

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Child Safeguarding Guidelines for Travellers

At Intrepid, we believe travel should be a force for good. This includes protecting the safety, dignity and rights of children everywhere we go.

A child is anyone under 18.

When we travel, we step into other people's communities. The choices we make, even small ones, can have a lasting impact on children and their families. Some actions that feel harmless, like giving a gift, taking a photo or spending time with a child, can unintentionally increase risk, create dependency or expose children to harm.

What we expect from our customers

Respecting children isn't just about avoiding harm. It's about recognising their rights, their dignity, and their place within their own communities. We ask all travellers to:

- Respect children's privacy, dignity and boundaries at all times
- Follow the guidance of your trip leader and local partners
- Be mindful that what feels normal to you may not be appropriate or safe in another context
- Speak up if something doesn't feel right. Safeguarding works best when everyone plays a role.

Children travelling with you

If you are travelling with a child, or as part of a group with children, clear roles and boundaries are essential. Parents, guardians or approved escorts are responsible for children at all times during the trip. This includes supervision, behaviour and day-to-day care.

We ask that you:

- Do not supervise, discipline or take responsibility for another traveller's child
- Respect boundaries between families and different parenting approaches
- Avoid stepping into situations that could create confusion about responsibility

Our trips are designed so children travel safely with their guardians across accommodation, transport and activities. Your trip leader is there to support the group and ensure safety, but they are not responsible for supervising children.

Photography and social media

Photos are a big part of travel. But when children are involved, they can pose real risks.

Images can be shared widely, reused without consent, or taken out of context. In some cases, they can even be used in ways that put children at risk of exploitation.

If you want to take photos:

- Ask permission from a parent, caregiver or responsible adult first
- Where appropriate, ask the child as well
- Respect a no, without question

We encourage:

- Group photos rather than images of individual children, which can single a child out and increase their vulnerability

Please avoid:

- Taking photos of children who are distressed, unwell, poorly dressed, or in vulnerable situations
- Capturing children who are alone or isolated
- Sharing images that could be misinterpreted or misused

When sharing online:

- Do not include identifying details such as full names, exact locations, schools or communities
- Turn off geotagging on your phone or camera

These steps help protect children's privacy, reduce the risk of images being misused, and ensure they are represented with dignity and respect.

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Interactions with children in communities

Many of our trips bring you into contact with local communities. These moments can be meaningful, but they need to be handled carefully.

Unstructured interactions, even with good intentions, can:

- Disrupt daily routines, like school or work
- Create expectations around gifts or financial support
- Expose children to unfamiliar adults without safeguards
- Increase vulnerability to exploitation or harm

For this reason, we ask you to:

- Only visit schools, community centres or projects when they are part of your itinerary
- Avoid giving gifts, money or food directly to children
- Not ask children to pose for photos
- Never spend time alone with a child away from others

All community interactions included in your trip are assessed to ensure they are safe, appropriate and respectful. Creating your own interactions outside of this structure can unintentionally cause harm.

Volunteering and orphanage visits

We do not support orphanage tourism or unregulated volunteering with children. While these experiences may seem positive, evidence shows they can have serious unintended impacts.

Short-term visits can:

- Disrupt children's emotional development
- Create repeated attachment and loss cycles
- Encourage the institutionalisation of children who could otherwise be cared for in families

- Increase exposure to exploitation

Supporting children is important, but it needs to be done in ways that are safe, ethical and sustainable. If you're interested in contributing, your trip leader can suggest responsible alternatives.

Language and respect

How we talk about children matters. It shapes how others see them and how they are treated.

We ask you to:

- Use respectful, neutral language
- Avoid labelling children as victims or focusing only on hardship
- Respect how individuals and communities want to be represented

Children should never be portrayed in ways that are:

- Degrading;
- Sensationalised, or
- stripped of dignity.

If something doesn't feel right

You may see something that concerns you. It might feel small or unclear. But it's always worth reporting. This could include:

- A child being treated in a way that feels unsafe or inappropriate
- Someone interacting with or photographing children in a concerning way
- Any situation where a child appears distressed, at risk or uncomfortable

Please report this immediately to your trip leader. Even if it doesn't turn out to be an issue, sharing information helps us build a clearer picture and respond appropriately.

Want to learn more?

See Intrepid's [Responsible Travel Policy](#).