

In recent years, animal attractions have become increasingly common within tourism destinations.

Seeing wild animals when travelling is a memorable part of any travel experience and when done responsibly these encounters can play a major role in protecting wildlife and their natural habitats. Unfortunately, there are certain practices that have a known detrimental welfare impact or are wholly exploitative to animals. As a result up to half a million wild animals suffer to entertain tourist around the world. Animals at these wildlife attractions are either taken from the wild or bred in captivity so tourists can swim with a dolphin, take a tiger selfie, walk with lions, ride or wash an elephant or be offered animal souvenirs or by-products. The cruel exploitation of wild animals' fuels disease emergence, and the latest COVID-19 pandemic is a prime example of that – the unnecessary close contact between humans and wildlife especially where captive animals are subjected to poor welfare conditions can have catastrophic and devastating effects.

Sadly, many tourists who love animals aren't aware of these risks and may actually contribute to animal suffering simply because they're unaware of the hidden cruelty.

ABTA, followed by ANVR, has classified certain practices as unacceptable and travel providers working with the guidance manuals have agreed that these unacceptable activities should not be supported or offered for sale to their customers. The 2nd edition of this document introduces these practices and explains what they are.

Note that the ANVR addendum to the ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines adds a few more practices to the existing unacceptable list in the ABTA Manual on 'Unacceptable Practices'. ANVR came to this decision after consulting a group of Dutch outbound tour operators, as well as animal welfare organisations IFAW, Stichting SPOTS and World Animal Protection.



Partner:



Do's and Dont's: animal welfare & tourist activities

Particularly avoid...

1. Direct contact with wild animals, including using them as photo prop

'Cuddling' lion and tiger cubs, bathing elephants, swimming with dolphins, using them as photographic props and similar activities with wild animals seem like fun, but there is a lot of animal suffering inherent in them. Animals are bred on a large scale, removed prematurely from their mother, trained with fear and pain, sometimes drugged or have their teeth and/or claws removed. This sort of activity, including so-called 'walking with lions' for example, does not contribute to the preservation of these animals in the wild either. Animals which have been in direct contact with humans intensively cannot be returned to the wild. The question is therefore very much where all these bred animals end up. It has now been shown several times that many of these former 'cuddle cubs' end up in the 'canned hunting' industry. All handling of wild animals by inexperienced people, such as tourists, can pose serious risks to the health and safety of the public and the animals.



© SPOTS



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2. Ride a wild animal

Elephant

Whether an elephant has been caught in the wild or has been born in captivity, the animal's will must be broken at an early age before it can be safely used for rides or other entertainment whereby direct contact is permitted between the tourist and the elephant. This is done by tying the young elephant up for days, starving it and mistreating it until the animal 'breaks' and thereby permanently subordinate itself to humans. Once subordinated and after training based on fear and pain elephants spend the rest of their long life in captivity, often in very poor conditions.



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Jan Schmidt-Burbach

Ostrich

An ostrich's skeleton is not built to carry people. It is therefore physically harmful to the animal, and it is also unnatural, resulting in stress for the animal. Ostrich farms where these activities take place should therefore be avoided.



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3. Attending shows where animals have to perform

Do not attend shows or (street) performances by 'dancing' or 'trained' wild animals such as bears, parrots, monkeys, dolphins, elephants and tigers. These animals have to perform under duress, for example in a circus or zoo, to 'entertain' an audience. This unnatural behaviour is the result of training techniques based on pain and fear, including denial of food and physical abuse.



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4. Visiting marine parks or aquariums

Avoid marine parks or aquariums where marine mammals, such as dolphins, are held captive. These animals suffer at every stage of their captivity - from being captured in the wild, to having to undergo captive breeding, to being forced to live in inhumane barren tanks and forced to live in unsuitable conditions. Their complex social, behavioural and intellectual needs can only be fully met in the wild.

