



# Animal Welfare Guidelines

**Intrepid Group Animal Welfare and Wildlife Policy: We actively discourage the participation of Intrepid Group passengers in activities that exploit animals - wild or domestic/working animals.**

## Animal Welfare Basics

Animal welfare concerns the health of the animal's body and mental state. The following five universally accepted pillars of animal welfare have been considered in forming this policy:

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
- **Freedom from discomfort**
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease**
- **Freedom to express normal behaviour**
- **Freedom from fear and distress**

The Intrepid Group accepts that the welfare of wild animals is compromised in captivity and captivity is only acceptable when it is in the animal's best interests and the highest possible standards of care are given

The Intrepid Group believes domestic / working animals such as horses, donkeys and camels encountered on our tours should have a decent life, where they are properly cared for, they

enjoy the Five Freedoms and positive aspects of their existence outweigh the negative.

## As a general guide for domestic/working animals:

- The animals should look well fed
- Their coats should be in good condition without sores (check near the mouth, shoulders, spine and belly, these areas are typically in constant contact with harnessing equipment). Wounds may also be hidden under a saddle or harness. (Should be noted that it is not ever acceptable to use wild animals for riding).
- The animals eyes should be clear, bright and alert
- Handlers should not use physical force (including hitting or beating with crops, sticks or hands) to control or manoeuvre the animal
- Ensure that passengers do not feed the animals

## Elephant Rides: No longer part of our itineraries

The Intrepid Group supported an extensive research project concerning the welfare of captive elephants, conducted by World Animal Protection. As a result of this research, the Intrepid Group no longer offer elephant rides as part of included or optional activities.

### Reasons we don't endorse or offer elephant rides:

- Elephants are NOT domesticated
- Because all captive elephants are not domesticated animals, for them to be kept in captivity:
- They often need to be restrained.

- They are vulnerable to sudden outbursts of human targeted aggression, leading to injuries and fatalities.
- In order to be trained, all undergo a cruel, painful and intense process to break the elephants will and accept human control.
- They are susceptible to the development of health and behavioural problems.
- Bull hooks are used (by the handlers) to maintain control of the elephant. These can cause serious injuries to the elephants including infected sores and cuts.

## Riding Donkeys and Camels

Donkeys and camels are considered domestic or working animals. These are the only animal rides that are offered as an included activity and only offered in the itinerary where the wellbeing of the animals have been previously established. General things to look out for:

- When riding, donkeys or camels during our trips helmets are generally not available to travellers. We therefore need to ensure that only slow moving and even tempered animals are provided by the operator.
- Riders should choose an animal that is appropriate to their size.
- Animals should not carry more than half their body weight and less during extreme heat or on steep declines. If extreme temperatures are experienced animals should not be ridden.

### Are the animals healthy? Points to consider are:

#### Camels:

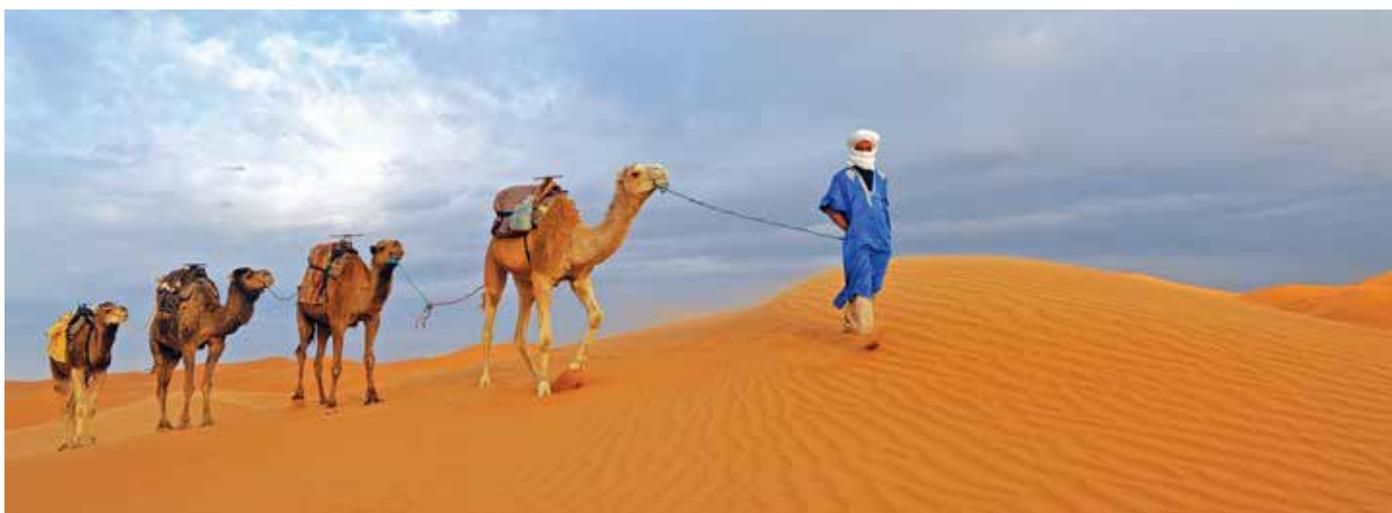
- Their coats should be in good condition without sores (check near the mouth, shoulders, spine and belly, these areas are typically in constant contact with harnessing equipment) Wounds may also be hidden under a saddle or harness.
- Handlers should not use physical force (including hitting with crops, sticks or hands) to control or manoeuvre the animal

- Ensure that passengers do not feed the animals
- There is a species of camel (the Wild Bactrian Camel - *Camelus ferus*) which is not a domesticated species. This species are not used for rides or close encounters with people.

#### Donkeys:

Check the donkey or horse over to see that it hasn't been subjected to 'firing'. This means burning with red hot metal to various parts of a donkey's body, most often the legs. The practitioners believe this 'traditional healing' method will make the animal 'strong'.

- Never overload a horse drawn carriage - walk away
- Never canter or gallop the horse or donkey drawn carriage
- Never ride more than one on the back of a horse or donkey
- Consider your own weight before riding and aim to choose an animal appropriate to your size and weight.
- If the owner is treating the animal badly, ie excessive whipping, stop and find an alternative driver.
- Ensure you pay a fair price for the ride to ensure that the owner can feed and properly look after the animal.
- Praise owners whose animals are in good condition and who are well rode.
- An appropriate weight for a donkey to carry is 120kgs



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## Horse Riding

Horse-riding is considered a technical activity and because of the greater speed of the animal they are not included in our itineraries. Horse riding activities can only be included in an itinerary if the specialist operator has the following in place:

- a written operational Safety Policy for the activity
- a written Risk Assessment and Management System in place which:
  - identifies risks associated with the activity;
  - identifies control measures to manage the risk, including methods of supervision, levels of staff training and qualification, staff ratios, maintenance of equipment, etc.
- co-ordinates the implementation and monitoring of these control mechanisms.

- a written Emergency Plan for the activity
- public liability insurance

### Before riding consider:

- Riders should choose an animal that is appropriate to their size.
- Horses should not carry more than half their body weight and less during extreme heat or on steep declines. If extreme temperature are encountered, animals should not be ridden.
- Are the animals healthy and being well cared for?
- Is the horse underweight? Horses which are underweight should not be ridden. An underweight horse can be identified by protruding or visible ribs, hip bones or spine.
- The horse's eyes should be clean, bright and alert.



### Viewing Wildlife in the Wild

As Intrepid believes wild animals should be viewed in the wild, the following code has been prepared with the best interests of wildlife and the safety of our staff and travellers.

- Respect the 'personal space' of the wildlife, this is their habitat. If a visitor/vehicle causes an animal to alter its behaviour, then the visitor has invaded its space and influenced its normal behaviour. Observe nature as it occurs naturally and not as to how it responds to your presence there. Stress is harmful to animals.
- Speak quietly - do not call out, whistle or in other ways try and attract the attention of animals. Noise disturbs them and may antagonise fellow visitors. Avoid sudden movements.
- Beware of the animals, they are wild and can be unpredictable. Do not get too close. Remember that if an animal charges you, it may be feeling threatened because it doesn't have sufficient space.
- Don't feed animals or birds. Habituating them to humans and to human food upsets their natural diet, can shorten their life and cause trouble for other people later on by making the animals unnaturally aggressive.
- Do not touch wild animals, as you can unwittingly pass on diseases to wildlife, as well as placing yourself at risk.
- Insect repellents and sun-cream (which tourist often have on their hands /body) can cause irritation/damage to the skin of reptiles and amphibians.
- When in a safari environment, stay in your vehicle at all times as predators may be present, except at designated picnic or camping areas and walking/bushwalking tracks.
- Leave no litter, including food scraps and cigarette butts.
- Night viewing: Minimise usage of a flashlight and never shine your light into an animals' eyes. Do not illuminate prey as this gives the predator an unfair advantage.

