

Orphanage Tourism

Have you heard of “orphanage tourism”? It’s a popular and growing travel trend.

Perhaps your tour provider to Asia, Africa, or Latin America has included in your itinerary a visit to a local orphanage or to an orphanage dance show.

If you’re considering these options or if you are traveling in a developing country and would like to learn more, we’ve compiled a list of 5 things you should know about orphanage tourism.

- 1. Most people think an “orphanage” means a place for kids without parents or safe living conditions.**
 - In Cambodia and many other popular tourist destinations that assumption is incorrect.
 - According to a recent UN study, more than 3/4 of Cambodian “orphans” have one or more living parents.
 - The rate of children living in orphanages has grown with the rate of tourism even though the number of actual orphans in the country has declined.
- 2. Many assume that the parents of children in orphanages have passed away or abandoned them. Sometimes this is true but not always.**
 - Studies show that in some cases, “owners” of the enterprising orphanages will travel to rural, poorer communities and tell families their children will be better taken care of in their orphanages.
 - They are sold the idea that Westerners will educate them and they’ll have a better life.
 - Most of the time children are forced to perform in cultural dance shows night after night or walk the streets with signs reading, “Donate to our orphanage.”

