

A close-up photograph of a monkey's face peering through a rusty metal grid. The monkey has brown fur and large, expressive brown eyes. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an enclosure.

**HOLIDAYS**  
**THAT HARM**  
BALI 2023 REPORT





# Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	4	Tourist traps.....	28
Preface.....	5	Overtourism .....	28
Executive summary .....	6	Marketing by venues.....	31
Introduction .....	7	More than a selfie.....	34
Return to Bali 2023.....	8	What can I do as a tourist?.....	35
Animal welfare for wild animals in tourism venues .....	9	Seven easy tips for being a wildlife-friendly tourist.....	36
Spotlight on popular species in tourism venues.....	10	What is the role of travel companies? .....	37
Scope and methodology.....	12	10 steps to become a wildlife-friendly travel company.....	38
Welfare assessments.....	12	Conclusion .....	39
Changes to venues and offerings 2017-2023 .....	16	References.....	40
Results.....	17	Appendix.....	42
Key findings .....	17		
Other general findings .....	25		

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## **Photography credit**

All images in this report are courtesy of Andito Wasi or World Animal Protection staff.





# > Preface

In 2017 World Animal Protection exposed the cruelty and suffering at wildlife entertainment venues in Bali and Lombok. Of the 26 venues we visited then, nearly all did not meet the most basic needs of the animals held captive.

The intervening six years have been tumultuous and a lot has changed. But not for the hundreds of animals at these venues. These intelligent, sentient beings – in some cases the same ones we saw in 2017 – are continuing to endure a life of boredom, confinement, ill treatment and neglect. For them, nothing has changed, and in some cases things have got worse. We must ensure that they are the last generation to suffer this cruel fate.

Our updated report on Bali and Lombok venues – *Holidays that Harm* – is part of World Animal Protection’s ongoing campaign to end the use of wild animals in entertainment. Across the world, thousands of animals are captured or bred in captivity for a demeaning, cruel life of performing in circuses, being ridden, or being held and used as photo props for tourists.

This suffering is facilitated by widespread ignorance of the appalling lives that captive wild animals endure for human entertainment. And, more broadly, by a tourism industry that still largely sees wild animals as merely commodities for humans to use and abuse, and to exploit for profit. It is this attitude that sees millions more wild animals held captive and mistreated every year for food, medicine and fashion.

World Animal Protection’s global wildlife campaign aims to not only disrupt the industries that profit from exploiting wild animals, but to shift the narrative that justifies their commodification and exploitation. We aim to repair our broken relationship with wild animals and the natural world, and foster an acceptance that human health, animal health and planetary health are inextricably linked. Wild animals must be celebrated for what they are: sentient beings with intrinsic worth that should enjoy life in the wild, where they belong.

Image: Alas Monkey Forest.

# Executive summary

Bali and Lombok are some of Southeast Asia's most preeminent tourism destinations. Their unique culture, the hospitality of their people, and their spectacular nature and scenery have made these islands extremely popular places to holiday.

Unfortunately, this popularity has also driven a diverse wildlife tourism and entertainment industry on the islands, as tourists who love animals look to get up close and personal with them, or as others seek the perfect holiday selfie.

Tourism is one of the world's biggest drivers of wildlife exploitation, with wild animals being taken from the wild, or bred in captivity, and inhumanely trained to be used in the tourism industry. Tourism demand also fuels the deadly global wildlife trade, impacting many endangered species.

In 2017, we investigated the wildlife tourism and entertainment industry in Bali and Lombok. The resulting report, released in 2018, uncovered the true scale of suffering and exploitation of elephants, dolphins, tigers, apes, monkeys and turtles for tourist entertainment.

As a result of that investigation, a number of prominent travel companies and airlines stopped selling and promoting wildlife tourism venues in Bali and Lombok, and removed elephant riding attractions across many countries, because of the concerns around animal cruelty.

Tourism is starting to rebuild post the COVID-19 pandemic. As it does, more and more tourists are demanding a shift to ethical travel options, and travel companies are responding to calls from World Animal Protection and other animal welfare groups to improve their policies and offerings.

In that light, it was important to return to review the current status of wildlife in tourism venues in Bali and their welfare conditions.

We found that – at this time – there is still no responsible way to see wildlife in tourist venues in Bali and Lombok. While there is no way for wild

animals to have all their needs met in captivity, the majority of tourist entertainment venues in Bali or Lombok do not meet even the most basic needs of captive wild animals.

Even opportunities to see free-ranging wildlife, such as macaques and dolphins, are not currently responsibly managed and should be avoided.

While tourists have a responsibility to do their research before going to a venue, gaining reliable and trusted recommendations from venues and travel companies is made difficult by 'humane washing' by venues, a lack of clear, upfront, and adequate animal welfare policies from tourism companies and the unpredictable impact of overtourism at key venues.

Travel companies have a crucial role to play in ensuring wild animals do not suffer cruel training regimes and low-welfare living conditions for tourist entertainment. Now, as the tourism industry builds back, travel companies must have robust animal welfare policies in place to ensure they do not keep perpetuating the demand for animal suffering and cruelty, and so that tourists have the information they need to make holiday choices that align with their values.



# > Introduction

Many tourists seek opportunities to get up close to wild animals when on holiday. This desire to interact with wildlife is driven by a range of factors, from a deep love for and fascination with animals to the wish to get an iconic holiday selfie.

In 2023, this desire continues to support the practice of wild animals being taken from the wild, or bred in captivity, and inhumanely trained to be used in the tourism industry.

Social media networks also show ample evidence of tourists sharing pictures of themselves alongside unusual or emblematic wild animals. By sharing these types of images online, tourists unwittingly send a message to thousands, even millions of people, that this activity is acceptable.

While research shows tourists are often unaware of the cruelty behind many wildlife attractions, many tourists are becoming increasingly concerned with animal welfare issues. 82% of people interviewed in our 2022 global poll (over 23,000 people across 15 countries) believed that tour operators should not sell activities that cause suffering to wild animals<sup>1</sup>.

The global COVID-19 pandemic, with its attending massive drop in tourism, showed just how problematic it is to have tourism-dependent for-profit captive wildlife venues. As the global tourism trade continues to rebuild after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a lot of discussion about tourism and its negative impacts, and the role of tourists, the tourism industry and travel companies in avoiding these impacts.

'Responsible tourism' is an increasingly popular term now used in the travel industry, and the concept is becoming more and more important to tourists<sup>2,3</sup>. In response to the mounting evidence of the animal welfare impacts of wildlife in entertainment, several travel platforms have been moved to protect wildlife by removing wildlife entertainment offerings.

The animal policies and wildlife offerings of global leaders in the tourism industry were reviewed in our report 'The Real Responsible Traveller'<sup>1</sup>. This revealed that many travel companies that seek or publicly celebrate sustainability credentials often fail to take responsibility for the impact that their sales and promotions have on wild animals and their suffering in captivity.

Tourists often put their trust in major travel brands for advice and recommendations, and the promotion and sale of wildlife entertainment venues can lead tourists to assume these attractions and activities are acceptable, or even beneficial for the animals themselves and conservation.

Tourists are therefore being misled into believing companies are protecting wildlife when they are, in fact, helping to sustain the captivity of hundreds of thousands of wild animals in exploitative conditions worldwide.

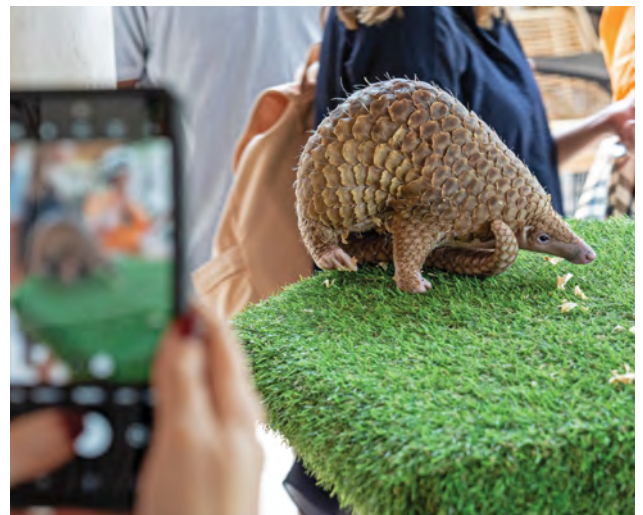


Image: A pangolin on display for selfies at Bali Zoo.

## Return to Bali 2023

Bali is a major global tourism destination. The number of international tourists totalled 5.7 million in 2017, and just over six million for both 2018 and 2019<sup>4</sup>. The two largest sources of inbound tourism were Australia and China.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the impact on Bali's tourism industry was devastating, with international tourist numbers dropping to one million in 2020 and trickling down to just 51 visitors in 2021<sup>4</sup>. As a result, the Balinese people were forced to seek alternative sources of income<sup>5,6</sup>.

However, in 2022, Bali's tourist numbers recovered to around two million. Although still far below pre-pandemic numbers, the Bali Provincial Government is optimistic, setting an international tourist arrivals target of 4.5 million for 2023 (approximately 75% of pre-pandemic numbers)<sup>7</sup>. Figures for January 2023 suggest this target will be reached<sup>4</sup> with Chinese tourists now allowed back to Bali which is expected to help drive up numbers.

Tourism for Bali is therefore likely to remain a key economic driver for the foreseeable future. The popularity of Bali and Lombok as tourism destinations has sustained and grown the use of wildlife in entertainment. Examples of sought-after wildlife experiences and photo opportunities include riding or bathing an elephant, taking a selfie with an orangutan or swimming with a dolphin.

Our 2017 report - released in 2018 - on wildlife in entertainment in Bali and Lombok highlighted the true scale of suffering and exploitation of elephants, dolphins, tigers, apes, monkeys and turtles<sup>8</sup>. It found that 100% of venues with elephants, tigers, dolphins or civet cats, and 80% of those with captive wild primates did not meet even the basic needs of captive wild animals.

As part of that investigation, a number of prominent travel companies and airlines were discovered promoting and selling tickets to these venues. As a result of our report and direct advocacy, they removed content promoting these cruel interactions at the time.

Since then, World Animal Protection has worked with travel companies, wildlife venues and governments around the world, to stop both the demand for, and supply of, cruel wildlife in entertainment offerings.

With the last review occurring just over five years ago and tourism now returning after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to return to review the current status of wildlife in tourism venues in Bali and Lombok and their welfare conditions. This report does so, and compares this to the 2017 review. We have also reviewed whether prominent global travel companies are still selling, promoting and profiting from cruel wildlife attractions in Bali and Lombok.

The findings of this report represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of wildlife entertainment venues within Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Many more attractions involving a wide variety of species are currently on offer throughout the region.



