

A photograph of a monkey, likely a macaque, holding a large, pink parasol with a floral pattern. The monkey is holding a cigar in its mouth. The parasol has a white fringe around the edge and is supported by a wooden frame. The monkey has a white patch on its face and chest.

WORLD
ANIMAL
PROTECTION

Tracking the
travel industry

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Wildlife tourism in Canada

The suffering of captive wildlife for tourism is a huge global problem, affecting hundreds of thousands of wild animals. In our work to end this suffering, travel companies have proven themselves to be pivotal. Most tourists who choose to participate in an animal-activity are animal lovers. They trust their travel advisor to provide them with the right information to make decisions that align with their values; and attitudes towards the acceptability of captive wildlife experiences are changing.

In Canada, the historic victory of Bill S-203 (Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act), to ban the keeping, breeding and trading in cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) for entertainment purposes stated clearly that Canadian sensibilities are shifting. With the passing of the Bill, major Canadian airlines including Transat, Air Canada, WestJet and Sunwing committed ceasing the promotion and sales of tours that involve captive cetaceans.

Now another piece of progressive legislation, the Jane Goodall Act, is working its way through the Canadian Parliament. If passed, without significant amendments to its original form, it would end the commercial trade, breeding and use of more than 800 wildlife species which would have a big impact on roadside zoos and other facilities and businesses that use these animals for entertainment.

As tourism recovers post-pandemic, a similar shift in decreasing demand for exploitative wildlife experiences globally should be expected and North American-based companies must continue to do their part and move the tourism industry in the right direction.

Globally, nature-based tourism is on the rise. Wildlife tourism experiences can be 'wildlife friendly'. For example, responsible observation-only activities with wild animals in their natural habitats or in genuine sanctuary facilities. But wildlife tourism can also be in the form of exploitative attractions, where wild animals are held in captivity for entertainment and offered for riding, petting and feeding or made to perform in shows. These types of attractions can cause significant animal suffering¹.



Top photo: Staff member at Marineland in Niagara Falls Canada standing on a beluga whale during a performance, 2018. Credit: World Animal Protection

Bottom photo: Wild dolphins, 2020. Credit: Unsplash

In a recent poll conducted by World Animal Protection, 58% of Canadians respondents said they were engaged with animal welfare issues². The same poll showed support for wildlife friendly tourism, with 72% of Canadian respondents in the poll agreeing that countries should stop the commercial exploitation of wild animals, and 81% believing that wild animals have the right to a wild life. This indicates a demand for ethical tourism and awareness of the distress caused by exploitative wildlife tourism.

Why protecting wildlife in tourism matters

Worldwide, wild animals are taken from the wild or bred in captivity to be used for entertainment in the tourism industry. Activities and attractions that are considered wildlife entertainment are those allowing tourists close contact with wild animals or to see them perform. Popular examples include tiger cubs made to pose with tourists for selfies, elephant rides and washing, and swim-with-dolphin experiences.

What is wildlife entertainment?

Wildlife entertainment includes activities that:

- **risk** portraying or trivializing wild animals as pets, novelty objects, comedians, or domesticated species
- **encourage** animals to perform behaviours that are either unnatural, unnecessary, or harmful
- **involve** procedures that may be considered stressful or harmful to all or individual animals
- **expose** visitors or handlers to unnecessary risks of injury or disease
- **profit** from the commodification of wild animals

Captive wildlife tourism often requires the removal of wild animals from their natural habitats, or separation from their families at an early age if captive bred, and is linked to both legal and illegal wildlife trade^{3,4,5,6,7}. Furthermore, keeping wildlife in captivity for entertainment offers no genuine benefit to the conservation of the species.

Using wild animals for entertainment is not only demeaning, but the suffering also starts the moment the animals are captured from the wild or bred in captivity. In most cases they are separated from their mothers at an early age, and then exposed to harsh training which causes physical and psychological damage that can last a lifetime. They typically experience harm, stress and discomfort at entertainment venues which fail to meet their basic wild animal needs.

A 2015 study by Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) in the UK, commissioned by World Animal Protection, reported up to 550,000 wild animals are suffering for tourist entertainment in wildlife attractions worldwide⁸. They also found that very few travellers can recognize animal cruelty and consequently continue to leave positive reviews for low-welfare venues.

However, some wildlife tourism activities are humane and ethical and contribute to the protection of wild animal populations, harnessing tourism's potential to be an economic rationale for protecting nature. These activities may include observing wild animals responsibly in their natural habitats from a safe and respectful distance. They may also involve viewing them in genuine sanctuaries or wildlife-friendly facilities that are part of efforts to phase out captive wild animal use for tourist entertainment and other exploitative uses.

Travel companies need robust animal welfare policies that protect wildlife at tourist attractions which they promote and sell tickets to. Travel companies must educate and empower customers to make animal-friendly travel decisions. This involves 'choice editing' (the process of controlling or limiting the choices available to consumers to drive to an end goal, in this case, removing cruel wildlife tourism activities and promoting wildlife-friendly alternatives) and providing ethical alternatives that put the welfare of the animals first, while providing safe, memorable travel experiences for tourists to see wildlife on holiday.



Photo: A pod of spinner dolphins off the west coast of Oahu, Hawaii.
Credit: World Animal Protection / Rachel Ceretto

This is important now, more than ever, as the travel industry builds back following the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a total stop of international tourism and hit many of the popular travel destinations hard. The loss of tourism revenue following the global pandemic has further demonstrated that it is not sustainable to build a captive wildlife entertainment industry that relies on income from tourism when that income is not always dependable. With tourism at a stand-still, the care and well-being of thousands of wild animals, that should never have been in captivity in the first place, becomes a serious concern.

Besides the serious animal welfare and conservation concerns surrounding wildlife entertainment, Covid-19 has also shown how the demand and exploitation of wild animals exposes us all to disease, and damages our social and economic wellbeing.

When travel companies sell wildlife entertainment, they are funding the wildlife trade which is a top driver of pandemic risk. Furthermore, direct tourist contact with wild animals is unacceptable for both animal welfare and public health and safety reasons.

Now is the time for the travel industry to build back better as a responsible and resilient sector by integrating animal welfare into its corporate responsibility strategy and actions. As a first step companies can include wildlife friendly considerations in their materiality assessments and resulting matrix to demonstrate wider considerations in both their Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) indicators, to improve overall sustainability.

Greenwashing

‘Greenwashing’ is when companies are marketed as environmentally friendly but in reality, do very little to actually minimize their impact to the environment. To be a truly responsible company that creates real, lasting change for animals, companies cannot sell exploitative captive wildlife attractions. Companies that call themselves ethical or sustainable but still sell these types of attractions are misleading their customers to think they are buying responsible tourism experiences when they are not.

The role of the travel industry

Tourists put their trust in wildlife entertainment venues associated with travel brands. Travel agencies, associations, tour operators and booking platforms promoting and selling wildlife entertainment venues lead tourists to assume such activities are acceptable, or even beneficial for wild animals, when in fact they are inhumane and can cause irreparable and lifelong harm to wildlife.

Visits to wildlife attractions are estimated to account for up to 20-40% of global tourism⁹. Travel companies worldwide play a crucial role in changing the demand and the supply for captive wildlife experiences. Those companies that are choosing to continue selling captive wild animal entertainment are continuing to profit from animal suffering. Eighty four percent (84%) of people from Canada interviewed in our 2022 global poll believed that tour operators should avoid activities that cause wild animals suffering and 78% of Canadians polled also said they would prefer to see animals in the wild than in captivity if they had the chance¹⁰. There is continuing growth in tourists visiting natural areas and protected areas to see wild animals in their natural habitat which indicates there is already a global shift in demand for wildlife friendly tourism¹¹.

By taking a stance to protect wildlife, companies can also enhance their reputation, brand identity, traveller loyalty, and revenue.

.....

