

THINKING ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE WHEN TRAVELING



Travel destinations often offer authentic experiences, especially those involving native animals in the area.

Animal-related tourist activities can be educational and contribute to the holiday country's environmental protection while providing visitors with fun. However, it's essential to ensure the welfare of the animals through responsible offers. Travelers can also be environmentally conscious. Unfortunately, many animals are not well-cared for in these activities, and travelers may unknowingly contribute to this issue.

Refrain from photo shoots with wild animals

It is common to see pictures on the internet of travelers posing with adorable baby monkeys on their shoulders in front of temples in Asia. In addition, travelers swim turtles in the sea.

The trend of taking selfies for social media has increased due to tourists wanting to get close to animals, whether in captivity or the wild. However, many people are unaware that this harms animals. Tiger and monkey cubs, in particular, are often used as photo props to attract tourists. Unlike domesticated animals, wild creatures are not accustomed to living with humans and being kept in captivity. To make them more manageable and docile, these animals are often sedated with medication from a young age, which is not a humane practice.

The constant movement of animals causes them a lot of stress. During times when visitors are not allowed, they may live a boring life alone in cages or chained up without friends.

Sanctuaries as an alternative to the zoo

A better option for those who care about animal welfare is to visit wildlife rescue and protection stations. These locations provide medical care for injured or orphaned animals. However, it's essential to be wary of establishments that claim to protect animals and species but may not be legitimate. The term "sanctuary" is not protected, so anyone can use it.

Experts recommend tourists research these facilities on independent websites, evaluation forums, or social networks before visiting. Real sanctuaries prioritize the needs of their animals and do not breed them. Additionally, they do not allow photo shoots, shows, or trekking tours with animals in their care. This ensures that the limited space available is used to help animals in need.

Soon no more camel riding?

Some tourist destinations are starting to prioritize animal welfare. In Palma de Mallorca, horse-drawn carriages will be prohibited beginning in 2024. This decision was made in response to an incident that occurred in August 2022. A tourist captured a video of a coachman attempting to forcefully and ineffectively revive a horse that had collapsed on the road due to temperatures around

40 degrees. The video spread across social media quickly and sparked public outrage.

Tourists in Egypt, who usually ride on camels and horses to visit the pyramids, may soon have a new mode of transportation. The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism has reportedly expressed interest in replacing animal rides with e-cars as a more humane alternative, according to animal welfare organization Peta. The transition to e-cars is expected to start soon.

For the donkeys and mules on Greece's island of longing, Santorini, the government has already promised a ban on carrying more than 100 kilos in 2018.

A significant problem is the need for proper regulations. The creatures must transport heavy burdens up steep hillsides on the island, causing inadequate treatment and ongoing distress.

When traveling to Santorini, visitors can take the cable car between the port and the breathtaking old town of Firá without relying on animal transportation. Similarly, tourists can consciously avoid contributing to animal suffering when traveling to other destinations such as Palma or the pyramids. Travelers must be mindful of their impact on the environment and animal welfare during their journeys.

First aid for animals

What should one do if they come across an animal suffering or injured under human care while on vacation? Robert Kless from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) suggests talking to those responsible first. When dealing with a zoo, it is best to address the issue directly with the management.

If there are potential breaches of animal welfare regulations, which vary depending on the country, law enforcement has a role to play. Additionally, in various well-known tourist spots, online resources, such as veterinarians and animal welfare groups, can offer assistance in these situations.

If you come across package tours involving questionable animal activities, it is essential to contact the tour operator. This will bring this issue to their attention.

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