



15 Ways to Support Local Communities on Your Next Trip




During these tours and workshops, you'll learn about local issues and help make a difference.

It's easy to go somewhere and be a tourist, but travel is all about widening our perspective and learning about cultures other than our own.

For on-the-ground experiences that get you off the beaten path while also giving you an inside look into what life is actually like in that location, seek out classes and tours led by locals that support marginalized people and groups in that community.

Related: [Gifts That Give Back](#)

From Canada to the West Bank, these 15 tours and classes offer exciting opportunities to expand your worldview, learn something new, and feel good about where your dollars are going.





Don Johnston/Getty Images

Adventure Tours in British Columbia, Canada

A trip to [British Columbia](#) would be incomplete without immersing yourself in the stunning natural world. Go whale watching, fish for salmon, track down grizzly bears, or partake in an overnight cultural tour, all while supporting a business owned and operated by the West Coast First Nations like [Adventures Village Island](#). Aboriginal guides will give you a taste of their traditional culture while introducing you to the pristine natural world they have lived in harmony with for centuries.



Denise Liguori

Artisan Workshops and Tours, Italy

Wherever your Italy travels take you, [Italian Stories](#) offers experiences with artisans to help you delve a little deeper into the culture. From creating a hand-sewn book in Torino to visits with goldsmiths in Florence, you'll

get a rare, firsthand look at the traditional Italian artisanship that remains vibrant today. The tours support local artisans and small and family-run businesses while keeping the ancient arts alive.



Steven Greaves/Getty Images

Arts and Culture Tour in Bronx, New York

The South Bronx isn't typically high on many travelers' lists of places to visit, but the Bronx Council of the Arts seeks to change that with their [Bronx Trolley Arts and Culture Tour](#). It takes place on the first Wednesday of every month, and starts off with a wine and hors d'oeuvres meet-and-greet reception at the Longwood Gallery. Afterward, hop on the trolley and enjoy stops at galleries, theaters, and community spaces to get a sense of the area's thriving cultural scene. The tour is free, so participating does not directly support the community financially—unless you buy something along the way—but it does bring attention to their work.



Courtesy of Sidreh-Lakiya, Photo by lobOlmo

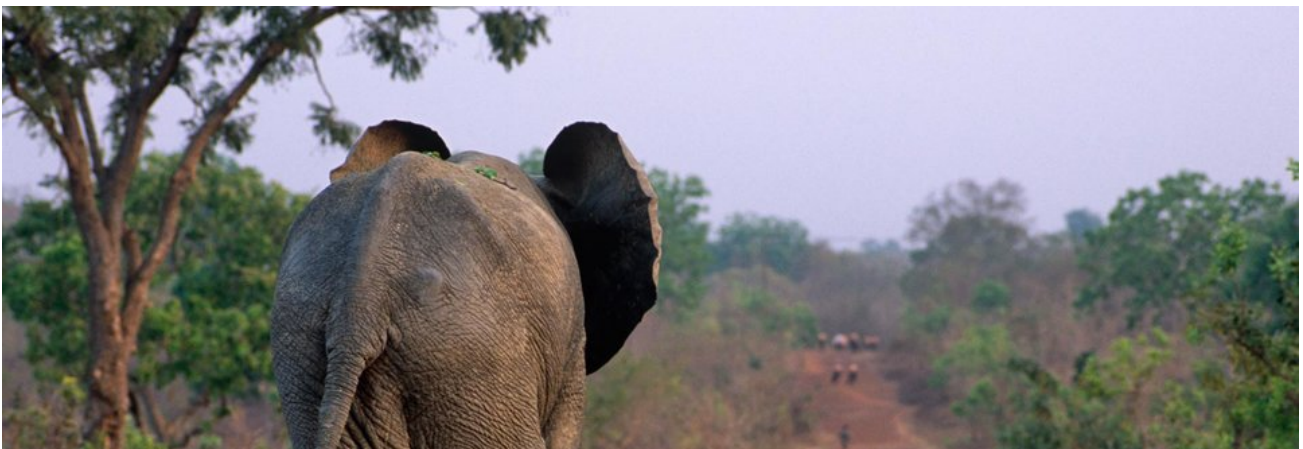
Bedouin Weaving and Culture Tours in the Negev, Israel

There is no shortage of supposedly authentic Bedouin experiences in Southern Israel, but for a more in-depth introduction to modern Bedouin culture, check out the tours led by [Sidreh-Lakiya](#), a non-profit dedicated to empowering Bedouin women. You can choose between tours that focus on Bedouin weaving, women-led economic development initiatives, or Bedouin life from a geopolitical perspective. Proceeds benefit Sidreh-Lakiya and their community efforts.



Community Adventures in Costa Rica

Though [Lokal](#) has tour offerings across Latin America and Southeast Asia, their [Costa Rica](#) experiences are where they shine. Spend the day at a small, family-owned coffee growing farm outside San Jose, Costa Rica or embark on a weeklong adventure through the Osa Peninsula while supporting local efforts to protect one of the most bio diverse places on Earth. Lokal aims to preserve natural and cultural heritage and financially strengthen local communities.





Max Milligan/Getty Images

Cultural and Wildlife Tours in Ghana

[Ashanti African Tours](#), which is based out of [Ghana](#), operates in a few African countries. They're devoted to providing responsible tourism experiences while giving back to local communities. Besides supporting a variety of communities directly through tourism, they have also built multiple schools and work to protect endangered rainforests and animals within Ghana. They offer multiple types of tours, including bird watching, wildlife, culture, heritage, biking, and history.



Courtesy of Sojourn Siem Reap

Day in a Life Village Experience in Siem Reap, Cambodia

Soujourn Boutique Villas in Siem Reap, Cambodia weaves its ethos of responsible tourism into everything it does. It even went so far as to set up a separate NGO called HUSK to forward those goals. Their [Day in the Life Village Experience](#) offers guests the opportunity to spend the day with a family in a local village and lend a hand with community development projects. Part of the payment for the tour goes directly to your host family, while a larger contribution is made to a village fund.





Courtesy of Reality Tours & Travel

Dharavi Tour in Mumbai, India

Visiting a slum like Dharavi (made famous by the film *Slumdog Millionaire*) may seem like voyeuristic poverty tourism at first, but [Reality Tours and Travel](#), who operate a number of community-centered tours across India, takes their mission of protecting the dignity and privacy of the residents seriously. There is a no-photo policy, guides are locals from underprivileged communities, and groups are kept small. Eighty percent of the profits from the tours and all the profits from merchandise sales go to support local education programs through the company's NGO, Reality Gives.



Courtesy of Zawadisha

Imprint Adventures in Nairobi, Kenya

For an immersive, two-week-long experience in Kenya, check out [Imprint Adventures](#). It's operated by Zawadisha, an organization that provides micro-loans to rural Kenyan women while also giving them access to

renewable energy and water products. The tour includes stops at Nairobi's major tourist attractions, a three-day safari in Maasai Mara, as well as fieldwork and visits with loan recipients. Proceeds go to support Zawadisha and their various projects.



Local Community Experience in Dana, Jordan

Although Jordan's most famous tourist destination might be [Petra](#), the country offers a great deal beyond the rose-hued ancient city. Venture to the [Feynan Ecolodge](#) in Dana for sustainable and environmentally friendly accommodations paired with activities that support the local community. You can choose from a number of Bedouin experiences, like making kohl, Arabic coffee, or traditional bread, or spend the day in the wilderness with local shepherds and their goats. The fees for these activities go directly to the families and shepherds you visit.