Their use in wildlife entertainment causes them harm, stress and discomfort and does not contribute to the preservation of these animals in the wild either. They are forced to do tricks, like beaching (also known as 'sliding out'), where the animals are trained to propel themselves out of the water onto a stage. Not only does a trick like this offer no educational value, but it is also demeaning and dangerous for the dolphin.



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5. Visiting facilities where captive wild animals are bred and kept for commercial products

Crocodile, turtle, bear bile, civet coffee, snake and tiger farms hold large numbers of animals, often bred for their body parts such as their hide, bones or meat. These farms are usually also tourist attractions, often under the false pretence that they contribute to preserving the species in the wild. One characteristic of such farms is - for example - the opportunity to touch the animals.



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6. Attending animal fights

Fights with or between animals always cause serious pain and stress and often leads to the slow and painful death of the animal from wounds which are rarely given enough time to heal properly. Examples are bullfighting (including bull running), bear baiting with dogs, cockfighting, dogfighting and crocodile wrestling.



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7. Rodeo events

Rodeos come in various forms. The most common are: calf-roping, chuckwagon racing, team-roping, steer wrestling, bareback riding/bull riding, wild cow milking, wild horse/pony racing, horse-tripping and steer-tripping. All these rodeo activities involve the 'cowboys' testing their skills and demonstrating them to the public. However all the forms of rodeo listed above involve fear, stress and pain for the animals involved. The animals are also regularly injured or killed. So there are plenty of reasons for avoiding these rodeo activities.



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8. Sale and purchase of products from endangered wild animals

Holidaymakers like to bring back a souvenir to remind them of their holiday. But you should recommend that they should not buy souvenirs made from endangered wild animals such as a bracelet made of ivory or jewellery made of coral, and avoid visiting shops where such items are sold. If it's unclear or uncertain where the products originate from, advise against purchasing.

More and more species are threatened with extinction, particularly as a result of the growing demand for luxury products made from their body parts.



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9. Visiting a restaurant with dishes that involve extreme animal suffering or from animals at risk of extinction

Avoid local restaurants where dishes are offered which are made with animal ingredients which have been obtained by horrific means. These include shark fin soup, bush meat, turtle burgers, whale meat, civet coffee (kopi luwak), frogs legs, dog meat, foie gras, lion burgers or tiger wine. Some (of these) dishes are also made from animals which are at risk of extinction, such as the conch.



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10. Direct contact with animals that roam or swim freely

Contact with wild animals which roam freely should be avoided. This might include swimming with dolphins in the wild or feeding monkeys that roam freely. Wild animals are unpredictable, can be dangerous, transmit or acquire diseases, and can be stressed by contact with humans. Therefore advise clients to maintain an appropriate distance and never to initiate contact with animals.



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11. Animals used for begging

While we recognise that tourism businesses have no direct control over the use of animals by beggars, they can influence the situation and help to stop begging practices from operating near to tourist businesses (for instance on the beach in front of, working in the boundaries of, or next to a tourist business). Examples of animals used for begging are dancing bears, great apes and other primates, snakes and individual elephants. Tourists should be discouraged from being photographed with, feeding or encouraging in any way activities where animals are exploited by beggars.



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Particularly do...

1. Visit a rescue centre for wild animals where direct contact between visitor and animal is avoided

Wild animals belong in the wild, but sometimes it's not possible for individual animals to live in the wild, either temporarily or permanently. In such cases a rescue centre can provide a solution. Here the focus is on the animal's natural behaviour and direct contact with visitors is prevented. In addition the intentional breeding of or commercial trade in these animals is not permitted.



