

Tu Lan Cave Expedition Tour

- *Tour code: TL4*
 - *Adventure level: Demanding*
 - *Age 16-70 years old*
 - *Group size: 8 customers*
 - *Tour type: Join-in*
 - *Operation: January to August*
 - *Price: USD 680/pax*
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A 5 day 4 night tour journey exploring the Tu Lan Cave System with spectacular caves and underground rivers where the movie Kong: Skull Island was filmed. With 3 nights jungle camping and 1 night at Tu Lan Lodge.

The Tu Lan Cave Expedition - TL4 is one of the "must do" caving tours in Vietnam for many visitors nowadays. This hiking adventure run by Oxalis Adventure Tours, this expedition is ranked as adventure Level 5: "Demanding", and is just below the [Son Doong Expedition](#) and [Hang Ba Deep Jungle Expedition](#) which are currently ranked at level 6: "Hard", the highest level in the Oxalis Adventure' caving tour scale relating to physical fitness and ability.

The [Tu Lan Cave system](#) was discovered by a local named Dinh Hong Nham in 2009. During his fishing trips, he discovered three caves - Tu Lan, To Mo large and To Mo small in the area. The cave system was then explored and surveyed by Mr. Howard Limbert with the British - Vietnamese Cave Expedition team, and now includes more than 25 large and small caves. The Tu Lan Caves were featured in [National Geographic Magazine in 2011 together with Hang Son Doong](#). A photo of Hang Ken taken by photographer Carsten Peter won the National Geographic photo award in the same year.

Tu Lan Expedition is one of the longest Oxalis Adventures tours, enabling you to explore all seven of the most beautiful dry and river caves of the Tu Lan Cave System. This tour includes a series of fascinating experiences such as trekking through the forest, wading in streams, swimming in the caves, abseiling down into underground rivers, climbing steep hills, walking through beautiful valleys, exploring the largest dry cave in the system - Hang Tien, and camping for 3 nights by the riverside and amidst the majestic natural scenery.

Tu Lan Expedition highlights include:

- Explore 7 majestic caves in Tu Lan Cave System:** Venture deep into the magnificent Tu Lan system, famous for its unique stalactites and serving as a key filming location for the blockbuster movie, [Kong: Skull Island](#). This epic journey includes exploring 7 iconic caves, such as Tu Lan Cave, Secret Cave, Hung Ton Cave, Ken Cave, Kim Cave, Hang Tien 1, and Hang Tien 2 Cave.

- ☑️ **Becoming a real caver:** You'll be trained in essential caving and jungle skills by expert guides. Master multi-terrain trekking, navigate dark underground rivers (swimming), and learn safe rope techniques (climbing ladders/cave walls) on a real expedition.
- ☑️ **Thrilling underground river swims:** Embrace the exhilarating [challenge of swimming](#) through the cool, dark subterranean rivers that connect the caves. All swims are conducted with professional guidance and safety gear for an exciting yet secure experience.
- ☑️ **Jungle trekking and stream crossings:** Test your endurance by hiking across vast, emerald-green grasslands, crossing numerous streams, and traversing the untamed, pristine jungle terrain in the core area of Tu Lan Cave System.
- ☑️ **Immersive wilderness camping:** Unwind and enjoy a tranquil night camping amidst stunning natural beauty, typically set up beside a flowing stream or within a peaceful valley. Savor [delicious meals](#) prepared by a professional chef, offering a true taste of the wilderness.
- ☑️ **Professional and safe services:** Benefit from a large, dedicated support team including expert guides, safety assistants, and local porters. All adventurous activities adhere to the highest international [safety standards](#), ensuring peace of mind throughout your journey.
- ☑️ **Discover local culture and community life:** Experience unique local culture by dining in a local family's home in Tan Hoa village. Learn about their sustainable farming model on a refreshing morning bicycle tour on the final day of your journey.
- ☑️ **Pioneering a sustainable and shared economy model:** By choosing the Tu Lan Expedition tour, you directly support Oxalis's shared economy model. Your trip promotes local development through the employment of local labor, [procurement of local food](#), and utilization of homestay dining services, ensuring the community benefits alongside the company.
- ☑️ **A journey that transforms lives:** Beyond the natural splendor, your presence contributes to a powerful story of community resilience and growth. Sustainable tourism has played a key role in [transforming Tan Hoa](#), driving the poverty rate down from 85.7% in 2010 to just 2% in 2024. This expedition supports vital initiatives, including the construction of floating houses and septic toilets to improve local living standards. Furthermore, Oxalis is committed to future generations, sponsoring free open [swimming and safety training](#) to over 300 children in Tan Hoa and along the Rao Nan River every year.