62% of Canadian respondents said they would not travel with a tour operator or company if they promoted the use of wild animals in entertainment¹².

Sixty-two percent (62%) of Canadian respondents said they would not travel with a tour operator or company if they promoted the use of wild animals in entertainment¹². This means companies not proactively moving towards wildlife friendly tourism are potentially losing business and risking their brand. From a 2019 poll, 75% of global travellers who witnessed animal cruelty said they would pay more for an activity involving animals if they knew the animals did not suffer¹³. Additionally, studies have shown that many tourists are becoming increasingly reluctant to support activities that are deemed unethical and there is a growing interest in animal welfare and a growing demand for attractions deemed “sustainable”, “eco” and “ethical”¹⁴. This demonstrates a significant amount of economic potential for wildlife-friendly venues – a potential that is growing on the world tourism stage.

Observing wildlife is a major travel motive of tourists and plays an important role in their destination selection process; the demand for authentic wildlife tourism (i.e., wild animals in their natural habitats) is growing rapidly, as is competition among wildlife destinations, thus destinations will need to secure competitive advantage by seriously considering their approach to wildlife and animal welfare¹⁵. This also means going beyond a typical ‘greenwashing’ approach to create real, lasting change for animals.

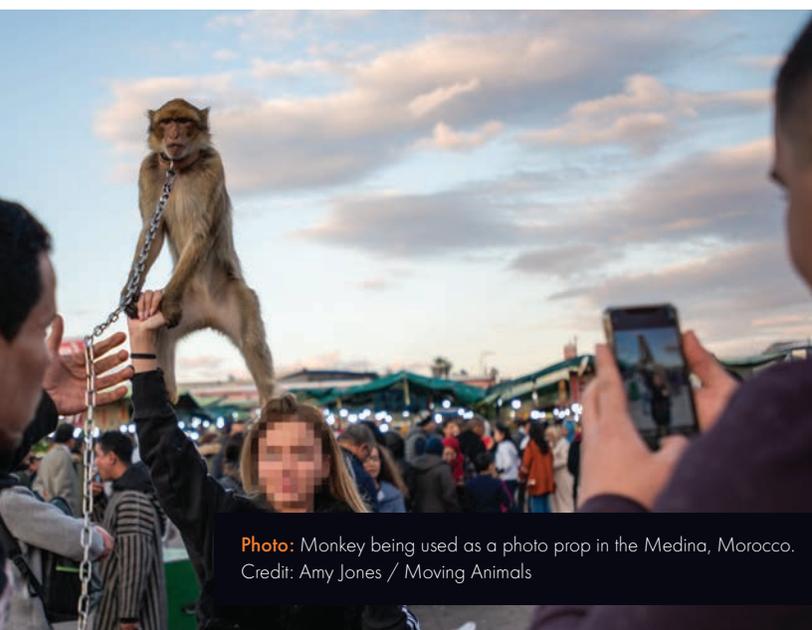


Photo: Monkey being used as a photo prop in the Medina, Morocco.
Credit: Amy Jones / Moving Animals

Tourism leaves wild animals vulnerable

The loss of tourism revenue following the global pandemic demonstrates that building a captive wildlife entertainment industry reliant on tourist income, is highly vulnerable when tourism fluctuates and declines following a pandemic, natural disaster or other external factors. This puts the well-being of animals and people whose livelihoods depend on them at serious risk. With tourism at a stand-still, the care and well-being of thousands of wild animals that should have never been in captivity, becomes a serious concern. Tourists can reduce the number of wild animals facing a lifetime of suffering in captivity by not buying tickets to these attractions, hence avoiding sustaining, or fuelling demand.

Wildlife friendly travel

Some travel companies have started to recognize their responsibility to offer ethical travel experiences. In particular, the pandemic has shone a harsh spotlight on how people treat wild animals and the consequences this can have. Worldwide, more than 250 travel companies have joined World Animal Protection by committing to end all sales and promotion of venues offering exploitative elephant attractions. Instead, they have pledged to offer more humane alternatives. These include visits to genuine sanctuaries to support captive wildlife in need, or responsible viewing of animals in the wild.

Leading the way in North America

The Travel Corporation (TTC) is a [family](#) of 40 award-winning travel brands including Trafalgar, Contiki, Insight Vacations, Uniworld River Cruises and Red Carnation Hotels. One of the largest, family owned and run businesses in the world, TTC was founded by the Tollman family in Cape Town, South Africa, and celebrated its first 100-year anniversary in 2020. With a mission to MAKE TRAVEL MATTER®, TTC's portfolio operates in over 70 countries worldwide, with teams in more than 30 global offices providing travellers with impactful and sustainable travel experiences.

In 2008, TTC's non-profit [TreadRight Foundation](#) was created to ensure a positive impact on our planet, its people, and wildlife, through philanthropic support for more than 60 sustainable travel initiatives worldwide to date. In 2014, TTC stopped the sale of all experiences that involved elephant rides or shows and partnered with World Animal Protection to develop its first animal welfare policy and training material for its tour directors and sales teams. Its broader animal welfare policy led to the phase out of bullfights and captive whale and dolphin attractions and other inhumane tourist activities in its supply chain.

TTC has always demonstrated a willingness to improve based on evolving best practices in the sector, new scientific evidence and declining public acceptance over the use of animals in tourism. The group updated its [animal welfare policy](#) in 2020, becoming one of the first travel companies to adopt the more progressive Five Domains framework for assessing animal welfare.

The new policy more explicitly states that unacceptable activities will not be included in any of its tours, including wild animal performances, any activity where wild animals are bred, held captive, purchased or traded for tourism, sport or trophy hunting, any animal fights, baiting or luring animals closer and walking with big cats. And based on feedback from the University of Surrey's first assessment, they agreed to make their animal welfare policy a binding condition of their contracts with suppliers.

TTC strives to be transparent about their journey, [publicizing their animal welfare goals, progress and impact](#) along with their other sustainability goals on their website.

Not only does TTC work to continuously improve protection for animals impacted by their travel experiences across its 40 brands, but it also encourages change across the global travel sector as a member of the Coalition for Ethical Wildlife Tourism and the Future of Tourism Coalition. It also continues to educate its customers on animal welfare best practices, and encourages guests and teams to contact them if they feel an experience does not meet their animal welfare policy. They have funded several projects to increase protection for wild animals and have also advocated for stronger policies, laws and enforcement to protect wild animals through the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime and by joining NGOs and other travel companies in calling on the UN World Tourism Organization to include animal welfare in its Code of Ethics for Tourism.

'Tracking the Travel Industry' presents an assessment of 11 travel companies and tour operators, prominent internationally and within North America's travel market, on their commitment to animal welfare and wildlife friendly tourism. This research, commissioned by World Animal Protection and undertaken by the University of Surrey, highlights which companies are failing wildlife by selling exploitative experiences and attractions or by operating their business without concern for animal welfare. 'Tracking the Travel Industry' gives industry leaders, travellers, the public, travel companies and World Animal Protection supporters a clear picture of the progress the travel industry has made in committing to animal welfare and where work still needs to be done to protect wild animals.

