

TO DO! 2014

Contest Socially Responsible Tourism



Award Winner

REALITY TOURS & TRAVEL

represented by:

Asim Shaikh, Operations Manager

Mumbai

India

Award Rationale

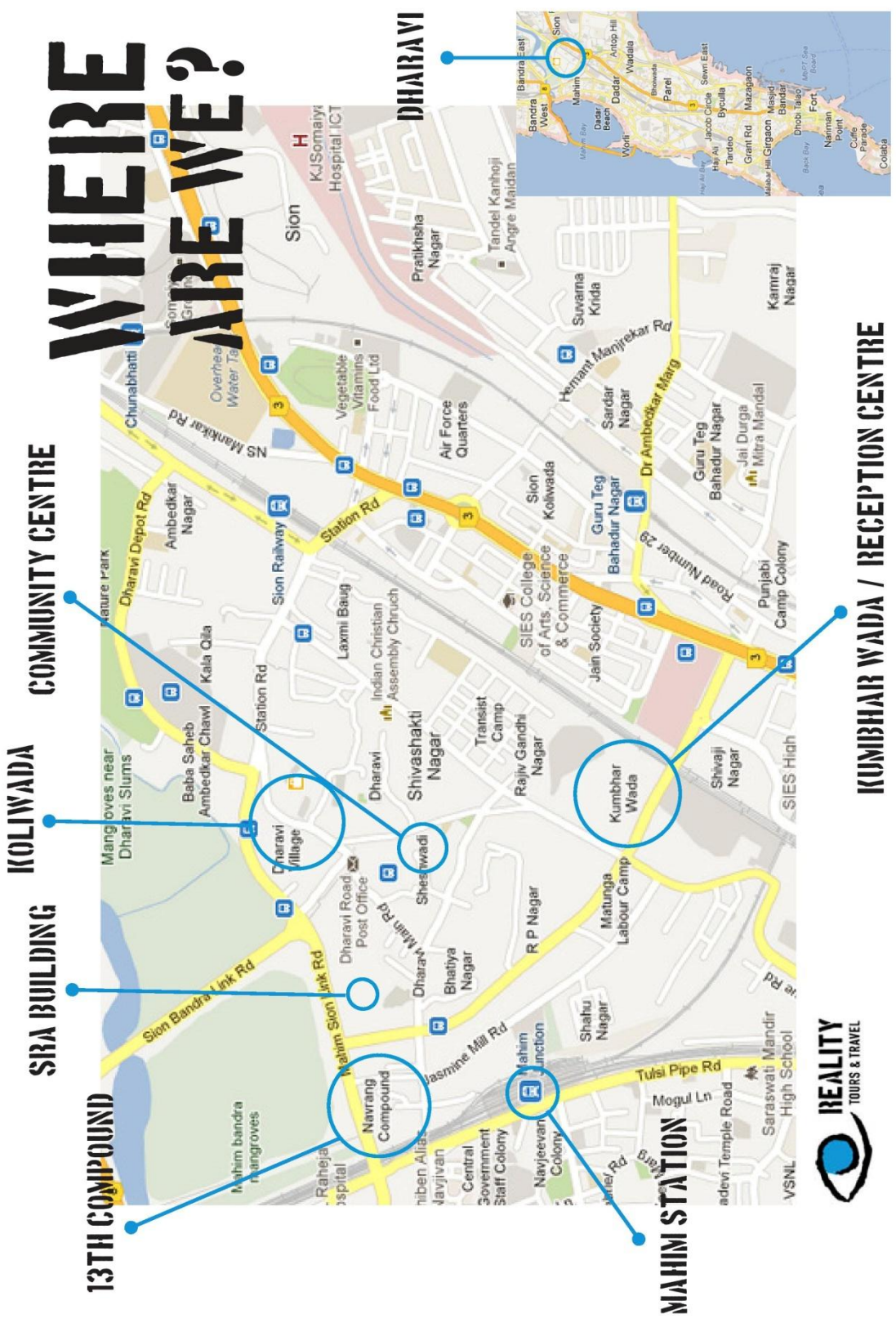
by

Dr. Dietmar Quist



Map Source: Google Maps / www.weltkarte.com

WHERE ARE WE?



