

# Hoang Lien National Park

## Alternative site name(s)

Day Hoang Lien; Hoang Lien Son; Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa; Nui Hoang Lien; Sa Pa

## Province(s)

Lao Cai

## Area

29,845 ha

## Coordinates

22°08' - 22°23'N, 103°45' - 104°00'E

## Agro-ecological zone

North-eastern

## Decreed by government

Yes

## Management board established

Yes

## Investment plan prepared

Yes

## VCF eligibility criteria met

A, B, C

## Social screening criteria met

None

## Conservation needs assessment prepared

No

## Operational management plan prepared

No

## Tracking tool completed

No

## Map available

Yes

## Management history

The site was included on Decision No. 194/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, dated 9 August 1986 (MARD 1997). This decision decreed the establishment of a 5,000 ha nature reserve for the protection of “high-mountain forests, mono-*Fokienia hodginsii* stands and valuable medicinal herbs” (Cao Van Sung 1995). An investment plan, prepared in 1993, defined a 29,845 ha nature reserve in Sa Pa and Than Uyen districts (Anon. 1993). In 1997, the area in Than Uyen district was placed under the management of the Song Da Watershed Protection Forest management board. An investment plan for the revised nature reserve was prepared in 1997, which gave the area of the nature reserve as 19,991 ha (Nguyen Quang Hung *et al.* 1997). The boundary of the nature reserve was revised again in 1998 to include areas in Ban Ho commune, Sa Pa district (Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

On 12 July 2002, the management category of Hoang Lien was revised from nature reserve to national park, following Decision No. 90/TTg of the Prime Minister. According to the Prime Minister's Decision, the total area of the national park is 29,845 ha, comprising a strict protection area of 11,875 ha, a forest rehabilitation area of 17,900 ha and an administration and services area of 70 ha. In

addition, there is a buffer zone of 38,724 ha. The national park is located in San Sa Ho, Lao Chai, Ta Van and Ban Ho communes, Sa Pa district, and Muong Khoa and Than Thuoc communes, Than Uyen district.

The national park management board currently has 40 members of staff, and reports to Lao Cai Provincial FPD. An investment plan for the national park is currently under preparation (Lao Cai Provincial FPD *in litt.* 2003).

Hoang Lien National Park is included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD, with an area of 29,845 ha (FPD 2003); this list has not yet been approved by the government.

On 17 and 18 December 2003, the environment ministers of the ASEAN nations amended the ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks and included four ASEAN Heritage Parks in Vietnam, including Hoang Lien National Park.

## Topography and hydrology

Hoang Lien National Park is located in the Hoang Lien mountains and includes Vietnam's highest peak, Mount Fansipan (3,143 m). The lowest point is 380 m but most of the national park lies above 1,000 m. The flanks of the mountains are very steep. Between Mount

Fansipan and Sa Pa town, lies the Muong Hoa valley, which becomes wider towards the east of the national park (Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

The section of the national park in Sa Pa district is drained by the Muong Hoa and Ta Trung Ho rivers, which feed the Nam Po river and, finally, the Red River. The section of the national park in Than Uyen district lies within the catchment of the Black River.

## Biodiversity values

The national park supports a wide variety of habitat types: elevations below 1,800 m support lower montane evergreen forest; elevations between 1,800 and 2,500 m support upper montane evergreen forest, elevations between 2,500 and 2,800 m support sub-alpine forest, while the vegetation above 2,800 m is dominated by stands of dwarf bamboo with scattered, stunted trees. Below 1,000 m, the forest has been almost entirely cleared and replaced with anthropogenic habitats, including secondary grassland, scrub and cultivation. Secondary habitats are also found at higher elevations (A. Tordoff pers. obs.).

Plant species richness (2,024 species of vascular plants recorded) and levels of endemism (one quarter of Vietnam's endemic species) are both very high relative to other protected areas in Vietnam (Nguyen Nghia Thin and Nguyen Thi Thoi 1998). For these reasons, the site was selected as a Centre for Plant Diversity by the IUCN Plant Conservation Programme (Davis *et al.* eds. 1995).

Mammal abundance is relatively low as a result of intensive hunting pressure. However, Hoang Lien National Park supports a high diversity of other animal groups. Three hundred and forty seven bird species have been recorded in and around the nature reserve, including 49 species that are restricted in Vietnam to north-west Tonkin (Tordoff *et al.* 1999). The national park supports a number of restricted-range and globally threatened bird species, including Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*, and qualifies as an Important Bird Area, together with the contiguous Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve (see site card) (Tordoff 2002).