### Drivers/guides are instructed in the following (and you must not ask them to do otherwise):

- Keep below the maximum speed limit. In most National Parks this is 40kph/25 mph.
- Never drive off the road (in National Parks). This can severely damage animal habitat.
- In a reserve that allows off-road driving, the guide needs to be aware of and adhere to where they can and cannot drive. This refers to the type of soil and vegetation of the area.
- When viewing wildlife, keep to a minimum distance of 20 meters and pull to the side of the road so that others can pass. The number of vehicles at a sighting should be controlled whenever possible - being sensitive to other visitors' viewing and not crowding in an animal on the move.

- Avoid marine parks or aquariums that keep large mammals' captive as they are often taken from the wild and their confinement is both physically and psychologically cruel.
- Avoid lion walks as these animals are often taken from their mothers prematurely and kept in conditions that do not meet their needs. Venues will sometimes sell the lions on to commercial hunting operations once they become unable to be controlled.
- You may be offered options to visit wild animals that have been habituated or in animal orphanages. Ask the operator or the attraction if any of the animals kept have been taken from the wild, as this places additional pressure on wild species. Ask if there is an active education programme at the attraction, as responsible attractions provide this. A genuine wildlife orphanage will not allow the tourist to hold/touch/ride the wild animals. Do not give business to exploitive operators.



- When a pride of lions or a leopard is hunting, and they stop to listen or to smell the air, switch off your vehicle and keep your guests quiet.
- Never cut an animal off. Remember they have the right of way in their environment. If an animal has to change direction because of your vehicle, you are interfering.
- Never use your vehicle to get an animal to move. Try to anticipate what the animal is going to do and position your vehicle accordingly.
- In some parks, night game driving is not allowed and you must make camp or leave the park before dusk.



### Animal products

In most local markets passengers can find wild animal products, especially anything from an endangered species – such as skins, horns, spiders and butterflies, turtle shell, sea shells and ivory. This trade is generally illegal but may not be enforced through relevant government agencies. It is important to discourage travellers from purchasing such items as they are fuelling an illegal trade. The wild animals used to produce these products often suffer significantly and at every stage of the process. Suffering is likely to occur regardless of if the animal has been bred in captivity/wild sourced or if the process is legal/illegal.

This also extends to food products such as Turtle Soup, Shark Fin soup and Snake whiskeys. We would advise against travellers purchasing 'medicinal' products that are made from wild animal derivatives, such as bear bile, tiger wine, lion bone wine which can also fuel wildlife farming and illegal wildlife trade.

### Animal photography

You may find that local people have taken animals from the wild so tourists can pay and have their photos taken with the animal. We advise our groups to NOT to participate in this activity. It is not known how these animals are treated, (Are they drugged? Are they fed correctly? Are they kept in inadequate conditions?).

We also discourage people from visiting venues that offer animal shows, 'selfies' or direct interaction with wild animals. The animals involved in these activities are sometimes taken from the wild, often bred in intensive conditions, usually taken prematurely from their mothers as babies, and undergo cruel physical and psychological conditioning to make them compliant and perform. Visiting these venues perpetuates a cycle of animal cruelty

### Sanctuaries for Wildlife

Intrepid Group should only visit facilities involving wild animals in captivity if the rationale for the sanctuary operation is in the best interests of the animals involved (i.e. only visiting animal sanctuaries and/or rescue centres operating with the highest animal welfare and conservation standards possible).

Genuine sanctuaries do not buy/sell wild animals, do not use the animals for interactions with travellers or in performances/shows, they do not breed wild animals – unless they are part of an official recognised breeding programme in which the animals involved are being responsibly released back in to the wild. Sanctuaries should also be keeping the animals in conditions that meet their species specific needs. Activities such as walking with the lions and petting wildlife are not permitted on Intrepid Group trips.

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### Any questions or concerns?

If you are still unsure whether a facility has a high standard of care for its animals or have any other questions on animal welfare, please contact us at [responsible.business@intrepidgroup.travel](mailto:responsible.business@intrepidgroup.travel) for further guidance.