Map Source: Reality Tours & Travel



1 INTRODUCTION

The application for the TO DO! 2014 award was submitted by **Reality Tours & Travel (RTT)** from India and was nominated by the TO DO! jury. On behalf of the Institute of Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e. V.), Dr. Dietmar Quist visited Mumbai/India from 25th November to 3rd December 2014 in order to check the application by Reality Tours & Travel on location.

During this time, the author participated in a Dharavi slum tour and three other guided group tours of three to six hours duration in Mumbai City, together with tourists of RTT.

The author had sufficient time and opportunities to conduct qualitative interviews. The interview partners were Krishna Pujari (co-founder of RTT), members of the management team of Reality Tours & Travel and Reality Gives (RG), teachers and students of the RG Community Centre, tour guides, inhabitants of Dharavi and participants of different tourist groups.

Furthermore, the author did comprehensive internet research on the Dharavi slum and on the tourism agency RTT.

On the basis of the insights and findings, the author recommends awarding RTT with a TO-DO! 2014.

2 BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Almost 60 percent of Mumbai's 22 million inhabitants live in slums. Dharavi, where RTT offers guided tours, is probably the largest slum. Between 600,000 and one million people are crowded together on a mere two square kilometres (217 ha). (These data are estimates and vary significantly. The estimate of one million inhabitants is probably closest to reality.) About 200,000 to 300,000 people have partly been living in the slum for decades. Another 700,000 to 800,000 persons are seasonal and migrant workers from different parts of India, mainly from rural areas. About 70 to 80 percent of the inhabitants are men. Dharavi is one of the most densely populated places in the world. The population is multi-ethnic and multi-religious (33 percent Muslims, six percent Christians, 60 percent Hindus). The ethnic and religious communities usually live in separate neighbourhoods.

Most of the seasonal and migrant workers stay in Dharavi for eight to ten months. They often live and sleep at their workplaces. In this way, the owners/employers get an additional income from the rent, their workers are always available and ready to work, and the compound is protected against theft. The workers save time and money that would otherwise be needed to reach the workplace. Women and children stay back in the rural areas. Life in Dharavi would be too expensive for them.

Incomes in the slum are generated by small industrial enterprises and manufacturing sites. Business and living space is mixed and cannot be clearly distinguished. About 5,000 larger and about 15,000 single-room factories such as leather and textile processing businesses, embroidery, pottery and distillery businesses and all kinds of recycling enterprises are to be found in Dharavi. The largest part of Mumbai's waste is recycled here. Businesses in the fields of paper, carton and plastic processing, sorting of scrap metal, barrel cleaning, and even aluminium melting furnaces can be found here. In Dharavi, anything can be refurbished, altered, repaired, renewed, cleaned and reused.

The annual turnover of businesses and manufacturing sites in Dharavi is estimated to amount to 500 million to one billion US dollars. The workers usually get four to six US dollars a day. For comparison: In rural areas, the common daily wage is less than two US dollars. Most of the workers in Dharavi earn an annual income of 1,000 to 2,000 US dollars.

The working conditions are dangerous and harmful to health. There are no safety gloves, safety glasses, safety shoes, protective masks etc. Some tourists groups have sent gloves,

safety glasses etc. to Dharavi in order to contribute to solving these problems. The workers, however, cannot and do not want to use such protective measures. They are getting paid a piece rate and they say any protection against injuries reduces their productivity. Better and safer machines would require higher investments by the employer. Environmental protection measures practically do not exist. People do not talk about hazardous substances and toxic fumes. Still, Dharavi attracts many people from rural areas searching for work, as there is work available here which is also better paid than in rural regions.

In the residential areas, the houses in the alleyways are hardly shoulder width apart. Sewage flows off in open gutters. Electricity supply works relatively well, even internet is available almost everywhere. There is water for about three hours a day, the amount needed for the day has to be stored in water containers. Toilets are rare. They are often located several hundred metres away from the house. Some toilets are used up to 1,500 times a day. The floor space of the houses is usually not more than 20 m², shared by six to seven persons on average. At night, all the space on the floor is usually used for sleeping. In front of the houses and inside, it is usually relatively clean. Everybody is busy with something. Only those who contribute to their own livelihoods can stay here. Many families have been living here for generations. People may be born in Dharavi, but in response to the question where they live or belong, they will always mention the region their parents or grandparents hail from. Dharavi is not a place people identify with.

