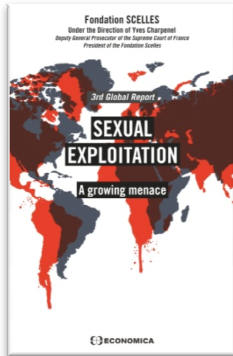




Fondation Scelles

Connaître, Comprendre, Combattre  
l'Exploitation Sexuelle

# Sex tourism



## From :

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Sex tourists are those who have a tendency to combine “Sea, sun... and sex.” More precisely, sex tourism generally implies leaving your home region in hope of buying sex services through prostitution. From that point forward, the term “tourism” becomes inappropriate. While tourism implies the joyful discovery of a different country, sex tourism involves practices that are reprehensible in both a legal and ethical framework, given these travelers take direct pleasure from paid sexual relations that often involve minors.

Sex tourism is the commercial exploitation of children, women, and men, by one or more travelers out of their home city, geographic region, or country. These travelers come from all over, and their destinations include numerous countries around the world. Payment for sex is, by and large, monetary. However, these marauding exploiters may also pay for their pleasure with clothing, food, or other means. Transactions take place in various circumstances and environments (brothels, 4 or 5 star hotels, palaces, etc.). Contrary to preconceived stereotypes, sex tourists come from all sorts of socio-economic backgrounds. There are those who are married or single, male or female, well off or financially insecure, young or old.

Two types of sex tourism exist. The first consists of the purchase of a sex tour on the Internet. In Ukraine, for example, numerous

Turks head directly into the country after having purchased these tours on the Internet. They are put up in hotels, where prostitutes are then put at their disposition. Each night, they are generally led to different brothels. The second type of sex tour consists of *safaris*, which generally take place in nightclubs. The word safari reveals both the explicit and dehumanizing nature of the event, given that tourists roam around the city in groups, guided by locals, in order to “capture animals” at their will.

## A lucrative phenomenon in full expansion

Tourism, in the general meaning of the word, is the most important industry in the world. This is due to the fact that it encompasses multiple interrelated sectors (restaurants, lodging, and vehicle renting, for example). It employs more than 8% of the world's workforce and generates more revenue than any other sector of the world economy. The last publication of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) which held worldwide statistics on prostitution in 2012, highlighted this phenomenon: “Throughout the last sixty years, tourism has experienced a period of expansion and continued diversification, to become one of the most important and dynamic economic sectors in the world... Between 2010 and 2030, it is expected that the number of arrivals in emerging economies will

rise twice as quickly (+4.4% annually) as arrivals in advanced economies (+2.2%)”

For all of these reasons, numerous countries are looking to use tourism as a supporting pillar of the economy, investment, and infrastructure development. A strong illustration of this phenomenon took place June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 when, for the first time in the history of G20 meetings, in Los Cabos, Mexico, travel and tourism were cited in the final summary provided by world leaders. In the minds of these men and women, the potential of the travel and tourism sectors has become clear. It is now seen as a means of creating millions of new jobs in the world economy, with the capacity to bring in billions of dollars in additional the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Despite the positive news of economic growth within the sector, roughly 10% of all 900 million tourists in 2011 chose their destinations by taking into account the country's market for sex tourism. Since 1998, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has claimed that, “sex commerce took the dimensions of an industry and has directly or indirectly contributed, in an undeniable measure, to employment, national revenue, and economic growth.” In effect, from a cynical point of view, it is impossible to find a better illustration of globalization. Responsive, effective, and lucrative organizations are implanted in all four corners of the world, perfectly mastering the theory of supply and demand. These organizations find people in search of work, and supply them with jobs based upon the state of the market and ever-changing demand.

To bring this discussion out of its hypocritical state, it is necessary to see how economic growth from sex tourism is founded on the degradation of female, child, and male victims of sexual abuse. What is worse, nations appear more eager than ever to incorporate revenue from prostitution into their annual GDP. It is unfortunate to note that, by legalizing a part of procuring, Germany and the Netherlands have made the choice to follow monetary interest placed in the

framework of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. In the same line of reasoning, FEMEN denounced the fact that abolishing visas took place in order to develop tourism and open Ukraine to the West. In practice, however, this abolition additionally contributed to the development of sex tourism.

