

# Taking a Reality Tour

If you were to name the top three places you would like to go on your next vacation, would Haiti, Vietnam or the slums of Mexico top your list?

Global Exchange is a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization that plans vacations to some of the world's most woeful places. People pay good money to be depressed by the harsh realities of life. That's why these packages are called Reality Tours.

Participants aren't invited to do much hands-on work to remedy problems. The objective is to get people inspired about making lasting changes and investments once they return home.

This million-dollar business is attracting people of all ages and backgrounds. They are coming in increasing numbers to see women working for \$4 a day assembling typewriters, people living in subhuman conditions and to learn of the heartbreaks these people face. From early in the morning until late at night, they are exposed to the reality that much of the world endures.

Most of us would benefit from such an experience, but even if we don't sign up for one of these annual trips, we can make a point to take daily reality tours right where we live.

When we struggle with frustrations about mechanical problems in a car, we can embrace the reality that most of the world's citizens don't even own a car.

When we grumble about an office that is too cold or hot, we can remember that the majority of the world doesn't have the luxury of air-conditioning or heat.

When finances seem too cramped, we can think about the billions of people who will never own a home, can't wear more than one set of clothes and seldom eat to their heart's content.

Regular reality tours like this will certainly cause us to be more thankful for the reality that is ours and will inspire compassion that can easily be translated into effective help for those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

The Thanksgiving season is straight ahead. Let's offer our gratitude to God for the blessings He has bestowed.

And be a little more sensitive to the needs of those around us.

*For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, "You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land" (Deuteronomy 15:11 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter