



## **Khiri Travel Animal and Wildlife Policy**

Updated on 3rd March 2023

## Relevance

Animal attractions and experiences are a common part of holiday destinations and are generally very popular with holidaymakers in Asia. Travelers are becoming aware of their negative impact on wild or captive animals and want to be provided with more animal friendly options; so it is important for Khiri Travel, as a Destination Management Company, to consider these issues and develop less intrusive ways to enjoy wildlife in Asia.

We must be vigilant and careful with these kinds of experiences as they can go both ways; they can have a negative impact on local wildlife or they help raise awareness for the plight of the animals we encounter along the way. We have developed the Wildlife Policy with the published information from Travelife, ABTA, WWF, Elephant Asia, and other specialists to inform travelers and our partners about the issues at stake.

## Our Commitment

Khiri Travel makes the conscious decision not to contribute to the extinction of wildlife. We does not promote any activities, which exploit or harm animals, both in the wild and in captivity. We are committed to gradually assess our services and activities providers; and only choose to work with those who ensure wildlife welfare. This Wildlife Policy serves as a fix principle for all Khiri Travel products and is always factored in the assessment of wildlife-tourism suppliers.

Key aspects of animal welfare are the Five Freedoms, internationally accepted standards of care that affirm every living being's right to humane treatment:

- (i) Freedom from hunger and thirst by having easy access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full vitality and vigor
- (ii) Freedom from discomfort by providing a nurturing environment that includes proper shelter and a comfortable resting area
- (iii) Freedom from pain, injury, or disease by providing routine health checks and rapid treatment and diagnosis of injuries and diseases
- (iv) Freedom to express normal behavior by providing sufficient space, proper facilities, and company of the animals' own kind
- (v) Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring living conditions and treatment are free from mental suffering

Embracing the Five Freedoms supports the health and welfare of animals in captivity or in the wild. This ensures that animals are treated in a humane way free from unpleasant states.

## Captive Animals

While Khiri Travel believes that animals belong in the wild, we also understand that due to the loss of habitat, excessive poaching, and the domestication of animals, captive animals represent a large part of wildlife tourism in Asia. Types of captive animal facilities include urban zoo; rural safari park; aviaries or falconry centers; crocodile and snake farms; riding stables; elephant camps; dolphinarium; animal sanctuaries open to the public; rescue and rehabilitation centers open to the public; circuses; individual animals kept for display or performance purposes.

Encounters with captive animals, when done in a responsible way, can have positive and beneficial impacts on the conservation of animals and help educate both tourists and locals.

When working with captive animal suppliers, we strictly adhere to the following minimum requirements:

- (i) All animals have regular, daily access to adequate and clean drinking water in line with their species needs.
- (ii) All animals are fed appropriate food via an appropriate feeding routine, which mentally stimulates the animals and encourages natural behavior.
- (iii) Enclosures allow animals to move and exercise freely, and to maintain sufficient distance from each other in case of conflict.
- (iv) Enclosures are clean, hygienic and well maintained.
- (v) Animals are regularly checked by specialized veterinarians.
- (vi) Where animals are involved in performances these should only involve natural behavior and be free from bad practice, such as “humanizing” (dress up or riding bicycles...)
- (vii) Captive animal suppliers have legal license for the attraction or activities they offer.
- (viii) Captive animal suppliers must maintain up-to-date records of all animals held including numbers of each species, births, deaths and animal acquisitions.
- (ix) Strong safety regulations are in place to protect both animals and visitors.
- (x) Where customers are permitted to be photographed with animals, this should be free from evidence of bad practice.

## **Captive Elephants**

The treatment and use of captive elephants are very much an ethical concern in Asia’s tourism industry. Over the last 25 years, the rapid growth in the tourism industry has increased the demand for elephant interactions across Asia. Coupled with a severe lack of government regulations, these elephants have suffered from poor treatment while being exposed to harsh conditions that often inflict unnecessary pain and suffering on them.

