

Son Doong Expedition Tour

- *Tour code: SD4*
 - *Adventure level: Hard*
 - *Age 18-70 years old*
 - *Tour type: Join-in*
 - *Operation: January to August*
 - *Price: USD 3,000/pax*
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The 6 days and 5 nights journey to conquer the world's largest cave with spectacular sceneries and terrains change everyday.

The Son Doong Expedition tour started in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Vietnam in August, 2013. It has become very popular and attracted people around the world who love adventure tours. The adventures that explore caves have become highlights tours in Vietnam since then. In 2014, UK National Geographic named the Son Doong Expedition as the best adventure tour among other expedition and adventure tours. In 2019, the British TV channel, Dave Television also ranked Son Doong Cave Tour as 5th out of the 20 greatest adventure trips on the planet. In 2017, the British Daily Mail voted Son Doong Cave Expedition as having the most impressive campsite in the world.

Son Doong Expedition is a cave trekking tour into the underground world to discover and explore the largest cave in Vietnam, see the beauty of cave formations such as huge stalactites, stalagmites, cave pearls, underground rivers, dolines and a forest growing right inside the cave. Guests will also have opportunities to contemplate the giant sunbeams through the cave, encounter unique creatures and conquer [the Great Wall of Vietnam](#) up to 90 meters high.

[Son Doong Cave](#) was found in 1990 by Mr. [Ho Khanh](#) (a local jungleman in Phong Nha), and surveyed in 2009-2010 by the [British-Vietnamese Cave Expedition Team](#), Son Doong Cave was announced as the largest natural limestone cave in the world in 2009 by the expedition team and confirmed by the [National Geographic Magazine in 2011](#). National Geographic TV also reaffirmed Son Doong as the largest cave in the world by volume of 38.5 million cubic meters. On November 26, 2023, Hang Son Doong, Hang En and Hang Va were featured on Episode 6 - EXTREMES of the famous documentary series [Planet Earth III](#) made by BBC.

The highlights include:

- World's largest natural cave:** As the world's largest known cave passage by

volume, Hang Son Doong is so staggeringly vast that any of the world's previously largest caves could be entirely contained within its walls. To illustrate its scale, it is large enough to house an entire Manhattan city block of skyscrapers.

☑️ **The cave has an entire jungle inside and its own weather system:** The colossal Hang Son Doong Cave, with its two giant dolines (sinkholes), creates a [unique and separate weather system](#). Visitors can observe a dense jungle located 252 meters deep inside. The temperature inside the cave typically ranges from 18 to 24°C (64 to 75°F), a complete contrast to the outside temperature of 38°C (100°F) in the summer.

☑️ **There are many new species only found in Son Doong:** Visitors may have the chance to see the world's most [unique species found only in Son Doong Cave](#) such as blind fish and transparent shrimp. There are also white scorpions and other species that are among the 7 new species found in Son Doong Cave.

☑️ **Learn about the indigenous Bru-Van Kieu culture:** Visitors will have the opportunity to experience life in [Ban Doong](#), a small village belonging to the Bru-Van Kieu ethnic minority. The village is situated deep within the strictly protected core zone of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, remaining completely isolated from modern urban civilization and other settlements.

☑️ **Unique campsites deep inside the colossal cave:** The absolute highlight of the Son Doong expedition is the three unforgettable nights spent [camping deep inside the world's largest cave](#). Following days of challenging jungle trekking, explorers settle down on pristine "sandy beaches". Here, natural light and moonlight stream through the massive sinkholes (dolines), transforming the cavern ceiling into a breathtaking, sparkling starry sky. This unique experience of sleeping overnight in a huge cave, subterranean is truly one-of-a-kind experiences.

☑️ **Conservation-focused tourism:** Due to a [commitment to conservation](#), the number of permits for the Son Doong expedition is capped at just 1,000 visitors annually. The demanding 6-day, 5-night adventure is designed for deep immersion: participants will spend 4 days and 3 nights trekking through the primeval forest and exploring the cave, experiencing a total disconnect from civilization.

☑️ **World-class adventure tour:** To ensure a once-in-a-lifetime and unparalleled experience, Oxalis strictly limits each Son Doong expedition to just 10 guests, supported by a massive and highly professional team of 30 staff. This dedicated service crew, including safety experts, guides, rangers, chefs, and porters.