Itinerary

Please note that the TL4 itinerary is weather-dependent and trails can be slippery. As one of Vietnam's toughest treks, this expedition requires significant endurance to navigate steep hills and earn the views. Cave swimming is a key feature (life jackets mandatory), though rafts are available for non-swimmers. This is a true adventure designed for those passionate about hiking.

[Download the itinerary](#)

Day 1: Tan Hoa – Secret Cave – Tu Lan Campsite

Your expedition begins between 7:30 AM – 8:00 AM with a pickup in Phong Nha (please finish breakfast beforehand). You will travel 70km to the Oxalis Tan Hoa office for a comprehensive safety briefing, gear distribution, and itinerary run-through.

The trek starts across the flat farmlands of Tan Hoa, crossing the river to reach the foot of the mountains. A short climb leads to the entrance of Secret Cave, a compact but geologically stunning cave discovered recently by local porters. Here, you will navigate carefully past rare cave pearls and unique formations before enjoying a picnic lunch at the cave entrance.

In the afternoon, the route winds through forests and hills into the Tu Lan Valley. The highlight is a swim through Hang Ken, renowned as one of the system's most beautiful river caves. The day concludes at the campsite, where you can settle into your tent, swim in the natural river, and enjoy multi-course dinner prepared by local chefs. The evening is yours to relax with the team or stargaze in the pitch-dark valley sky.

Day 2: Tu Lan – Hang Kim – Hung Ton – Hung Dung Campsite

The second day is an action-packed journey through three distinct caves: Tu Lan, Hang Kim, and Hung Ton. After breakfast, the team will provide a hands-on training session for the abseiling equipment. Once prepared, you'll hike to the dry entrance of Tu Lan Cave for the day's highlight: a thrilling 15m abseil down to the river passage, landing directly onto an inflatable raft. From there, the group paddles out of the cave into a stunning landscape of river, jungle, and limestone mountains.

Next, you will swim and trek through Hang Kim, navigating a 300m dry section where natural light beams spectacularly through a high upper entrance. The cave exit leads into the breathtaking To M Valley, a secluded paradise with waterfalls and a turquoise lake. Here, you can swim and relax while the team prepares a picnic lunch.

The afternoon continues with Hung Ton Cave. Entering near the waterfall, you will swim 100m before ascending a secured ladder to exit the cave. The final leg of the day requires endurance, involving a hike over "Lom Com" hill and across La Ken Valley to reach the Hung Dung Campsite. Set beside a crystal-clear river and surrounded by primeval jungle, it is the perfect spot to rest.

Day 3: Hung Dung – Hung Nhai – Hang Tien Campsite

Day 3 shifts the focus from caves to the deep jungle. The route covers approximately 8km with an elevation gain of 350m, taking you from Hung Dung Valley to the expansive Hung Nhai Valley. The trek involves navigating steep hills, dense forests, and refreshing stream crossings.

The destination is the Hang Tien Campsite, widely regarded as the most stunning campsite on the

entire tour. Located on the banks of the Rao Nan River, it features the crystal-clear Mooc Lake—known among explorers as a "natural infinity pool." Here, you can wash off the day's mud with a swim or enjoy stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) on the calm river waters.