Image: Bali Zoo.





Image: Elephant bathing session at Mason Elephant Lodge.

## > Animal welfare for wild animals in tourism venues

Across the world, wild animals are taken from their families in the wild or bred in captivity to be exploited for entertainment in the tourism industry. Contrary to popular belief, keeping wildlife in captivity in entertainment venues offers no genuine benefit to the conservation of the species.

Wild animals are sentient beings who can experience positive emotions such as contentment and joy, as well as negative ones such as fear and pain. From the moment they're born or captured from the wild, until the end of their lives, wild animals endure horrific suffering at every stage of their lives in captivity. The inadequate captive conditions they are kept in at many venues severely affects their physical and psychological well-being.

In addition, many wildlife entertainment venues offer close encounter opportunities to tourists such as holding, riding, petting, swimming with, or bathing a captive wild animal. This key selling point, which is also a significant source of revenue for these venues, is a major welfare issue for wild animals in entertainment<sup>8-14</sup>.

As wild animals have not evolved to be comfortable near people the way domesticated species like dogs and cats have, such situations cause stress responses in them. They are often 'tamed' using cruel training regimes which can cause them lifelong trauma.

Unlike their counterparts in the wild, animals in captivity have no way of escaping from stressful situations such as being surrounded by large crowds, unfamiliar sights and loud noises<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, daily interactions with humans and intensive performance schedules add to the stress.

Ultimately, a life in captivity can in no way come close to replicating the lives wild animals would lead in the wild, the environment they naturally belong in and have evolved to thrive in. Many species found in wildlife entertainment venues such as primates, dolphins, elephants and big cats often have high intelligence and complex ecological, social and behavioural needs that cannot be met in captivity under any conditions<sup>8,15</sup>.

While some animals may be rescued from wildlife entertainment venues and live a relatively free life in legitimate sanctuaries or rehabilitation facilities, there are few genuine prospects of these animals being rehabilitated and released into the wild.



## Spotlight on popular species in tourism venues

### Elephants

Within Indonesia, a few wild populations of the Asian elephant are found on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. Despite being classified as an endangered species<sup>16</sup>, elephant rides and activities continue to be some of the most popular tourist activities in Asia.

In wildlife entertainment venues in Bali and Lombok, elephants are not only used for rides but are also forced to perform in shows, paint pictures for sale and are hand-bathed by tourists. After performing these activities, they are typically chained with greatly restricted movement and little to no social interaction.

In order to make them 'tame' enough to perform these activities, elephants are separated from their mothers and made to endure inhumane training processes such as 'the crush' at an early age which often involves cruel punishments such as chaining, hitting, isolation and starvation. While the severity of this process varies, it always causes intense suffering to elephants as it is based on establishing dominance.

Our report 'Elephants. Not commodities'<sup>11</sup> details the devastating effects that captive wildlife venues have on individual elephants and wild animal populations. It also indicates people's growing concern about animal welfare issues, as statistics from Thailand showed that more and more tourists are moving away from riding elephants in preference to seeing them in the wild.

### Dolphins

Indonesia is home to more than half of the world's dolphin species. However, these highly intelligent marine animals are still exploited in captivity in wildlife entertainment venues in Bali. While there are many species of dolphins, the ones usually found in captivity are the bottlenose, white-sided, spinner and spotted dolphins. Elsewhere in Asia, the Irrawaddy and other dolphin species may also be found in captivity.

Welfare issues for dolphins in captivity are well known<sup>9, 17, 18</sup>. In the wild, dolphins tend to swim tens of kilometres a day, whereas in wildlife entertainment venues, they are typically held captive in small, chlorinated and barren pools. Captive dolphins are often forced to endure intensive schedules involving shows and are made to swim with tourists.

In addition to suffering physically, captivity also causes a considerable amount of psychological stress due to their high intelligence, separation from their social groups and denial of their complex natural environment and behaviours.

The negative welfare impacts of captivity on dolphins used in entertainment can be found in our 'Behind the Smile' 2019 report<sup>17</sup>.



Image: Feeding the dolphins at Bali Exotic Marine Park.

## Primates

Monkeys and apes, particularly orangutans, gibbons and macaques, are also popular at wildlife tourism venues in Asia. Their high levels of intelligence and sentience are indisputable, yet they continue to be kept in cages and are often forced to perform activities for tourists.

For these activities, they can be made to wear human clothing or make-up and are made to perform various tricks. Forcing them to engage in these unnatural behaviours further demeans them as living beings who deserve respect.

In these venues, many primates are often forced into close encounters, either by making them sit on or near humans or by displaying them as photo-props for many hours a day so tourists can take selfies. These activities deny them the freedom of movement or choice which can result in severe physical and psychological trauma.

Even though all orangutan species are critically endangered<sup>16</sup>, they are still being exploited for financial gain in these venues. Captive environments offer little stimulation to these highly intelligent animals which leads to boredom and frustration and can cause abnormal behaviours such as repetitive rocking, hair-pulling and regurgitation and reingestion of food.

## Tigers

Tigers are classified as endangered by the IUCN<sup>16</sup> with declining numbers in several populations, yet they are particularly popular in tourism venues in Asia. All remaining Indonesian tigers are found in Sumatra, while tigers in Java and Bali are now extinct.

In wildlife entertainment venues, tigers are forced to perform daily shows such as running, jumping and swimming to entertain large crowds of tourists to the sound of blaring music and loudspeakers. In addition to this, they are severely restrained and controlled for close encounters with tourists, with indications that some tigers are drugged.

The negative welfare and conservation impacts of tigers used in entertainment specifically in Thailand can be found in our reports 'The Show Can't Go On' and 'Tiger Selfies Exposed'<sup>12,14</sup>.

## Turtles

The waters of Indonesia are home to six out of seven of the world's sea turtle species. Although in Bali and around the world there are reputable facilities associated with NGOs dedicated to sea turtle conservation, there are also many tourism venues which have little regard for either the welfare of the animals in their care or the fate of the endangered wild populations.

Sea turtles at tourism venues are often housed in small concrete or tiled pens or tanks, with little depth of water and no environmental enrichment. In some cases, hundreds of these normally solitary creatures are forced into crowded public-facing areas, stranded on concrete and unable to move properly without water present, to make it easier for tourists to see and handle the turtles.

Research has shown that the handling of captive sea turtles at wildlife attractions causes them stress, leading to escape behaviours such as pulling their head in or moving their flippers when in contact with tourists<sup>19</sup>.

# Scope and methodology

A total of 34 wildlife venues and attractions across Bali and Lombok were assessed during January and February 2023. These were selected based on desktop research that identified venues where tourists could visit and directly, and indirectly, interact with captive (and in three cases, free roaming) wild animals. Venues, particularly the numerous civet coffee venues, were also identified by physical in-person visits to popular tourist areas.

The selection of venues aimed to provide a current and representative picture of the welfare of wildlife in the Bali tourism industry and identify any changes since the 2017 assessment. We looked for positive steps towards improved welfare and conservation efforts, where the status quo had been maintained, and steps backwards, such as more animals in tourism venues or worsened animal welfare conditions.

## Of the venues we assessed:



10  
were wildlife  
entertainment venues;



4  
were predominantly rescue  
and rehabilitation facilities;



3  
were venues or experiences  
with free-roaming wildlife;



1  
was a 'mini-zoo'  
and selfie venue; and



16  
were civet coffee venues.

## Welfare assessments

An initial desktop review was conducted of all wildlife entertainment venues in Bali and Lombok, and the close encounters and other wildlife attractions offered to tourists, starting with the venues reviewed in 2017 (See *Changes to venues and offerings 2017-2023*). These were confirmed during the field assessment. Venues included elephant parks, zoos and small menageries, dolphinaria, and facilities with turtles. Offerings included elephant riding and bathing, wildlife shows, photo opportunities, touching animals, and swimming with dolphins.

For the field assessment, 34 venues and attractions were visited in a tourist capacity. Visits were conducted during the usual opening hours of the venues, with the researcher being able to observe and gain access to the activities and areas that a normal tourist would.

Our researcher assessed each venue during a single visit. A 'rapid welfare conditions assessment' was completed for each of the following focal animal species and groups at each venue where the following species were present: Asian elephants, tigers, bottlenose dolphins, sea turtles, primates (orangutans, gibbons, and monkeys) and other wild species (civets, bears, binturongs (bearcats), and flying foxes).

As much information as possible was gathered on the following: the number and genders of individuals; the characteristics of the daytime enclosures and night holding areas; stereotypic behaviours (which are stress-induced repetitive



**Image:** Cherry the orangutan on display at Bali Safari Marine Park.

abnormal behaviours), daily husbandry and management routines; interactions with keepers, and the nature and schedule of tourism activities the animals were involved in. For dolphins and turtles, additional measures included: pool dimensions; show content and management of animal-visitor interactions.

The data was collected mostly through direct observation (i.e., observed information) in combination with conversations with staff on site (i.e., reported information). Not all reported individual animals were seen at each venue due to some being held out of sight or being involved in activities not observed during the visit.

Observations were also collected on the number and condition of non-focal species, and the activities in which they were involved. Photographs and occasionally videos were taken to document the findings.

This methodology was also utilised for the 2017 study. It is not intended to provide a direct measurement of an individual animal's welfare. Instead, it evaluates the conditions that affect the welfare and key welfare indicators. The welfare assessment covered up to nine categories with a significant direct impact on the welfare of the captive animals, with the number of categories varying slightly between species (see table 1).

The researcher scored conditions for each species at each venue along a five-point scale for each relevant category. The total score for each venue and species was then converted into a single final score on a scale from 1 (worst) to 10 (best possible captive conditions). Final scores were rounded to the nearest whole number. These scores were classified as follows: 1–5 (severely inadequate conditions); 6–8 (inadequate conditions); 9–10 (best possible captive conditions).

**Important note:** Any captive situation for wild animals compromises its welfare, no matter how well-intended or designed it may be. The top score of 10 in this assessment methodology represents the best possible captive conditions but as noted above, captive conditions cannot meet the needs of wild animals and a score of 9–10 still does not justify keeping wild animals in captivity for commercial purposes.

Table 1 provides a description of the most common conditions at venues according to these scores across the categories. This table does not provide the full detail of the assessment criteria that was used in the assessments, and some exceptions to those descriptions did occur.