Finally, nations deserve heavy critique for allowing sex tourism to develop; for many, the goal of increasing economic expenditure makes them tacitly complicit in the industry. Nations often use revenues generated from prostitution in order to alleviate poor social support, unemployment benefits, or unequal economic opportunities for women. This practice deserves serious critique, given that much of this revenue is generated by the exploitation of children. Even though we know that the number of exploited children in the industry has increased, it remains impossible to fully portray the problem with hard data. Numerous factors render data collection difficult. First, sex tourism involving children is an illegal activity, often spread across the country or run by criminal organizations. Second, political actors are often embarrassed to admit the problem, and deny its existence or publically mitigate its importance. Those who ought to be responsible for bettering the country heavily fear the negative image that will be generated by admitting the problem. In their minds, an admission of child exploitation may stagnate the development of tourism.

### **Sports events, a powerful motor for tourism**

The cause and effect relationship between large sporting events and the increase in sexual exploitation is a central question that has become increasingly critical in the last ten years. It is undeniable that the more a sporting event is publicized the more it attracts spectators. Given the influx of people traveling abroad to watch separate events, prostitution often becomes a problem in the areas that hold international games or tournaments. For the 2012 Euro Cup in Poland and Ukraine, tourists from the sixteen participating countries made

the trek to watch the event. In the same fashion, during the 2012 Olympic Games in London, numerous supporters visited the country with personal interests that extended beyond their preferred sport.

Italians, Americans, Germans, and French chose girls in hotels that put catalogues of “services” at their disposition. These catalogues contained photos and short introductions of each girl. Clients were able to order whichever one suited their pleasure, in the same fashion as room service. The only difference between the two services was that, in this case, women or children replaced drinks and food.

FEMEN reported that numerous tourists, during the 2012 Euro Cup, after getting off of the plane, were directly given numerous offers for “massages.” They were also given a map of the city center, by the Office of Tourism, with addresses of “escort” services that included photos.

This solicitation during sporting events is internationally present. Sexually exploited women, men, and children are present in all corners; in train stations, airports, parks, the Internet, bars, night clubs, saunas, massage parlors, hostels, hotels, and brothels. The scene is similar to shopping mall, in which everything is available at arm’s reach. While the comparison is frightening, it is more than appropriate in relation to reality.

To combat this movement, FEMEN multiplied their actions, since 2012 in particular, by protesting topless, showing their bodies with slogans such as “Fuck Euro 2012.” Their fight continues to take place, in order to achieve, “the total eradication of prostitution, the most brutal form of female exploitation, by criminalizing clients, investors, and organizers of this commerce” (*Ackerman, 2013*).

### **The dangers of sex tourism**

Sexual exploitation, which is a large part of sex tourism, is ranked third in the shameful list of the most important illegal industries, following drugs and arms. There is reason to

be alarmed, due particularly to the inherent dangers of this practice.

Sex tourism promotes the transmission of sexually transmittable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which affect vulnerable children. To illustrate this point, it is necessary to note that, out of 11,000 prostitutes in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, 1 out of 4 is estimated to be HIV positive (*Euronews, June 8<sup>th</sup> 2012*). In South-East Asia, entire villages in Burma have been decimated by HIV/AIDS, partly due to the return of child prostitutes who contracted the virus in Thailand.

In addition to the problem of infection, children are increasingly the victims of sex tourism. According to a study conducted by UNICEF in Costa Rica, 83% of boys and nearly 79% of girls interviewed have been the victims of sexual abuse before the age of twelve. Among these persons, 48% began prostitution around the same age, or beforehand. Most often these children are ethnic minorities, displaced or marginalized, and come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, whatever their background may be, these children who suffer from these treatments are often left with serious emotional, psychological, and physical scars. They develop feelings of guilt, depression, and occasionally commit suicide. In addition to having had their childhoods stolen, these children often find themselves stigmatized within their communities once they reach the age of maturity. Without the support of their community, they remain without normal social contact, and cannot fully evolve as a full member of society, as other children do. According to the NGO End Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT), if Thailand and the Philippines enforced their legislation against child prostitution, countries such as the Dominican Republic, South Africa, Botswana, and Romania would be particularly affected.

