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Five Travel Tips to Help Stop Human Trafficking

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It's not terribly surprising to learn that many trafficking victims have been exploited in a hotel. It seems part and parcel of every movie we have seen about forced commercial sexual exploitation. The hotels are usually seedy under the radar locales or the high-end luxury kind where wealthy men, often foreign, abuse girls and women. None of this seems to have much to do with the general population, or does it?

It does. As much as we want to believe otherwise, the reality of human trafficking isn't far from home. The good news is that as we jaunt from trip to trip this summer (and into the holiday season), when given the right tools, we can actually help identify and decrease human trafficking. Collaboration between hotels, travellers and NGOs can make a huge impact on combatting trafficking. To get the ball rolling, the non-governmental organization ECPAT-USA and members of the travel industry founded the Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct, called [The Code](#), to help hotels learn the signs of trafficking. The NGO also recently launched **#DoesYourHotelKnow**, a new awareness campaign that alerts hotels and travelers on what to do if we think it's happening (key: you don't have to be certain, that's up to the authorities to figure out).

Here are some easy-to-do steps to make the world a bit better when you travel.

1. Stay At Hotels With Anti-Trafficking Policies

An excellent first step for tourists, says Sarah Porter, development officer at ECPAT-USA, is to pick your hotel and airline from companies that have signed The Code and implement policies that help prevent and protect children from trafficking. The policies include what are basic, but often forgotten, ways to protect children from exploitation. They include requiring guests to register car information at check-in, changing Wi-Fi passwords regularly, blocking Internet access to online sex classified advertisements, installing strategically-placed security cameras and coordinating with law enforcement.

Among companies that implement these policies are **Delta Air Lines, Hilton Worldwide, Wyndham Worldwide and Carlson Companies**. ([Here](#) is the full list.) Orbitz and Choice Hotels International just signed on. These companies annually report to ECPAT on their anti-trafficking policies and development.

Be proactive: If you have a favorite hotel that isn't implementing anti-trafficking policies, you can [ask](#) them to do so.



2. Get Your Employer To Buy-In

Forget about just travel for leisure during the summer, many of us frequently travel for business. We don't likely think about the impact our companies can have if their travel and hotel accounts include anti-trafficking policies. It seems so simple and easy, but the impact is enormous. Major companies that build-in anti-trafficking language into contracts with hotels are **Apple, Toyota, Reed Elsevier, McDonalds and Kraft**. These companies are connecting the dots and realize that they play a unique role in combatting trafficking. They are using their corporate influence to do more. So can you, if you bring it to your employer's attention.

3. Learn the Red Flags

By learning how to identify signs of trafficking, you quickly become part of the solution and increase the number of eyes and ears on the ground. The red flags are often simple and easy to remember. For instance, do you see a young person inappropriately dressed for the weather? Is the person disoriented and with another person who seems in charge and speaks for him/her (right, it sounds like my one-year-old most of the time, but I think you know what I mean). [Here](#) are some other clues. Often, it's the totality of clues and simply your gut that tell you something is wrong...

- Loud noises or fighting coming from a room
- A person that watches the door and escorts various men to and from the room at regular intervals
- A person that pays with cash upon check-in and carries little or no luggage
- When traveling, the person is not in control of documents/identification
- Signs of physical or emotional abuse
- Potential victim avoids eye contact

Keep in mind that if a person under age 18 engages in a commercial sex act, then she/he is a victim of trafficking.

When you suspect something is off and could be human trafficking, take mental notes of how to describe the trafficker, victim, location and any other identifying details.

4. Say Something

Okay, don't turn into MacGyver (seriously, don't. It jeopardizes you and the victim) but saying something to the right people can save someone's life. When you suspect something awry is happening, talk to a flight attendant or hotel management. Call the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Call Center: **1-800-THE-LOST** (1-800-843-5678) or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at **1-888-373-7888**, or text: **HELP to BeFree (233733)**. Again, you don't have to be sure, that's for the authorities to figure out.

5. Spread Awareness

As you travel, pass the word on the travel and hotel companies you select and why. Use the hashtag **#DoesYourHotelKnow**. If you feel like getting even more proactive you can share this [PSA](#) to get friends, family and colleagues on board.

Enjoy your travels! I hope they contain melting popsicles, sandy toes and dripping watercolors from well-worn paintbrushes.

This post originally appeared on [The Good Blog](#). Photo credit: [Eugenio Azzola](#)