**Table 1: Description of the typical conditions for animals at venues with low, medium and high scores for the welfare conditions assessment**

	<b>Freedom of movement</b>	<b>Social interaction</b>	<b>Hygiene</b>
<b>Scores 1–5 (Severely inadequate conditions)</b>	Across all assessed species, mobility is severely restricted at venues with these scores. For example, elephants are kept on short chains under 3m long, on concrete and are only allowed to move during tourism activities, or morning/evening routines; dolphins are usually housed in small swimming pools or sea-pens, with a water surface less than 100sqm per animal. Across all assessed species, the size and design of the habitat prohibits natural behaviour.	For social animals, interaction is very limited and animals are unable to form more complex relationships. Animals may be chained next to, or put into enclosures with incompatible animals, contributing to higher stress levels. Enclosures, or pools may be either overcrowded or isolate social animals.  Solitary animals may be housed with others and be unable to avoid contact, increasing stress.	On land, old faeces may accumulate for days within enclosures. Limited drainage creates a urine smell or wet ground. Garbage or dung piles may be located within or near the animals' habitat. For species which require bathing, such as elephants, access to water is limited and controlled by keepers.  For marine mammals, the water may be visibly dirty or show evidence of pollution, with little to no water filtration, or temperature control. Water quality is unclear or irregularly monitored, and potentially harmful levels of chemicals such as chlorine are present.
<b>Scores 6–8 (Inadequate conditions)</b>	Across all assessed species, mobility is less restricted at venues with these scores. For example, elephants are kept on longer chains, and during the day, the offered activities may allow for some sort of freedom to move independently. For marine mammals, water surface area and depth increases, and the design of the habitat will be more structured with varying depths, textures and offer more opportunity for exploration.	In medium-ranking venues, social animals are allowed slightly more social interaction. Limited socialisation is permitted, although this commonly will not allow for the creation of social groups or expression of more complex behaviours. Enclosures, or pools will be less crowded and social animals are not isolated.  Solitary animals may be grouped with a small number of compatible animals, but have the option to avoid other animals at times.	Standing grounds are usually clean and dry, with faeces being removed daily. For species which require bathing, animals have increased access to a river for daily bathing, although they are still under keeper control.  For marine mammals, water is visibly clean and of an adequate temperature, but monitoring of water quality may still be unclear or irregular. Attempts are made to regulate chemical levels.
<b>Scores 9–10 (Best possible captive conditions)</b>	At the highest-ranking venues, mobility is the least restricted. Species such as elephants are usually not chained at all during the day, and are able to move around freely on their own terms – under supervision by mahouts who interfere if required. Other species, including marine mammals, have the largest enclosures which allow more space for exercise and to express a wider range of natural behaviours.	The highest-ranking venues allow social animals to interact freely in groups and form more complex social relationships. The compatibility of animals is considered when making housing decisions. Higher-ranking venues may restrict captive-breeding to prevent a further increase of the captive population.  Solitary animals are kept solitary.	Habitats are clean and a high standard of hygiene is met. For species which require bathing, animals have free access to a range of bathing environments and are able to bathe and play where they choose.  Marine mammals will live in i) clean water with a fully functioning filtration system and monitoring pH, salinity, chlorine and temperature or ii) have access to a natural sea environment away from sources of noise and chemical pollution.

## Nutrition

The lowest-ranking venues usually provide sufficient amounts of food, however, the quality of the food is inadequate and of limited variety, affecting nutritional levels. Furthermore, the provided food often bears the risk of being contaminated with insecticides or pesticides. At venues of these levels, carnivores such as tigers have little or no access to full carcasses. Dolphins may be fed frozen, or not fresh fish. Food may be withheld in order to encourage compliance during training and shows.

For non-marine wildlife, access to water sources may be missing or irregularly provided.

Middle-ranking venues provide a more varied, higher quality appropriate diet to animals, which is an improvement to the monotonous diet in lowest-ranking venues, but still bears risks of pesticide contamination and insufficient variation. Food may also not be available at all times throughout the day. For non-marine wildlife, clean water access is usually reliably provided once or twice per day.

Captive wildlife at the highest-ranking venues usually receive a varied diet with cultured ingredients of higher quality, and, where species-applicable, complemented with access to natural browse for foraging during the day and at night. Cultured ingredients may be washed before feeding to minimise pesticide-caused problems. Animals have constant access to clean drinking water.

## Environment

Environments are usually urban, as many of these venues require easy access for larger numbers of tourists. Consequently, there is often noise pollution through traffic and loud-speakers. Across the assessed species, shows are noisy, exposing animals to loud music from speakers.

For dolphins, the water habitat may have poor ventilation and insufficient lighting, or offer the animals no chance to avoid direct sunlight.

Environments and habitats are more natural in appearance and may be more rural. These venues usually depend less on walk-in visitors and are able to choose more remote locations, providing a more natural environment than the lower ranking venues. At times noise pollution due to larger visitor groups may occur.

Environments are mostly entirely in the natural environment; some venues are remote, away from loud tourist crowds. There is very little or no noise pollution present.

## Tourist interaction

The lowest-ranking venues offer intensive direct physical interaction between tourists and captive wildlife. For elephants, tourists mainly visit these venues for saddled riding or watching elephant shows. Feeding of captive wildlife is common, as are taking selfies with animals. Venues with high numbers of tourists have queues of people waiting for the activities.

For dolphins, tourists visit these venues to swim with dolphins and/or see shows. They actively interact with dolphins within the water, engaging in touching, kissing and being towed through the water holding the dorsal fin. There may also be separate shows available, where visitors can see a broader range of tricks performed.

The middle-ranking venues reduce the direct physical interaction between tourists and captive wildlife. For elephants, venues may offer bareback riding, which is often less intensive than saddled rides but which still requires full control of the elephant due to the close contact with the visitor. Across a range of assessed species, including dolphins, feeding, bathing and/or selfie activities are offered at set times, rather than when guests arrive. Shows are not usually performed at middle-ranking venues.

Animals may be 'rotated' out of interactions, taking turns to reduce their interaction time with tourists.

At the highest-ranking venues, no direct interaction between visitors and captive wildlife is offered. Visitors observe animals behaving as naturally as possible in a captive environment. The lack of direct interaction ensures these activities are safer for visitors and least stressful for the captive animals. Education of visitors is usually taken very seriously and provided through dedicated and knowledgeable staff.

## Animal management

The focus of these venues is usually on quantity of visitors and less on welfare of animals. Venues may be open to the public for 8 hours or more. Veterinary care may be lacking or carried out by animal keepers rather than qualified veterinary professionals. There may be little to no restrictions on the number of tourists able to interact with animals at any one time. There may be minimal or no briefing to tourists on how to behave when directly interacting with the animals.

Venues are open for between 6-8 hours. Middle-ranking venues usually employ better qualified keepers. Venue management will call for external vets to treat sick animals or some of the larger venues have their own vet staff on site. There are usually restrictions on the number of tourists able to interact with animals at any one time. There is usually a briefing on how to behave when interacting with the animals. Still the focus for managing their animals is primarily on ensuring smooth operation of the business and only secondarily dictated by what is good for animals.

Animal management at these venues prioritises the welfare of the animals over their control and visitor numbers. Due to no direct interaction with tourists less handling and control over animals is needed, allowing for a less stressful environment. Animal keepers are trained to high standards and work in conjunction with on-site veterinary staff.



Image: A turtle held for selfies at Bali Fantasi/Turtle Island.

## Changes to venues and offerings 2017–2023

Positive changes since 2017 included the closure of one dedicated elephant camp and three dolphin facilities. Most of these venues had been associated with reports of disturbingly poor conditions. Bali Elephant Camp (True Bali Experience) had reports of elephants starving during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the venue being unable to pay staff. The elephants were relocated to other zoos and venues in Indonesia<sup>20</sup>. Unfortunately, these ‘rescued’ elephants were only transferred to life in another captive entertainment venue rather than a better life in a genuine sanctuary.

Three venues with dolphins that were reviewed in 2017 have since closed. Reportedly, ongoing protests about the poor conditions for the dolphins led to the government not renewing their permits to operate<sup>21</sup>. Wake Dolphins closed in 2018 and Dolphin Lodge Bali closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the Umah Lumba Rehabilitation, Release and Retirement Centre was opened in West Bali to house these rescued dolphins and future rescued performing dolphins<sup>21</sup>.

Four dolphins in small pools at the Melka Hotel were rescued in 2019 and released into the wild in 2022<sup>22</sup>. However, not all the dolphins at that venue were released from life in captivity. A new venue,

Bali Exotic Marine Park, opened in 2019 with five of their nine bottlenose dolphins coming from one or more of the closed venues. These dolphins are still involved in close encounters including swimming with visitors and providing ‘kisses’ for photographs, and other interactive experiences.

Surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic did not deter the planning and opening of another new venue. Tasta Zoo opened in 2021 and now houses some elephants from the closed elephant camp<sup>23</sup>.

Some small, positive changes were noted in the offerings at venues since the 2017 review. These include the cessation of elephants in shows at both Mason Elephant Park & Lombok Wildlife Park and elephant riding at Lombok Wildlife Park. At Mason Elephant Park, we found there was potential for improved mobility for some elephants and a new space for socialisation. However, only a solitary elephant was observed in the socialisation space at the time of visit and many others were chained in isolation elsewhere. Venues that appeared to not have changed their low-welfare attractions on offer from 2017 were: Bali Zoo, Bakas Elephant Park, Bali Safari Park, and Bali Fantasi Benoa Bay (Turtle Venue).



# Results

## Key findings

As noted above, data was collected through direct observation (i.e., observed information) as well as conversations with staff on site to glean information about animals that may not have been on display or visible during our assessment (i.e., reported information).

Through this method, a total of over 1,300 captive wild animals were *observed* during our assessment at the 34 venues, compared to more than 1,500 wild animals observed across 26 venues in 2017.

Total captive animals *reported* across the 34 venues approximated 2,829 consisting of: 92 Asian elephants, 21 orangutans, 25 gibbons, 16 tigers, 9 dolphins, 45 civets, 40 turtles and tortoises, 18 bears (both Asiatic and Malaysian sun bears), 18 binturongs (bearcats), 20 crocodiles, over 1,000 birds, and over 1,000 other wild animals of various species, plus hundreds of free-ranging monkeys and around ten free-ranging dolphins.

The following key findings section focuses on the welfare of focal species at the wildlife entertainment venues visited, all of which offer close encounters with captive wildlife and other wildlife in entertainment activities. Six of these venues were also reviewed in 2017. Observations about other wild species found at wildlife entertainment and other venues in Bali and Lombok can be found in the *Other Findings* section.

### Welfare of focal species

At the wildlife entertainment venues visited, a total of 134 individual animals of the focal species were observed and subject to the rapid welfare conditions assessments: 40 Asian elephants, 39 turtles, 25 gibbons, 10 tigers, 10 orangutans and 9 dolphins.