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2. Wildlife safari, i.e. spotting wild animals in the wild or in nature reserves

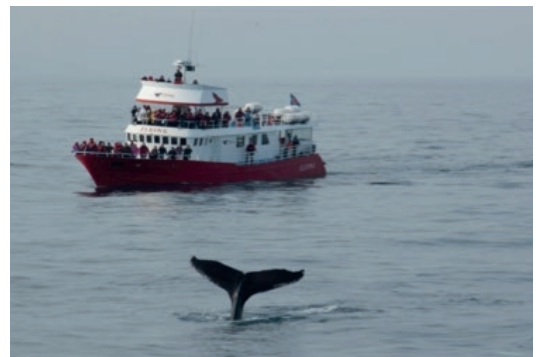
The most beautiful and most adventurous way to encounter wild animals is by seeing them in their natural habitat. Thereby always maintain an appropriate distance, keep noise to a minimum, do not startle the animals, do not give them food in order to lure them and do not leave any rubbish behind.



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3. Whale spotting (whale tourism)

More and more holidaymakers are interested in booking excursions whereby whales, dolphins and porpoises can be admired in the wild. Only contract and book these excursions with a responsible operator who respects the animals and their habitat (e.g. maintaining sufficient distance, not startling or feeding the animals). Whale tourism is a sustainable alternative for many local communities and contributes to the protection of whales.



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4. Recommend the purchase of sustainable and animal-friendly souvenirs

Advise holidaymakers to buy souvenirs which are not made from animal products and which benefit local communities. Examples of such souvenirs are local handicrafts, items made from recycled materials etc.



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5. Consciously opt for animal-friendly food

It's often a special experience to allow holidaymakers to taste local dishes, but do choose an eating establishment based on their animal-friendly, sustainable policy and consciously select particular dishes. For example, when visiting Reykjavik (Iceland) opt for a restaurant where there is no whale meat on the menu in 'whale-friendly' restaurants.



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6. Support or visit local projects which benefit both people and animals

Consider providing extra support to sustainable local initiatives with donations or by visiting workshops where sustainable souvenirs are made.



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7. Active eco-tours combined with education

Include active eco-tours (such as kayaking, cycling and sailing) in the range of products whereby holidaymakers are also provided with information about the surrounding nature by an expert guide, and which also guarantee that nature and wild animals will not be disturbed.



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8. Visit nature preservation projects or projects which are run by animal welfare organisations

Offer holidaymakers the opportunity to visit a nature preservation project e.g. where they might help plant trees to preserve the habitat for wild animals such as elephants and orangutans.



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9. Visit natural history museums with educational and awareness-raising information

Visiting a natural history museum often provides the holiday-maker with greater insight into the nature of the region in question. Examples are the Nantucket Whale Museum (with information about the destructive consequences of whaling in this region in the past) and the Whale Museum in Reykjavik in Iceland, which features life-size whales.



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10. 'Learning skills' excursions

'Learning skills' excursions might include activities such as a wildlife photography course, diving excursions whereby information is provided beforehand and afterwards, attending lectures or walking routes for birdwatching.



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Concluding message

There has been growing interest in animal welfare in recent years, and increasing importance is attached to it. Tourists are sensitive to appropriate conditions for humans and animals. Local conditions can only change if the approach is based on a respectful attitude, the provision of sustainable alternatives and increased awareness amongst travel organisations, tourists and the local population.

If you encounter abuse, it can help to raise this with your local partners (e.g. local agents, excursion operators, guides, hotels and restaurants) and to discuss how the situation can be changed. Also report it within your travel organisation.

Don't forget to report the abuse to an animal welfare organisation as well. They have the expertise with regard to animal welfare and protecting animals, and often work with local partners. To do this you can contact the following organisations:

- **World Animal Protection**
 - o Website: www.worldanimalprotection.org
- **IFAW**
 - o Website: www.ifaw.org
- **protection of the cheetah, the lion and the leopard**
 - o <http://www.stichtingspots.nl/>

Note We would point out that the contents of these guides does not necessarily correspond to the precise positions of the individuals and animal welfare organisations involved in the formulation, assessment and enhancement of ABTA's Animal Welfare Guidance. However all the parties involved have made a valuable contribution during the consultation process, for which ANVR would like to thank all of them heartily.