

Explore Real Asia - ERA

A bridge to cultures and identities

ERA is a local travel agent for Inbound tour in Vietnam and Indochina

By Charlie Addiman
Getting fed up with the same Thai beach? Done the neon lit strips? Then perhaps it's time for something different – time to **Explore Real Asia**. And with **Membership Rewards** you can get 5% off the cost.

As discerning travellers are discovering, Indo-China is excitingly different. Of course Vietnam has its

beaches: for instance at Nha Trang, where the seafood is wonderful, or stunningly beautiful Halong Bay, a World Heritage site. It has its cities: cosmopolitan Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and stately Hanoi, with the fascinating warren of streets in its old town bordering Hoan Kiem Lake. Or there is the ancient City of Hue with its Forbidden City, the magnificent tombs of its ancient rulers and the possibility of a trip on the Perfume River.

But there is so much more: the way of life on the Mekong Delta with its stilt houses and rice paddies. The bizarre Cao Dai religious sect at Tay Ninh and the strangest temple you're ever likely to see. You can take a trip down the amazing Cu Chi tunnels and begin to understand the ingenuity deployed by the Vietnamese to defeat the might of the US. The colourful Minority Peoples with their traditional dress are spread throughout the country. Despite flooding several times over the centuries, Hoi An's houses and Japanese bridge are a trip back to a distant era. The ancient Cham Towers near Da Nang also speak of a centuries old culture. Remember, Vietnam's first University was inaugurated in 1076! Or there's the breathtaking scenery of North-East Vietnam. The list could go on and on.

Explore Real Asia was set up relatively recently by Hoang Thi Mai (that's her in the corner of the photo) who has worked in the travel industry all her working life and has been a personal friend for the past 10 years, hence the unlikely link between Rosslyn Park and a travel company based in Vietnam.

Mai, from Hanoi, got together with some fellow-spirits at the younger end of the travel industry in Laos and Cambodia to cover the whole of Indo-China. They were concerned that westerners were getting ripped-off by operators who were more interested in turning a quick profit than in delivering the service and quality that

Hoang Thi Mai

Director

Add: #701, Tan Minh Building
37/66 De To Hoang Road,
Hai Ba Trung Dist., Hanoi
Tel: 84-4 622 7195, Fax: 84-4 622 7194
H/P: 84-9 0341 1916
Email: mai@explorerealiasia.com, hoangthimai@vnn.vn
Website: www.explorerealiasia.com



would bring return bookings and a sustainable business. In comparing prices, it's important to realise that with ERA you are not part of a larger group herded around on a coach. For most tours you have your own guide, and most often a car as well. So you travel at your own speed, tours can easily be tailored to your precise requirement and frequently you'll gain fascinating insights that are just not available to larger parties.

The Vietnamese people are very friendly. They are also justly very proud of their culture: bordered by China, close to Japan they have resisted colonisation by either, and seen off the French and the Americans. They are a fascinating people to be among.

ERA also offers tours to Cambodia and Laos (an unspoilt country just waiting to be "found" as the next "must-see" destination). Mai can arrange your flights or, if you prefer, book your own flights and Mai will make all the arrangements once you get there. And if you really can't resist that Thai or Malaysian beach holiday, then Indo-China is a low-cost add-on to turn a routine holiday into an exotic one – and save 5% through **Rosslyn Park Membership Rewards**.

Remember to mention Rosslyn Park when enquiring.

Contact: Hoang Thi Mai
Website: www.explorerealiasia.net
E-mail: mai@explorerealiasia.net,
mai@explorerealiasia.com,
hoangthimai@vnn.vn
or
Telephone +84 4 622 7195
Fax +84 4 622 7194

NB The website server is based in Hanoi and occasionally is a bit slower to download / refresh than you may be used to.