Day 4: Hang Tien 1 – Hang Tien 2 – Tu Lan Lodge

The final day begins with Hang Tien 1, the largest dry cave in the Tu Lan system. Here, you will witness spectacular swirling rock patterns carved by centuries of water flow. The exploration concludes with a climb up a 10m ladder (secured by safety rope) to reach the exit.

A trek through ancient primary jungle leads to Hang Tien 2. You'll feel this cave before you see it; a powerful breeze rushes from the small entrance, acting as a natural air conditioner. Inside, the cave features distinctive rock formations and layers of rimstone pools that resemble subterranean terraced rice fields.

After exploring, the group will hike out via a rocky mountain path (200m elevation gain), stopping for a valley lunch en route. Upon reaching the road, cold drinks await, followed by a medal ceremony to celebrate conquering this expedition. You will then transfer back to the Oxalis Tan Hoa office to shower and check in at Tu Lan Lodge. The adventure concludes with a bicycle ride to a local house for a traditional dinner at 17:30.

Day 5: Visit local farms by bike - Transfer to Phong Nha/Dong Hoi - Tour ends

Your final morning in Tan Hoa begins with the peaceful sight of limestone mountains rising through the early mist. Wake up early to watch the sunrise from Tu Lan Lodge, or take a quiet walk through the village before enjoying breakfast (served from 6:30 AM).

At 08:30 AM, our guide will lead you on a bicycle tour through the heart of Tan Hoa. You will cycle along quiet paths lined with cornfields and peanut gardens, observing the daily rhythm of rural life. Stops include visits to local farms to learn about the sustainable VAC farming model. Along the way you'll taste local specialties like boiled corn, roasted peanuts, and ginger honey tea.

The tour concludes at 11:00 AM, allowing time to pack. Check-out is at 12:00 PM, followed by a 12:30 PM shuttle transfer to Phong Nha or Dong Hoi.

Travel Note: Please ensure your onward flight or train departs after 4:00 PM. If you wish to extend your stay or explore more of Phong Nha, please contact your Oxalis consultant or the front desk.

Suggested itinerary before and after the tour:

To ensure the best preparation before your journey or to unwind after the expedition, Oxalis suggests staying at Chay Lap Farmstay, featuring premium rooms, a swimming pool, spa, kayaking, cycling, and more. A special discounted rate for Oxalis customers is 1,000,000 VND/room for 2 people. Check availability here: chaylapfarmstay.com

During your time in Phong Nha, the [Phong Nha Caves Exploration Museum](#) (open daily from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM, free admission) is a must-visit destination. Here, you can experience the Son Doon 5D VR technology for 500,000 VND per ticket. All proceeds from this activity are contributed to the Oxalis Foundation to support local community projects, making your journey even more meaningful.

Adventure level on tour

After many years of adventure tourism activities, Oxalis Adventure has created a Level of Adventure scale to help guests participating in Oxalis tours to visualize and choose the adventure tour most suitable for their fitness and health. This scale is not to be applied to other companies or tours with different conditions and terrains. The easiest level (level 1) anyone can join, and the most difficult level - 6 requires regular exercise and some trekking experience.

Those who regularly practice sports or regularly participate in mountain climbing and trekking tours in the forest can complete this tour easily.