Methodology

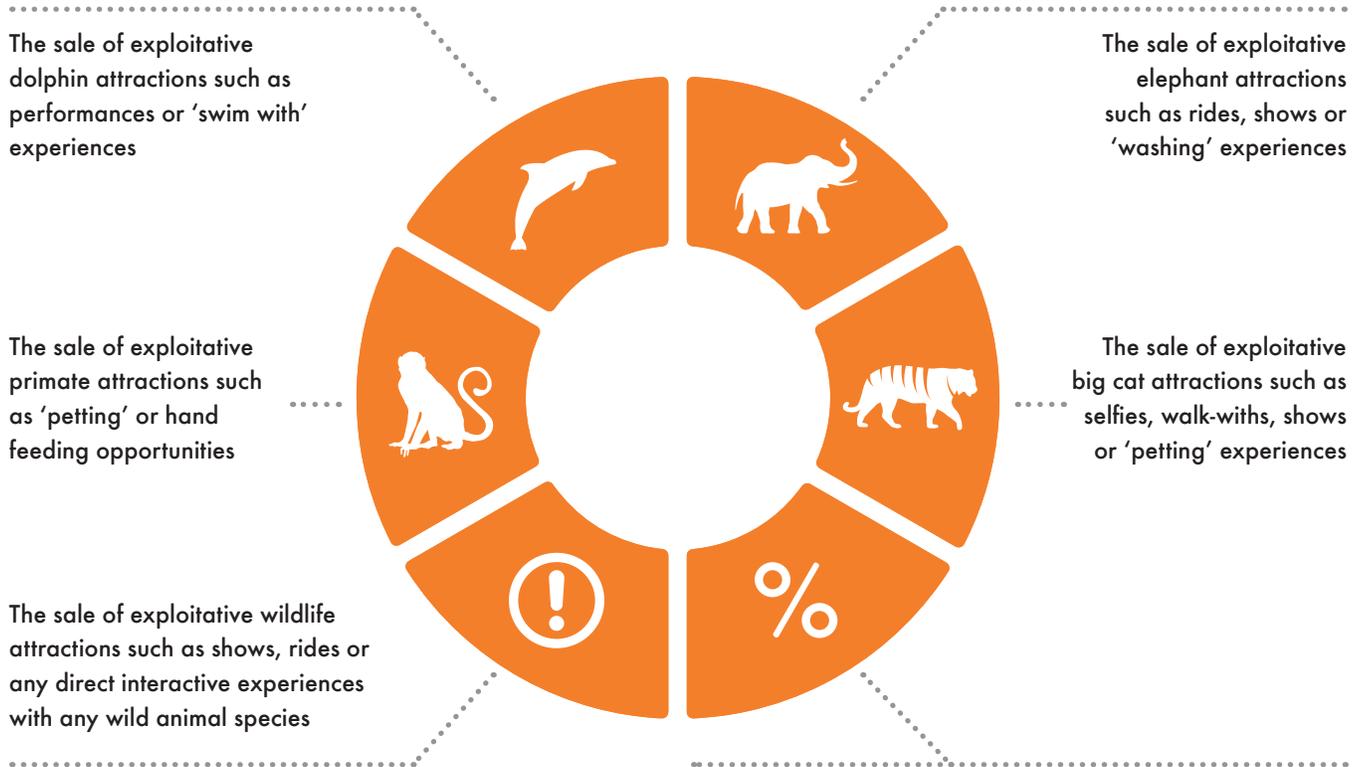
Company selection

The companies featured in 'Tracking the Travel Industry' report are:



These international travel companies were chosen based on their relevance, popularity, and influence in the US and Canadian travel markets. The companies represent a group of some of the most influential travel agencies, travel platforms and booking facilitators, activity and experience specialists, and traditional tour operator stores internationally and in North America.

Company wheels



This research component, conducted by independent research partner, the University of Surrey, assigns companies a % score using comprehensive methodology that assesses companies across four key areas:

- 1 Commitment:** Public availability and quality of published animal welfare policies and how applicable they are to all their brands.
- 2 Targets and performance:** Availability and scope of published time-bound targets and reports on progress towards meeting animal welfare commitments.
- 3 Changing industry supply:** Availability and quality of engagement with suppliers and the overall industry, to implement wildlife friendly changes.
- 4 Changing consumer demand:** Availability and quality of educational animal welfare content and tools to empower consumers to make wildlife-friendly travel choices.

Company % scores

The assessment of companies was done independently by the University of Surrey. World Animal Protection employees were not involved during the assessment or scoring of companies. By relying largely on public information, 'Tracking the Travel Industry International' paints a fair, unbiased picture of the travel industry's transparency and progress towards becoming wildlife friendly.

University of Surrey researchers relied largely on published information available on company websites:

- to encourage better transparency of information published by companies
- to avoid bias in terms of those companies World Animal Protection has engaged with in animal welfare policy development
- to ensure that companies were assessed consistently.

Individual company reports were independently created by a team of four researchers and industry experts from the University of Surrey. These confidential company reports were shared with the companies, giving them the opportunity to provide further clarification on publicly available evidence. This was to ensure consistent scoring, to check the factual accuracy of the content and to ensure consistency of the assessment methodology. Companies were also able to provide evidence for information that was not publicly available for some sections of the assessment, notably 'Targets and performance' and 'Changing industry supply'.

Companies were assessed across the four summarized key areas below, to give a final percentage score out of 100.



Commitment

Do the companies have a policy which outlines the general animal welfare values of the company and what animal activities they find acceptable or unacceptable?
Which species are covered?

Do the companies make statements of commitment to protect wildlife from harm through tourism?



Targets and performance

Do the companies have targets for meeting their animal welfare commitments?

Do the companies publicly report on their performance in meeting those targets?



Changing industry supply

Do the companies publicly say how they include binding animal welfare standards in the contracts with their suppliers?

Do the companies take a leading role in the sector to determine and promote responsible animal welfare practices?



Changing consumer demand

Do the companies raise awareness of animal welfare issues among consumers and provide advice to change customer attitudes towards wildlife tourism?

Do they provide resources to shape ethical habits and identify ethical activities at attractions involving wild animals?

Do the companies make this information easy to find and are customers encouraged to raise animal welfare concerns with the companies?



Photo: A lion and tiger cub at an undisclosed venue in South Africa offering petting and interaction with big cats. Credit: Blood Lions / Pippa Hankinson

Companies could achieve a total of 135 points.
The points are divided as follows.

| Assessment criteria subject areas | Points / Percentage value |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Commitment | 30 / 40% |
| Targets and performance | 45 / 20% |
| Changing industry supply | 30 / 20% |
| Changing consumer demand | 30 / 20% |
| TOTAL | 135 / 100% |

Final company reports showing individual scores and comments for each question, and overall scores, were provided to companies along with the methodology. This enables companies to see how and why they received their scores and the improvements needed to score higher in future.

Wildlife icons

A key part of the journey for tourism companies to become wildlife friendly is to oppose the sale of tickets to attractions and experiences exploiting wild animals. Researchers collected information from the public websites of each of the companies in this assessment, to determine which companies are selling harmful experiences at captive wildlife venues.

We chose to focus on four species categories – dolphins, elephants, primates, and big cats, as well as a general section encompassing all other wild animal species. These animals were chosen due to their known complex ecological, social and behavioural needs, their sentience and their common use in tourism entertainment attractions globally. We believe these animals are flagship species, and changes for them can trigger changes across the entire wildlife entertainment industry.



Find out more about how animals can suffer in dolphin entertainment attractions in our report [‘Behind the smile’](#).



Find out more about how animals can suffer in elephant entertainment attractions in our report [‘Elephants not commodities’](#).



Find out more about how animals can suffer in primate entertainment attractions in our report [‘The show can’t go on’](#).



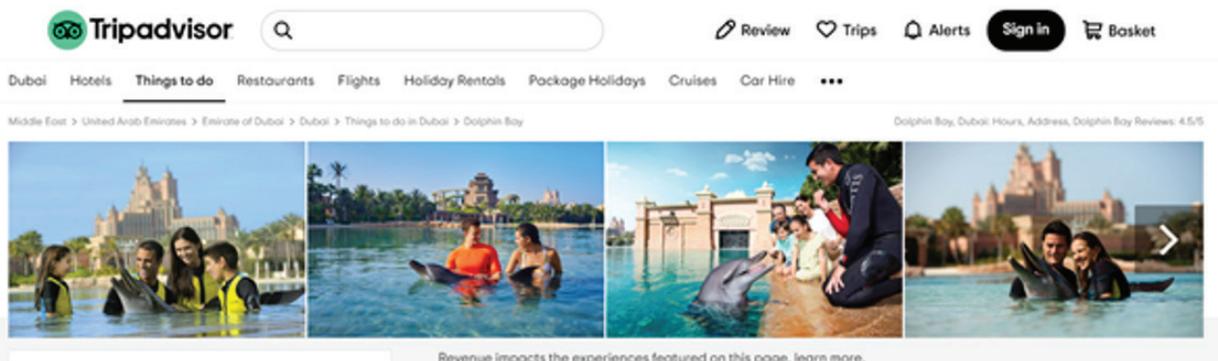
Find out more about how animals can suffer in big cat entertainment attractions in our report [‘Trading cruelty’](#).