The children living in Dharavi are not undernourished, but often malnourished. Malnutrition is due to lack of knowledge. There are also schools in Dharavi that are attended by about 85 percent of the children of Dharavi. With their school leaving certificates, about 10 to 20 percent of them find jobs outside Dharavi.

Poverty, inadequate sanitary conditions, insecure jobs which are also often harmful to health, a poor image, few career opportunities, crowded conditions, overpopulation, lack of health care – all this applies to Dharavi as to other slums, too. What worries all the inhabitants is the insecure future of Dharavi, especially the insecurity of jobs. The businesses do not comply with official regulations and can be closed down by the authorities at any time. Furthermore, most of the inhabitants live here illegally. At best, they are tolerated, yet they have no legal entitlements. The land belongs to the city of Mumbai. Only about 20 to 30 percent of the inhabitants have a legalised right to housing. Under circumstances of forced eviction, they can expect to be resettled – however, housing has yet to be created. Furthermore, the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) makes clear that only workshops and companies that comply with environmental protection and safety standards at work may continue to exist after a relocation, which applies to just a few.

Dharavi is located in the centre of Mumbai. The plots are extremely valuable. Therefore, time and again there is political and economic pressure to close down Dharavi. There are plans for constructions and changes in land use. But despite all the chances for improvement, the population resists resettlement. Fear and insecurity dominate.

Compared to other slums, Dharavi offers jobs, income, and partly secured, legalised housing. “Dharavi is a five star slum after all”, as one of the guides of RTT put it. And: “Those who are really poor and the poorest of the poor do not live in slums. They live in the streets, in entrances, corners, parks. These people have nothing, no rights and no defence”.

3 REALITY TOURS & TRAVEL (RTT)

3.1 History and Objectives

RTT was founded in 2005 by Chris Way from the UK and by Krishna Pujari from India who has been living in Mumbai for 22 years and has worked his way up from simple conditions. Chris Way had participated in a favela tour in Rio de Janeiro in 2004. He had found part of the concept convincing, but had not been happy with the fact that the inhabitants of the favela hardly benefited from this tour.

In Mumbai, Chris Way and Krishna Pujari therefore began by discussing the opportunities and obstacles of slum tourism with people in Dharavi. According to their concept, the slum inhabitants should be involved in planning the tours. A major part of the revenues should benefit them. 80 percent of the profit should be invested in local development projects which must be coordinated with the slum inhabitants.

One of the objectives was to give tourists a realistic picture of the conditions and living situation in a slum. Through personal experiences and encounters, they should get differentiated impressions of everyday life in this slum. On the other hand, the slum inhabitants should also benefit from the tours, not only financially. Thanks to the tourists' interest in their everyday life and living environment, the organisers expect to strengthen their self-esteem.

After lengthy and partly heated discussions, the slum residents living along the route agreed to the concept. In 2005, the first tours were conducted.

In 2007, the Community Centre was founded. In discussions with the local people it became clear that they mainly wanted training in health and hygiene, but also in English and computer classes. (Without English and computer skills, advancement in Indian society is hardly possible.)

Expanding the teaching activities in Dharavi and creating new play schools could not be managed by RTT alone. This led 2009 to the foundation of the sister organisation Reality Gives (RG; the name Reality Cares that they had envisioned was already in use). Since then, 80 percent of the profits of RTT have been going to RG. RG conducts its own educational programmes and has since 2012 coordinated educational, health and hygiene-related projects, also in cooperation with other organisations working in Dharavi. RG is also getting financial support from them. Alongside its partner organisation RG, RTT remains an independent tourism enterprise with the clear objective of doing business in order to generate profit.

In 2010, RTT expanded its product range and now also offers Mumbai city tours in addition to the slum tours. Today, this includes, among others, theme-based tours such as "Mumbai by night", "Indian street food", "Mumbai by public transport", "Central Mumbai in the early morning by bicycle" (starting at 6:00 am) or "Discovering Mumbai by car". The company offers experiences and tours which cannot be found in travel hand books and which require a guide.

In 2012, RTT got the "World Responsible Tourism Award". The company saw this as an encouragement to expand. Since then, tours are also offered in Delhi, in the slum Sanjay Colony. In Delhi, too, 80 percent of the profit goes to two NGOs in the slum.

