

Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site

Alternative site name(s)

Chua Huong, Chua Huong Tich, Perfume pagoda

Province(s)

Ha Tay

Status

Decreed

Management board established

Yes

Latitude

20°34' - 20°38'N

Longitude

105°43' - 105°49'E

Bio-unit

10b - Northern Indochina



Conservation status

The site was included on Decision No. 194/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, dated 9 August 1986, which decreed the establishment of a 500 ha cultural and historical site named Chua Huong Tich (MARD 1997). The cultural and historical site was established to conserve "limestone forest for renowned landscape protection" (Cao Van Sung 1995).

In 1992, an investment plan for the cultural and historical site was prepared by FIPI (Anon. 1992). This investment plan proposed establishing a 4,354 ha cultural and historical site named Chua Huong, comprising a strict protection area of 2,901 ha and a forest rehabilitation area of 1,453 ha. In addition, the investment plan defined a buffer zone of 780 ha (Anon. 1992). The investment plan was approved by MARD on 14 April 1993 and by Ha Tay Provincial People's Committee on 6 May 1993, following Decision No. 230-QD/UB. A management board for the cultural and historical site was established by the provincial people's committee on 19 March 1994. The site is currently under the management of Ha Tay Provincial DARD, and has a staff of nine (Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board 2000).

Figures provided by Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board (2000) are not consistent with those in the investment plan, indicating

that the management zoning of the cultural and historical site has been revised since the preparation of the investment plan. According to Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board (2000), the cultural and historical site has a total area of 4,355 ha, comprising a strict protection area of 2,080 ha, a forest rehabilitation area of 821 ha and an administration and services area of 1,454 ha. The buffer zone still covers 780 ha, in An Phu, An Tien and Hung Tien communes, My Duc district. The cultural and historical site itself is in Huong Son commune.

Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site is included on the 2010 list, under the name Huong Son (FPD 1998).

Topography and hydrology

Huong Son Cultural and Historical site lies 60 km south of Hanoi, and is centred on Chua Huong Tich, the Perfume pagoda. The landscape of the cultural and historical site is dominated by Huong Tich mountain, a limestone karst outcrop, which reaches a height of 381 m. To the north and east, the site is bordered by the low coastal plain of the Red River Delta. The lowest altitude in the site is 20 m. The site is situated in the watershed of the Day river.

Biodiversity value

According to the investment plan (Anon. 1992), the cultural and historical site supports 1,723 ha of limestone forest. A total of 350 species of plants have been recorded at Huong Son, including several that are listed in the *Red Data Book of Vietnam*, such as *Fraxinus chinensis* and *Dalbergia tonkinensis*. There is no reliable, up-to-date information available about the fauna of the cultural and historical site.

Conservation issues

The buffer zone of Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site has a population of 19,920 people, who belong to the Kinh and Muong ethnic groups. A further 17,343, mostly Kinh, people live inside the cultural and historical site. The main economic activities in the cultural and historical site are agriculture and tourism (Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board 2000).

Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board (2000) recognises that the biggest threats to biodiversity at the site are exploitation of forest products, forest fire, shifting cultivation, the impact of tourism, and livestock grazing in the forest during floods. As for many popular visitor destinations in Vietnam, solid waste management and pollution are two of the biggest management issues.

Other documented values

The cultural value, specifically the religious value, of Huong Son is the main reason for the site's designation. Chua Huong Tich, the Perfume pagoda, is a popular destination for pilgrims and other domestic and foreign visitors. Rather than just one pagoda, the site actually contains a complex of pagodas and Buddhist shrines, nestled within the limestone outcrops of Huong Tich mountain ('the mountain of the fragrant traces'). Dodd and Lewis (1996) describe the area as "north Vietnam's most famous pilgrimage site". Additional recreational and amenity values can also be assumed.

Related projects

No information.

Literature sources

Anon. (1992) [Investment plan for Huong Son (Chua Huong) Cultural and Historical Site]. Hanoi: Forest Inventory and Planning Institute. In Vietnamese.

Dodd, J. and Lewis, M. (1996) Vietnam: the rough guide. London: Rough Guides.

Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board (2000) [FPD questionnaire]. Huong Son: Huong Son Cultural and Historical Site Management Board. In Vietnamese.

Storey, R. and Robinson, D. (1995) Lonely planet travel survival kit: Vietnam. Third edition. Hawthorn: Lonely Planet Publications.