

Animal Welfare Policy (External)	
Date written:	01.02.22
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Authorised by Board:	04.02.2022
Date to be reviewed:	04.02.2023



Inside Travel Group Animal Welfare Policy



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1 Introduction

1.1 Our position on animal welfare

At Inside Travel Group (ITG), we understand that animal welfare is an issue that is important to our customers, our partners and our staff. Tourism experiences involving viewing or interacting with animals can be enjoyable, educational, provide valuable revenue for conservation and local communities. However, certain activities need to be carefully managed to avoid jeopardising animal welfare, and other activities are best avoided altogether.

ITG has developed this Animal Welfare Policy (AWP) to protect animals, those who look after them and our clients' health and safety. Our AWP is based on the ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines that were developed through a multi-stakeholder consultation involving industry experts, scientists, zoologist organisations, associations and non-governmental organisations around the world.¹

We follow ABTA's guidance about the animal products we sell and promote. This means we don't include any of ABTA'S 'unacceptable practices' in our product range. We also provide viewing 'best practice' guidelines for potentially harmful experiences.

1.2 Scope of these guidelines

These guidelines aim to provide guidance for responsible activities involving animals on our trips. They are designed to be used by our customers, suppliers and partners to understand our approach to animal experiences and ensure that animal welfare remains a priority throughout our trips.

We have a separate Internal Animal Welfare Policy with further guidance for our staff to ensure we offer animal experiences with the highest welfare standards.

1.3 Our approach

1.3.1 Our suppliers and the people in our destinations

We currently assess all our activities and experiences involving animals through a desk-based audit on an annual basis. If we have any concerns, we will contact the supplier for more information. If there are still concerns, we will stop offering the product to our customers until we have clear information about whether the product aligns with the ABTA guidelines. This could involve an in-person audit.

If we find any suppliers to be engaging in an unacceptable practice, or receive a complaint about the welfare of an animal, we will investigate immediately. At ITG we believe that communication and education are key to ensuring we can make industry-wide change on animal welfare. Therefore rather than immediately stopping all interaction with the supplier, we want to understand the issues and work together with suppliers to ensure better practice for the scientific or legal reasons given by ABTA. If they are unwilling to, or it is evident that sufficient changes cannot be made, we will cease working with them. As part of our annual review, if they are found to have improved their practices, we will be willing to re-establish the relationship.

¹ ABTA is the Association of British Travel Operators. More information on their guidelines can be found here <https://www.abta.com/industry-zone/abta-shop/abta-animal-welfare-guidelines> and the complete manuals are all our suppliers upon request.

Our approach is based on the idea that the best way to affect change is by working with the people who need to change and encouraging the development we want to see, rather than stepping away from an issue and allowing the practice to continue unaltered.

We believe that local and indigenous people are well placed to protect wildlife if they derive benefit from it. Employing and training local staff, buying produce from local suppliers and paying fair wages can maximise the positive effects of tourism on animal welfare. Efforts should be made to secure alternative livelihoods for individuals engaged in unacceptable practices involving animals.

1.3.2 Our Clients

As well as ensuring the welfare of animals, in any animal experience or encounter we want to ensure the health and safety of our clients as a priority.

Animals, whether wild or domestic, can be unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Even in a controlled, captive environment or after generations of captive breeding, an animal retains its innate behaviour and instinct. Suppliers of activities involving animals and people should take all reasonable steps to safeguard the health and safety of visitors and staff, as well as the animals themselves.

We follow the DEFRA species list of risk categories for animals, as per [ABTA guidelines](#)².

ITG encourage responsible wildlife watching where our clients can observe animals in their natural environment, from a safe and respectful distance.

We also respect our clients' freedom to choose what experiences they organise independently on their trips. If it is something that is contrary to ABTA's advice, we will explain why we won't arrange it for them but would leave the final decision as to if they visit in their hands.

1.3.3 Our staff

We have a detailed internal Animal Welfare Policy which in addition to the material presented here includes health and safety advice, viewing guidelines for our Tour Leaders and Guides, and guidelines for how we decide which experiences to offer our clients.

² DEFRA is the UK Government Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs responsible for environmental protection, food production standards, agriculture, fisheries and rural communities.

