Reality Tours & Travel
India

Ask most tourists what's on their bucket list for India and they will probably mention temples, tigers and the Taj Mahal. Few will include a visit to Dharavi, one of Asia's largest slums. Yet a trip here with Reality Tours & Travel will provide more of an insight into the 'real India' that so many seek.

Reality Tours & Travel's 2.5 hour walking tour aims to give visitors the most accurate picture possible of Dharavi and life in this vast slum. Guests interact with locals as much as possible without disrupting their lives or work.

These trips have two key goals. The first is to break down negative stereotypes. Local slum residents are employed as guides and staff to show visitors how Dharavi is the heart of small-scale industry in Mumbai. Guests get to see recycling, pottery making, embroidery, bakery, a soap factory, leather tanning, poppadum-making and much more. And because groups are kept small, a strict dress code is observed, and photography is not allowed, the tours avoid disrupting the residents' lives or treating them as attractions.

The second goal is to support the inhabitants of Dharavi, and 80% of Reality Tours & Travel's profits go to development projects in the communities it visits. Run by its sister NGO, Reality Gives, projects range from computer, English and soft skills classes for 16 to 30 year old students, a

girls football program, an art room and a 'Barefoot' acupuncturists clinic, to the neatly named I Was a Sari, a women's empowerment scheme that turns old saris into designer products.

Reality Tours & Travel's success is growing by the year. In 2006, it hosted just 397 guests; by 2013 that number had risen to 16,265. It has so far spent US$134,000 on Reality Gives activities over its seven years of operation; and it recently expanded to working in New Delhi with the Sanjay Colony slum. All together this means many more people are returning home from a holiday in India with an original story to tell.

To learn more about Reality Tours & Travel and the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards please visit: **http://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/**