## Awareness and repression

The fight against sex tourism takes place, first and foremost, by awareness of the problem. In this way, tourists can report crimes committed by others. They have the opportunity to see illicit acts committed by other tourists and, as a result, can report to competent authority figures. An agreement was signed June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 between hotel professionals (Accor group), the police (the Direction de la Coopération Internationale-DCI and the Office central de répression des violences aux personnes - OCRVP) and ECPAT France, so that professionals, receptionists, and hotel managers know how to react in cases of suspicious behavior. The agreement produced a widely distributed guide on how to spot the signs of sex tourism. For example, if a single man checks in with an immigrant child who does not resemble his physical complexion, receptionists are trained to contact their superiors or, in emergency situations, police and social services.

From a strictly legal point of view, numerous countries have established laws to prosecute tourists who commit crimes of sexual exploitation within separate countries. A tourist can therefore be held responsible for his or her acts, whether in his own country or the country in which the crime took place. Legislation such as this is commendable, in so far as tourists are unable to find countries willing to harbor them from punishment. It is, in fact, one of the most important tools in the fight against sex tourism, as it lowers the probability of a traveler avoiding penalties. With regard to children, articles 34 and 35 of the International Convention of Child Rights call on signatory states to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation. The code of conduct for the protection of children in tourism and the travel industry (1998) that outlines an ethical framework of information was signed by nearly 600 tour operators, hotels, and travel agents, within 26 European, Asian, North American and South American countries.

In French law, involvement in child prostitution constitutes a legal violation both in France and abroad (Article 225-12-1 of the Penal Code). Sentences are determined by the gravity of the infraction<sup>1</sup> and can reach up to 20 years of imprisonment. International legal cooperation between France and certain European states such as Bulgaria and Romania has largely demonstrated its efficacy and has continued to develop over the last ten years. With this cooperation, states do not limit their investigations according to their borders, and are capable of responding against the transnational reality of sex tourism. Created by a decision of the European Council on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2002, a simplified procedure of extradition between member states helped contribute to the efficacy and development of cooperation on a continental scale.

## A fight that must not back down

Despite the mobilization of tourism professionals and a growing awareness of the phenomenon, notwithstanding the laws developed, sex tourism remains a growing problem with few legal cases underway. Contrary to all notions of progress, the trivialization of paid sex, the search of adventures and strong pleasures helps enlarge an industry, against which many states who value revenue are unwilling to fight.

In Ukraine, prostitution, though illegal, involves between 63,000 and 93,000 persons, according to unofficial statistics. But the act remains relatively unpunished. In addition, no legal cooperation between France and the Ukraine or Belarus has been put in place. According to FEMEN, “On paper, the sex industry is prohibited, but in reality if there is a brothel next to a police station, the police will not shutdown the establishment, but will protect it.”

One of the methods to continue the fight and create a strong barrier against sex tourism would be the criminalization of purchasing sex. The Norwegian model, inspired by Sweden, introduced a law to achieve this

criminalization<sup>2</sup>. Concretely, the Norwegian client that buys sex services in his or her country or abroad, is committing a crime. FEMEN has convinced a Ukrainian congressman to initiate a legal project founded upon the idea of client penalization.

With three major sporting events: the 2013 Confederation Cup, the 2014 Soccer World Cup, and the 2016 Olympic Games, Brazil is preparing for an influx of tourists, and everything appears to point toward an increase in sex tourism. An association of prostitutes is organizing, at this point, language courses in order to welcome tourists once they arrive. It is therefore necessary to continue the fight against prostitution, to raise awareness and to hold future travelers responsible for the issue of sex tourism, focusing in on the exploitation of children. The Fondation Scelles and other NGOs are calling for an international concentration of public and private efforts in order to help cure the scourge of sex purchased abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> Rape, Sexual assault, Corruption of Minors, Involvement in Child Prostitution, Provocation of Child pornography.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter on Sweden.