**Overall, there was no meaningful or significant improvement in the recorded and observed welfare conditions for wildlife in entertainment in Bali and Lombok in just over five years since the last report. Our investigation showed that wild animals are still predominantly suffering from inadequate conditions.**

As noted, some small improvements were recorded in some venues for some species and represent small steps towards improved welfare conditions for these animals. These include: the halting of elephant riding and shows at Lombok Wildlife Park; the cessation of elephant shows and some new facilities for the animals at Mason Elephant Lodge; and slightly fewer elephants and tigers in captivity overall.

Despite this, none of these changes were significant enough to result in a venue being rated as even close to the 'best possible' welfare conditions for any of the focal species. Other conditions are still status quo in many venues for the animals with the retention of attractions including elephant riding and bathing, close encounters, photo opportunities, swimming with dolphins in artificial pools, and touching turtles in small pens.

According to conversations with staff at a number of venues, at least one elephant and several primates died from 'stomach problems' during the COVID-19 pandemic; this may also be a factor in the reduced number of elephants, and potentially tigers, alongside potential movement for trade or transfer off the island. At least one venue – Bakas Elephant Park – had visibly deteriorated during the pandemic and reported that they had trouble paying for food for the animals.

Veterinary care for the animals, a requirement for venues, has slightly improved since 2017 with a reported increase in the use of an external vet when needed. However, only five venues had a vet on site, while the nature of vet care for eight venues was unknown.

Steps backwards, in addition to the two new venues Tasta Zoo and Bali Exotic Marine Park, are a large increase in primates (orangutans, gibbons and monkeys) in venues, further indicating no meaningful shift in the Bali tourism industry with respect to the use and abuse of wildlife for entertainment.

**Table 2: Animal welfare conditions score by species at each key venue.**

	Severely inadequate conditions	Inadequate conditions	Best possible captive conditions
Elephants	5	1	
Primates	4	2	
Dolphins	1		
Tigers	2		
Turtles	2		

## Elephants

The number of venues holding elephants in 2023 remains at six; five that were also included in the 2017 review and the new Tasta Zoo replacing the closed Bali Elephant Camp as the sixth. Elephant riding is still commonly offered at five of the six venues. Five venues also offer bathing elephants, an increase on the three in 2017. Elephants are still in shows at two venues. Lombok Wildlife Park has ceased offering elephant shows and elephant riding since the 2017 review.

The number of reported elephants in these venues has dropped only slightly from 100 to 92 – at least two elephants from the previous studies had died from what staff described as a ‘stomach infection’. Of the 92 elephants, 74 are adult females with 18 adult males. All venues are actively pursuing captive breeding of their elephants with no prospect of them living in the wild. Only one has had a calf in the last two years, with three calves under five years of age observed during the 2023 assessment.



**Image:** Bakas Elephant Park.

## Welfare scores

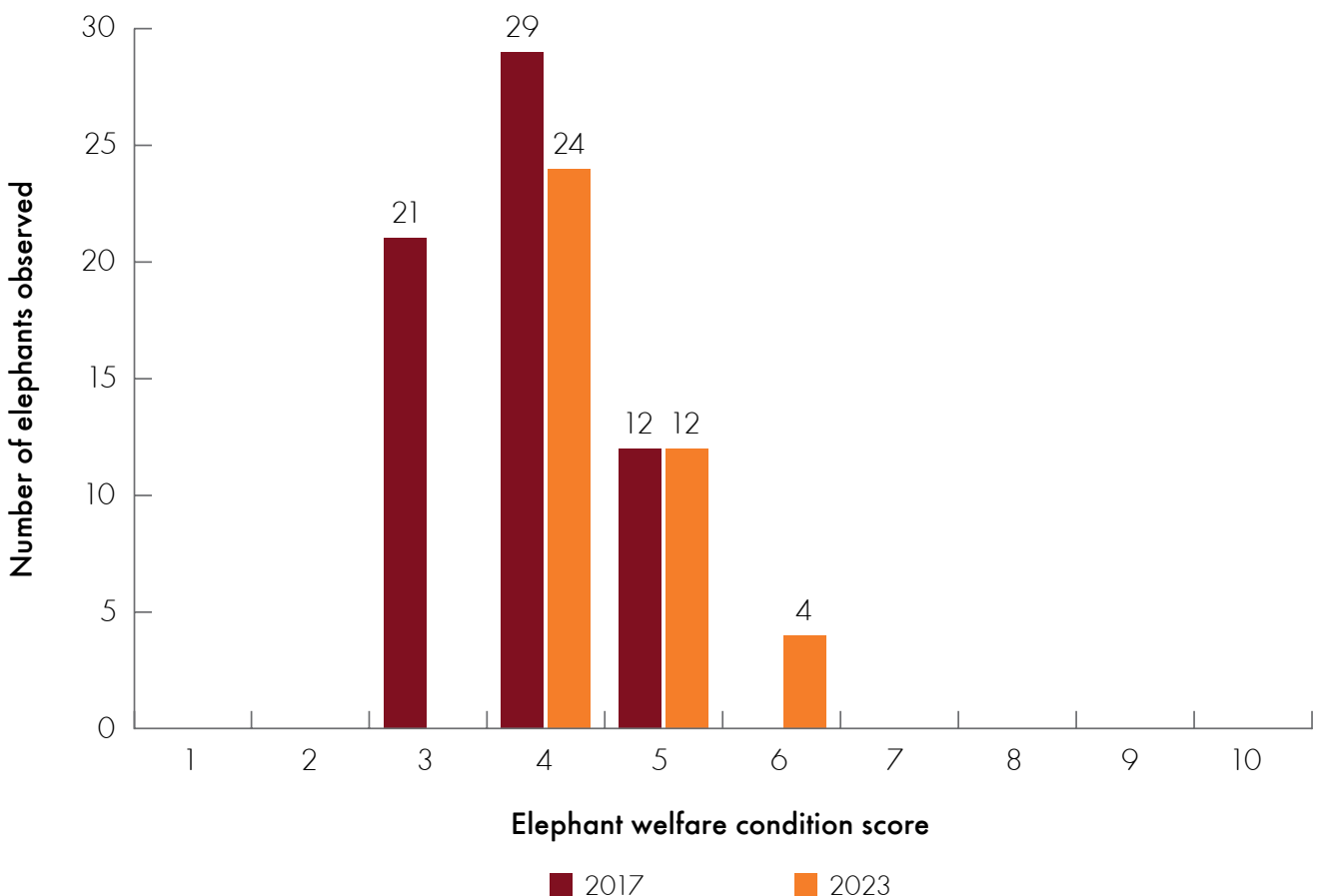
40 elephants were observed during the review, accounting for 43% of the reported number of elephants in Bali and Lombok. The welfare scores for elephants at each of the venues are shown in Figure 1. Four of the five venues that were also reviewed in 2017 received the same welfare condition score.

Mason Elephant Park gained 1 point. The venue has implemented some changes and improvements since 2017, including the potential for elephants to have better mobility with the 'free roam' area, water stations, and the elimination of elephant shows. However, the score still represents severely inadequate conditions. Despite these facility changes, their conditions are predominantly the same for the animals themselves, with chaining in isolation without shade still used, and close encounters continuing through riding and bathing. Only one elephant was observed in the new free-roaming area and others were working or chained on their concrete 'resting pads'.

Interestingly, Mason Elephant Lodge, the only venue with Asian Captive Elephants Standards (ACES) accreditation, shared the lowest welfare score with Tasta Zoo and Bakas Elephant Park. Lombok Wildlife Park received the higher score, up one point to represent improved but 'inadequate' conditions. This was mainly due to the positive step of stopping the poor welfare activities of elephant rides and shows.

Of the 40 observed elephants across the venues, 36 elephants (90%) were in severely inadequate conditions with welfare condition scores of 4 or 5 (Figure 1). Applying this percentage to the total reported number of elephants at each venue, we can reasonably assume 78 elephants are being kept in 'severely inadequate' conditions with only four in the 'inadequate conditions' at Lombok Wildlife Park. This was, however, a slight improvement in the scoring from 2017 where 34% of observed animals were assessed as in even poorer conditions (scoring 3).

**Figure 1: Number of elephants for each welfare scores**



## Other observations

Elephants are very social animals and hence contact with other elephants is critical for good welfare. However, 30% of the elephants observed had either no contact or only visual or audio contact with at least one other elephant. 11 had some contact but were restrained and 17 elephants were free to roam with at least one other elephant at the time of assessment.

Severely restricting elephant mobility through chaining is still commonplace. Six elephants were observed chained during the day visit (two without shade) at Mason Elephant Lodge and Tasta Zoo. Additionally, seven were observed in pens, and five in small enclosures measuring 21–200 square metres. The other 27 elephants were involved in tourism activities during the visit: being ridden or saddled waiting for rides, involved in photos and feeding, or being bathed by tourists.

Stereotypic behaviours, including pacing, head-bobbing and swaying were observed in five chained elephants. Physical health concerns or injuries were observed for 14 (35%) of the elephants including being underweight, having abscesses, cracked toenails, and pink, sore-looking skin around the legs from where the chain has repeatedly rubbed the area. At Bakas Elephant Park, two adult females were observed to have abscesses and physical scars.

At every venue, elephant handlers (mahouts) were seen with bull-hooks or other pointed implements to express and reinforce their dominance over the elephant. Elephants are jabbed with these to inflict pain and encourage compliance. These are often used daily on the elephants in contrast to the messaging from some venues that they are only for emergencies.

At one venue, during a supervised feeding session, an elephant was observed pulling a small child through a barrier onto the floor by their backpack, resulting in the child nearly falling into the water. This child had been feeding the elephant and then turned their back for a photo. The child was screaming, and the mahout moved the elephant further away. The mahout suggested the incident was because the backpack contained food. The elephant was observed to be distressed by the child and mahout's reaction.

## Dolphins

The closure of the three venues that housed dolphins in 2017 is a very positive step in reducing the exploitation of captive dolphins in Bali. However, the new Bali Exotic Marine Park means at least nine dolphins remain in captivity for entertainment.

The main dolphin pool at this venue (approximately 400 square metres and 10 metres at its deepest point) has clear, blue water with concrete substrate replicating the swimming pools of tropical resorts for humans. The Park website claims the venue '... has the largest saltwater habitat in Indonesia with advance purification methods'<sup>24</sup>. Although it did not smell of chlorine, saltwater in the pool was also unable to be detected.

There were two distinct dolphin groups: one of five dolphins and one of four dolphins. Staff reported that these groups cannot share the large pool together, meaning one group spends prolonged periods in a much smaller pool, estimated at about one-quarter the size. Stereotypic behaviours were observed: one dolphin was observed swimming in circles and tail slapping at the same place in each circuit.

The overall score for dolphins at this venue represented 'severely inadequate conditions', falling just short of the 2017 score for the now-closed Dolphin Lodge Bali, which had a sea pen enabling dolphins to access the sea and swim in saltwater. Although these nine dolphins are in slightly better conditions than those provided at the closed Wake Dolphins and the Melka Hotel pools, it is still far removed from their rich, natural environment in which bottlenose dolphins such as these may swim hundreds of kilometres a day.



Wild encounters with free-roaming dolphins are also available to tourists at Lovina where tourists can pay to go out on boats and see dolphins in the wild, although this activity is not recommended due to poor management and welfare concerns (see *Overtourism*).

## Primates (apes and monkeys)

Primates were found at six venues, five the same as the 2017 review plus the new Tasta Zoo. Most concerningly, many more apes and monkeys were seen in these tourism venues than in 2017, with 78 animals observed (a 63% increase since 2017). The key venues accounting for this increase are Bali Zoo (up from 21 to 37 individuals) and Bali Safari and Marine Park (up from eight to 15). Bali Zoo has two more orangutans (a new total of six), and now at least 28 monkeys of different species (macaques, lemurs, proboscis monkeys, langurs). Bali Safari and Marine Park retained six orangutans, but now reportedly has two gibbons and more monkeys.

Orangutans were housed at five venues, with a total of 21 orangutans reported (of which 10 were observed) – this is five more individuals than reported in 2017. Like Bali Zoo, Lombok Wildlife Park also has two more orangutans than in 2017. Orangutans were involved in shows at Bali Safari and Marine Park and were made available for selfies and direct contact with tourists at three venues. Only two of the five venues provided anything near adequate enrichment for these highly intelligent apes.

Severe welfare issues were evident. One very overweight female orangutan observed at Lombok Wildlife Park was even heavier than when seen in 2017 (reportedly 90kgs, around double their average weight in the wild) due to overfeeding and lack of opportunity for movement. At Bakas Elephant Park, a visibly underweight female

orangutan was observed begging for food from tourists, then repeatedly regurgitating and re-ingesting the food. This is an unnatural, stereotypical behaviour often found in captive great apes and may present health concerns comparable to some eating disorders in humans<sup>25</sup>.

Other apes were also kept at all six venues. 25 gibbons and siamangs were reported and observed. Another 44 other types of primates were reported, including longtail macaques, ringtail lemurs, proboscis monkeys, and langurs. The venue visited on Turtle Island held one single macaque, 'Johnny' while two were observed there in 2017. He is kept in a small, two square metre, concrete-floored cage and was observed biting his hands from psychological distress.

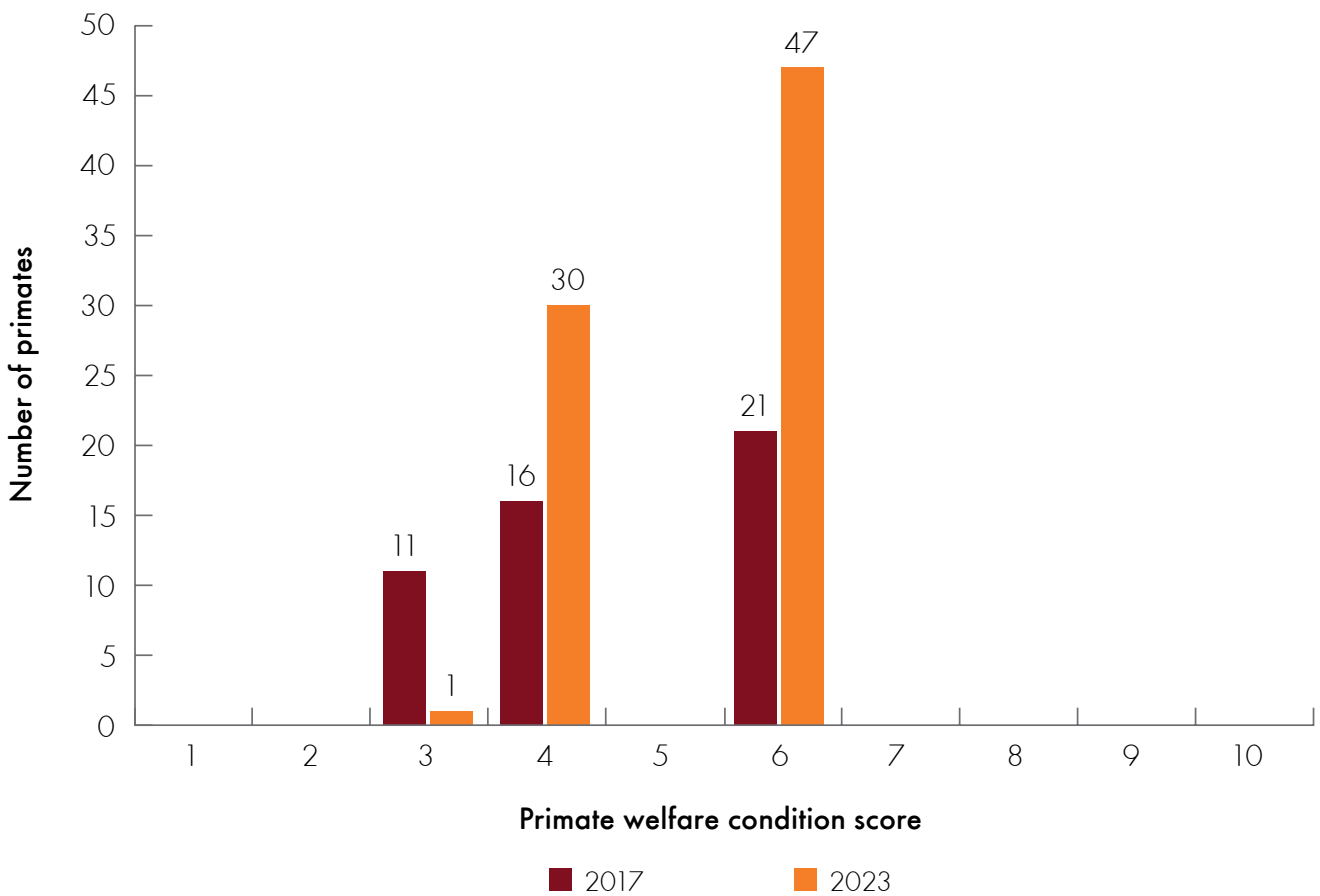
Staff reported the other macaque observed in 2017 had been 'released into the forest', although we have no information as to if this is true, and if true, done responsibly. Given macaques are social animals, living in isolation is likely adding to Johnny's stress.

For primates, all venues scored the same welfare condition scores as in 2017 except Bakas Elephant Park. Though the venue had fallen into an even worse condition overall, the score improved very slightly due to the stopping of close encounters between orangutans and visitors, but conditions remained 'severely inadequate'.



Image: An overweight orangutan at Lombok Wildlife Park.

**Figure 2: Number of primates for each welfare scores**



**Image:** Ubud Sacred Monkey Forest.

Four of the six venues scored under 5, meaning they had severely inadequate welfare conditions. This accounted for 40% of the animals. The other two venues had a score of 6, meaning 47 apes and monkeys were in captive conditions that were categorised as just ‘inadequate’. However, with more primates in entertainment venues, there is no overall positive progress for the welfare of primates in entertainment.



Close encounters with free-roaming monkeys are also available to tourists at the Alas Kedaton Monkey Forest and the Sacred Monkey Forest where visitors can pay for selfies with the monkeys and interact with them although this activity is not recommended due to poor management and welfare concerns (see *Overtourism*).



**Image:** The tiger show at Bali Safari and Marine Park.

## Tigers

The two venues housing tigers in 2017 remained the only ones with tigers in the 2023 review – Bali Zoo and Bali Safari Park. There were a reported 16 tigers (two fewer tigers than in 2017) with 10 observed (five fewer tigers observed than in 2017). The venues received the same welfare condition score as in 2017 (severely inadequate conditions). *Note: The 2017 report contained an error, showing a score of 4 for these venues rather than 5<sup>8</sup>.*

Of the 10 tigers observed, eight were in overcrowded, shared housing and the remaining two were alone. Fewer tigers were seen observed in the very small cages (less than 20m<sup>2</sup>) at the time of review than in 2017, with more observed in medium and larger-sized areas. However, six were in areas less than 131 square metres. As in

2017, there was minimal enrichment seen in the enclosures – just static structures, typically with one platform that also poses as a shelter under which the tigers could lie. Two tigers were seen pacing back and forth around the cage, which can be a stress-related stereotypic behaviour, and one was very overweight.

Of the two venues, one offered a tiger show. Tigers performed various movements including climbing and swimming with meat rewards. The environment was extremely loud, with large crowds cheering and loudspeakers playing music. Both venues allowed visitors to feed the tigers (with no touching of the animals) while having their photos taken as souvenirs.

## Turtles

Bali has at least six or seven sea turtle tourist venues on 'Turtle Island'. The largest venue, Bali Fantasi Benoa Bay, was reviewed for this report. The venue is home to around 40 turtles, including the critically endangered hawksbill turtle, the endangered green turtle, and the vulnerable loggerhead and olive ridley species<sup>15</sup>.

The venue scored the same very low score of 2 (severely inadequate) and was the lowest overall scoring venue for both 2017 and 2023. The condition of facilities appeared to have continued to deteriorate since 2017. Turtles were in small, overcrowded tanks with barely enough water to submerge, with pen sizes ranging from the larger (about 20m<sup>2</sup>) housing 17 large turtles, to 'fish tanks' around 1-4m<sup>2</sup>.

A turtle pen on the shore at the entrance to the venue provided a more naturalistic setting, with water levels semi-dependent on tides. It housed 14 large green turtles that tourists could touch and feed. During the visit, a staff member pulled out a turtle flailing in distress for an unrequested photo opportunity. Although this venue is officially a 'donation entry' inferring a not-for-profit model, it is advertised as requiring a boat trip to reach even though it is on a peninsula reachable by road.

It is suspected that Bali Fantasi Benoa Bay has a business arrangement with the boat companies, possibly sharing the revenue from the expensive boat fees tourists pay.

Two venues primarily focussed on rescue and rehabilitation centres for sea turtles on Bali were also visited: the Turtle Conservation and Education Centre and Saba Asri Sea Turtle Conservation. These did not allow direct contact with the turtles during visitation, although according to details provided by staff, minimal handling happens when hatchlings are released to the sea. While there are guidelines and hygiene protocols in place to theoretically make the release no more stressful to the hatchlings than if a staff member were doing it, World Animal Protection does not advocate the handling of wild animals by non-professionals.

