



# VOLUNTEER PROGRAM THE TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE

CUC PHUONG NATIONAL  
PARK





**TURTLE CONSERVATION CENTRE**  
Cuc Phuong National Park  
Cuc Phuong commune, Nho Quan District, Ninh Binh  
Province, Vietnam  
Tel: +84(0)2293848090 Email: info@asianturtleprogram.org



## ABOUT THE TCC

The Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) is located at Cuc Phuong National Park, 120 kilometres 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 threats to the survival of turtles in Vietnam.

The centre encompasses an area of about 7,000 square meters comprising enclosures, aquatic tanks, and specialized breeding and holding facilities for more than 1300 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**

The centre 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 signboards 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 places special importance on training students and young professionals, preferably Vietnamese, to encourage the next generation of young turtle scientists and conservationists.



SOUTHERN VIETNAMESE BOX TURTLE (*CUORA PICTURATA*)  
PHOTO BY SIMON BRAUBURGER – ATP/IMC



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 by conducting short research projects or volunteering at the centre.

### **3. Captive breeding**

Although the majority of Vietnamese tortoise and freshwater turtle (TFT) species are under threat, there is a shortage of funding and it has been essential to identify priorities for conservation breeding activities. At the TCC, captive breeding programs are prioritized for the most vulnerable native TFT species of Vietnam, recognized by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. To date, the TCC has succeeded in breeding 12 species at the centre.



*ELONGATED TORTOISE (INDOTESTUDO ELONGATA)*  
PHOTO BY KRISZTIAN NEMETH – ATP/IMC



*ELONGATED TORTOISE (INDOTESTUDO ELONGATA ) HATCHING*  
PHOTO BY THUY NGUYEN – ATP/IMC

### **WHO CAN BECOME VOLUNTEERS?**

The 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 can take responsibility for the work that they do.

The 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.

Applicants under 18 years of age need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

### **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.
- Collect and organize turtle egg and hatchling data.
- Assist in updating news, articles, pictures on the website and Facebook of the TCC.
- Deliver special tours for visitors, when required
- Support the treatment and medical care of the turtles under the supervision of the veterinary department.
- Various other tasks as assigned by the TCC manager(s).



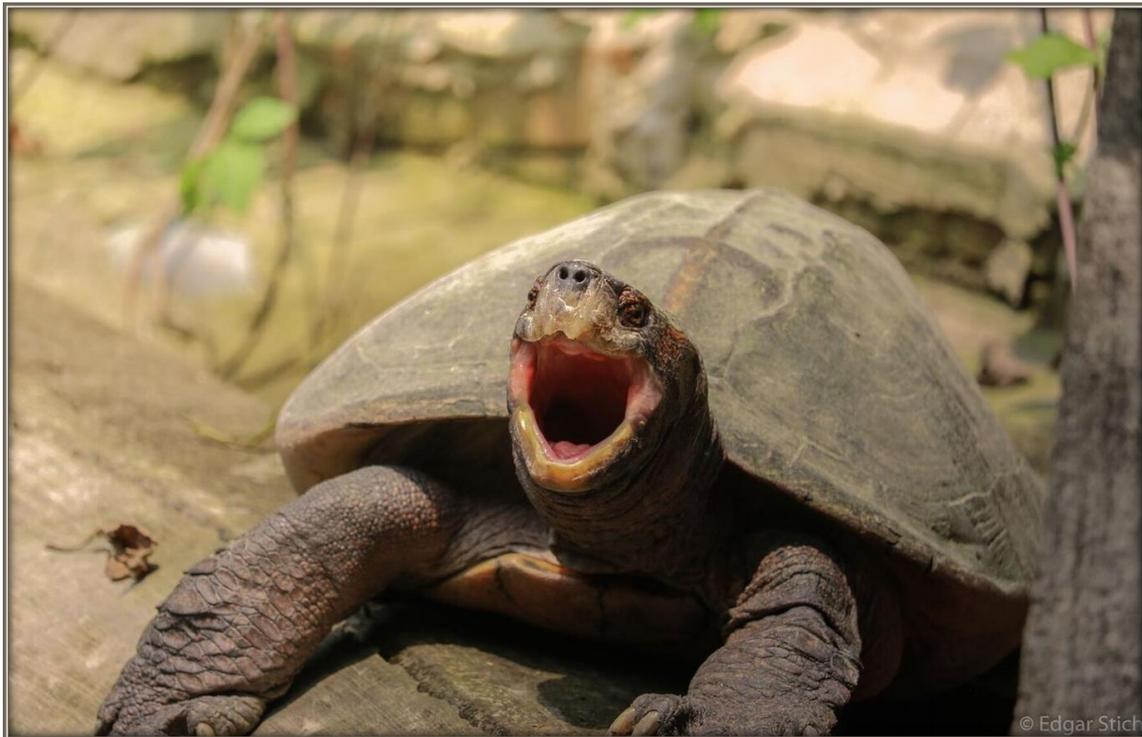
### WORKING TIME

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, volunteers may be asked to provide help during their days off.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Comply with the working regulations at the TCC such as the working schedule, health and safety requirements and security protocol at the Cuc Phuong National Park.
- Always work under the guidance of ATP staff at the TCC.
- Immediately report any issue which arise in their work to the Rescue coordinator and TCC manager.