Wild animals deserve the right to a wild life. Wild animals are not domesticated and suffer when exploited for tourism entertainment.

Companies were not penalized in this assessment for selling tickets to venues where additional exploitative encounters can be purchased as an optional extra for an additional cost. For example, tickets to theme park where there are additional purchase options inside the park to participate in captive wildlife experiences. Companies were also not penalized for inadvertently promoting exploitative attractions through images and reviews, where tickets are not sold directly for those venues or experiences. For example, Tripadvisor allows the promotion of dolphin exploitation through inclusion of imagery on their ‘things to do’ suggestions tab alongside positive consumer reviews.

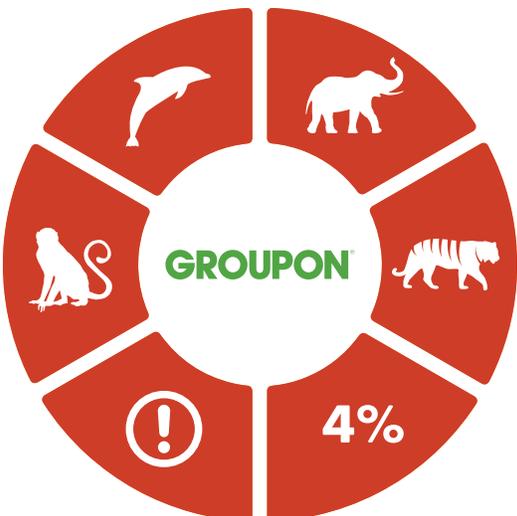
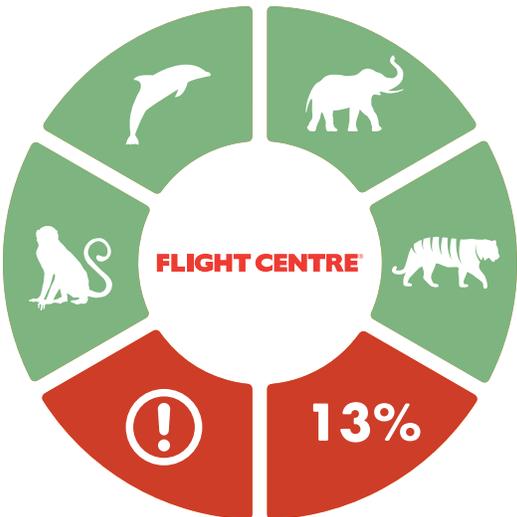
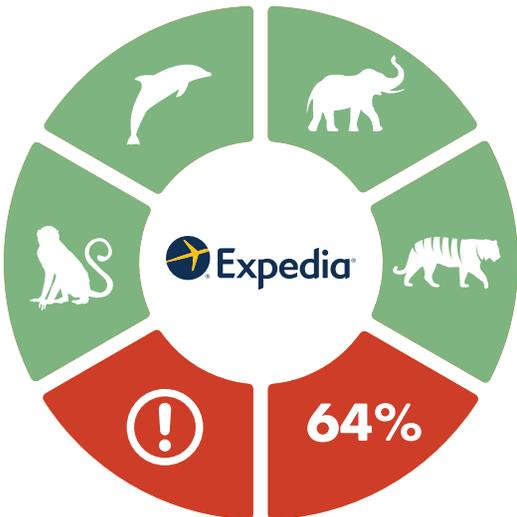
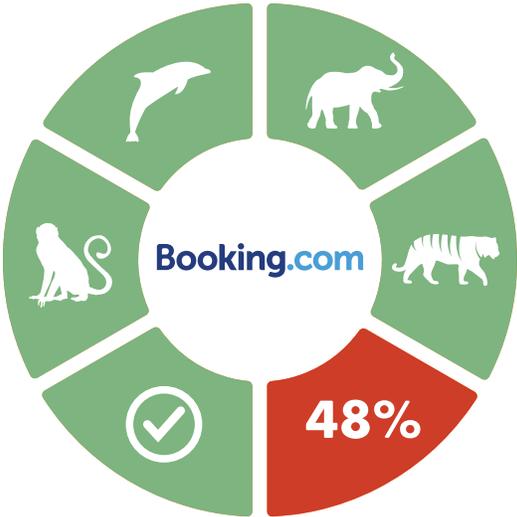
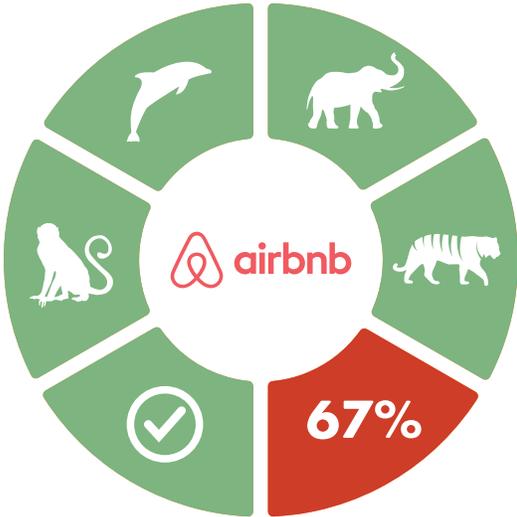
While companies were not penalized in this assessment for inadvertently promoting wildlife entertainment where they do not directly sell tickets, advertising such content can contribute to sustaining demand for exploitative tourism experiences, hence future versions of ‘Tracking the Travel Industry’ may penalize companies contributing to promoting exploitation in this way.



Results

| Who's falling behind? | |
|---|--|
|  <p>Failing dolphins</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupon • Get Your Guide • Klook • TUI/Musement • Trip.com |
|  <p>Failing elephants</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupon • Get Your Guide • Klook • TUI/Musement • Trip.com |
|  <p>Failing primates</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupon • Get Your Guide • Klook • TUI/Musement • Trip.com |
|  <p>Failing big cats</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupon • Get Your Guide • Klook • TUI/Musement • Trip.com |
|  <p>Failing wildlife</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedia • Flight Centre • Groupon • Get Your Guide • Klook • TUI/Musement • Trip.com |

A closer look



A closer look cont'd.

