider items bringing a small first aid kit for personal use. Medical services at Cuc Phuong are very limited, with the closest well equipped centres being in Hanoi.

Volunteers must take care of and be responsible for any injuries incurred during their voluntary time.

VISA

Volunteers work on a tourist visa is not possible at Cuc Phuong National Park, so you will require either a one month or three month working visa. We can arrange the visa for you to collect and pay upon arrival at Noi Bai Airport. Volunteers need to submit a copy of their passport, flight information, health insurance no later than 6 weeks prior arrival to process their visa request.

The processing fee for a working visa is \$30 USD/month, \$45/ 3 months. Volunteers can pay this to the TCC upon arrival at Cuc Phuong. Visa costs payable at the airport vary for different nationalities.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

The seasons in Cuc Phuong vary substantially but usually humid, and what you need will depend on when you decide to come. From December through to February/March, it can be **very cold** because of wind and high humidity, and you mostly work outdoor. You will need warm clothes (thick jacket, sweater, shoes, gloves, hat,..). April through September however can be very hot, and very humid. You will need light comfortable clothes, and plenty of them. Long sleeves and trousers are essential. Volunteers are reminded that you will be living and working in rural Vietnam so please observe local dress and follow accordingly, be modest, no short shorts or revealing tops.

Volunteers should bring some belongings for personal use within the park such as:

- Towel, toothpaste, shower gel, shampoo
- Mosquito repellent
- Raincoat
- Sport shoes, sandals, anti-slip shoes
- Boots (for winter)
- Clothing: should bring long sleeves, trousers to limit insects, clothes should be light, fast drying, spacious and comfortable for work.
- Torch
- Medical first-aid kit
- Hairdryer
- Tampon
- Books
- Cash (VND): Volunteers should bring cash to pay at the park because there is no bank or ATM in the local commune. There are ATMs from Vietcombank, techcombank and agricultural bank in Nho Quan town, 12km from the park.

Volunteers also can buy some items at shops in the village such as shampoo, soap, towels, toothpaste.

COMMUNICATION

Cuc Phuong National Park has phone signal coverage of the mobile operators in Vietnam as Viettel, Vinaphone, Mobiphone. Wifi is available at the Turtle Conservation Centre. Volunteers can purchase phone cards at the grocery store just outside the park gates.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Volunteers are fully responsible for their own health and safety, and the TCC or its agents or employees will not take any responsibility for accident, injury or illness occurring during your voluntary time.

The TCC highly recommends that volunteers have fully a comprehensive medical insurance policy whilst undertaking your volunteer placement.

TCC reserves the right to ask any volunteer to leave the project with no refund, should they behave in such a way as to put any other volunteer or TCC staff at risk.

Volunteers should adhere to the organization's rules, procedures and standards, including health and safety procedures.

Volunteers must work closely with and follow instructions from the TCC staff.

TCC is not liable (to the maximum extent of the law) for any harm you may suffer, including but not limited to loss caused by delay, bodily injury or death, emotional upset, damage to or loss of property, war or terrorism.

HOW TO REGISTER

So if you think that volunteering at the TCC is for you, please be sure to read our terms and conditions, complete the application form, and e-mail it along with your CV back to us. We will notify you as soon as possible of your acceptance into the volunteer program. Once we have confirmed, you can organize your flights and liaise with us for your health check and accommodation preference. We will organize your accommodation in Cuc Phuong, your business visa and a pick up from the airport to the TCC.