These venues still represent better welfare options for tourists to see turtles and contribute more directly to their conservation, without supporting demand for captive wildlife in entertainment venues. However, improvements to ensure the best chance of survival for the hatchlings, including releasing from quiet beaches at night and staff-only handling, would be recommended.



**Image:** The larger turtle pen at Bali Fantasi Benoa Bay/Turtle Island.



## Other general findings

Outside of the rapid welfare assessment process for focal species, our assessor gathered observational data on the number and state of other wild animals in captive wildlife venues, as well as the venues themselves, across Bali and Lombok.

This process was not intended to provide a direct measurement of an individual animal's welfare or be as detailed an assessment as for the focal species. Instead, this section represents general observations about key issues observed by the assessor.

### Non-focal species at wildlife entertainment venues

Two venues that may be reasonably classified as wildlife entertainment venues – Bali Reptile Park and Bali Bird Park – were also visited.

Bali Bird Park held around 1,000 birds of 200 species, set in tropical gardens, and nearly all were observed. The enclosures for the birds varied in size with some spacious and others evidently too small. However, there was generally good enrichment for the birds, the education resources were comprehensive and there was a vet on site. They have a breeding programme for several endangered species.

Unfortunately, this venue also offered birds of various species as photo-props including parrots

(including African greys), macaws, cockatoos, pelicans and birds of prey. It was not apparent that the birds could remove themselves from the situation if they found it stressful. Some also had patchy feathers, a potential sign of distress if they are self-plucking. The removal of direct interactions with birds would be recommended at this venue.

The park also offered shows and feeding throughout the day, in which visitors could participate. Two Komodo dragons were also observed at Bali Bird Park in a decent-sized enclosure.

Bali Reptile Park housed roughly 130 animals including 92 species of snakes and other reptiles (monitor lizards, turtles, crocodiles), of which nearly all were observed. Like the Bird Park, the educational resources were more comprehensive than other venues and enclosures varied in size and condition.

Bali Reptile Park also offered direct interactions with a python and iguana at the gate, and tortoises in the interaction section. It was not apparent that the reptiles could remove themselves from the situation if they found it stressful, or if they are being improperly handled. In the interaction area, the tortoises' movement was also restricted within a small low-walled area removing their option to move freely. The removal of direct interactions with reptiles would be recommended.



Image: Selfies at Bali Bird Park.



Image: Snake selfies at Bali Reptile Park.



Image: Mini-zoo in Bakas Elephant Park.

### Other captive wildlife venues

Other disturbing welfare concerns were observed during the review.

Bedugul Animals is a small roadside menagerie with animals clearly suffering. Seven flying foxes hung under umbrella stands shivering in cold, misty weather, with the owner stating they dislike the cold. The owner reported that they were brought from Java as they are more impressive for the tourists to see than the locally sourced flying foxes.

Two pythons were kept in small tanks with no food or water, one of which was housed directly next to a small rabbit. The owner stated at least 10 rabbits had died from the cold, though being housed next to a predator will have likely also caused additional extreme stress. Other animals included a barred owl kept on a short tether. There were also two civets, both overweight and displaying disturbing stereotypical behaviours in their small unnatural enclosures.

Bakas Elephant Park includes a 'mini-zoo' that houses a number of primates, mammals (including porcupines and otters) and birds, in addition to the elephants and orangutans at the park discussed in Results. There was also a large python on display. These animals were in distressingly poor conditions, with many in filthy cages contaminated with faeces and water bowls either empty or filled with algae. Reports from staff indicated that they were unable to enter some cages to clean them owing to staff shortages.

A number of the primates demonstrated stereotypies while our researcher was at the park. Several birds were observed with unhealed and open 'self-plucking' wounds – self-plucking is a stereotypy that typically indicates stress.



Image: Ubud Sacred Monkey Forest.

### Free roaming wildlife

It is possible to see wild animals in a natural, or semi-wild setting in Bali. Three such popular destinations are the Alas Kedaton and the Ubud Sacred Monkey Forests, where tourists can see macaque monkeys, and Lovina Beach in the north of Bali, where many operators offer dolphin-watching trips.

At all these destinations, wild animals were free to roam, although macaques are kept within the boundaries of the Monkey Forests by various methods. At the Ubud Sacred Monkey Forest, staff reported that vets were on call and visited the monkeys to provide vaccinations and care if required.

There were significant welfare concerns at all these destinations arising from overtourism, particularly the regulation of the number and proximity of tourists to the wild animals causing stress and potential injury (see *Overtourism*).

In addition, at the Alas Kedaton Monkey Forest, tourists were able to feed the macaques and at the Ubud Sacred Monkey Forest guides were observed luring and encouraging monkeys with food to sit on tourists' laps and take 'selfies'. This is concerning as it increases the chance of negative human-animal interactions and can significantly alter the behaviour of the monkeys.



Image: A caged civet in the Tampaksiring area.

### Civet coffee

Venues housing civets for the purposes of 'kopi luwak', the world's most expensive coffee, are still commonplace in Bali. Civet 'cats' are cruelly poached from the wild and forced to live in inhumane conditions at civet coffee venues across Bali and other parts of Indonesia. These small, nocturnal animals ingest coffee cherries to produce faeces containing partially digested, fermented coffee beans. The suffering endured by these animals in Bali for the sake of a cup of 'special' coffee has been comprehensively reported<sup>26</sup>.

16 civet coffee venues were visited, four more venues than in 2017. Encouragingly though, the number of civets observed at these venues decreased by almost 44%, from 80 to 45 animals. This decrease was reportedly due to civets being 'released into the forest coffee plantations' during the COVID-19 pandemic as there were no tourists to see them. The informal nature of these venues and the reported 'releases' raises significant questions about the current welfare of those civets.

Interestingly, staff reported that civets in the wild produce 'higher quality' kopi luwak and can fetch a higher price. Staff at many venues also reported releasing many of their civets due to pressure from tourists claiming it was cruel.



Image: Mason Elephant park.

### Wildlife Education

Educational signage and information of any kind was lacking at 21 of the 34 venues visited (or 62%). However, justification for keeping wildlife captive often focuses on a role in conservation education, engendering respect for the species and awareness of actions tourists can take to protect wildlife.

Bakas Elephant Park had no education resources or even enclosure signage, whilst the resources provided by the 'accredited' Mason Elephant Park were rated in the review as basic. The four venues with very comprehensive educational resources were the two turtle rescue and rehabilitation projects, Bali Bird Park and Bali Reptile Park.

However, it must be noted that - regardless of the presence and quality of educational resources - the exploitation of wild animals for rides and as photo props for entertainment derails any possible contribution to positive education and also contributes to ongoing misconceptions of animals as a commodity and normalises animal suffering.

# › Tourist traps

Wildlife tourism, when properly and responsibly managed, can be good for the environment and wild animals. It can also support the protection of natural areas, improve animal welfare and support community development. Tourists have great power to support such responsible wildlife tourism.

However, misleading claims by venues, overtourism and a bombardment of wildlife selfies online can make it difficult for tourists who want to be responsible to identify the ethics of wildlife attractions.

In Bali and Lombok, these issues were observed at a number of venues, including overtourism as a result of poor regulation of tourist numbers and the power of holiday selfies as a driver of wildlife captivity. And in some cases, observed venues and tour operators were observed making specific claims about their animal welfare policies and practices that were misleading or false.

As a tourist, it can be hard to do the research to identify and avoid venues and attractions where these are issues.

That is another reason why it is so important that travel companies – who have the resources and capacity to thoroughly investigate venues before sending tourists there – have strong animal welfare policies so that tourists can trust they are not contributing to or perpetuating the suffering of wild animals.



Image: An elephant ride at Mason Elephant Lodge.

## Overtourism

Overtourism is a term used when tourist numbers at a destination or venue reach a level that negatively impacts the environment, the welfare of the animals involved and/or the quality of visitor experience and local communities. It leads to 'tourists unintentionally destroying the very things they have come to see'<sup>27</sup>.

It drives the demand for more frequent offerings of wildlife close encounters (such as photo sessions, petting opportunities and shows) and increases noise and disruptions during the day for the animals due to crowds. Broader impacts include driving demand for cruel wildlife entertainment venues, as well as habitat destruction and wildlife displacement for tourist accommodation and infrastructure.

Even at destinations where tourists can see animals in the wild, or semi-wild, overtourism can create severe and negative impacts on wild animals. This happens where either the volume of tourists – or poor regulation of how tourists interact with animals – causes stress for the animals, limits their natural behaviours, and encourages undesirable behaviours, such as interacting with tourists and relying on them for food.

Even with Bali tourist numbers still below pre-pandemic levels, overtourism remains a significant issue for the welfare of animals at several venues assessed in 2023.

At both assessed tourist destinations where tourists could see wild animals in natural or semi-wild settings, it was observed that the number and behaviour of visitors were poorly regulated, causing visible negative impacts on wild animals.



## Bali case studies

### Sacred Monkey Forest

The Sacred Monkey Forest is a popular attraction for tourists, with approximately 1,000 long-tailed macaques roaming freely around visitors. Although the monkeys are not captive, there are welfare concerns due to the close proximity of the tourists to the monkeys and the impact of overtourism on their welfare and behaviour.

During our visit in 2023, the forest was peaceful until tourist numbers quickly reached the hundreds. The macaques' behaviour immediately changed in the presence of tourists, with monkeys seen taking and sometimes eating people's belongings including film cartridges and plastic bottles. Tourists can pay to take selfies and directly interact with the monkeys - with the monkeys baited by food to participate - amplifying their unnatural and undesirable behaviours.

This daily presence of tourists likely has a damaging impact on the natural behaviour and welfare of this wild population. The ability to pay for selfies with the monkeys that are lured with food into the photo also promotes perceptions of these wild monkeys as 'playthings' and performers.



### Lovina dolphin watching

Lovina Beach in the north of Bali is a location offering dolphin-watching trips. This stretch of coast is dotted with lines of businesses offering boat trips to see, and some to snorkel, with these fascinating, intelligent and playful marine mammals.

Boats, from 40 up to 120 in the peak season, swarm the waters each day erratically chasing down wild juvenile dolphins at high speeds. The boat rides go for around two and a half to three hours.

Of the boats observed, none gave the dolphins space or cut engines when near the animals. The atmosphere was one of noise and chaos. According to the tour guides, adult dolphins have apparently learned to avoid going near the boats.

The competition between boats to get tourists as close to the dolphins as possible fuelled irresponsible behaviour that lacked respect for the animals and endangered dolphin welfare. On the day the research team visited, one boat was observed striking a dolphin, with its resulting welfare unknown.





