



Don't send wild animals back to work

The first of its kind – a complimentary animal welfare policy toolkit – has been launched to help travel companies rebound ethically to protect wild animals used for entertainment after the COVID-19 shutdown

August 17, 2020 – Global tour operator [Intrepid Travel](#), together with the global animal welfare organization [World Animal Protection](#), is encouraging travel companies to take responsibility and put an end to the exploitation of wildlife in entertainment venues, following the collapse of tourism from COVID-19.

The two organizations have teamed up to provide tour operators with a complimentary Animal Welfare Policy Toolkit that is customizable and free for download from Intrepid Travel's website.

The intention behind this initiative is to create an easily accessible way for tourism companies to implement more ethical wildlife practices into their businesses.

The toolkit includes steps that can be taken to become wildlife-friendly, including information on how to draft animal welfare policy for travel companies, and a full editable animal welfare policy that is modeled off of Intrepid's, which was produced in collaboration with World Animal Protection. The toolkit also provides World Animal Protection's contact for additional support such as resources to help educate customers or staff.

"The COVID-19 crisis has provided our industry with an opportunity to redefine what tourism looks like once travel resumes and to use this time to forge a new path for a more responsible, sustainable and ethical future," **said James Thornton, CEO of Intrepid Travel.**

"We must put real action behind our words, and as operators who facilitate experiences all around the world, it is our responsibility to protect the environment and all of its living species. The very least we can do is ensure our practices are not causing harm to the wildlife who call the destinations we visit home."

According to World Animal Protection, up to 550,000 wild animals are currently enduring lifetimes of suffering at tourist entertainment venues globally. Activities such as riding elephants, taking photos with tigers, lion walks and dolphin performances are examples of popular tourist attractions that can cause lifelong trauma for wild animals. The impact of COVID-19 has made the situation even more dire, with at least 85 elephant camps in Thailand that were forced to close as a result of the pandemic. World Animal Protection launched an appeal to help some of these venues - with this support, the venues can at least feed and take care of their elephants during the next couple months.

Audrey Mealia, Global Head of Wildlife at World Animal Protection said: “We are at a turning point when it comes to our relationship with wild animals. For too long, these intelligent, sociable creatures have been the victims of a cruel trade, just to entertain tourists on holiday.

“Wild animals are destined for a life of suffering and brutality behind the scenes, cruelly as entertainers under the guise of innocent fun for visitors. Tourists are duped into believing they are helping wild animals and the conservation of the species, while in reality they are creating the demand for such activities.

“The tourism industry has come to a halt in the wake of COVID-19 but it will re-build – this is the ideal opportunity to build a better future. We are calling on the tourism industry to revise their wildlife policies and stop offering exploitative experiences to their customers once and for all.”

Intrepid Travel has led the industry on animal welfare, becoming the first global tour operator to ban elephant rides on its trips in 2014, following an extensive assessment by World Animal Protection into the welfare of captive elephants at tourist venues that the company supported.

The veteran tour operator has also been a leader in bringing awareness to the cruelty of lion walks, and actively aims to educate its travelers about the realities of wildlife protection, launching specialized tours focused on ethical wildlife experiences and insight into the lives of park rangers on the frontlines of conservation. Since 2002, the company has raised thousands of dollars for wildlife protection through its not-for-profit arm, [The Intrepid Foundation](#), for community projects such as The East African Wildlife Society, MandaLao Elephant Conservation, and the Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society.

“We’re proud of the strides we’ve made to date and hope to lead others in the tourism industry to a more responsible future through this initiative. We also encourage companies who may already have policies in place to use this time to re-evaluate their existing animal welfare standards. Through the creation of this toolkit, we’ve even worked with World Animal Protection to update some of our own existing language to align with the current best practices,” **Thornton added.**

World Animal Protection has been campaigning for over ten years to end the cruelty of wild animals used for entertainment. Most recently, they launched a campaign calling on governments to commit to a global ban on the wildlife trade, and for all travel companies to vow to be wildlife-friendly by removing sales of entertainment venues and focusing on responsible wildlife-friendly alternatives instead.

To download the Animal Welfare Policy Toolkit, visit: www.intrepidtravel.com/animal-welfare.

For additional guidance and information, visit: www.worldanimalprotection.org/wildlife-friendly-travel-companies.

To discuss how to implement these actions within your business, and to finalize your Animal Welfare Policy, contact: tourism@worldanimalprotection.org.

###

Note to editors:

Images available for download with credit to Intrepid Travel, [here](#).

For more information please contact:

Nicole Powell, Senior PR Manager, Intrepid Travel
nicole.powell@intrepidtravel.com
+1-631-316-1246

Marco Ouji, Global Media Manager, World Animal Protection
marcoouji@worldanimalprotection.org
+1-647-449-4386

About Intrepid

Independently owned by the founders of Intrepid Travel, Intrepid is a collection of three tour operator brands and 25 destination management companies united by the vision of Changing the Way People See the World. For more than 30 years, Intrepid has been taking small groups to travel the local way, on real life experiences that give back to the places and people we visit. As this style of travel has caught on, Intrepid has grown to now offer more than 2,700 trips to more than 120 countries and on all seven continents. We cater for all ages, budgets, and appetites for adventure through Intrepid Travel, Peregrine Adventures and Urban Adventures. Globally renowned as a leader in responsible travel, in 2018 Intrepid became the world's largest travel business to be certified B-Corp, joining a growing community of businesses looking beyond the bottom line. Our not-for-profit, [The Intrepid Foundation](#) has raised over AUD \$9M for more than 130 charities around the world by matching traveler donations dollar-for-dollar.

For further information on Intrepid or to download the company's 2018 Integrated Annual Report, visit www.intrepidgroup.travel.

About World Animal Protection

World Animal Protection moves the world to protect animals. From campaigning to improve the lives of farm animals, vaccinating dogs against rabies, providing relief to animals caught up in natural disasters, or raising awareness of the barbaric treatment of animals used for entertainment, we're working to end animal suffering worldwide. To find out more about our work, please take a look at our [strategy](#) to give you more of a feel for what we're all about.

Our work for animal-friendly travel was recognized at the World Responsible Tourism Awards in [2014](#), [2015](#) and again in [2018](#). We also encourage individual travel companies to become wildlife-friendly and recently sent [a joint open-letter](#) signed by 250+ like-minded organisations, including many travel and tourism organisations to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) urging them to lead the global phase out of captive wildlife entertainment in tourism.