



VOLUNTEER & RESEARCHER HANDBOOK

**DAO TIEN
ENDANGERED PRIMATE SPECIES CENTRE**



VIETNAM 2014



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1. Endangered Asian Species Trust

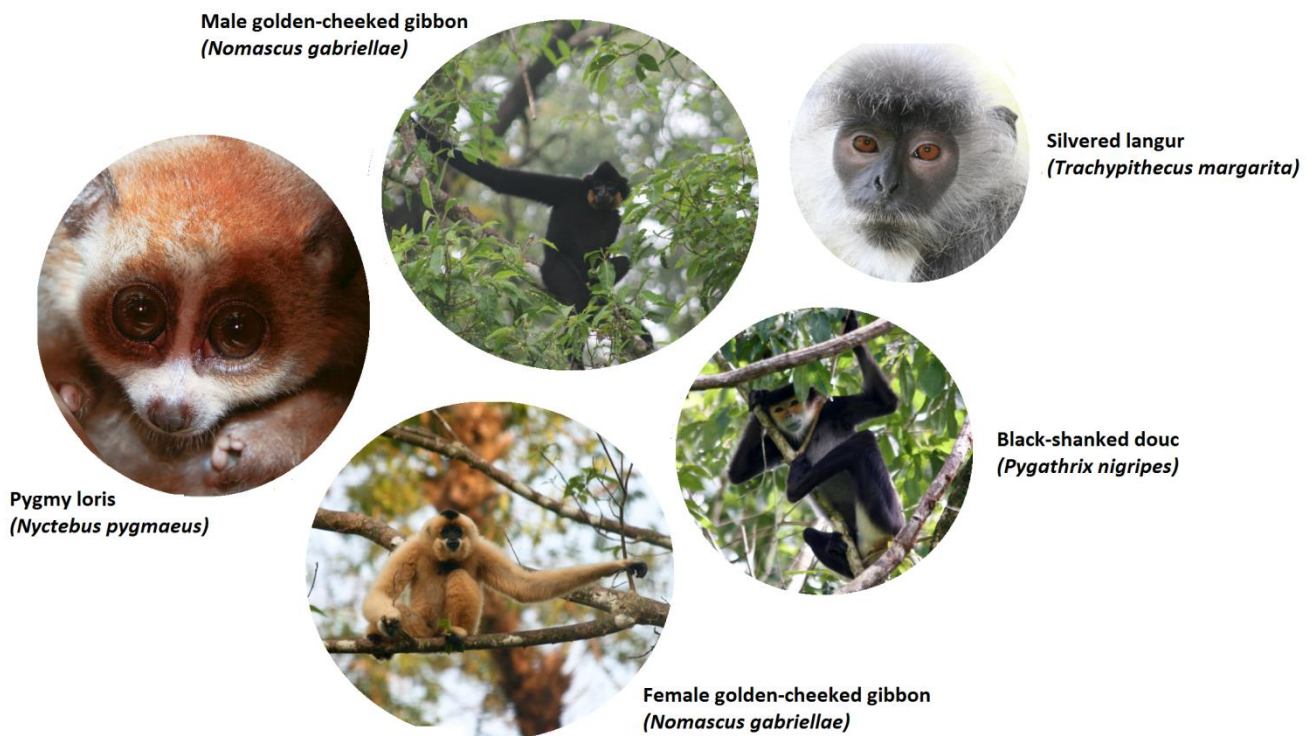
The Endangered Asian Species Trust (EAST) is a charity founded by Monkey World-Ape Rescue Centre, UK in collaboration with the Pingtung Rescue Centre, Taiwan. Monkey World and Pingtung Rescue Centre have been working together for many years to stop the trade in orang-utans and gibbons. After travelling to Vietnam in 2001 and discovering pygmy lorises, black-shanked doucs, and golden-cheeked gibbons were openly for sale on the markets, the aim was to set up a project in Vietnam to help solve the problem of illegal hunting and selling of these animals. The Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre opened in 2008, which is currently EAST's first major project. However, the aim is to in time develop other projects across Asia, and conserve Endangered Asian wildlife through rescue, reintroduction, research, empowerment and education.



2. Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre

2.1 General Information

The Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre is set on a 56-hectare island in Cat Tien National Park, in Southern Vietnam. Dao Tien collaborates with Cat Tien National Park and the Forestry Protection Department. The Forestry Protection Department confiscates animals from the *illegal* wildlife trade. The primary function of Dao Tien is the rehabilitation and release of rescued animals that have come from this trade and therefore assists the Vietnamese Government in ceasing the illegal trade in endangered primates. Dao Tien specialises in four species of endangered primate found in the South of Vietnam including Cat Tien National Park. These are the black-shanked douc, golden-cheeked gibbon, silvered langur and pygmy slow loris. Research is key in developing suitable standards and guidelines for management and rehabilitation of these species. Through our education programme Dao Tien aims to raise awareness about primate conservation in local communities and on an international level. You can find more information on education, research and current updates about the work at Dao Tien on the EAST website, www.go-east.org.



2.2 Location & Environment

Cat Tien National Park is located in Southern Vietnam, Southeast Asia. The Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre is an island within Cat Tien National Park, in Dong Nai Province. The local village (Nam Cat Tien) and Cat Tien Headquarters, including the tourism centre and a few cafes, are only about a 10 minute boat drive away from Dao Tien Island. The nearest big town is Tan Phu (about a 30-45 minute drive by car) and the nearest big city is Ho Chi Minh City (about a 4 hour drive by car).



A tropical monsoon climate makes for two seasons. The wet season with expected downpours most afternoons stretches from April/May to October. The dry season stretches from about November to April/May, where temperatures climb. Humidity is high all year round.

Cat Tien National Park has high biodiversity and is considered one of the biggest and well-protected national parks in Vietnam. Dao Tien, being a part of Cat Tien National Park, also has a wide range of animal species, including venomous snakes, scorpions and other reptiles and insects that are capable of giving a nasty bite. It is important you are aware that these animals live in your environment. More information is available on the Cat Tien National Park website, www.namcattien.org





2.3 Language

The main language spoken in Vietnam is Vietnamese. Generally, few people speak English in Vietnam. However, it is increasing through the younger generation. Staff at Dao Tien are a mix of English speaking Western staff and Vietnamese staff, who speak little, if any, English. A permanent Western staff will always be available on site.

Street vendors in Ho Chi Minh City sell good simple Vietnamese phrase books.

2.3 Cultural Awareness

- Vietnam has a socialist government.
- Vietnam is a fast growing country, quickly becoming more and more Westernised. It is however considered inappropriate to show lots of flesh, by for example wearing very short shorts.
- Shoes are not worn inside any house or hotel. They are taken off upon entry and left neatly. Hotels often have designated areas where you can leave your shoes. It is also considered rude to point the bottom of your feet at anyone.
- Religions in Vietnam are most commonly Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism and Taoism. If entering a temple or church, trousers and sleeves must be worn covering your shoulders and legs.
- Family is a big part of Vietnamese culture, and not having a family can be regarded as bad luck. If asked, say that you are 'not yet married' if you are single.
- In Vietnam, delays are inevitable. Work is often put at halt at the hottest part of the day and people do not rush around so do not expect a Western work ethic. Do always aim to smile and be polite - if you are rude it will just take longer. Remember that you are entering a different culture.
- Toilet paper goes in the bin provided, only human waste goes down the toilet. In places where there is no paper provided you will find a bucket of water to wash yourself with, however feel free to bring your own supply of toilet paper. At Dao Tien toilet paper and hand soap is provided on site.



3. Preparation before travelling to Dao Tien

3.1 Researchers

Before travelling to Dao Tien, please make sure you have all the equipment to start your research at Dao Tien and that your research topic and methodology have been approved by both EAST and your academic institute. Make sure that your equipment will be able to function in a tropical climate and think about potential difficulties you might come across when working in this environment. Note that Dao Tien does not allow any direct contact with the primates.

3.2 General medical advice

- Cat Tien National Park is a low-risk malaria zone, so appropriate anti-malarial drugs are required. Some anti-malarial drugs can have unpleasant side effects. It is recommended for your own convenience that you check with your doctor which anti-malarial to take and whether it is possible to trial them for side effects before starting work at the centre. It is recommended to use insect repellent appropriate against mosquitoes carrying malaria whilst living in Vietnam. Mosquito nets are provided for sleeping at night.
- High factor sunscreen is recommended – make sure it is sweat proof.
- Rehydration salts and vitamin supplements may be of use throughout your stay and can be of help when adjusting to the climate, especially in your first few weeks and certainly if you are travelling to Asia for the first time.
- It is recommended you bring your own first aid kit and basic medicines. Disinfectant is important (betadine for example) as in this climate even the smallest wounds or cuts can quickly become infected.