Courtesy of Backstreet Academy

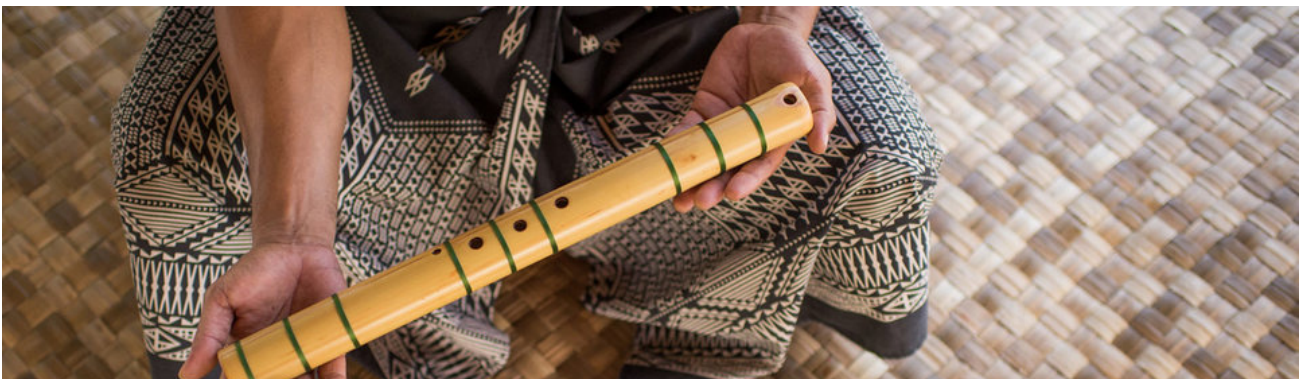
Local Experiences in South and Southeast Asia

Operating in 11 countries in South and Southeast Asia, [Backstreet Academy](#) connects travelers with local hosts for a range of experiences. Craft a crossbow with an 86-year-old Hmong hunter in Luang Prabang, Laos, spend the day with *mahout* (elephant trainers) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, or take a home cooking class in Hanoi, Vietnam. Although Backstreet Academy is a for-profit venture, their mission is to support local artisans and craftsmen, and they work closely with local NGOs and handicraft organizations to identify and train hosts.



Microfinance Tours in Oaxaca, Mexico

Microfinance is one of the big buzzwords in the development community these days, but to get a firsthand look at what it's really about, take one of [Fundación En Vía's](#) tours in Oaxaca. The organization provides interest-free micro-loans to local women to help start or expand their businesses, and the tours offer a chance to meet with some of the borrowers while also visiting town and enjoying an authentic [Oaxacan meal](#). Your entire tour fee will be given to the women you meet in the form of an interest-free loan, which will later be reinvested back into the community.





J. Anthony Martinez

Native Arts, Culture, and History Tours in Maui, Hawaii

If you're planning a trip to the stunning [islands of Hawaii](#), make time for a tour with [Maui Nei Native Expeditions](#), an educational program from the nonprofit organization Friends of Moku'ula. Located in the Lahaina area of western Maui, Moku'ula—which is now undergoing excavation—was an ancient spiritual and political center and home to great Maui chiefs. Tours include a Lahaina history tour with native Hawaiian guides, as well as a hands-on arts and culture tour. Proceeds support the nonprofit, which is dedicated to restoring the sacred site.



Courtesy of Noor Women's Empowerment Group

Palestinian Cooking Classes in Bethlehem, West Bank

A refugee camp isn't a typical stop for tourists, which is one of the many reasons the [Palestinian cooking classes](#) in Bethlehem's Aida Refugee Camp are so valuable. The four-hour experiences includes a tour of the camp, a cooking class in a home kitchen, and of course a memorable meal. Organized by the Noor Women's Empowerment group, all proceeds from the tour support the school for disabled children in the refugee camp.





Syrian Refugees in Istanbul, Turkey

Learning about the Syrian civil war may not be the first thing that comes to mind when planning a trip to Istanbul, but Turkey is home to the largest number of [Syrian refugees](#) outside of Syria. [Intrepid Urban Adventures](#) has paired up with [Small Projects of Istanbul](#), a local NGO helping displaced Syrian families, to offer visitors a chance to visit the Capa district of Istanbul to partake in a Syrian meal while speaking with people who have had to flee Syria. All net proceeds go directly to Small Projects Istanbul to support their work with Syrian refugees in the city.