

How to be a Respectful Traveller | Skyscanner Australia

The best travel adventures broaden our horizons, open our eyes to foreign cultures and offer rest and relaxation on our annual holidays. Being a respectful traveller means respecting the places we visit, the people we meet, learning and understanding about the world beyond our front door. So how should we behave when we visit former war zones and natural disaster areas or sites of human atrocities. Here's [Skyscanner Australia's](#) top five tips for being a respectful traveller.



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1. Stop the poverty porn

Poverty porn is defined as media which exploits poor and impoverished people to generate sympathy to induce an action, be it selling newspapers, inciting charitable donations or support for a given cause. Famine porn, development porn or stereotype porn are poverty porn's equally unsavoury siblings.

While there is much debate about NGO's and charities using stereotypical images of malnourished, miserable children in famine depleted countries to raise awareness, travellers are susceptible to jumping aboard the exploitative bandwagon too.

Slum or ghetto tourism, which originated in 19th century slums of London and Manhattan, has since gone global, in part attributable to hit movies like Slumdog Millionaire or The Impossible which follows one family caught up in the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

Respectful alternatives

Think twice before snapping a photo of a child dressed in rags or a haggard woman doubled over from the weight she is carrying. At the very least, ask permission before pulling out your camera. Any half-decent photographer will tell you that the best portraits reflect the relationship between shooter and subject.

Travel with ethical tour operators who employ locals, visit locally-owned attractions and create responsible travel itineraries that give back to the community.



2. Avoid unethical wildlife parks

Alarm bells should start ringing at any wildlife encounter where wild animals are trained to perform on cue. Despite a movement towards anti-animal cruelty, according to Animals Asia there are only five countries worldwide where animal performance is totally banned: Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Malta and Cyprus (other countries have partial bans) .

Animals aren't actors, circus clowns or spectacles to gawk at or imprison. Yet countless wild animals are forced to perform silly tricks under the threat of physical punishment. Have you ever seen a wild elephant paint a picture with its trunk or balance on its hind leg triumphantly trumpeting skywards? No, neither have we. Circuses are some of the worst offenders.

Then there are those safari parks or zoos where animals are contained in cages or enclosures. Visitors are encouraged to cuddle, pet or ride wild animals, while an official photographer snaps pictures of your encounter. In Australia you can cuddle a koala or pose with a sea lion or dolphin. Visitors to Thailand often sign up to ride an elephant while perched on a heavy, cumbersome houdah (seat) strapped to its back. Wild animals should be just that – wild.

We're not even going to mention the ethics of hunting animals for trophies. Just no.

Respectful alternatives

South African safari parks are a good example of how to ethically view animals in the wild, where travellers board open-topped jeeps with a knowledgeable guide and tracker. In Australia, Dubbo's 300ha [Taronga Western Plains Zoo](#) aims to secure a shared future for wildlife and humans. If you must visit a circus, make

sure it's an animal-free one.



3. Enough with the selfies – travel is not all about you!

Selfies are the lovechild of the World Wide Web with approx. 6,000 selfies posted on Instagram every minute. Every day. The number of selfies uploaded to social media platforms is staggering: 55 percent of all social media selfies come from millennial's, followed by Gen X with 24 percent and baby boomers lagging behind with a miserable 9 percent.

Considering our average lifespan is 75 years (or 27,375 days), an average millennial is expected to take 25,700 selfies during their lifetime, or one selfie daily. Travellers are the worst offenders, turning their backs on an attraction, monument, museum or other point of interest as they preen, pose and pout.

Respectful alternative

Put the selfie stick away, turn around and actually absorb the site you've travelled to see. Chances are you might look at the world differently once you've ditched the narcissism and removed yourself from the foreground. Go on, try it!



4. Research the cultural etiquette

Visiting delicate nature environments or sacred cultural sites may mean we'll literally traverse someone's backyard in order to access to a site. While tourism provides vital income for locals, it's also a daily nuisance, with strangers gawking and gapping or snapping photographs.

Uninformed travellers can easily cause offense by not being aware of local

customs about dressing appropriately or behavioral traits. For example, when visiting a Fijian village, sunglasses should not be worn on your head, hats should be removed and ladies should cover shoulders and knees. In Thailand, feet should never be pointed at others, especially Buddhas, and the Royal Family are revered (disrespect towards the King attracts a prison sentence).

Ethical alternatives

It's simple common sense to learn a few phrases (like please, thank you, hello & goodbye) along with cultural anomalies specific to your destination. Respect private property and people's privacy when abroad just as you would at home (would you walk to a window and snap a photo of a stranger on their front porch in your home country?).

Brush up on local politics to avoid tourism operators with little regard for delicate, fragile ecosystems or unethical tourism developments.

[You tube greetings around the world](#)

5. Do you really need to see historical atrocities?

Sadly, there are countless sites around the globe where humans have committed atrocities against each other. Horror and human tragedy have become popular attractions for travellers, who tread a ghoulishly fine line between death, disaster and despair on a tragic scale. The morbid and the macabre take centre stage.

Ground Zero New York, Eastern Europe concentration camps, Chernobyl or the site of Princess Diana's car accident are all popular 'dark tourism' sites. While visiting these sites help us to understand what it is to be human, turning a tragedy into a profit-making enterprise comes with endless challenges – managing visitor behavior being just one of them.

Respectful alternatives

Consider your reasons for visiting a site of human suffering and be aware of your behavior while at the site. Are you there simply to rubberneck? Or perhaps your interest is more inclined towards empathy, education or social responsibility. Put your camera away just this once to sombrely absorb your surroundings.

[You Tube dark tourism](#)

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Now that you're equipped with five simple rules to being a respectful traveller, check out Skyscanner Australia for the best deals on [airfares](#), [hotels](#) and [car hire](#) with no booking fees.