If you have any medical needs or difficulties, please let us know in advance before your commitment to volunteering.

3.3 Vaccinations

It is important that you check with your doctor or local travel clinic well in advance which vaccinations you may need to protect your health when in Vietnam as some courses require injections over a period of several months. Your doctor will be able to provide you with the most recent information about the requirements of vaccinations, as this information can change over time. Ensure that your doctor is aware that you will be working with or amongst primates that can transfer disease to humans and vice versa, and that you will be living in a tropical rainforest environment where wild animals roam free.



Do make sure that your vaccinations *include* Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, TDP (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Polio), MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella), Rabies and TB/BCG. Note that this may not be all of the vaccinations required and that it is essential that you contact your doctor for advice.

Please check entry requirements if you have come from or have passed through an area where yellow fever is present.

3.4 Visa

A visa is required to enter Vietnam and must be arranged prior to entry. A tourist visa is sufficient. A visa can be obtained through travel agents or through contacting the Vietnamese Embassy in your country. A visa can also be collected upon arrival at the airport in Ho Chi Minh City. However, at the airport visas can cost up to \$50 in addition to the processing fee for your visa and must be paid with cash. For your convenience it is recommended you obtain a visa before travelling to Vietnam as it will save you time and money. When applying for a visa always make sure you have more than 6 months left on your passport by the time of your expected departure date and make sure you have spare photographs for your visa. Always carry a pen to fill in immigration forms when necessary.

If you are staying at Dao Tien for a longer period of time and will need to renew or extend your visa in Vietnam, there are many travel agencies in Ho Chi Minh City where you can easily get a visa extension. This can however take up to a few weeks.

3.5 Money

The Vietnamese currency is the Vietnamese Dong (VND). This is a closed currency and can only be obtained in Vietnam. However, American dollars (USD) are accepted readily, especially in more populated areas such as Ho Chi Minh City. In more rural areas, such as in Cat Tien National Park, the Vietnamese Dong is more commonly used. It is easy to access money in Ho Chi Minh City through the many banks, money exchanges and ATMs. Money is though, only available in Ho Chi Minh City and it is not possible to get money in the local villages near Dao Tien. You must therefore ensure that you have sufficient cash before you leave Ho Chi Minh City.

3.6 Volunteering fees

Researchers are charged £20 per day, which includes accommodation and basic food. Volunteers are charged £30 per day, which also includes accommodation and basic food. Fees must be paid 12 weeks before your start date with no exception. You will not be allowed to start until payment has been received.



3.7 Insurance

EAST requires that all volunteers/researchers provide their own travel insurance. A copy of your insurance including your personal details will be required *prior* to your arrival.

3.8 Basic kit requirements

- Waterproofs. This is especially important if you are planning to travel to Vietnam in the wet season, between April/May and November.
- Medical support
(See *general medical advice p.7*)
- (Reusable) water bottle. 1000ml would be ideal.
- Several sets of work clothing (long sleeves and trousers, preferably dark green/green, camouflage, or beige/brown). You will find your clothing needs to be washed daily due to perspiration from the heat.
- Uniforms/EAST clothing is provided by EAST, and generally used when addressing members of the public for education and tourism purposes.
- Casual clothing. Be aware of the culture and be respectful in how you dress.
- Comfortable walking shoes. Lightweight walking shoes are sufficient. Heavy boots are not necessary, and can even be less convenient for walking in dense forest.
- Washing powder, bedding and towels are provided by EAST.
- Leech socks are provided by EAST and are necessary in the wet season.
- Head torch/regular torch with batteries. It goes dark at 18:00 hours. A head torch is generally more convenient.
- A small day sac/rucksack to take your kit into the forest, including (lots of) water and specialised research kit.
- Plug adaptors (2 rectangular pins). Although, European plugs (two round pins) work too.
- Books and other entertainment. Dao Tien is very quiet and isolated, so please bring items to keep yourself entertained. There is a TV and DVD player, including a wide selection of DVDs on site.
- Laptop. Dao Tien generally has Wi-Fi connection. A variety of cafes near Cat Tien Headquarters offer free Wi-Fi.
- Camera and charger.
- Spare batteries. Batteries bought in Vietnam tend to be of poor quality.
- Electricity may not always support the use of hair dryers etc.
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- Toiletries are available in Ho Chi Minh City. The shops in the local villages are very limited. Ensure that you have everything you need before leaving Ho Chi Minh City.