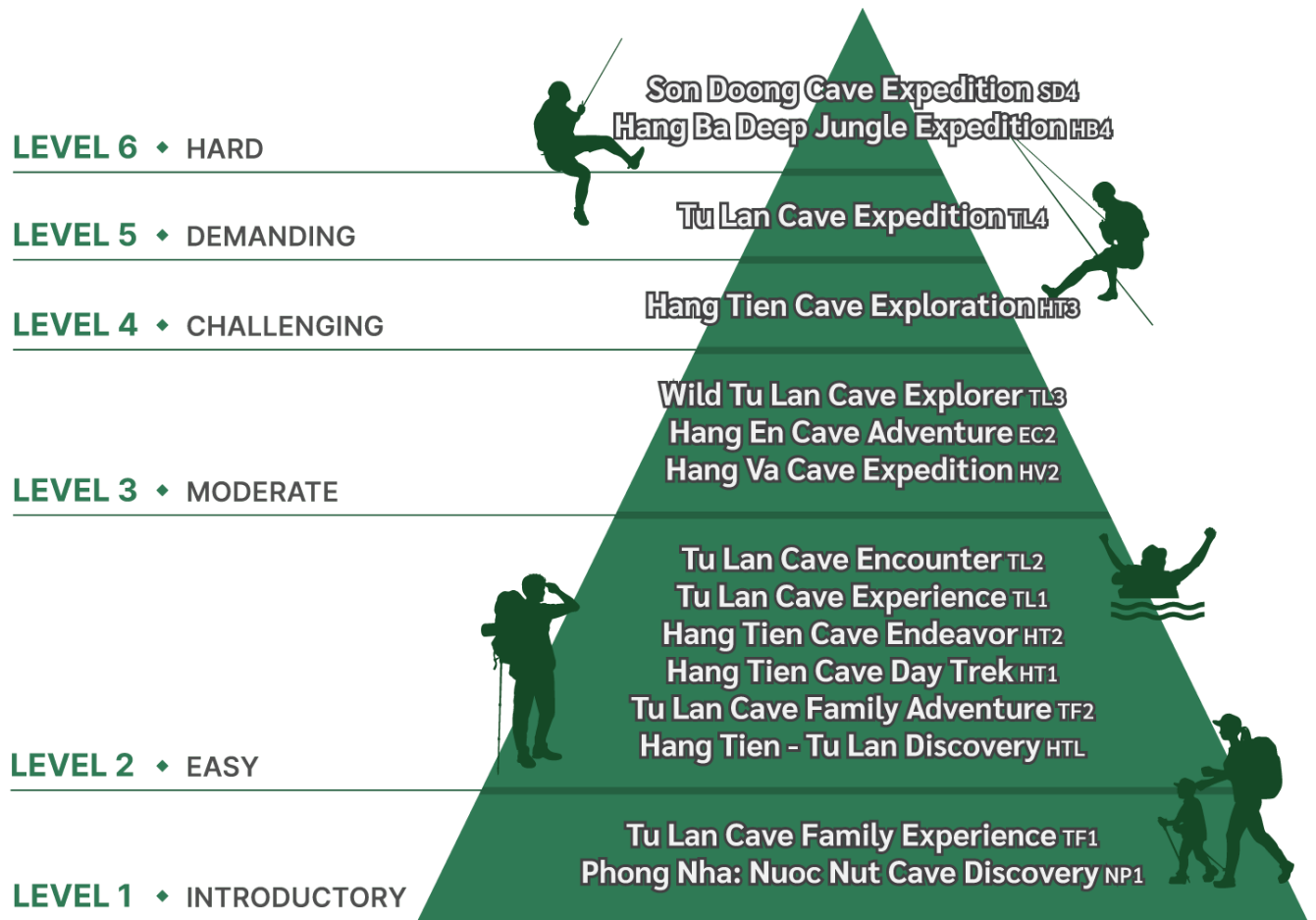
Adventure level 5 · Demanding

The Tu Lan Cave Expedition tour is rated as Demanding (Level 5) 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: Crossing rocky terrain, climbing steep hills, hiking long distances, swimming and using technical equipment, caving.