3.2 The Programme

A decisive component of the concept is the qualification of the local guides. They have to be able to establish a connection between the slum inhabitants and the tourists and to involve both sides in the flow of information. The guides are well trained and sensitised for the questions of the tourists and the wishes and needs of the slum inhabitants. By now, some of the guides are from Dharavi or other slums; some of them did their training and learned English with RG.

Tourists who have registered for a slum tour meet at the time stipulated on the edge of Dharavi. There, small groups of not more than eight participants are put together. Taking photos is not allowed in the slum, respectful clothing is a mandatory condition. The guide explains the tour and gives initial information on the slum. For most of the tourists, it is surprising to see that in Dharavi there are thousands of small factories, workshops and manufacturing sites. The working conditions are tough, it is hard physical work. There are hardly any safety standards or environmental protection measures. The alleyways in the slums are dusty and congested. The industrial area is often adjacent to small single-room workshops with sales outlets, i.e. production and sales are not separated. In short breaks during the guided tour, the guide explains what the group had seen and provides background information. For example, the workers refrain from protection measures at work so as not to reduce their productivity. Since the workers have to work at a piece rate, they do not have time to attend to the tourists. While they demonstrate their skilfulness to the visitors in operating the – partly self-made – machines, there is no contact beyond this. The guided tour then continues in the alleyways of the residential areas where RTT has rented one of the small houses as they are commonly found – with a size of only a few square metres and scarcely furnished. Hardly any of the visitors had been confronted with this kind of working and living conditions before. Nevertheless, the round trip remains relaxed and informative. This is mainly thanks to the guides who are very well prepared for the difficult tour and who help the often concerned visitors with background information. They keep up the conversation with their customers by asking and answering questions.

Surveys conducted by RTT show that the people who suffer from the stigma of being “slum dwellers“ feel acknowledged and appreciated by the visitors. This is also confirmed by the research done by Nieck Slikker in 2014 (as part of his Bachelor’s thesis “Perceptions of the Dharavi Community Regarding Slum Tourism and Affiliated NGO Operations“, www.academia.edu).

The slum tours are the core business of RTT. The newly offered tours focussed on experiences outside Dharavi try to give a realistic, exciting picture of a different Mumbai. Which tourist would dare try the different Indian dishes in simple restaurants or “on the roadside“? Or go on a group tour by bicycle in Mumbai, which was until recently considered unfeasible, or on tours by public transport? On these tours, too, the main idea is to reduce fears of getting in contact with people and feelings of insecurity on the side of travellers in order to enable them to get more deeply involved with the country.

The tours offered are an addition to the slum programme and indirectly enrich it. They enhance and deepen the understanding of Mumbai (and probably also of India). Dharavi, like the other slums, too, is a part of Mumbai that is hardly noticed by travellers. But Mumbai does not only consist of slums, after all, but is a vibrant metropolis.

Most of the guests are impressed by the objectives of the RTT and welcome the fact that a major part of the money they paid for the tour is used for the implementation of projects for people in Dharavi. The visitors are also taken to the Community Centre of RG where they get detailed information on the Centre’s activities. The tour ends at the RTT office in Dharavi with a final discussion and there is a possibility to buy T-shirts, pictures and souvenirs. As they are not permitted to take photos in the slum, the guests may download photos from the internet if needed. To evaluate the tour, the guests are asked to give their feedback by e-mail after the tour. Most of the visitors are from the US and Europe. The interviews conducted

among the visitors by RTT highlighted the fact that they do not believe the often cliché-like media reports about slums represents an important motivation for their participation in the tour.

RTT does its marketing independently. Word of mouth advertising plays a major role (tourists recommend the tour to other tourists). The slum tours have in the meantime become so well-known that TripAdvisor, Wikipedia, Lonely Planet and local hotels also refer people to RTT.

In 2006, the slum tours had 397 guests, in 2008 as many as 3,148, in 2010 7,996 and in 2013 16,265 guests. Growth might slow down in the future. More than 40 small and medium size tourism organisations already offer similar or identical slum tours. In most cases, they copied the routes developed by RTT. December to March is the peak season. During this time, there are three to four times more tourists than during the rest of the year. RTT alone then offers eight to ten tours a day while ensuring that the number of participants does not exceed six to eight persons.