ENTRY

## Marketing by venues

As the true welfare and conservation consequences of keeping wildlife captive in entertainment venues are becoming clearer to tourists and tourism companies, a number of venues have adapted to retain patronage and stay in business. Methods include carefully wording advertisements which can, intentionally or not, deceive tourists into thinking these venues are more ethical than they are.

Research has found that 'greenwashing' or 'humane washing' – text claiming non-existent or exaggerated animal welfare and species conservation benefits (i.e., on brochures, websites and signage) – may encourage tourists to visit venues with standards of which they might otherwise disapprove, diminishing their ability to evaluate the true impacts of these attractions on wildlife<sup>28,29</sup>.

Researchers also found that tourists are not adequate assessors of the animal welfare and conservation impacts of wildlife attractions they visit, lacking specialist knowledge and are subject to psychological biases that influence tourist decisions to attend these venues.

Similarly, venues may have names that mislead tourists into thinking they are visiting genuine

wildlife-friendly venues. In the case of elephants, for example, non-riding venues may use the name 'sanctuary' but still offer activities like bathing and selfies, which have clear welfare issues. Positive reviews on aggregator sites such as Tripadvisor, even for venues with objectively poor ethical standards, can also influence decisions and perceptions.

Efforts to draw tourists back following the COVID-19 pandemic must not compromise animal welfare or involve false conservation and animal welfare messaging. Our review shows that while some venues are slowly responding to shifting demand from tourists for the ethical treatment of wildlife by making small improvements to conditions for animals, others are simply altering their messaging with exaggerated claims that are not backed up in practice.

For example, no venues in Bali can genuinely claim conservation and welfare benefits for elephants in captivity. Unless all elephants were rescued from a life in entertainment and now live free-roaming in a naturalistic setting, no longer used or bred for riding or shows, and are no longer used to increase the captive population, they are simply wildlife with compromised welfare in entertainment.

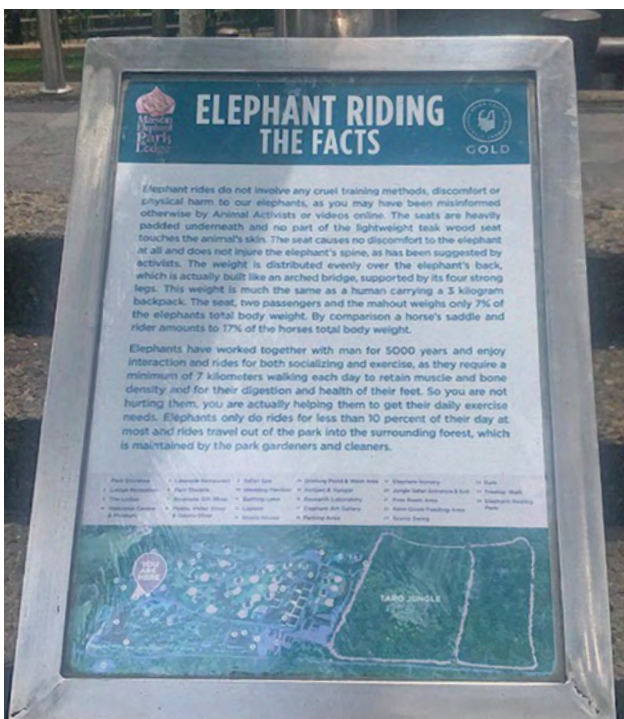


Image: (Above) Signages at Mason Elephant Lodge. (Left) A elephant ride with bullhook at Mason Elephant Lodge.





## Spotlight on Mason Elephant Park & Lodge (Mason Adventures)

Mason Elephant Lodge goes to considerable lengths to promote that they have received an Asian Captive Elephant Standards (ACES) accreditation on their website, and in brochures, an extensive 22-minute promotional video and all signage throughout the park. However, the ACES criteria do not address the need to restrict breeding or the trade of elephants and, in principle, promote the use of endangered elephants for entertainment.

In our view, the ACES accreditation system is not a reliable guide to judge the welfare standards of captive elephant venues. Our welfare

assessment ranked the Mason Elephant Lodge below the non-accredited Lombok Wildlife Park, with a major factor in this being the lower amount of control needed to have the elephants participate at the Lombok venue.

And as noted above, any venue that uses or breeds elephants for riding or close interactions, and where elephants don't live in free-roaming naturalistic settings, compromises animal welfare for entertainment purposes. If a rescue facility or sanctuary is genuine, there is no need to convince visitors via 'humane washing'.



**Image:** Lukcip rocking while chained on concrete.



**Table 3: Examples of claims made by Mason Elephant Park & Lodge<sup>30</sup>**

Claim/approach	Comment
Mason's is 'Bali's only dedicated elephant rescue facility' (website).	The last rescue of an elephant was in 2004. The venue's focus is tourism. Mason Elephant Lodge is part of Mason Adventures – a for-profit business that also offers other entertainment activities including buggy rides, helicopter rides and white-water rafting <sup>31</sup> .
Our elephants are only tethered during their meal and sleep times, which helps prevent elephant fights, bullying, food stealing and protects the park and local environment (website).	Some elephants were observed and documented chained to restrict movement through the entire duration of our visit of several hours, who were not observed eating or sleeping.
Our park has never condoned the use of cruel training methods ever, and we have a no-punishment policy at our park (website).	During our visit, the use of bullhooks was witnessed and documented being used on the elephants if they were distracted.
When done ethically, rides are actually very beneficial for an elephant's overall health and well-being for the following reasons: regulates circulation and respiration, sustains muscle growth and bone density, helps them digest food, improves cognitive health and prevents foot ailments (website).	These assertions are substantively incorrect and no evidence is offered to support them.  There is no mention of the cruel and intensive training process the animals will have endured to make them safer to handle and ride – either at Mason or before they came to the park.  The provision of exercise can be considered beneficial for captive elephants compared with being chained immobile on the spot but does not provide a justification for the continuation of rides compared with free socialisation and roaming in a genuine sanctuary or in the wild.  Higher welfare alternatives such as free-roaming within their new free-roaming area and other larger spaces without carrying saddles and taking visitors for controlled rides would be far better for elephant welfare.
The Free-Roam Area, where our elephants routinely share the space, socialising together within their friendship group (website)	Only one elephant was observed in the free-roaming area on the day of the review. Others were involved in activities or chained and awaiting activities, including being saddled.

## More than a selfie

Wildlife selfies – where tourists capture and share images of themselves with wild animals – are as popular as ever, and Bali and Lombok are no exception. At 16 of the venues visited, there were close encounters with wildlife on offer that provided the opportunity for photos with the animals, with staff often encouraging tourists to participate.

Social media platforms have the power to both promote and prevent cruelty to wildlife in entertainment. Tourists actively seeking out opportunities to take photos holding, touching, riding or standing next to wild animals have shaped a global industry where animal welfare is regularly compromised for an attention-grabbing social media post. Examples include koala cuddling in Queensland, Australia, as detailed in our report 'Too Close for Comfort'<sup>10</sup>, posing with tigers or tiger cubs in Thailand<sup>12</sup> and riding elephants throughout Asia<sup>11</sup>.

Such forced interactions, loud music and excitement from tourists during photo sessions, rides and shows can cause anxiety and stress which the animals endure on a daily basis. And for many wildlife selfies, the cruelty behind them is less than obvious with serious animal suffering behind the scenes.

Wild animals are also portrayed as tame, which increases people's desire to hold and pet them, and encourages misperceptions about their natural behaviour<sup>32-34, 36</sup>. Images shared online often have little or no context or explanations accompanying them. Therefore, any suffering imposed on the animal to allow the interactions to take place is not evident to the viewer<sup>35</sup>.

Selfies with wildlife can also have negative consequences for the conservation of the species. The public perception of wild animals is influenced by sharing of images on social media and can also lead to 'copycat' behaviour that perpetuates animal suffering. This in turn increases the number of people wanting to take part in these low-welfare close encounters with wildlife, sustaining these venues and driving both the poaching of wildlife and captive breeding.

The link to poor animal welfare has led some social media sites to have policies that alert users to posts associated with animal abuse, including posing with and holding wild animals. However, no social media sites have policies that protect wild animals by preventing videos or content from being placed on their platforms.

Selfies with wildlife and wild animal performances also encourage considering wild animals through the lens of human behaviours and responses, including through dressing wild animals like dolls or babies, leading to undesirable outcomes.

Some higher welfare zoos in Australia, such as Zoos Victoria and Taronga Zoo, have developed photography guidelines to inform practices for how close visitors can get to the animals and how animals should be represented in photos, to avoid negative animal welfare outcomes and foster respect for the animals. However, venues in popular tourist destinations like Bali and Lombok are yet to follow this lead.

# > What can I do as a tourist?

Tourists have choices when they travel and can have great influence by showing they will not tolerate travel venues and companies supporting animal exploitation and suffering.

Wildlife tourism can fuel harm and exploitation of animals – but equally, there are humane and responsible ways to see wild animals as a tourist. These include safely observing wild animals in their natural habitat, or visiting sanctuaries and wildlife-friendly facilities that support genuine conservation or are part of phasing out the use of captive wild animals for tourist entertainment. Tourists can also ensure they are responsible and respectful around animals in the wild by not touching or approaching them, and by not buying products that involve animal suffering.

As a tourist, it is important to do research and not visit venues where people can ride, touch, bathe or take selfies with captive wild animals. But as many venues and travel companies start touting their sustainability and ethical credentials, tourists can be misled into believing this also implies a level of responsibility when it comes to wild animals.

That is why one of the most impactful things tourists can do to end animal suffering for entertainment is choosing travel companies with clear, publicly available wildlife-friendly animal welfare policies. This can involve either:

1. Choosing a travel company that has taken the World Animal Protection wildlife-friendly travel pledge; or
2. Asking your current travel company if they have an animal welfare policy, and if so, what it is.

In addition, tourists can make a difference by clearly communicating disapproval to travel companies that advertise wildlife entertainment venues. These companies want patronage and do not want to risk poor reputations and loss of business.

When the public show they will not support wildlife in entertainment, travel companies change their policies and end ticket sales for these attractions. For example: after hundreds of thousands of World Animal Protection supporters publicly called for an end to captive dolphin entertainment, Expedia committed to ending the sale of captive dolphin attractions and activities in 2021.

Decreasing the sales of tickets also decreases the economic incentive to breed and capture more wildlife, saving them from a lifetime in captivity.



Image: A caged gibbon at Tasta Zoo.

## Seven easy tips for being a wildlife-friendly tourist

Experience the magic of seeing wildlife while not contributing to wild animal suffering and cruelty. These are some of the best ways to ensure a fun and safe wildlife experience.