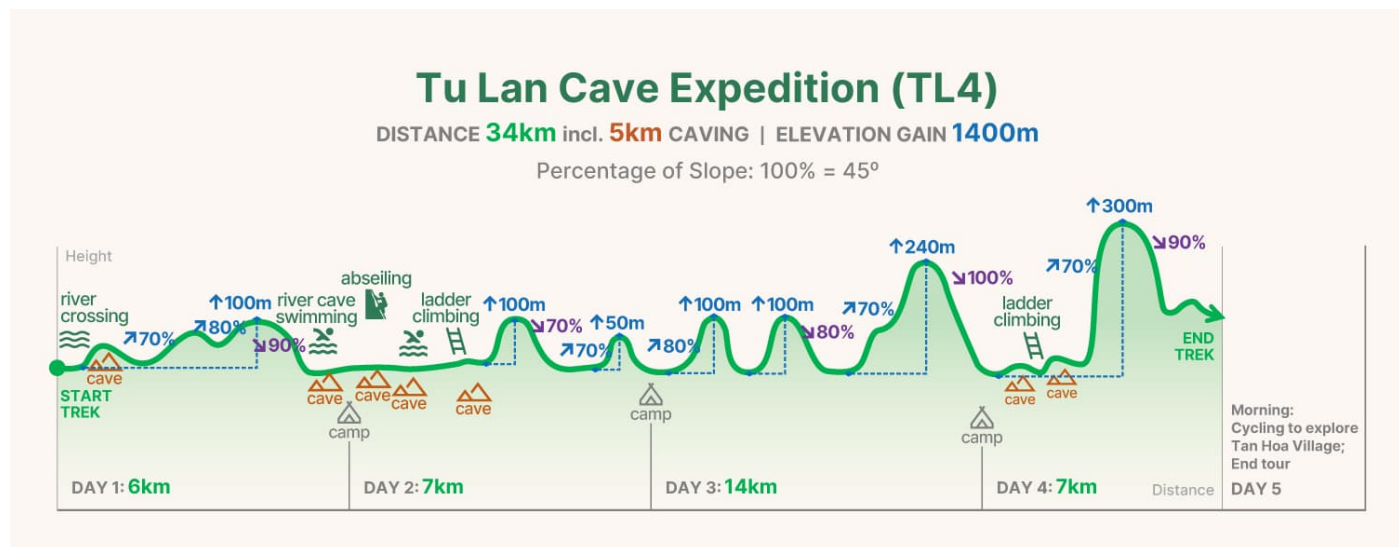
The number of guests per tour: Maximum 8 customers; Age 16-70 years old.

- ★ Terrain with many steep hills
- ★ Trekking 34km of mountainous terrain
- ★ Elevation gain of 1400m
- ★ 5km of cave exploration
- ★ River and stream crossings
- ★ Swimming underground rivers (Total 1km intermittently) with a life vest provided by Oxalis
- ★ 15m adventure abseil in the cave (the abseil equipment provided by Oxalis, directly guided and supervised by the guide).
- ★ Two 15m ladder climbs with a safety rope and harnesses, operated by the safety team.



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](#).



Items to bring on Tu Lan Cave Expedition tour

Tour TL4 is a multiple-day trek and considered to be the one of the toughest Vietnam jungle tours, with many different terrains and you need to have a thorough preparation for the trip. Customers will be asked to prepare suitable clothing for safety and comfort. Clothing should be good for trekking in the jungle, river crossings, or exploring the cave as well as avoiding dangers and risks from sharp rocks, snakes, insects, or poison ivy.

Oxalis provides

Camping equipment: tent, mattresses, pillow, sleeping bags

Caving and safety gears: helmet, headlight, gloves, dry box for electric device, mini size camera

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1 PVC backpack (25L) to carry helmet, dry box, water and things you need during the trek.

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 filter

Compost toilet, toilet paper, hand cleaner

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

First aid and medical rescue equipment

Satellite phone

Mini-size portable fan inside the tent (in summer)

Secure storage at office

You need to prepare

Essential clothing

Trekking clothes:

- 3-4 quick-dry, bright, long-sleeved shirts
- 2-3 pairs of long pants(quick-dry)
- 1 waterproof jacket (winter months December to March)

Campsite clothing sets:

- Warm clothes for winter from November to March
- Shorts and T-shirts for summer from April to September
- 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/slides for campsite
- Swimwear using at the Campsites

Optional items

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

Optional

- Arm cover if wearing short-sleeved T-shirts
- Camera & Tripod
- Ear plugs
- Bandana or headband
- Rehydration tablets
- Blister prevention tape
- Personal dry bag/box for electronic devices

Photos