2 Animal welfare

2.1.1 Animal Welfare Basics: Five Domains

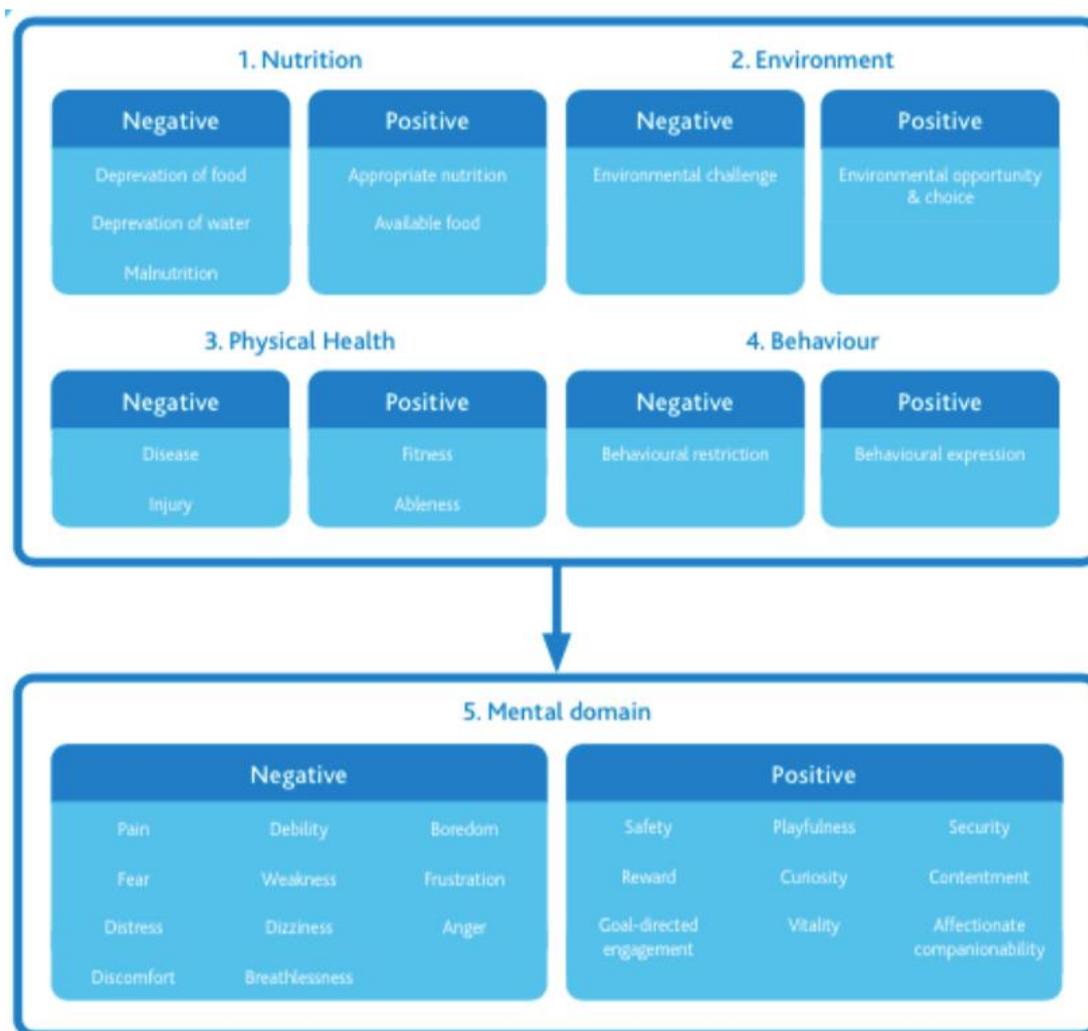
Animal welfare refers to the physical and mental state of an animal. An animal may experience positive mental states if it is healthy, well-nourished, safe, able to exhibit choice and control over its behavioural repertoire and if it is not suffering from unpleasant, negative mental states such as pain, fear and distress.

A person is responsible for an animal's welfare if they use, supply, own, or oversee it. This responsibility includes the provision of conditions to meet its basic welfare requirements.

The Five Domains is the most well-accepted framework for measuring animal welfare. The four functional domains of Nutrition, Environment, Physical Health and Behaviour combine to result in the animal's Mental State (see ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines Overview manual, p.16 for more information).