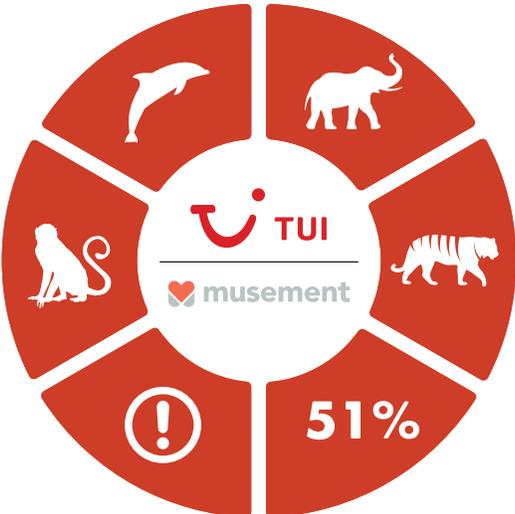
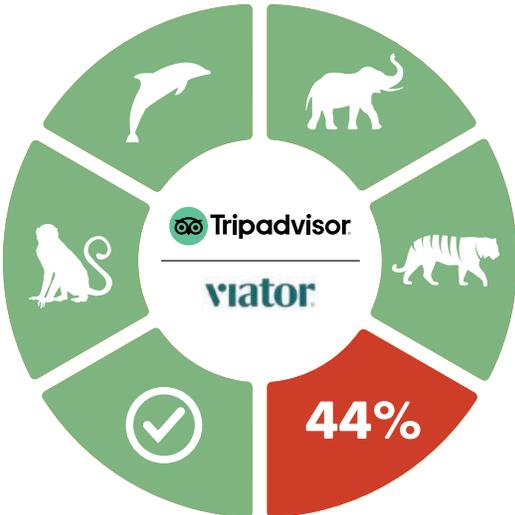
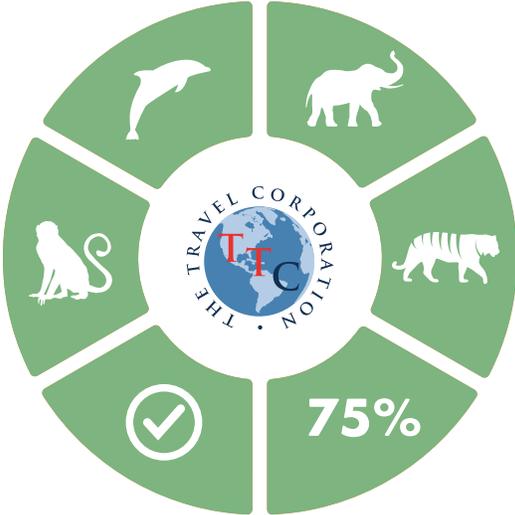
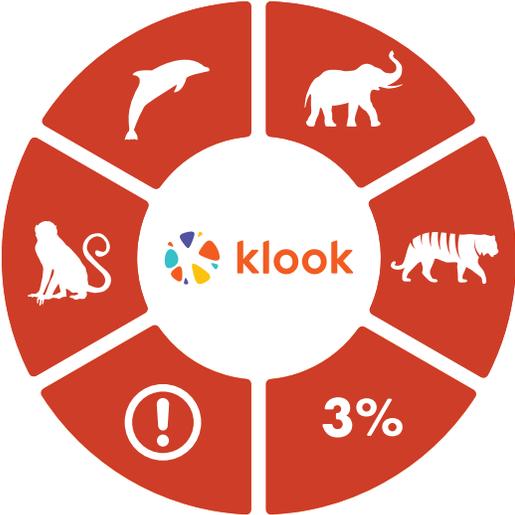




Photo: At Monkey Centre in Mae Rim, Northern Thailand, over 15 monkeys are kept in horrific conditions.
Credit: Moving Animals / Amy Jones

% Scores for animal welfare considerations in companies' business models

Independent assessments conducted by the University of Surrey, UK

Section 1 – Commitment

This section assessed the content of the companies' published animal welfare policies and guidelines and their scope.

Our recommendation to all companies is to clarify their policies when it comes to tourist contact with wild animals and performances. Harmful direct interactions, and activities involving captive wildlife performances should be identified and removed from offers. Many of the companies in this assessment that have started to incorporate this in their company policies have only done so for selected species. While we appreciate their change in policy for some wild animals, company policies should clearly state that direct contact is prohibited for ALL wild animal species. This will ensure no wild animals are left vulnerable to exploitation for tourism entertainment and reduce public health and safety risks.

Critically, five companies received a score of less than 10, with three of those achieving zero for having made no attempt to

include animal welfare related commitments in their business plan at all. Groupon, GetYourGuide, Flight Center, Klook and Trip.com have all neglected their responsibility to animal welfare and to their customers who engage in interactions with wild animals through a ticket purchased on their site.

Other overall recommendations for this section are to ensure that animal welfare commitments are made using clear objective language. This applies to both the actual commitments outlined, and to the scope of the commitment document. A practical recommendation, also benefiting transparency, is to ensure that all animal welfare commitments are located within a single policy document, rather than across multiple documents and reports.

Adhering to the Five Domains of Animal Welfare model, combined with the concept of 'a good life', recognizes the importance of animals having positive experiences.

Five domains of animal welfare

- 1 Nutrition** – factors that involve the animal’s access to sufficient, balanced, varied and clean food and water.
- 2 Environment** – factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odour, noise and predictability.
- 3 Health** – factors that enable good health through absence of disease, injury, impairment and good fitness level.
- 4 Behaviour** – factors that provide varied, novel and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating and others.
- 5 Mental state** – by presenting positive situations in the previous four functional domains, the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort or vitality, while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain or boredom.

Wild animals’ needs can only be fully met in their natural environment in the wild. Although the Five Domains and the concept of ‘a good life’ are important to improve the welfare of captive wildlife, they do not justify keeping them in captive environments.

World Animal Protection recognizes, however, that captive wildlife venues practicing these concepts are likely to have higher welfare standards than those which do not recognize and implement them.

Wild animals’ needs can only be fully met in their natural environment in the wild. Non-exploitative, high welfare venues and genuine sanctuaries are a solution in the short term for animals already in captivity, where tourists can see wildlife ethically.

Section 2 – Targets and performance

This section assessed any published targets the companies set for implementation of their animal welfare policies and guidelines, and any reporting on performance and progress towards those goals. Targets were also scored according to their ambition, with broader or larger targets receiving more points than less ambitious targets.

While we recognize meaningful changes can take some time to implement, five companies scored zero against this section, showing they have not yet made any progress in this area. These companies (Groupon, Flight Center, GetYourGuide, Klook and Trip.com) have not yet published any animal welfare commitments.

When companies do publish animal welfare commitments, they need to be set with measurable, time-bound targets. We recommend companies clearly state the date when commitments should have been fully implemented. They should also be more transparent with their targets and reporting process. We are aware that some companies have internal reporting measures, and we recommend making these publicly available.

Accrediting bodies

Companies sometimes turn to accrediting bodies to base the development of their animal welfare guidelines. While some accrediting bodies can provide a useful start to consider aspects of animal welfare, there is no one ‘gold standard’ body to turn to. While not an accrediting body, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) is the main global umbrella organization for zoos and other related institutions and is expected to lead the way with clear animal welfare standards and guidelines for its members. These standards should be enforced by regular, unannounced, independent monitoring, especially because, our research (presented in our report ‘The show can’t go on’ in 2019) documents a huge range of cruel and demeaning practices that can cause animal suffering at WAZA member zoos and aquariums across the world.

World Animal Protection believes that any organization committed to animal welfare should not contribute to demand for commercial captive wild animal entertainment venues. Therefore, accreditation standards should not sustain captivity in any way. They should recognize captivity as a last resort and focus on housing wild animals rescued from exploitation.

For sanctuaries with the purpose of ending captive wild animal exploitation, accreditation bodies such as [GFAS](#), [EARS](#), [PASA](#) can be useful as a reference for quality standards to identify best practices. For wildlife watching experiences, following [WCA](#) or [ACCOBAMS](#) quality standards can be valuable to identify best practices.



Photo: At Phuket Zoo, Thailand, this tiger is kept chained by the neck to a concrete slab so that tourists can take photographs with her. Credit: Moving Animals / Amy Jones

Section 3 – Changing industry supply

This section assessed any published targets the companies set for implementation of their animal welfare policies and guidelines, and any reporting on performance and progress towards those goals. Targets were also scored according to their ambition, with broader or larger targets receiving more points than less ambitious targets.

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Section 4 – Changing consumer demand

This section assessed the companies' efforts to raise consumer awareness of animal welfare and to empower customers to make animal friendly travel choices.

Points were awarded for referencing or linking welfare content to experts, such as animal welfare NGOs or scientific studies. Companies that did well also made the content accessible either through findable routes, or where customers would see it during their purchasing journey. The companies that achieved high scores for this section, notably Tripadvisor, The Travel Corporation, Airbnb and Expedia, also encouraged their consumers to raise animal welfare concerns and provided them with a dedicated contact or procedure to do so.