GIANT ASIAN POND TURTLE (*HEOSEMYS GRANDIS*) PHOTO BY EDGAR STICH – ATP/IMC

### OUTSIDE OF WORK

There is lots to do in and around the park on days off. Within the park it is possible to visit Mac Lake, the observation tower, the Prehistoric Man Cave and Palace Cave. There are lots of hiking routes to take; popular trails will lead you to several ancient trees, caves and Muong villages. You can also take a tour of the other conservation centres at the park. One and a half hours from the TCC is the Van Long Nature Reserve, this popular bird watching reserve consists of a reedy wetland with large limestone outcrops and is home to species such as the threatened black-faced spoonbill, cotton pygmy goose and white-browed crake. Van Long is also one of the last places to see the Delacour's langur in the wild due to its isolated nature protecting them from predators and poachers. The Tràng An Scenic Landscape Complex is also worth visiting. Tràng An is a scenic area near Ninh Bình, Vietnam renowned for its boat cave tours and was recently made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Boat tours allow visitors to enjoy River caves and the stunning scenery throughout the area.





ACTIVITIES IN CUC PHUONG PHOTO BY THUY NGUYEN



TRANG AN SCENIC LANDSCAPE COMPLEX PHOTOS BY KRISZTIAN NEMETH

### GETTING HERE AND AWAY

Our centre is 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

Four seats: \$65            Seven seats: \$75

#### Limousine (share taxi)

It is possible to book a limousine (a share taxi) from Hanoi direct to Cuc Phuong and vice versa. It costs roughly \$8/180,000VND and take 2.5 to 3 hours. This can be booked on 1900 1985.

#### Bus Hanoi - Cuc Phuong

Daily bus departs at 3:15 pm from Giap Bat Bus station, fare: \$ 4.00 USD/ 80,000VND

Bus plate number: 35B-00837, the bus is dark pink and white, routine label: Nho Quan – Ha Noi, company: Phu Duyen. You can buy the ticket at the number 1 ticket sale booth. Ticket sale for Cuc Phuong trip opens at 3:00pm.

#### 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/ 80,000VND

#### Bus Hanoi - Nho Quan

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/ 80,000VND – 160,000VND.

### ACCOMMODATION

The TCC has rooms for volunteers, including Wi-Fi, 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 that sells fresh foods, fruits, vegetables and meat. If volunteers have specific foods they would like, they should bring them from their own country or buy them in Hanoi. Things like jam, butter, cereals and cheese can all be bought in Hanoi. Vegetarians/Vegans are easily catered for.



TYPICAL FOODS AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT

## COST

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Fee (USD)</b>
<i>Less than 5 days</i>	\$50USD/person/day
<i>One week</i>	\$300USD/person
<i>Two weeks</i>	\$500USD/person
<i>Three weeks</i>	\$650USD /person
<i>Four weeks</i>	\$750USD /person
<i>Five to twelve weeks</i>	\$160 per week
<i>Three to six months</i>	\$450 per month

These prices include all accommodation and food during your voluntary period. Any money left over from your stay will be used for turtle foods and improving habitat in animal enclosures. 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 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

Volunteer 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, and 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 are usually very 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 will be mostly working outdoors. You will need warm clothes (thick jacket, sweater, shoes, gloves, hat etc.). 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.

### VOLUNTEER PACKING LIST

- Towel, toothpaste, shower gel, shampoo, hand sanitizer and other toiletries.
  - Sun cream (don't bring too much as the work is normally in the shade and sun cream can be bought in Hanoi)
  - Sunhat/sunglasses (to protect you from the sun whilst working)
  - Water bottle
  - Mosquito repellent/soap
  - Raincoat
  - Sport shoes/trainers/sandals (or other comfortable shoes for walking)
  - Hiking boots for winter
  - Rubber boots/Wellingtons (available to buy in Hanoi or borrow at the centre in certain sizes)
  - Clothing: t-shirts, long sleeves and trousers (to limit insect bites) - clothes should be light, fast drying, spacious and comfortable for work
  - If you are coming in winter bring warm clothes, scarf, winter gloves and socks as it can be very cold and there is no heater indoors.
  - Swimwear
  - Torch
  - Medical first-aid kit
  - Travel adaptor (check for any differences in voltage between Vietnam and your home country)
  - Tampon
  - 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
- Optional:**
- Camera/memory cards, connecting cables and chargers (keen photographers can help take pictures at the centre for use on the TCC's social media when moderated by a manager.)
  - Portable charger/battery pack



- Laptop computer or tablet, chargers (useful if you wish to help with organising research data, updating news, writing blog posts and uploading pictures to the website and Facebook page of the TCC)
- Sunglasses
- Travel journal and writing implement.
- Books/magazines/e-reader.
- Smartphone plus headphones and chargers
- Back up external hard drive/portable flash drive
- Hairdryer
- Binoculars

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



IMPRESSED TORTOISE (*MANOURIA IMPRESSA*) PHOTO BY EDGAR STICH – ATP/IMC

### 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 can organize your transport from the airport to the TCC.

### **SOME MORE PHOTOS OF VOLUNTEER ACITIVITIES AND TURTLES AT TCC BELOW**

























PHOTOS BY THE ASIAN TURTLE PROGRAM OF INDO MYANMAR CONSERVATION