With over 3,000 years of captive elephant history – and given that there are over 10,000 captive elephants in Asia – it is important to establish elephant management and care guidelines while respecting the local culture and tradition. As we lay down solid foundations that ensure the welfare of captive elephants as well as their traditional mahouts, we can continue offering optimal health care and safeguard captive elephants. The truth of the matter is that the majority of elephants born and raised in captivity cannot simply be returned to the wild, and will always require professional care throughout their long lives – a huge expense that must be met.

Khiri Travel assure that our activities that involve captive elephants will strictly follow the above minimum requirements of Captive Animals.

At the same time, Khiri Travel actively collaborates with independent auditing organizations, who provide training possibilities and support towards a more responsible elephant camp management. The Elephant Camp Animal Welfare and Sustainability Standard and Assessment Initiatives; as well as the Asia Captive Elephants Standards are up-to-date framework for the camps - covering not only the elephants but also the staff, mahouts, and business practices.

The standards considered amongst other things:

- Fair working conditions for mahouts should include health care benefits, fair wages, and annual leave
- Training and first aid courses for mahouts and camp staff are mandatory
- Conservation efforts should be coordinated with local communities
- Working hours and working times for elephants, number of rides (if applicable): Elephants should not work or interact with tourists more than 4 hours a day. Rides should not interfere with their normal rest and feeding times
- Route of rides and terrain: elephants have very sensitive skin, they should not walk on hot concrete, rocks, or gravel. Shade should be provided to protect the animals from the sun: they are prone to sunstroke
- Access to food and clean water: elephants eat around 200 kg per day
- Access to veterinarian care
- Time for socializing and free roaming: elephants are extremely social animals. They should always be able to stay in their herds and have time to roam freely
- Daytime and nighttime enclosures must be adequately sized. When male elephants are in heat, they must be kept separate from the other animals: in certain circumstances it might be deemed necessary to use chains or to build an enclosure. If chains are used, they should be at least 20 meters long. Male elephants in heat are extremely dangerous not only to humans, but also to other elephants, therefore they will need to have a separate enclosure
- Training methods of animals: many elephant camps use positive reinforcement techniques to get the animals accustomed to interacting with humans
- Health & safety guidelines should be clearly defined for both animals and humans
- The facilities must be aware of their environmental impacts and have proper waste management systems for the elephant.

Khiri Travel, other DMCs and tour operators involved in this initiative will also no longer work with any elephant camp that refuses to be audited or assessed.

## Working Animals (Horse/Buffalo/Donkey Riding)

Captive animals used for transport or farm work is a tradition in Asian society. In order to guarantee welfare for the working animals, we work closely with our local partners to ensure the above minimum requirements on Captive Animals; as well as the below guidelines for working animals; are implemented:

- Equipment should fit, not causing injury, and be removed during rest periods and ideally when eating/drinking.
- No beating or other physical force should be used to control or coerce the animal.
- Animals should train and work within their physical capabilities. Loads should be equivalent to the animal's size and ability (e.g. Horse carry only half of their bodyweight), work should not be in the hottest part of the day and animals should have regular rest each day of at least an hour between working periods.
- Under no circumstances riding sick/underweight animals (if eyes are cloudy, bones or ribs are showing, visible wounds or sores).
- Young, pregnant, nursing, injured, ill, distressed or elderly animals should not be ridden, or be required to carry/pull loads.

- Strong health & safety guidelines must be in place and enforced. Tourists must receive a formal introduction and instruction before interacting with animals.

## Animals in the Wild

Southeast Asia has one of the most diverse ecosystems with a plethora of flora and fauna. Many tourists travel to remote tropical regions for once-in-a-lifetime wildlife encounters. At Khiri Travel, we believe that viewing wild animals in their natural habitat is the best way to experience the incredible biodiversity that Asia still has to offer. However, when not managed responsibly, wildlife excursions have the potential to harm animal welfare and degrade their natural surroundings. Khiri Travel apply strictly the below rules while seeing wild animals to ensure the best responsible practices within our business operation:

- (i) Tour suppliers and providers of wildlife excursions make sure that wildlife:
  - is not lured and feed with human food
  - is not chased after
  - is not touched
  - is not hunted
  - is not scared with loud noises or flash lights
- (ii) National Park guidelines and rules are communicated and respected by all visitors and excursion providers.
- (iii) Wildlife and human-beings are not put into dangerous situations.

