

Outlawing orphanage tourism, so now what?

by Amy McLoughlin

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Since we began Ayana Journeys we have aimed to educate travellers and our community about various responsible tourism issues and solutions. One of the most important current topics in this field for us is [voluntourism](#) that engages vulnerable children, such as those in residential care facilities or ['orphanages'](#).

Various international campaigns support our values and are lobbying to get orphanage tours removed from your bucket lists and holiday brochures. Incredible momentum has picked up, and exciting news is on the horizon. Have you heard – It could [become a crime](#) to organise trips for Australians to visit orphanages in countries like Cambodia? Senator Linda Reynolds is spearheading the movement; she wants it to become a criminal offence for someone to facilitate orphanage tours, arguing it is a form of [modern day slavery](#).

Travelling and 'doing good'

Once introduced to the complexities of 'doing good' as we travel, tourists are often left perplexed about what to do instead of visiting orphanages or volunteering their time with children. Consider these alternatives:

- **Become an advocate** – Learn from child protection and responsible tourism leaders as you travel, and share your knowledge with the traveller community.

Our friends at [Cambodian Children's Trust](#) recently starting holding talks in Battambang about their lessons in this field. Attend an event and pass it on, influencing fellow travellers as you move.

- **Think about where you spend your money** – By supporting businesses with ethical practices or social missions, you can support causes you believe in. We're lucky that in Cambodia there are plenty of social enterprises to support (we recently wrote a list of some of [our favourites!](#)), meaning you can shop or eat whilst contributing at the same time. Whilst directly engaging with an organisation's beneficiaries might not be on the cards, your money will go where it matters most.

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- **Be a ChildSafe Traveller** – Follow the [ChildSafe 7 Tips for Travellers](#) to safeguard children, including what to do if you spot exploitation and other recommendations.

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The travel industry at large

As part of our values to prioritise support and connection, over competition, we embrace opportunities to educate tour operators. If you're considering, or are in the process of, transitioning out of childcare placements or projects, we'd love to be part of your journey.

- **Book a workshop for your group** – We run educational [workshops](#) for schools and other groups. These can be easily integrated into your itinerary as an alternative to visiting an orphanage or other short-term volunteering activities. The objective of these is to foster critical thinking skills, as well as educating guests about various viewpoints on topics like orphanage tourism.
- **Become ChildSafe certified** – We recommend collaborating with child care experts like the team at the [ChildSafe Movement](#). They can support and train your company to become child protection ambassadors in and beyond the work place.

To keep up to date on the exciting campaign to outlaw orphanage tourism, [follow Rethink Orphanages on Twitter!](#)

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Co-Founder of Ayana Journeys and passionate about responsible travel!



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