All our experiences that include viewing or interacting with animals, must ensure that there is application of and adherence to a basic level of welfare, as structured within the Five Domains framework.

Figure 1 The Five Domains model, ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines Overview manual, p.8.



2.1.2 Difference between wild, tame and domestic animals

At ITG, we recognise that there is a difference between wild and domesticated animals.

Domesticated animals are animals such as dogs or horses that have undergone selective breeding over many generations to be notably and genetically different to their wild ancestors. As a result, domesticated animals adapt more readily to captive conditions and are generally easier to handle than their wild counterparts.

This domestication process has not happened for wild animals such as elephants, tigers and monkeys, that nowadays are primarily kept for tourism and entertainment purposes and remain wild.

ITG 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.

3 The Guidelines

3.1 Unacceptable practices

Unacceptable practices are activities that are widely recognised as having a detrimental impact on animal welfare and have been classified as 'unacceptable' by experts. The following are examples of unacceptable practices that we will not include or recommend:

- Animal breeding or commercial trade in sanctuaries and orphanages.
- Any tourist holding of, or photo opportunity with, wild animals where the animal does not have the choice of terminating the interaction or moving away.
- Performances or tourist interactions involving animals where training involves punishment or food deprivation, causes the animal fear, injury or distress, or the tasks are not based on normal behaviour.
- Tourist contact or feeding elephants without a barrier.
- Tourist contact or feeding of great apes, bears or sloths.
- Unlicensed zoos.
- Acquisition of any CITES Appendix I, II, or III listed species except for demonstrable conservation or rescue/rehabilitation purposes.
- Any animal fighting, whether against humans or other animals.
- Animals used for begging.
- Ritual animal slaughter as part of the tourism experience.
- Unregulated animal and plant collection from the wild.
- Human-initiated contact with or feeding of animals in the wild.
- Trade and sale of endangered wildlife products.

A full list of unacceptable animal practices can be found in the ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines manuals. The ones listed above are the most applicable to our destinations.

3.1.1 Elephant riding/bathing/human contact without a barrier

We do not offer elephant riding on any of our trips. Elephants are not, and never have been, domesticated. Acquiring them for tourist attractions is one of the drivers for illegal capture and trade in elephants. The traditional training methods involved in keeping elephants in captivity are very psychologically and physically harmful to the animals. They also pose a health and safety risk to the people who look after them, and to our clients.

3.1.2 Pet cafes

We do not sell or recommend any animal cafe experiences to our clients. Although pets such as cats and rabbits are domesticated animals, many animal cafes fail to meet the ABTA minimum requirements for the animal's welfare. These requirements include having an available water source, not being overcrowded, and having space to withdraw from humans and other animals.

Cafes that include nocturnal animals such as hedgehogs and owls most probably cause stress to the animals as they are usually kept awake during the day in these cafes. Being regularly picked up/touched by humans is not part of their natural behaviour and they usually don't have anywhere to retreat to. Solitary animals such as hedgehogs don't have anywhere to exhibit this behaviour because they are kept in crowded tanks. Owls can also cause harm to humans and must regularly be given the opportunity to be loose in an aviary – something which is non-existent in most animal cafes. There are also concerns of the outbreak of diseases and animals being bred purely for entertainment purposes.

3.1.3 Aquariums that keep cetaceans

It is unacceptable for any aquarium to capture any cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and whale sharks from the wild for entertainment purposes, as they are listed on the CITES Appendix 1 and 2.

Cetaceans are sociable, intelligent and far-ranging mammals, and keeping them for prolonged periods in inappropriate conditions can compromise both their physical and mental health, which may contribute to the development of abnormal behaviour, disease and early mortality. Direct contact with humans also poses a risk to public and human health.

Instead of these captive animal experiences we highly recommend viewing animals in the wild. We have a whole range of animal experiences that meet the highest welfare standards (see our section on our Favourite Animal Experiences).