Itinerary

The Son Doong Expedition is Oxalis Adventure's ultimate challenge. Prepare for strenuous jungle treks (150m–800m gain), knee-deep river crossings, and technical cave navigation using ladders and ropes. This is a strictly off-grid experience; however,

guides carry satellite phones for emergencies.

The itinerary of the Son Doong Expedition tour may be changed due to weather conditions.

[Download the itinerary](#)

Day 1: Phong Nha – Safety Briefing

You will be consulted and supported to plan for arrival as soon as you finish signing up for this cave exploration tour.

You should be in Dong Hoi City by 15:00 pm at the latest. You will be picked up by Oxalis staff from any location in Dong Hoi and taken to [Commander Lodge](#) in Phong Nha.

At 17:00, a tour guide will pick you up for a visit to the [Phong Nha Caves Exploration Museum](#). This visit offers a perfect introduction to your upcoming expedition, where you can explore the history of over 35 years of British-Vietnam Cave Expedition Team, view specialized gear alongside meticulously hand-drawn maps, and immerse yourself in a uniquely simulated natural cave space.

Around 17:30 - 18:00 pm, you will arrive at the Oxalis Phong Nha office for your official safety briefing. The safety briefing is required to make sure that each guest understands the nature of the adventure expedition. Anyone who does not attend this briefing may be refused participation in the Son Doong tour without refund. At the end of the briefing, guests are required to sign a [release form](#) and their medical declaration for the trip. Helmet and water bottles will also be provided at the briefing.

You will be required to bring your trekking shoes and personal backpack (size of the backpack) to the briefing for a quality and suitability check by a safety expert.

After the safety briefing, the whole group will have a welcome dinner at Oxalis Home. Time to start getting to know each other before a long journey together.

After dinner, you will return to the hotel, prepare your belongings (for the trek) and rest, ready for the trip tomorrow.

Day 2: Doong Village – Hang En Cave

After packing all belongings required for the trek into the bag provided (not more than 7 kg per Guest), please bring it to the hotel reception before 07:00 am. Oxalis' staff will receive and bring this bag directly to the campsite. You will not see these

belongings until reaching the campsite. Therefore please carry with you anything you may need along the way. Guests can refer to the article "what guests should prepare for Son Doong Expedition" for the best preparation.

Make sure that you have your breakfast and make yourself ready at the reception area before departure time of 09:00 am. Luggage and valuables will be stored at the Oxalis Office.

It will take around 1 hour to get to the drop off point by Oxalis bus. The Son Doong Cave Expedition starts from here with a long steep descent of around 350 meters inside [Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park](#). After reaching the bottom of the mountain, you will keep going for about half an hour through the forest with few stream crossings (knee deep) to come to [Ban Doong](#) - a small village of the Bru-Van Kieu ethnic minority.

After lunch at the house of the village elder and learning about living here. The group will continue trekking about 3 hours to reach [Hang En](#) Cave for the first night's camping - one of Vietnam's best-cave camping sites. There will be more river crossings with stunning natural scenery. Entering Hang En Cave through a small entrance, crossing the underground river and climbing a small hill you will see a spectacular campsite, full of light, located underneath a large high entrance.

You will locate the tent with your name on it and enjoy swimming in the lake next to the campground. How relaxing after a long day of trekking. A delicious dinner will be served soon. Hopefully, you will have a good night, ready to approach Son Doong tomorrow.

Important note: Any guest who is unable to complete the Son Doong Expedition on this day or struggles to complete the day with a lot of support from the safety assistant team, or fails to comply with safety and conservation regulations. The guest will be asked to return to Oxalis Phong Nha without refund.. The safety expert and tour guide will make the decision to allow them to continue or return. This is to ensure the safety of that guest as well as the whole group.

Day 3: Son Doong Entrance – Campsite Doline 1

In the morning, when exploring Hang En Cave, you will gaze at the fantastic exit, where the movie: Peter Pan – Pan and Neverland filmed, and then carry on to Son Doong Cave entrance. The journey from Hang En Exit to Son Doong follows the river with many more river crossings. A final steep hill will bring you to the entrance of Hang Son Doong.

After lunch at the entrance, you will be equipped with safety equipment for

descending into the cave. A safety briefing will be given by the tour guide or safety expert to make sure that every guest knows how to use the safety harnesses, karabiners and descend safely. The safety team is always by guest's side for support. Approaching the entrance, you will usually feel the cold air flowing out due to the difference in temperature and pressure inside the cave. Illuminated by the large filming lights, the giant cave passages with enormous formations will slowly appear in front of your eyes.