4 EVALUATION AGAINST THE TO DO! CONTEST CRITERIA

Comparing the activities of RTT with the TO DO! contest criteria leads to the following assessment:

4.1 Taking into account the different interests and needs of the local people through participation

Long before the first slum tour was conducted, the founders built up contacts with the slum inhabitants. What was at the beginning a clear rejection slowly led – after numerous discussions and visits – to a rather half-hearted agreement at first. But the objectives of RTT (strengthening the self-esteem of the slum inhabitants, opportunities for differentiated opinion building on the side of tourists), the good guides and the adapted behaviour of the tourists convinced sceptics and opponents. Today, there are extraordinarily friendly contacts between the staff of RTT and the inhabitants of Dharavi. Some of the guides are from here or from other slums. The strong wish to also get women as guides has not yet materialised.

From the beginning, it has been clear that a considerable part of the profit should go to the slum. The population voted for educational and training measures. Computer, English and soft skills classes (e.g. how to prepare a personal monthly financial plan) take place at the Community Centre. In the meantime, the first students have now become teachers. The teaching units are tailored to the needs of the students from Dharavi. For the people here, RG has become an integral part of Dharavi!

4.2 Enhancing the awareness of the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development for their economic, social and cultural lives

Teachers and participants in the courses at RG's Community Centre directly benefit from tourism. Their economic situation improves, their educational opportunities improve, enabling them to get "better" jobs outside the slum. As the slum inhabitants do not invest in the tours, a possible decline in tourism does not represent an existential threat. The visitors surely contribute to increasing the self-confidence and self-esteem of the slum inhabitants.

The Bachelor's thesis by Slikker (2014) shows, among other things, that more than 90 per cent of the population regard the tourists as a positive factor, or are not disturbed by them.

RG, too, is being evaluated positively by the slum inhabitants, though many of those surveyed feel the projects of RG should actually be tasks of the government.

4.3 Participation of broad local population strata in the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism

For some of the slum inhabitants, the Community Centre has become an integral part of the educational landscape. For example, boys are also trained in cricket. As cricket is not accepted for girls, soccer training is offered for them. Their enthusiasm exceeds all expectations, sports activities for girls are now regarded as something positive. For the first time, the YUWA girls played against teams from the American School in Mumbai. They did not stand a chance. But among the expats in Mumbai, the soccer girls from a slum have since then been a hot topic. In this way, the work of RTT and RG also gets publicity outside the slums and attract interest.

More than 200 persons annually directly benefit by some activity or through their participation in trainings and health courses at RTT and RG. Certificates and better job qualifications facilitate getting better jobs, better paid jobs and career opportunities. From these, in turn, whole families benefit.

RTT and RG provide important, sustainable help in Dharavi. At the same time, the support by RTT and RG and their effect must not be overestimated. In a slum population of one million – not considering seasonal workers, 200,000 to 300,000 people remain – only a small part of the population can be reached and can benefit. However, this does not fundamentally question the importance of the work of RTT and RG.

4.4 Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism or of income opportunities for the local people through improved working conditions in terms of remuneration, social security, working hours, further education, and training

Jobs in tourism in this project have so far been created for the management and organisation of RTT, plus local guides. About eight to ten tour guides have permanent full-time jobs, four to six guides have part-time jobs. Advancing from a tour guide or teaching position into the management is possible. Depending on the season, the direct tourism activities create up to 25 jobs.

4.5 Strengthening local culture and cultural identity of local people in the tourism destinations and avoiding/minimising any social and cultural damage caused by tourism in tourist destinations

One of the objectives of RTT is to strengthen the self-esteem of the slum inhabitants thanks to the interest of the tourists in their everyday lives and living environments. RTT feels that the feedback, for example by a former participant of the “Youth Empowerment Program“, confirms that the company contributes to strengthening local identity.

RTT explicitly points out that taking photos in Dharavi is not allowed and enforces this, as the local people insist on it. Decent clothing is also demanded. Female visitors whose shoulders are not covered must buy a scarf before the tour and must cover their shoulders (part of the route leads through Muslim neighbourhoods), otherwise they may not participate. It is also thanks to these rules that the slum inhabitants in general perceive the tourists as “neutral” or “positive”.

