



Another story just broke about an incident in New York City of an assault against a tourist. Travelers encounter the fake Sesame Street and Disney characters day and night on Times Square, Hollywood Boulevard, the Vegas Strip and other busy tourist walkways. They wear (illegally) familiar cartoon costumes, and make their money by posing for photos along busy sidewalks with passing tourists and their families. At first glance, they seem harmless, and will not usually harass people who shoo them away.

However, since it's a simple, unregulated way to make tax-free money for people of questionable, possibly illegal, backgrounds, they can be dangerous. There's a gang culture among them, where sidewalk territories are claimed and protected. As happens often, your family could be nearby when a violent fight breaks out among characters challenging others for choice locations.

If you're a tourist on those busy sidewalks, especially if with small children, and are approached by costumed characters, keep walking. Your safest action is to firmly refuse to pose with them.