3.2 Other unacceptable practices involving animals

In addition to the above, Inside Travel Group customers should not visit, support or engage in any of the following exploitative activities during their trip:

- Visiting or taking part in sport and cultural activities that cause animal suffering or death such as rodeo, bullfighting and running, elephant polo, ostrich riding and racing, cock fighting
- Animals used for begging such as dancing bears, snake charmers or buying bananas for elephants and monkeys etc.
- Trophy/game hunting of wildlife (e.g. lions)
- Any cage diving where baiting of any kind is used (e.g. shark or crocodile cage diving)
- Restaurants or hotels that display captive wildlife

3.3 Our Favourite Animal Experiences

We have many animal experiences that promote conservation, education and provide livelihoods for local communities. Here are some of our favourites:

- [Night-Time Flying Squirrel Tour](#)
- Black Bear Conservation
- [Bird watching](#)
- [Snorkelling/ scuba diving](#)
- [Japanese Giant Salamander Conservation](#)

- [Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre](#)
- [Sepilok Orangutan Rehab Centre](#)

4 Legal requirements

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was established in 1975 to protect wild animals and plants from over-exploitation through international trade. This is legally binding. Suppliers who own a CITES specimen (alive, or dead parts and derivatives) should comply with the convention. Those found to be in contravention of CITES are operating illegally and risk prosecution.

Generally, animals should not be acquired from the wild unless there is a demonstrable and justifiable conservation need, or it can be demonstrated that the acquisition will not adversely affect in any way the conservation status or welfare of the species.

5 Animal products

Many tourists take souvenirs home as a reminder of their holiday. It is extremely important that any wildlife (plant or animal) souvenirs do not affect threatened animal or plant species. Additionally, the importation of some plant and animal products is illegal in many countries and may result in prosecution. The wild animals used to produce these products often suffer significantly, and suffering is likely to occur regardless of if the animal has been bred in captivity or wild, or if the process is legal or illegal in the destination.

Example of unsustainable wildlife souvenirs include:

- Shells, coral, starfish and sea horses.
- Ebony and other hardwood products used for wood carving.
- Wild reptile skins.
- Tortoiseshell products.
- Spiders, butterflies and other insects.
- Products made from ivory.
- Products made from endangered animals' skins and/or fur.
- Traditional medicines made from animal parts and products.

6 Food and animal welfare

Our approach to food and animal welfare is that as travel providers we have a responsibility to inform clients of the impacts of the food options they may come across in our destinations and to avoid where possible including foods with poor animal welfare records or detrimental conservation impacts. Instead, we provide alternative eating experiences that are sustainable.

- We avoid serving clients the following foods due to issues of poor welfare associated with the animals sourced for these foods: whale and dolphin meat, shark-fin soup, foie gras, civet cat coffee, crocodile, bird nest soup, snakes and kangaroo. We also avoid cat and dog meat.
- We inform our clients of the foods they are likely to come across that are on the [ICUN Red List of Threatened Species](#) so they can make an informed choice. In our trip planning we try to avoid including these foods in included meals.
- In our trip planning we are mindful of offering or showing foods such as whole animal displays or live animal dishes and understand that these may cause upset.
- We inform our suppliers of the details of this policy via the Supplier Code of Conduct.

7 Viewing Guidelines

We provide general animal viewing guidelines to all clients who travel with us, as well as destination- and activity-specific guidelines for activities that require extra care. We advise our customers, suppliers and partners to follow these general viewing guidelines:

7.1 General Animal Viewing Guidelines

- If you are with a guide or experience host, stay close to them and always follow their instructions and advice. Pay particular attention to their safety briefings.
- Do not initiate contact with or try to feed animals in the wild
- Always try to keep sufficient distance between yourself and wild animals so as not to disturb their natural behaviour
- It helps if you approach wildlife from an angle, not head on, as they can see this is a direct threat. Don't crowd animals or box them in
- If an animal tries to run away/avoid you, don't pursue them
- When close to wildlife, keep your noise and movement to a minimum
- Take extra care when approaching wildlife with young so that parents and their offspring aren't separated
- Observe nests, dens and other breeding sights from a distance
- Don't try to mimic or playback animal sounds or calls as this can displace animals from their natural territories or trigger competitive reactions, affecting their survival success
- Take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footsteps – please take away any litter, including cigarette butts, and avoid taking anything from the natural environment, such as removing plants, fungi or animals

8 Any questions?

If there's anything in here that you'd like to ask us about, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

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