4.6 Environmental compatibility

During the slum tour, special emphasis is placed on the recycling projects. About 80 percent of Mumbai's waste is processed in Dharavi.

The RTT tours are designed in an environmentally friendly manner: In almost all cases, the tours are conducted on foot, by bicycle or public transport.

For the RTT office, a large part of the office materials are recycled products directly sourced at Dharavi. Among other things, environmentally friendly paper is used and the office operations are mainly paper-free, also saving printer cartridges which have negative impacts on the environment.

RG supports educational projects that deal with environmental issues, e.g. a bee project.

4.7 Participation of women and men in planning and implementation processes – improvement of gender relations

At RTT and also at RG women and men have equal opportunities. RTT has more male than female employees. There are no female guides, but RTT wishes to change this. However, it is not yet regarded as a “decent” profession for women. At RG, the share of women among the teachers is higher. Otherwise, vacancies are filled in a balanced manner and without gender preference or discrimination.

The soccer project for girls shows that equality and equal treatment by supporting girls in a targeted manner is an important concern of RG.

4.8 Measures to ensure economic and institutional sustainability of the project

RTT is a profit-oriented company. It is therefore possible to develop new tourism projects without violating the regulations for NGOs. By expanding the tours, the profit might only be increased after some more time or after respective investments. RTT thus retains a large scope for action and development. It was pointed out to the author that key data of the annual finances have been published and are available on the internet.

Five or six highly qualified persons, mostly US Americans or Europeans, regularly work for RTT and RG. They are committed young people who after their studies look for meaning and fulfilment in their work. Their salary plays a minor role for them. They usually stay for two to three years. They work in the management, analyse the motivations of RTT participants, conceptualise and then establish new tours, train staff and guides, develop new computer software and new business ideas. Research, planning, critical questioning, quick reactions to the wishes of customers characterise the work of the management. The sustainability and creativity of the company seem to be ensured. There is no need to worry that the company might turn rigid in routine.

Against this backdrop, RTT has been expanding since 2010. Apart from the “classic” slum tours and city tours in Mumbai-City, the company offers tours in Rajasthan, Kerala as well as slum and city tours in Delhi.

Since 2013, RTT has been supporting Smokey Tours in Manila, Philippines, in developing socially responsible slum and city tours. There are plans to build up a network for a global exchange of experiences in slum tourism in the future.

5 CONCLUSION

The author strongly recommends awarding RTT with the TO DO! 2014. RTT fulfils the criteria of the TO DO! contest in a convincing manner.

RTT has developed routes that present many aspects of the Dharavi slum and that are highly informative for the guests. The route has been coordinated with the local residents. The tourists are mainly seen as neutral to positive. Thanks to the appreciation by the guests, the people's self-esteem increases, and so does their identification with their Dharavi.

The guides are well trained and share their large amount of information in a sensitive and clear manner. The groups are put together spontaneously and have a maximum of six to eight participants. Questions and discussions are possible at any time. The guests will not be overloaded with information and have time for their own perceptions. The Community Centre run by the sister organisation RG is also part of the tour programme. RG's social and educational projects are supported by RTT with 80 percent of the profit generated. The work of RG has a focus on education and training programmes. The teachers at the Community Centre as well as the guides are partly from Dharavi or other slums. Some of them were students trained by RG. Thanks to their sensitive, coordinated tours and their high degree of social commitment as well as thanks to the social background of some of their staff, RTT and RG have in the meantime become integral parts of Dharavi.

RTT is a company with solid foundations. Since 2010, RTT has been expanding and offers several Mumbai city tours in addition. In Delhi, another slum tour is part of the programme. Tours of several days duration are also offered in Rajasthan and Kerala.

The informational value of the Dharavi slum tour is very high. Despite the impressions, some of which are "tough", most of the guests are personally enriched by the visits. All the visitors stress the value of the tour in terms of experiences and learning. With a well-trained guide, a Dharavi slum tour is not only to be endorsed, but to be recommended. It broadens the horizon and helps to form opinions.


RTT's slum tours in Dharavi offer an experience of a world which travellers hardly get in touch with otherwise. RTT thus makes an important contribution to intercultural exchange and to sustainably experiencing and understanding different aspects of Indian society.

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