



GROUP TRAVEL OR NOT?

One of our most frequently asked questions has to do with . . .
Group Travel or Not?

So, we posed this question to Eva Ash, Clinical Psychologist, Adoptive Parent and Ties Participant.....

Q. As an adoptive family that has taken a homeland journey, how did you feel about traveling with a group before you traveled? What was it like to travel with a group? Are you happy or unhappy that you decided to travel with a group, and why?

Eva's answer is "classic." It is what we hear from pretty much every family that has ever had qualms about group travel.

A. This was the exact question we had as we began to plan our homeland journey! We are not group travelers. But as we began to think seriously about how best to do a homeland tour, we realized several things that pointed us toward group travel in general and The Ties Program specifically.

- First of all, if we had traveled independently I (the mom of the family) would have become the tour guide, travel agent, translator, and referee. Plus I wanted to still be on speaking terms with my family when we returned. We knew that by traveling with Ties all of the logistics would be taken care of for us.
- Second, we knew that homeland travel (and actually any travel involving children) comes with extra stresses. We wanted to be able to "just" be parents on this trip so that we could take care of ourselves and our son should the emotion of homeland travel overwhelm one or more of us.

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- Third, we suspected that especially as an only child our son would benefit from traveling with other kids. And boy were we right on this one! The kids on our trip formed an amazingly close bond. While in-country, the kids loved to sit in the back of the bus chatting with each other, playing each other's handheld gaming devices, and looking out the windows appreciating the beauty of their birth country. They loved knowing all the other kids at the hotel pools (the honeymooning couples didn't seem to appreciate our group as much).
- Finally, we thought that traveling with the support of social workers would benefit our whole family as we processed our experiences. Some of us swore before traveling that we would opt out of this part of the trip, but as it turned out none of us did. And surprisingly it was our son (famously a non-talker when it comes to adoption issues) who enjoyed the chat sessions the most!

But there was an added benefit to group travel that we hadn't anticipated: having other adults to keep US company! We had so much in common since so many of us were anxiously excited about the trip:

- Would our kids love us or hate us for visiting their birth country? Had we picked the right age for homeland travel?
- Had we made the right decisions in terms of connecting (or not) with significant people from our kids' early lives?
- Were we really going to eat the local delicacy of deep fried tarantula as we had promised our kids? (2 kids and 4 adults did!).

It was also nice to travel with other families that look like ours and understand the particular politics of adoption from our son's birth country.

So yes, in the end we were extremely satisfied that we made the choice to travel with a Ties group. In fact, we are planning a family trip to Paris and might just become group travelers. If only Ties led tours of European capitals...

Eva