

Tourist Tips: Combatting Sex and Labor Trafficking While Traveling

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Why tourists need to be aware?

As the world slowly begins to reopen and tourism resumes, it is more important than ever to learn what you can do to prevent and combat sex trafficking while traveling. It is not uncommon for sex trafficking victims to work out of hotels or illegal spas and massage parlors which may be visited by tourists, and as noted by organizations such as [EPCAT](#), many of the trafficking victims involved in tourism are children. Hotels and restaurants are also at a higher risk for labor trafficking due to their increased use of subcontractors. By only supporting responsible businesses and organizations, we can all play a part in stopping the practice of modern slavery in the tourism industry.

When preparing for your next trip, review these tips on how you can ensure that your vacation does not contribute to the proliferation of modern slavery. Human Trafficking Search published a report called [Tourism and Human Trafficking: A Mapping of Sex Trafficking & Labor Trafficking in the Tourism Sector](#) that maps out the intersections of human trafficking and tourism with a primary focus on sex and labor trafficking's presence within the tourism sector to help travelers plan and navigate the issue of tourism and trafficking.

1. If you see something, say something:

[Polaris](#) found that only 22% of calls to report human trafficking in hotels and motels were made by the victims themselves. That means that over three quarters of the time when a report is made, it is made by someone who either witnessed suspicious activities or interacted with the victim. Remember that you should never try to intervene directly in the situation, as this can be dangerous to both yourself and the victim and that the best course of action is to report any suspicious activity. It is vitally important that whenever you suspect that human trafficking is taking place, especially if the individuals involved are minors, that you report the incident to local human trafficking hotlines. Human trafficking hotlines handle cases sensitively and have a victim centered approach, so it is best to contact them first before contacting law enforcement. In the US, contact The National Human Trafficking Resource Center (1-888-373-7888) or the BeFree (233733) Texting Helpline to report suspicious activities.

2. Support responsible businesses:

One of the easiest steps that someone can take in the fight against modern slavery in tourism is to seek out and support businesses committed to anti-trafficking. Hotels, airlines, and tourism agencies can make individual commitments to training their staff on how to spot, report, and prevent sex trafficking and can audit and adjust their hiring practices to ensure that they are utilizing best practices to lessen the likelihood of labor trafficking within their staff. While many hotels have individual action plans and commitments to address human trafficking in their establishments, tourism companies

and hotels can also join an external organization like [The Code](#), which provides trainings and action plans for tourism-related companies that want to fight against the sexual exploitation of children. When selecting a hotel, travel agency or provider, investigate the commitments that they have made to stop sex and labor trafficking in their industry.

3. Ensure best practices when selecting volunteer organizations:

For those who are going on a socially conscious holiday that involves volunteering, remember to investigate the volunteer organization before booking. If looking to volunteer with children, check to see if the organization has a code of conduct that centers the needs and protection of the child. When selecting a program, it is good to remember that if some of the activities or experiences being advertised are not acceptable in your home country, it's probably not the most responsible volunteer organization. This includes activities like unsupervised time with children, lack of a background check for volunteers, and the absence of volunteer training. In addition, many organizations such as [The Code](#), [EPCAT](#), and [Rethink Orphanages](#), suggest that volunteers should avoid touring or volunteering in orphanages or children's residential facilities at all, due to the higher risk of child labor and sexual exploitation present there. Unsupervised volunteers may sexually abuse or exploit the children while alone, and orphanages have been known to force children to beg and work to help line the pockets of orphanage directors.

4. Utilize new apps and technology:

With the evolution of technology, there are plenty of apps that people can download before traveling that can help tourists fight trafficking. One such app is the [Traffick Cam](#), a website where people can upload pictures of their hotel rooms for the use in tracking and locating victims of sex trafficking. Traffickers will sometimes post pictures of their victims online or in advertisements, and by creating a database of user-uploaded images of hotel rooms, law enforcement is better able to find the victims of human trafficking. Another handy app for tourists is the Airline Ambassadors International [TIP Line](#). The TIP Line allows users to report suspicious activities and possible instances of trafficking while travelling through airports around the world.

5. Do not support trafficking:

This one may be self-evident, but it's important to say nonetheless: if you are travelling, try your best to avoid directly contributing to human trafficking. The rise of "sex tourism" or the organization of a vacation with the purpose of taking advantage of the lack of restrictions imposed on prostitution and other sexual activities in some foreign countries, has led to an increased demand for these services. Having sex with someone who is trafficked or sex with a minor is always a crime, regardless of the legality of prostitution in the country you may be visiting. These crimes can be prosecuted both in the country you are visiting and back home in the US, so think twice before you engage in sexual activities in a foreign country.