Photo: A mahout steers an elephant in a show at a zoo in Thailand. Asian elephants are trained (using a stick with a sharp hook) to perform tricks for crowds of tourists.
Credit: World Animal Protection

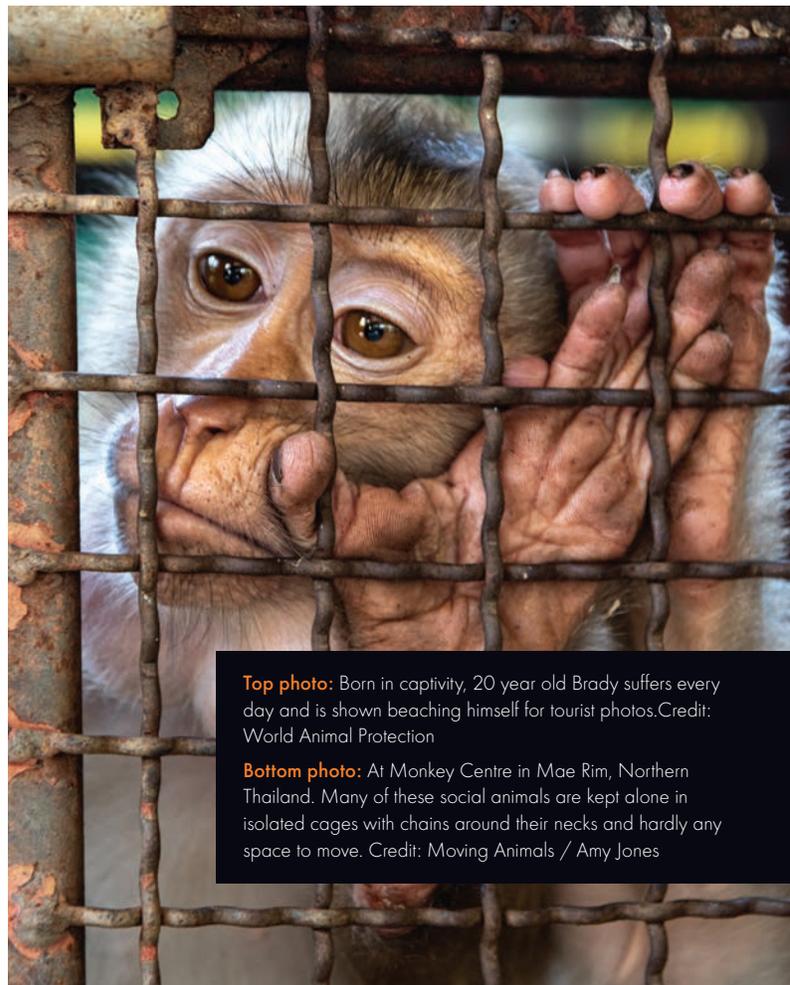
Bottom of the barrel

Critically, five key companies are severely failing wild animals:



All of these companies are selling exploitative wildlife attractions across a wide range of wild animal species, including dolphins, elephants, primates and big cats. Enabling interactions between tourists and any of these animals, whether that be performing for shows, posing for photographs, petting or feeding, can cause unnecessary suffering to animals. Methods to prepare the animals can often involve premature separation from their mothers, harsh training methods and physical restraint that causes pain or fear. Further, most entertainment venues cannot recreate the complex wild environments and social or ecological conditions these animals would have in the wild.

These companies also have significant improvements to make to their business models to take responsibility for preventing animal suffering in the tourism industry. While we recognize TUI/Musement achieved a higher score on the assessment conducted by the University of Surrey, which is progress in the right direction, they still sell tickets to exploitative wildlife venues, and thus still sustain demand for animal cruelty in the tourism sector. GetYourGuide, Klook, Groupon and Trip.com all received an incredibly low score of 7% or less, as low as 3% for Klook, indicating a complete lack of commitment to considering animal welfare throughout their business.



Top photo: Born in captivity, 20 year old Brady suffers every day and is shown beaching himself for tourist photos. Credit: World Animal Protection

Bottom photo: At Monkey Centre in Mae Rim, Northern Thailand. Many of these social animals are kept alone in isolated cages with chains around their necks and hardly any space to move. Credit: Moving Animals / Amy Jones

Conclusion

The findings presented here show that 5 tourism companies are failing wild animals in the North American market: Groupon, GetYourGuide, Klook, TUI/Musement and Trip.com. While several other companies are taking commendable steps towards their journey to become truly wildlife friendly, these companies are selling harmful experiences that exploit wildlife and sustain the demand for damaging tourism practices. They have not acknowledged the potential dangers of wild animal/tourist interactions nor any of the responsibilities that they, and their industry, have towards animal welfare.

The core problems identified in this report are:

- 1** 7 companies are still failing wild animals by selling exploitative wildlife attractions – Groupon, GetYourGuide, Klook, TUI/Musement, Expedia, Flight Center and Trip.com
- 2** Despite improving their company’s supply chains, commitments and targets, TUI continues to sell tickets to exploitative captive dolphin attractions, showing a worrying lack of interest in protecting wildlife.
- 3** Groupon, GetYourGuide and Klook scored no points at all in three of the four sections in the independent assessment, and are thus contributing to sustaining animal suffering throughout the tourism industry.
- 4** Some companies that are showing some progress by starting to implement bans for ticket sales to exploitative venues are doing so one species at a time, which severely delays protection for most wild animals.
- 5** Most of the 11 influential travel companies in this report are not doing enough to bring awareness to consumers about wild animal suffering in the tourism industry and how to prevent it.

The travel industry plays a huge role in the continuation of captive wildlife entertainment by selling and promoting wildlife activities around the world. Research shows tourists are often unaware of the cruelty behind many captive wildlife attractions. By selling inhumane wildlife activities, travel brands can promote a false sense that activities such as dolphin shows, elephant rides, elephant washing and tiger petting, are acceptable. They are not. The smart travel companies recognize that there are reputational and brand benefits to becoming a known leader in ethical, wildlife friendly travel.

When companies are transparent in their wildlife policies, publicly state their intentions and report on their progress, customers take notice. Transparency between companies and consumers encourages trust. Taking a strong stance against animal cruelty gives companies a strong market position and builds their brand as a responsible leader in travel.

Travel companies need to take responsibility for creating, fuelling, and fulfilling consumer demand for exploitative captive wildlife attractions. While some wildlife attraction venues, such as marine theme parks, are attempting to future-proof themselves (i.e., alter their business model to adapt to already changing trends and attitudes), travel companies need to be more proactive. For the sake of the wildlife languishing in captivity, travel companies cannot afford to wait for consumer tastes to change while continuing to promote and sell tickets to cruel wildlife tourism venues. To create true and lasting change for wild animals, it is critical that industry change is initiated by tourism companies from a supply-side.

We applaud those companies who have already taken steps to disassociate themselves from inhumane wildlife attractions. By taking a strong ethical stance against this cruelty, they have shown the travel industry and members of the public the unacceptability of keeping wild animals captive for entertainment.



Photo: A wild elephant with tourists watching on from a distance at Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.
Credit: World Animal Protection / Aaron Gekoski

Recommendations

For the public:

The public has the power to stop the exploitation of wildlife in several ways. Consumers can make a huge difference by not taking part in the exploitation by not buying tickets, and by telling travel companies that they disapprove of their involvement in the captive wildlife entertainment industry. Decreasing the sales of tickets decreases the economic incentive to breed and capture more wildlife. This then reduces the number of wild animals facing a lifetime of suffering in captivity.

It is important for the public to show travel companies that they won't stand for animal suffering in the tourism industry. When the public show they won't support wild animals used for exploitative entertainment, travel companies change their policies and end ticket sales for these attractions. Consumers and travellers have a choice when they travel and need to demonstrate they won't stand for this level of animal exploitation from the so-called market leaders.

