

tOuRIsM oR VOyEuriSm?

Michael Cronin's job as a college admissions officer took him to India two or three times a year, so he had already seen the usual sites — temples, monuments, markets — when one day he happened across a flier advertising “slum tours.”

“It just resonated with me immediately,” said Cronin, who was staying at a posh Taj Hotel in Mumbai where, he noted, a bottle of Champagne cost the equivalent of two years' salary for many Indians. “But I didn't know what to expect.”

Soon, Cronin, 41, found himself skirting open sewers and ducking to avoid exposed electrical wires as he toured the sprawling Dharavi slum, home to more than a million. He joined a cricket game and saw the small-scale industry, from embroidery to tannery, that quietly thrives in the slum. “Nothing is considered garbage there,” he said. “Everything is used again.” [...]

Slum tourism, or “poorism,” as some call it, is catching on. From the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to the townships of Johannesburg to the garbage dumps of Mexico, tourists are forsaking, at least for a while, beaches and museums for crowded, dirty — and in many ways surprising — slums. [...]

Slum tourism isn't for everyone. Critics charge that ogling the poorest of the poor isn't tourism at all. It's voyeurism. The tours are exploitative, these critics say, and have no place on an ethical traveler's itinerary.

Using the type of jobs, explain the word “slum” in your own words.

A slum is a village, most of the time built illegally inside a larger city, which is made of materials found around, using the least money people. It is built by and for really poor people that can't afford to rent an appartement. It is a shocking indicator of a huge quality-of-life gap between the poor and the rich.