## Marine Wildlife

Southeast Asia offers some of the most incredible diving and snorkeling spots in the world. Our guests have a good chance of spotting dolphins, turtles, sharks, manta rays, and even whales. Reefs are a focus of many excursions and care must be taken to not interfere with these precious ecosystems.

Khiri Travel follows the requirements below to make sure we protect the marine life:

- When swimming, snorkeling, or diving, always keep adequate distance;
- If marine wildlife is approached, do so slowly and cautiously. Let animals decide how close they want to be;
- Visitors must not touch, pick up, chase or feed marine animals;
- Do not collect anything from the water: coral, shells, animals, plants;
- Do not litter, especially plastic waste;
- Avoid sunscreen with Oxybenzone as it can harm wildlife and coral reefs;
- Watch out for your fins - make sure not to touch anything or stand on any coral;
- Always stay close to the boat and follow your guides' instructions;
- Diving activities offered by operators should have a valid operating licence issued by a recognized certification agency or relevant local authority.

We are also encouraging providers of wildlife activities to gradually adjust their activities to include less human interaction.

## Marine Turtles

Most marine turtle species are endangered due to habitat loss and noise/water pollution. They are extremely fragile. Therefore, interaction must always be kept to a minimum.

- Never touch turtles, their eggs, or hatchling, unless supervised by an official research or conservation program;
- When releasing turtles, never touch them with your bare hands, wear gloves at all times. Diseases can easily be transmitted;
- Be extra careful around turtle nesting grounds, try to avoid entering the beach when you see them;
- Never interfere with the movement of turtles;
- Don't shine intrusive lights at them or on their nests. Flash photography is also prohibited;
- Do not make sudden movements or loud noises- turtles can easily be scared.

## Fishing

Many communities in Asia rely on fishing for their livelihood. Fish and seafood represent a big part of Asian cuisine and culture. Khiri Travel promotes and supports traditional lifestyles by offering community-based tourist activities wherever possible.

- Traditional fishing methods serve a purpose on top of preserving the local culture. The fishermen eat what they catch and sell them in the local markets: these activities can be promoted to help the local town's community.
- No catch and release fishing activities for the sole purpose of entertainment should be allowed.
- Respect local fishing quotas and breeding seasons.
- Make sure not to fish in marine parks or protected areas.
- We work with suppliers which uphold and respect the fishing ban of any protected species according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Khiri Travel only works with suppliers that promote local marine wildlife conservation. With rules and regulations in place to maintain a healthy fish population, they can continue to fish in a sustainable manner.

## Animal Products/Souvenirs

Khiri Travel does not support the purchase of any animal products or animal souvenirs, especially from endangered species, according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or CITES:

- Sea shells, corals, turtles, turtle shells, starfish, sea urchins, snails
- Fur or skins
- Rhino horn, ivory or pangolin scales
- Traditional medicines containing parts or products of endangered species
- Food products or medicinal products: shark fin soup, turtle soup, snake, tiger, pangolin whiskey, snake blood, bear bile, tiger bone wine, dog or cat meat

The trade in endangered wildlife products is illegal in all countries that Khiri Travel operates in; however, it might not be enforced sufficiently. Khiri Travel ensures regularly training of all staff and tour guides on appropriate souvenir and gift purchasing to ensure that we do not promote or engage in any trading of endangered species' products. Khiri Travel is also a signatory of the WTTC Buenos Aires Declaration "Travel & Tourism Declaration on Illegal Trade."

Khiri Travel is an active supporter of Too Rare To Wear, a campaign educating locals and tourists about the protection of sea turtles and increasing awareness about products made out of turtle shells.