For tourism companies:

Companies included in this assessment have been provided full reports on their performance and tailored advice on how to increase their score in future assessments and move to become a wildlife friendly travel company. Recommendations for becoming a truly wildlife friendly travel company follow below.



Commitment

Companies should have a public animal welfare policy recognizing the following:

Animals are best seen in the wild.

Animals in captivity must have positive experiences – 'a good life'.

The Five Domains or the Five Freedoms of animal welfare are critical concepts to provide better conditions for animals.

The travel industry has a role towards protecting wildlife.

Travel companies should assess their offers for harmful wildlife activities and remove them. This includes direct contact with captive wild animals, animal performances, fights, and races.

Companies should publicly require specific certifications, guidelines or accreditations that experiences or attractions involving wild animals must follow as a minimum to be acceptable. This should be in addition to not offering unacceptable activities such as direct contact, performances, fights, and races. For example, accredited or membership body affiliated zoos/aquaria, Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) certified sanctuaries and World Cetacean Alliance (WCA) certified wild whale watching.

Companies should view as unacceptable, visits to facilities where wild animals are bred for commercial purposes.



Changing consumer demand

Companies should use content that references or links to evidence and experts to raise awareness and change customers' attitudes and behaviour towards wildlife tourism activities and attractions.

Companies should provide consumers with resources to identify ethical activities and attractions involving wild animals.

Companies should provide animal welfare content information where it is findable by consumers through an intuitive path on their user booking journey and on product pages. The content should be easy to 'discover' when users are not looking for it.

Companies should encourage customers to raise animal welfare concerns or queries with them and provide an easy way to do so.



Changing industry supply

Suppliers

Companies should incorporate their animal welfare policy and commitments as part of their binding contracts with suppliers. They should prohibit experiences or attractions involving practices with wild animals which are unacceptable and highlight policies which must be followed to make activities acceptable.

Companies should audit suppliers' performance against the animal welfare conditions stated in their contracts and have a procedure to correct suppliers if they fail to meet standards.

Companies should develop mechanisms to engage suppliers in best practices, such as raising awareness and providing training.

Industry

Companies should lead or co-lead joint initiatives within the industry, or with NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to protect wild animals in tourism. Eg:

- working with other travel industry bodies to develop standards or guidelines
- advocating for reformed regulations
- developing open resources such as training modules, audit tools, partnering with NGOs by providing funding and/or expertise.



Targets and performance

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Targets | Companies should publicly set time-bound targets to end selling or promoting experiences or attractions that allow close or direct tourist contact with wild animals, and animal performances, fights, and races. |
| | Companies should publicly set time-bound targets to only sell or promote experiences and attractions which have specific certifications, guidelines, or accreditations and which only offer acceptable practices involving animals. |
| Performance | Companies should publicly report on their performance in meeting the targets above. |
| | Companies should publicly report on the number or % of excursions, tickets sold and offers involving wild animals so the public can see progress. |



Photo: Wild lion cubs feeding at Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe.
Credit: World Animal Protection / Aaron Gekoski

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Appendix 1

10 steps to become wildlife-friendly

Protecting wildlife protects people and jobs. The outbreak of Covid-19 has shone a harsh spotlight on how people treat wild animals. The pandemic has challenged us to create change and provided an unprecedented opportunity to rebuild the tourism industry to be more resilient and responsible by becoming wildlife friendly.

As a member of the travel industry, you can help prevent another pandemic, secure livelihoods and help keep wild animals in the wild by integrating animal welfare into your company's business values and actions. This involves phasing out wildlife entertainment from your supply chain and offering responsible tourist experiences instead. Together we can ensure that this generation of captive wildlife is the last to suffer for commercial gain.

- 1 Commit to animal welfare by taking World Animal Protection's Wildlife-Friendly pledge.** Consider communicating this intent to your customers and the public to encourage a wider shift towards more ethical wildlife tourism.
- 2 Assemble a group of enthusiastic colleagues** who are interested in leading organisational changes to embed animal welfare into your company's business operations.
- 3 Review your animal-related product offerings.** Activities that negatively impact animal welfare and the conservation of species in the wild, and that can be of high risk to the health and safety of your travellers include direct interaction with wild animals and wild animals performing. World Animal Protection can provide you with guidance and checklists to identify red flags in your supply chain and remove them.
- 4 Assess the value of these activities to customers** and start to look for non-animal and ethical animal alternatives, such as watching animals from a safe and respectful distance in their natural habitats or at a true sanctuary where the animals are not bred or traded.
- 5 Start conversations with your suppliers.** Help them understand that change is needed, and you are looking for responsible alternatives to replace wildlife entertainment activities. Keep in mind: while ethical experiences exist, a company like yours can help phase out wildlife entertainment by asking ground suppliers to stop commercial breeding and trade while improving the conditions of those animals already in captivity.
- 6 Develop an animal welfare policy and ask suppliers to plan a phase out of any activities and attractions that are no longer acceptable as part of your product offers.** A good policy will help ensure you are assessing animal-based tourism consistently with the latest scientific information and mitigate the risk of being criticized for not doing enough. World Animal Protection can provide support.
- 7 Train staff on animal welfare and how to identify cruel attractions and activities, as well as truly ethical wildlife experiences.** World Animal Protection has training modules, checklists and research that will allow your staff to own your company's animal welfare policy, assess suppliers, and select exciting and responsible alternatives.
- 8 Speak out about your company's commitment to animal welfare and educate your customers on how to be an animal-friendly traveller wherever they go.** Education is vital to shift demand towards responsible tourism. World Animal Protection has numerous educational materials, such as tips on how to be an elephant-friendly traveller.
- 9 Join forces with other travel leaders** to build back a responsible and resilient travel industry by creating and promoting truly ethical alternatives which together with reducing demand will lead to a gradual phase out of captive use of wild animals for tourism entertainment. Contact World Animal Protection to learn more about the Coalition for Ethical Wildlife Tourism.
- 10 Annually re-evaluate, monitor and report on your animal welfare strategy.** We encourage you to continue to update and improve your policy and ensure it's being fully implemented across your organisation and supply chain.

Appendix 2

How to draft an animal welfare policy

Purpose, scope and disclaimer

This toolkit has been created to support companies like yours in drafting a robust animal welfare policy and guiding you in adopting more ethical practices concerning animals, in particular wildlife.

As wildlife encounters are amongst the most popular holiday experience, most of the principles and guidelines that are recommended in this document relate to wild animals, whether in captivity or in the wild. This doesn't mean though that ensuring good welfare for domesticated animals is any less important.

Adopting an animal welfare policy based on this guidance document must not be considered as a certification or in any other way an endorsement by World Animal Protection of your company's animal related practices. The content of this policy guidance should be customised to be relevant for your company.

You can reach out to World Animal Protection if you wish to receive more information or any further support or materials, such as staff training, checklists or customer education. Email us at tourism@worldanimalprotection.org

What is wildlife entertainment and why is it unacceptable?

There are certain tourist attractions with animals that are simply unacceptable as they will never meet the animals' most basic welfare needs. Wildlife entertainment is one of these particularly worrying types of attractions.

Activities and attractions that are considered wildlife entertainment are those that allow tourists to have close contact with wild animals or see the animal(s) perform. In addition to the entertainment being demeaning, the suffering starts from the moment the animals are captured from the wild or bred in captivity.

In most cases young animals are prematurely separated from their mothers and exposed to harsh training, causing physical and psychological damage. This exploitation and abuse exacerbate the stress and discomfort they experience for the rest of their lives while living in unsuitable conditions at entertainment venues. All solely for commercial gain.

Review current offers first

Before drafting an animal welfare policy it's recommended that an initial review of the products and experiences involving (wild) animals is undertaken. The following questions can help when reviewing animal related products.

- Are wild animals required to perform in shows?
Eg. orangutans who re-enact kick-boxing matches, elephants and dolphins who perform tricks.
- Are visitors allowed to hold, touch or directly interact with wild animals? Eg. tiger (cub) selfies, walking with lions, riding an elephant or swim-with-dolphin experiences.