3.9 Specialised kit requirements

EAST provides specialised kit for specific projects we are managing, such as surveys or tracking of released animals.

We *do not* provide specialist kit for those coming to Dao Tien as part of academic study.

Do please keep in mind not to pack any unnecessary valuables as they might get caught, broken or lost. If you are bringing your own kit, do consider whether your kit is able to function in a tropical climate.

If you will be involved in any forest work, you might find it rewarding to bring your own binoculars and compass. Depending on whether you are doing any evening/night activities, such as working with the loris, a head torch or large Maglite is recommended. If working with the loris, your torch ought to have a red filter, so it does not hurt their eyes.



If you have issues with obtaining specialised kit or are unsure whether this will be provided for you, please contact us before travelling to Vietnam and prior to purchasing any items.

4. Travelling to Vietnam

4.1 Arrival airport

The nearest International Airport to the project is Ho Chi Minh City airport (Tan Son Nhat International Airport). The airport is about a 30 minute drive from the centre of Ho Chi Minh City. Tourists generally reside in district 1, the backpacker area, with 'Pham Ngu Lao' as its main street. You will find that many people here speak English. In Ho Chi Minh City shops provide a wide range of goods and you will be able to buy toiletries, clothing, food and basic first aid. There is also a wide range of hotels available, with prices starting from about \$17 (USD).



**Ho Chi Minh City
(District 1)**

4.2 Travelling from Ho Chi Minh City to Dao Tien

We will normally pick you up from Ho Chi Minh City, either at the airport or in the city centre. However, we will individually discuss arrangements for your travel to Dao Tien. If you are intending to arrive from any other destination please discuss this with us as early as possible.



5. Working at Dao Tien

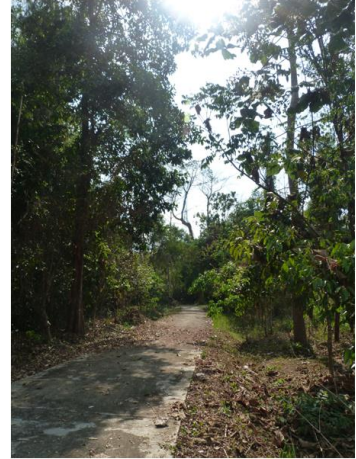
5.1 Accommodation

- Accommodation is provided at the Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre on Dao Tien Island. The main building is a brick house with a tin roof. The house is secured with mosquito netting. Volunteers and researchers stay in a mixed dorm room, which has four beds separated by curtains for privacy. You will have your own mosquito net, set of drawers, a fan and a bedside lamp. The room does have air-con, however unfortunately the electricity supply does not always support its use. Next to this room you will find a separate toilet and shower. You may be the only volunteer or you may have to share the dorm room and bathroom facilities with up to 3 other volunteers, researchers or visitors associated with the centre. There will be no more than 6 people living on the island.
- There is one common room/office with a fridge, sofas, air-con, satellite TV with LCD screen and a DVD player, including a wide range of DVDs. A small selection of books is also available for use on the island. There is a large table in the room for office work.
- There is mains electricity supply to all the rooms, however it is not always robust enough to allow all appliances to be operated at the same time. Plugs with two rectangular pins are required (plugs with two round pins fit also). There is a back-up generator for emergencies (power cuts are quite regular in Vietnam).
- Wi-Fi is free of use and generally available. Do remember to bring your own laptop if you wish to access the internet. Please keep in mind that circumstances do change as we are located on a small remote island, and it may be possible that at times Wi-Fi is not available. Cat Tien National Park does however have cafes that offer free Wi-Fi, which are only a 10 minute boat drive away.
- Kitchen and washing facilities are located in a separate block next to the main building. Our house keeper will maintain the house and wash and dry clothes and bedding. Washing facilities include a washing machine and dryer. The kitchen has a stove, microwave and kettle. Clean, filtered drinking water is provided.
- Mobile phone reception on Dao Tien is fairly good. The cheapest way to phone home is to buy a VIETTEL sim card upon arrival in Vietnam. The most reliable method is to have a mobile phone from home with international roaming, however costs can become very high. Contacting home through the internet (Skype etc.) is not always guaranteed, although it does generally work in the cafes on the mainland.