The national park supports approximately one third of Vietnam's known amphibian species, the highest recorded amphibian species richness of any protected

area in Vietnam. Several amphibian species are currently known only from the site, and around 10% of the national park's amphibian species are globally threatened.

Invertebrate diversity is also very high, and many species of invertebrate discovered at the site are known from nowhere else in the world (Hrebly *et al.* 1999, Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

In the *Biodiversity Action Plan for Vietnam*, Hoang Lien National Park is rated "A" for biodiversity value (the highest rating) (Government of SRV/GEF 1994).

## Conservation issues

Over-exploitation of natural resources, together with clearance of forest for cultivation and by accidental fire, is rapidly destroying the natural vegetation cover of Hoang Lien National Park. Already, natural forest covers only around half the area of the national park, and continued human disturbance threatens those areas that remain. Where forest has been cleared or burnt, soil fertility has decreased, and it will be a long time before the forest regenerates (Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

One human activity with potentially significant impacts on biodiversity at Hoang Lien National Park is cardamom cultivation. Although some canopy trees are retained in cardamom plots, canopy cover can be reduced by up to 80%, through indiscriminate removal of trees, and current methods of drying cardamom pods require more firewood than can be generated within the plots. Indirect impacts include hunting and exploitation of non-timber forest products by farmers staying in the forest for extended periods during the planting and harvesting seasons.

The national park has been established and a management board has been formed. A headquarters building has been built, the boundaries of the national park have been demarcated, and signboards have been posted displaying management regulations. The staff of the national park are currently implementing fire-prevention activities. They are also implementing forest management schemes to replant bare forest land, regenerate degraded forest and protect natural forest. Local people are being involved in the implementation of these schemes to a greater or lesser degree.

However, beyond fire prevention and social forestry, the national park staff do not have any resources to enforce management regulations (Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

Unsustainable tourism development represents a potential future threat to biodiversity at Hoang Lien. The neighbouring town of Sa Pa is already a major tourist destination, and plans exist to develop it into a resort city (Vietnam News 2002). Specific potential threats from unsustainable tourism development include infrastructure development, such as trails and roads in the national park, which could facilitate exploitation of natural resources, hiking and camping within the national park, which could lead to an increased risk of accidental forest fire, and increased demand for forest products, such as orchids.

## Other documented values

Hoang Lien National Park contains many species of plants with proven uses as medicine, ornament, food or timber. The national park is already utilised as a source of medicinal plants for research and cultivation, but the full potential of the site has yet to be realized. The national park is an important source of building materials, fuel, food, medicine and income for local people, many of whom are heavily dependent on these resources. The national park plays an important role in watershed protection, both for local people (for whom water availability is a limiting factor in agricultural productivity) and the Red River system as a whole. Forest at high elevations is particularly important in this regard, as it captures water by condensation and contributes it to stream flow. The natural resources and scenic beauty of the area have great potential for the development of tourism, which has already begun, with organized tours to climb Mount Fansipan (Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

## Related projects

From 1998 to 2002, Frontier-Vietnam implemented an environmental education programme in Sa Pa district, focussing on the four communes within the national park.

Sa Pa district was selected as a case-study for the *IUCN Capacity Building for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives Project*. This project included an

investigation of the potential for eco-tourism development in the area.

Oxfam GB are currently implementing education and agriculture programmes in Sa Pa district.

CraftLink are currently implementing a project to promote handicraft production by ethnic minority people in Sa Pa district.

In 2003, the Fauna & Flora International Vietnam Programme, in collaboration with Lao Cai and Yen Bai Provincial FPDs, Lao Cai Provincial DARD and Hoang Lien National Park, began implementation of a European Commission-funded project to promote conservation in the Hoang Lien mountains. A number of activities under this project will be implemented at Hoang Lien National Park.

The Netherlands Local Environment Fund, administered by SNV, has provided a small grant to the management board of Hoang Lien National Park for capacity building activities. These activities will continue until September 2004.

## Conservation needs assessment

A conservation needs assessment has not been conducted for the site.

## Operational management plan

An operational management plan has not been prepared for the site.

## Eligibility against VCF criteria

The site is eligible for VCF support because it meets criteria A, B and C.

Criterion	Eligibility
A <sub>I</sub>	NH1 - Hoang Lien Mountains
A <sub>II</sub>	VN057 - Fan Si Pan
B <sub>I</sub>	Decision No. 90/TTg, dated 12/07/02
B <sub>II</sub>	National Park
B <sub>III</sub>	Under provincial management
C <sub>I</sub>	Management board established
C <sub>II</sub>	

## Social screening requirements

A social screening report has not been prepared for the site.

Criterion	Eligibility
A	
B	
C	
D	

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