Reaching the bottom of the entrance slopes, you will continue crossing the river twice, some sandbanks and rocky slopes to see a huge stalagmite, called the [Hand of Dog](#). Around 16:00, you will arrive at the first campsite of Son Doong – named the Level Playing Fields, just before Doline 1. There will be toilets and changing tents here.

Another highlight not to be missed: swimming in a cold underground pool (17-22 degrees). Useful for muscle relaxation and also refreshing yourself after a hard day. You need to wear trekking shoes, long sleeved-shirts, long pants to get here and for swimming. A life-jacket is required. Another delicious dinner will be waiting for you after swimming.

Day 4: Garden Of Edam – Campsite Doline 2

There are steep climbs, wriggling through small parts of the cave and some ropes and ladders to reach Doline 1, called [Watch out for Dinosaurs](#) - a highlight of the journey through Son Doong.

Descending from Watch Out for Dinosaurs, you will reach the other side of Doline 1, the Green gours. A stunning scenery will reveal itself in front of your eyes. On sunny days, you may sit and contemplate the giant sunbeams shining into the cave. Lunch will be served here.

After lunch, the group continues over the calcite paths to come into the [Garden of Edam at Doline 2](#). This area is very fragile and you must take great care. From here, you can view the entire forest and the variety of trees and plants adapted to this environment. A final steep and slippery descent will bring you to the campsite, to rest, review your photos and enjoy the amazing view. There are no bathing facilities in this campsite. You must prepare wet wipes, dry shampoo etc for this final night in the cave. Another yummy dinner will be served soon.

Note: a pair of dry socks are recommended for this day if available and it is not rainy as there is no river crossing on this day.

Day 5: The Great Wall Of Vietnam – Son Doong Exit - Chay Lap

Farmstay

Starting your new day of a wonderful trip with a hot cup of coffee, the exciting adventure has yet to come. After breakfast, you will be equipped with safety equipment and a short safety briefing given to be ready for conquering the Great Wall of Viet Nam, one of the best caving experiences.

Then carrying on cave exploring and learning about the unique creatures that live in the darkness for millions of years such as: spiders, fishes, woodlice and centipedes. They all have the same characters: no eyes, no color. Cave pearls are also a special formation that can be found in Son Doong Cave.

On different occasions you will be able to experience the Wall differently. On a heavy rainy day, after the rain there will be a lake to the Great Wall of Vietnam, therefore you will have a chance to row a raft along the lake to the bottom of the Wall. On other days, the lake will disappear, and you will experience walking through the muddy passage, this passage is called "Passchendaele passage". At the bottom of the wall, there is a stainless steel ladder about 18m high and you will start the climb from here. After the ladder, continue climbing ropes to ascend to a large resting place. The ascent continues with a 72 meters slope with 45 degrees. All guests will be attached to a safety line at all times, operated by the safety assistants. Safety assistants will be stationed at various points along the climb from the bottom to the top, to instruct and encourage you. Do not be nervous, this is all part of the expedition's experience.

Unlike other hiking expeditions, this is a challenging adventure. But, as long as you have good physical fitness, you can definitely conquer the Wall with the support of the safety team. After lunch at the top of the Wall, the group will leave the cave, where a final rocky section awaits, and trek through forest to return to Ho Chi Minh Trail West. Here the Son Doong Cave Expedition ends with cool beer and soft drinks. Tour guide and driver will bring you to [Chay Lap Farmstay](#) at around 15:00 - 16:00.

Chay Lap Farmstay will warmly welcome you back with a glass of champagne and a fancy dinner. The tour guide will also confirm transfers to the Airport or train station...for you according to your plan. You can see: "Directions to Phong Nha" for more information about suitable transportation for your trip.

Day 6: Chay Lap Farmstay - Dong Hoi

Following your plan, you may be picked up after breakfast (to the airport or train station in Dong Hoi City) or take time to visit some more places in Phong Nha

before leaving.

There are many famous places to see around Phong Nha Town such as: Chay Lap Water Sport Center, Blue Diamond Camp, Paradise cave, Mooc Spring, etc... or you can rent a motorbike / bicycle to explore the National Park, Bong Lai Valley, Pub with Cold Beer yourself. Please make sure that you are good at driving...