### 1. Always pick 'observation' over 'interaction'

If you want to witness wildlife at its best, observe them in their natural habitat – the wild. Do your research and visit a country or region that is naturally home to your favourite animals and enjoy seeing them safely from afar.

If that is not possible, your next best option is to visit a genuine wildlife reserve or sanctuary to observe wildlife in their natural environment. But make sure to avoid venues who disguise themselves as sanctuaries by avoiding venues where touching is allowed and captive breeding takes place.

### 2. Avoid close encounter experiences

If the venue you are looking at allows visitors to ride, hold or touch, feed, swim or take selfies with a wild animal, animal cruelty is likely involved.

### 3. Pick a responsible travel company

Before booking your trip, it is important to make sure that the company that you are making your bookings through takes animal welfare seriously. Look for travel companies that have a dedicated, clear and easily accessible animal welfare policy – one that rules out selling captive wildlife experiences or ones where you cannot ride, hold or touch, swim or take selfies with a wild animal.

Avoiding companies that profit from low-welfare wildlife attractions will help reduce the demand for such cruel tourist activities and help keep wild animals in the wild, where they belong.

### 4. Share your responsible travel adventures...

If you encountered a wild animal in their natural habitat which left you with memories of a lifetime, share your story with your friends and family. Sharing your stories of witnessing wildlife in an responsible way will inspire more people to do the same.

If you come across a venue where you suspect animal cruelty, always report it to local authorities, and your travel company, asking them to investigate. Then share your experience with other tourists so others won't visit a low-welfare venue not knowing that they are supporting animal cruelty.

### 5. ... but don't share or like social media posts that show animal cruelty

Especially if you see an influencer posting photos or videos of elephant rides, tiger selfies, holding sea turtles, swimming with dolphins or similar interactions, positively interacting with that post can incentivise them to make more, similar content.

Please do not comment on the post. This may seem counterintuitive; however, engagement increases popularity. It is best to not comment at all and to report the video or channel immediately.

### 6. Never shop for souvenirs with animal products

When on holiday, it is tempting to purchase souvenirs for family and friends back home. But it is important to avoid purchasing products that involve animal suffering such as handbags made of crocodile leather, bracelets made of ivory or jewellery made of coral.

### 7. Say no to cruel local dishes

Many places have delicacies that tourists are tempted to try. But it is always good to do some research on how a certain dish is made and then proceed to make an informed decision about consuming it, as many can be a result of extreme animal cruelty. A few dishes that are products of extreme animal cruelty are shark fin soup, monitor lizard or snake satay, tiger wine, and civet coffee (kopi luwak).

# > What is the role of travel companies?

Travel companies yield great power to both inform and influence choices made by tourists and some have made the positive step to stop advertising wildlife entertainment venues.

However, our 2023 report 'The Real Responsible Traveller'<sup>1</sup> found that only a handful of the world's leading travel companies have positive policies that protect wildlife by opposing the sale and promotion of exploitative wild animal attractions, and many continue to sell tickets to, and promote, the venues in this report.

The loss of tourism revenue following the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that building a captive wildlife entertainment industry reliant on income from tourists can jeopardise the well-being of animals caught within that industry. Many iconic species – such as tigers, dolphins and elephants – can live for decades, even if the tourists stop visiting.

In Bali and Lombok, due to the halt in tourism, the welfare of numerous wild animals that should have never been born into captivity became a serious concern.

And as more tourists move away from captive wildlife entertainment to seeing animals in their natural habitats or in genuine sanctuaries, travel companies have even more of a responsibility to ensure new animals are not bred or brought into the captive entertainment industry.

Protecting wildlife protects people and jobs. Studies have shown many tourists are becoming increasingly reluctant to support activities that are deemed unethical and there is a growing demand for attractions deemed 'sustainable', 'eco' and 'ethical'.

In a 2019 poll, 79% of travellers who witnessed animal cruelty said they would pay more for an

activity involving animals if they knew the animals did not suffer (World Animal Protection 2019 global online survey of 12,000 people across 12 countries).

This demonstrates both the urgency for travel companies to move to a wildlife-friendly model, and a significant amount of economic potential for wildlife-friendly tourism.

The travel industry can help secure livelihoods and end the cycle of wild animals being born or brought into a lifetime of suffering in captivity by not selling or promoting tickets to these attractions. Travel companies need to create robust, publicly available animal welfare policies that protect wildlife at tourist attractions to which they sell tickets and promote. Travel companies also need to include educational material on their websites about why they don't sell experiences like elephant riding so that they help educate tourists to avoid such cruel attractions.

They can also educate and empower customers to make animal-friendly travel decisions with 'choice editing'. In this case, removing cruel wildlife tourism activities from supply chains by promoting wildlife-friendly alternatives instead will help promote wildlife-friendly tourism.

World Animal Protection has supported companies around the world in developing animal welfare policies, addressing their supply chains and becoming wildlife friendly. By working together, we can ensure that this generation of captive wildlife is the last to suffer for commercial gain.

## 10 steps to become a wildlife-friendly travel company

- 1. Commit to rejecting animal exploitation** by taking World Animal Protection's Wildlife-Friendly pledge. Consider communicating this intent to your customers and the public to encourage a wider shift towards more ethical wildlife tourism.
- 2. Assemble a group of enthusiastic colleagues** who are interested in leading organisational changes to embed animal welfare into your company's business operations.
- 3. Review your animal-related product offerings** such as activities that negatively impact animal welfare and the conservation of species in the wild, and that can be of high risk to the health and safety of your visitors including direct interaction with wild animals and performances by wild animals. World Animal Protection can provide you with guidance and checklists to identify red flags in your supply chain and remove them.
- 4. Assess the value of these activities to customers** and start to look for non-animal and ethical animal alternatives, such as watching animals from a safe and respectful distance in their natural habitats or at a true sanctuary where the animals are not bred or traded.
- 5. Start conversations with your suppliers.** Help them understand that change is needed, and that you are looking for responsible alternatives to replace wildlife entertainment activities. Keep in mind: while ethical experiences exist, a company like yours can help phase out wildlife entertainment by asking ground suppliers to stop commercial breeding and trade while improving the conditions of those animals already in captivity.
- 6. Develop an animal welfare policy** and ask suppliers to plan a phase-out of any activities and attractions that are no longer acceptable as part of your product offers. A good policy will help ensure you are assessing animal-based tourism consistently with the latest scientific information and mitigate the risk of being criticised for not doing enough. World Animal Protection can provide support.
- 7. Train staff on animal welfare** and how to identify cruel attractions and activities, as well as truly ethical wildlife experiences. World Animal Protection has training modules, checklists and research that will allow your staff to own your company's animal welfare policy, assess suppliers and select exciting and responsible alternatives.
- 8. Speak out about your company's commitment** to animal welfare and educate your customers on how to be an animal-friendly traveller wherever they go. Education is vital to shift demand towards responsible tourism. World Animal Protection has numerous educational materials, such as tips on how to be an elephant-friendly traveller.
- 9. Join forces with other travel leaders** to build back a responsible and resilient travel industry by creating and promoting truly ethical alternatives which, together, with reducing demand will lead to a gradual phase-out of captive use of wild animals for tourism entertainment. Contact World Animal Protection to learn more about the Coalition for Ethical Wildlife Tourism.
- 10. Annually re-evaluate, monitor and report** on your animal welfare strategy. We encourage you to continue to update and improve your policy and ensure it is being fully implemented across your organisation and supply chain.

For more detailed information on how your company can become a wildlife-friendly travel company, see our [Real Responsible Traveller report](#).





Image: Elsa the elephant at Bakas Elephant Park.

## > Conclusion

The conditions for wildlife in tourism venues in Bali and Lombok continue to be deeply concerning, with the welfare of many animals severely compromised and no substantial improvement evident since 2017.

Additionally, the serious welfare consequences for thousands of wild animals in captivity from the loss of revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic (seen in Bali and likely in many other locations worldwide), further demonstrate that it remains unethical and not sustainable to bring wild animals into an industry that relies on tourism to care for them.

The findings of our report indicate that currently there is no responsible way for tourists to see wildlife in Bali and Lombok. Even opportunities to see free-ranging wildlife, such as macaques and dolphins, are not currently responsibly-managed and should be avoided.

'Humane-washing' and the unpredictable impact of overtourism at key venues and attractions make it hard for tourists to gain reliable information on animal welfare prior to visiting a venue.

At this time, tourists should visit national parks in other parts of Indonesia if they want to see elephants or orangutans, or visit genuine rehabilitation centres and sanctuaries in their native islands like Sumatra or Borneo. It is important to use responsible tour operators when doing so.

If Bali wants to be regarded as a truly responsible travel destination, then a significant transformation of the wildlife tourism industry is required. Venues need to start transforming their models away from wildlife in entertainment so that the animals can live in genuine sanctuaries or be rehabilitated for release.

Travel companies must ensure that they have robust animal welfare policies in place to ensure they do not keep perpetuating the demand for the wildlife trade and breeding for captive tourist attractions.

This could make this the last generation of wild animals who will suffer for entertainment and tourism in Bali and Lombok. Now, more than ever, as the tourism industry builds back, travel companies and tourists worldwide have a crucial role to play in making this happen.

Together with local communities and governments, we can create a sustainable future for responsible tourism in tourist hotspots like Bali and Lombok.

Together, we all can play our part to protect wild animals - to help keep them thriving in the wild, where they belong.

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# Appendix

Key venue	Animals	Elephant shows	Elephant riding	Elephant touching and selfies	Elephant bathing/washing	Orangutan touching and selfies
Bali Zoo	Multiple		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Mason Elephant Park & Lodge	Elephants, tortoises	✓x	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Bakas Elephant Park/Bakas Levi Adventure Park	Multiple		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓x
Bali Safari & Marine Park	Multiple	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓
Lombok Wildlife Park (formerly Lombok Elephant Park, Lombok)	Elephants, orangutans, gibbons, reptiles, birds, other	✓x	✓x	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Bali Fantasi Benoa Bay (Turtle Island)	Turtles python, iguanas, birds					
Bali Bird Park	Birds, reptiles					
Bali Reptile Park	Reptiles					



**KEY:**

- ✓ Offered in 2017 report
- ✗ Not offered in 2017 report

- ✓ Offered in 2023 report
- ✗ No longer offered in 2023 report

Dolphin tricks/shows	Dolphin touching and selfies	Swimming with dolphins	Sea turtle touching and selfies	Other species touching and selfies	Tiger shows	Tiger feeding	Other species shows
				✓✓		✓✓	✓✓
				✓✗			
				✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✗✓
				✓✓			
			✓✓	✓✓			
				✓✓			✓✓
				✗✓			





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