Please keep in mind that Dao Tien is a very quiet, small island. Access on and off the island is by small boat. During the day, the boat is operated at 4 fixed times in line with Vietnamese staff working hours. Outside of these hours, boat transport is subject to availability and



limited outside working hours, in the evenings and early mornings. This is subject to weather conditions, and whether a driver is available.





5.2 Food

Fresh food is provided daily as part of your fee. Lunch and evening meals are provided. Basic food (bread, eggs, bananas, vegetables, noodles) are available for you to cook your own breakfast. If you require extras such as coffee, milk, yoghurt, cereal etc. you will need to provide this yourself. The local village only has basic food items available to buy. Fruit and vegetables are easy to get by, however milk and yoghurt can also be obtained locally.

For any Western style food – this can be purchased in Ho Chi Minh City or in the supermarket on the way when travelling to Dao Tien. With car pickups, a stop off at the supermarket is possible, please let us know if you wish to do so in advance. Please note that Ho Chi Minh City is a 3-5 hour drive away (depending on mode of transport) from Cat Tien National Park, so make sure you have all the supplies you need before leaving Ho Chi Minh City.

If you have special food requirements, please let us know in advance. Please be aware that all food provided is local Vietnamese cooking style. This often makes it very difficult to avoid meat, as meat stock is often used in vegetable dishes. Every effort will be made though to cater for vegetarians. If you have any other specific dietary requirements, please discuss these with us before your commitment to volunteering.

5.3 Work schedule

- You will have two days off per week, although we are flexible if more is required. Number of days off will not influence the volunteering fee, no reductions can be made.
- Your working day depends on your activity. If you are working with the primates on Dao Tien or in education or tourism your working day is from about 7 am to 4.30 pm with an extended lunch break from 11.30 am until 1.30 pm to avoid the intense sun. Rest is recommended in this time. If you are working on tourism – there are two set times, at 8.30 am and 2 pm, when tourists are welcome to visit Dao Tien.
- Those staying on site deal with any problems overnight.
- Earlier starts are needed for forest work (animal or forest surveys for example), which is from about 5 am to 11 am, pygmy loris radio tracking involves more evening work, from about 4-9 pm, as lorises are nocturnal animals.
- As we are a small project, work schedules can be subject to change depending on the events of the day and staff availability.



5.4 Medical support

A medical officer is available in Cat Tien National Park, alternatively there are international clinics in Ho Chi Minh City that can provide you medical support if needed. This is however expensive, so make sure your medical travel insurance is comprehensive. The forest is full of dangerous animals so please make sure you are prepared. We will make sure that you are up to date with our health and safety procedures before you engage in any work at Dao Tien.



6. Contact details

If you wish to apply as a volunteer or researcher,
please send your CV and covering letter to:
daotien@go-east.org

EAST UK

Endangered Asian Species Trust
Stag Gates House
63-64 The Avenue
Southampton SO17 XS
Tel.: +44 (0) 19 29 401 019 or +44 (0) 01929 401005
Fax.: +44 (0) 19 29 405 414
For enquiries, please email enquiries@go-east.org
For logistical support, please email support@go-east.org



EAST Vietnam

Dao Tien
Vuon Quoc Gai Cat Tien
Huyen Tan Phu
Tinh Dong Nai

Please note that any post sent to this address will be searched at Vietnamese customs, and items may be confiscated. Valuable items should not be posted. Cards or letters may take several weeks to arrive.

EAST Vietnam Tel.: +84 613 669 903

EAST UK Tel: +44 (0) 1929 401019 or +44 (0) 1929 401005

If you have been accepted as a volunteer or researcher at the Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre, we will send you a volunteer/researcher induction pack with more detailed information in advance of your departure to Vietnam.

Useful links

EAST website: www.go-east.org

Cat Tien National Park website: www.namcattien.org

Vietnamese Embassy UK: <http://www.vietnamembassy.org.uk/>

UK government – Vietnam travel advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/vietnam>