If you still want some more adventure trips, Oxalis is also running tours to Hang Va, Hang Tien, and especially, Tu Lan - home of the Hollywood movie [Kong: Skull Island](#). These exploration tours (from 1 to 6 days) will definitely bring you more great expedition experiences which are quite different from the Son Doong Expedition.

Please do not forget the check-out time is before 12:00 midday. Inform Oxalis' sales staff in-advance if you want to stay longer.

Adventure level on tour

After more than 10 years operating adventure tours in Phong Nha - Ke Bang, Vietnam, Oxalis Adventure tours designed an adventure scale in order to help guests choose the right tour for their physical fitness and ability. This scale is not applicable to other tours or treks not run by Oxalis.

From level 1 to 6, Oxalis hopes that our guests will make the right choice for their adventure tour. For example, if you exercise regularly and trek often, you can confidently choose level 6 and the Son Doong trip. We are sure you will complete it proudly.



Son Doong Expedition: Adventure level 6 - Hard

The Son Doong Expedition tour is rated as the most challenging (Level 6) on the Oxalis adventure level system. The difficulty of the tour is based on the physical fitness and health of average active people, not runners, athletes, or intensely active individuals.

Activities: Long treks, river crossings, rocky terrain, climbing steep slopes with and without safety equipment.

Number of Guests per tour: Maximum 10, age 18-70 years old.

- ★ 25km trekking on jungle and mountain trails, elevation changes up to 800m.
- ★ Multiple river crossings both inside and outside the cave (knee - deep or more depending on weather conditions).
- ★ 3 nights camping in the cave (the first night in En cave, the second and third in Son Doong).
- ★ 8km caving including: climbing with safety equipment, extensive rocky terrain.
- ★ 90m descending to the cave entrance with a steep slope of 45 degrees with support from safety equipment, safety assistants and the cave expert.
- ★ 90m ascending up to the Great Wall of Vietnam with a ladder, steep slopes of 45 degrees with support from safety equipment, safety assistant and cave expert.

Terrains

The tour takes place in remote areas with complex terrains. Customers must be physically fit. Please carefully read the tour itinerary and honestly fill out the booking

information yourself, especially your experience and health condition. Read more about [Oxalis Adventure Level](#).

Preparation for the Son Doong Expedition

In order for you to have a great trip, Oxalis recommends you to take appropriate exercise to have good physical fitness. Furthermore, take time to prepare the items you need to bring for the Son Doong expedition including: trekking clothing, sun protections, trekking shoes and backpack. Anything extra can be stored in Oxalis' Phong Nha Office.

Son Doong Expedition is a long trekking tour in Vietnam with various terrains. Items to bring on Son Doong Expedition Tour:

Oxalis provides

Camping equipment: tent, mattresses, pillow, sleeping bags

Caving and safety gears: helmet, headlight, gloves, ...

Basic jungle boots (EU size 36–44); if using Oxalis shoes, bring thick, long socks and 2 insoles to ensure comfort.

Water bottle (1L)

Water purifier

Compost toilet, toilet paper, hand cleaner

Semi-dry bag (15L) for campsite clothing sets

First-aid kit and medical rescue equipment

Satellite phone

You need to prepare

Essential clothing

Trekking clothes:

- 3-4 quick-dry, bright, long-sleeved shirts

- 2-3 pairs of long trekking pants (quick-dry)
- 1 waterproof jacket (winter months January to March)

Campsite clothing sets:

- Warm clothes for winter from January to March
- Shorts and T-shirts for summer from April to August

1 medium size backpack (20L) to carry stuff that you need while trekking

1 pair of good gripping trekking/approach closed shoes. Heavyweight trekking boots are not necessary

4 pairs of calf-length, thick socks

1 pair of sandals for campsite

Personal dry bag/box for electronic devices

Swimwear using at Hang En Campsite

Personal items

- ★ Mosquito repellent
- ★ Sunglasses, sun hat, sunscreen
- ★ Hand fan for summer (April to August)
- ★ 1-2 medium towels
- ★ Underwear
- ★ Personal hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, nature-friendly shampoo & soap, ...)
- ★ Power banks
- ★ Personal medication
- ★ Antifungal foot powder
- ★ Passport

Optional items

Arm cover if wearing short-sleeved T-shirts

Camera & Tripod

Ear plugs

Bandana or headband

Rehydration tablets

Blister prevention tape

Photos