If the answer is "yes" to one or both of these questions, these activities have negative impacts on animal welfare and should not be allowed.

A robust animal welfare policy consists of two parts.

- Your company's mission and values in relation to animal welfare. These will not have an immediate impact on the animals in your company's supply chain, but they serve as a frame of reference and a way to put forward principles that will accompany the organization wherever and whatever business is done.
- Your company's commitment sets out guidelines in which your mission and values are translated into concrete practices, outlining what's acceptable and what's not

Essential animal welfare principles to recognize

- That the travel industry plays a key role in steering demand away from cruel wildlife experiences, encouraging improving conditions for existing captive wild animals and asking suppliers to end commercial breeding and trade to ensure this is the last generation of captive wildlife used for entertainment.
- That all animals must be respected for their intrinsic value and that the best way to experience animals whilst on holiday is by seeing them in the wild.
- That when under human care animals must have a good life by enjoying good physical and mental health. That they should be provided with an environment and conditions that prevent suffering, and also enable positive experiences, with the ability to make choices and express the widest possible range of natural behaviours.
- That the unique needs of wild animals in particular can never be fully met in captive environments. That where wild animals are kept in captive conditions they must be provided with the best possible welfare and not be held captive for entertainment purposes.
- That your company will only work with suppliers if the animals under their care have the highest possible welfare in line with the Five Domains of Animal Welfare:
 1. Nutrition – factors that involve the animal's access to sufficient, balanced, varied and clean food and water.
 2. Environment – factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odour, noise and predictability.
 3. Health – factors that enable good health through absence of disease, injury, impairment and good fitness level.
 4. Behaviour – factors that provide varied, novel and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating and others.
 5. Mental State – by presenting positive situations in the previous four functional domains, the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort or vitality, while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain or boredom.

Essential guidelines outlining what and what not to offer

It's recommended that travel companies develop as part of an animal welfare policy, clear guidelines that set out acceptable and unacceptable activities.

We recommend to not sell or promote venues and/or activities that offer tourists any of the following experiences:

- close interaction with wild animals, such as touching or riding, including but not limited to elephant riding and bathing, swimming with dolphins or walking with lion
- watching wild animal performances, including but not limited to dolphin shows, circuses, orangutan boxing
- photo opportunities with wild animals, including, but not limited to big cats, sloths, or primates, tiger selfies, dolphin kissing, or selfies with orangutans
- watching animals fight or race, or being used in other sports or cultural events that cause animals to suffer or die, including but not limited to bullfighting and running, crocodile wrestling, dog fighting, rodeos, elephant polo and horse or dog racing
- visiting facilities where captive wild animals are bred and kept for commercial products, including but not limited to crocodile farms, civet coffee farms, bear bile farms, turtle farms
- consuming food that has caused extreme animal suffering and/or that threatens the survival of species in the wild, including bush meat, foie gras, tiger wine, bear bile, shark fin, whale meat, turtle meat, snake blood and civet coffee (kopi Luwak)
- buying souvenirs made from wild animal parts, such as bags made out of crocodile or snake-skin, jewellery made out coral, ivory, tortoise shells
- engaging in any form of hunting, including trophy and canned hunting or sport fishing

When not in conflict with any of the above guidelines, the following venues, and activities where tourists can experience animals can be offered and/or promoted:

- Genuine wildlife sanctuaries, rehabilitation facilities and rescue centres that have the highest possible standards of animal care and where there is no breeding for commercial purposes – eg sanctuaries certified by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) or elephant venues following World Animal Protection's Elephant-Friendly venue guidelines. For further guidance on how to recognise a genuine wildlife sanctuary, see World Animal Protection's checklist.
- Responsible wildlife watching where tourists observe animals in their natural environment from a safe and respectful distance without luring or chasing them or in other ways interrupting their natural behaviours or routines – e.g., whale watching operators and destinations (Whale Heritage Sites) certified by the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA).

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

In order for your company's animal welfare policy to be fully implemented across your organisation we encourage you to set clear objectives with timebound targets so progress can be monitored and reported.

As part of implementing the policy your company should ensure suppliers understand the policy, how they can guarantee compliance and what the processes are for when they don't.

Awareness raising through education is another essential part of ensuring the policy becomes fully entrenched into your daily business operation.

Last but not least, we strongly recommend you evaluate your company's animal welfare policy on a regular basis to allow for updates and improvements based on the latest research, evidence, and expertise.

Appendix 3

Ready-to-go animal welfare policy template

[Company name]’s Animal Welfare Policy

[Company name] is committed to responsible tourism and protecting animals who are impacted by the travel industry. We have developed this animal welfare policy as animal encounters have become increasingly popular as part of people’s holiday experiences.

However, some animal related activities, such as elephant rides, photo opportunities with tigers or watching dolphins perform, lead to suffering through cruel treatment and inhumane conditions.

[Company name] believes that all animals should be respected for their intrinsic value and that the best way to experience animals whilst on holiday is by seeing them in the wild. When under human care, both domesticated and non-domesticated (wild) animals, must have ‘a good life’ by enjoying good physical and mental health. The conditions they are provided must favour positive experiences over negative ones within an environment that encourages making choices and enables them to express the widest possible range of natural behaviours.

[Company name] only works with suppliers if the animals under their care are provided with the highest possible welfare in line with the Five Domains of Animal Welfare:

- 1. Nutrition** – factors that involve the animal’s access to sufficient, balanced, varied and clean food and water.
- 2. Environment** – factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odour, noise and predictability.
- 3. Health** – factors that enable good health through absence of disease, injury, impairment and good fitness level.
- 4. Behaviour** – factors that provide varied, novel and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating and others.
- 5. Mental State** – by presenting positive situations in the previous four functional domains, the mental state of the animal should benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort or vitality, while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain or boredom.

[Company name] also recognises that the needs of wild animals in particular can never be fully met in captivity. Where wild animals are kept in captivity the facility must not only provide them with best possible welfare conditions, it must also contribute towards a shift away from exploitative practices and be supportive of phasing out keeping wild animals for commercial purposes.

Our guidelines

At [Company name], we do not sell or promote venues and/or activities that offer tourists any of the following experiences.

- Close interaction with wild animals, such as, touching or riding, including but not limited to elephant riding and bathing, swimming with dolphins or walking with lions
- Watching wild animal performances, including but not limited to dolphin shows, circuses, orangutan boxing
- Photo opportunities with wild animals, including, but not limited to big cats, sloths, or primates, tiger selfies, dolphin kissing, or selfies with orangutans
- Watching animals fight or race, or being used in other sport or cultural events that cause animals to suffer or die, including but not limited to bullfighting and running, crocodile wrestling, dog fighting, rodeo, elephant polo and horse racing
- Visiting facilities where captive wild animals are bred and kept for commercial products, including but not limited to crocodile farms, civet coffee farms, bear bile farms, turtle farms
- Engaging in trophy, canned hunting or sport fishing

When not in conflict with any of the above guidelines [Company name] does offer and/or promotes the following venues and activities where tourist can experience animals.

- Genuine animal sanctuaries, rehabilitation facilities and rescue centres that have the highest possible standards of animal care – eg. sanctuaries certified by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) or elephant venues following World Animal Protection's

Elephant-Friendly venue guidelines. For further guidance on how to recognise a genuine wildlife sanctuary, see World Animal Protection's checklist.

- Responsible, wildlife watching where a visitor can observe animals in their natural environment from a suitable distance without interrupting their natural behaviours or disturbing their routines – eg. whale watching experiences certified by the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA).

We are World Animal Protection.

We end the needless suffering of animals.

We influence decision makers to put animals on the global agenda.

We help the world see how important animals are to all of us.

We inspire people to change animals' lives for the better.

We move the world to protect animals.

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