

Guide and Tool for Evaluating Captive Wildlife Attractions and Activities

Frequently Asked Questions

Q	Why was the Animal Interaction study undertaken?
A	SATSA was tasked by its members to develop guidelines for animal interactions in SA's tourism industry in response to a growing sentiment, both locally and internationally, against tourism experiences that include harmful or exploitative animal interactions. Many tourism businesses are already feeling the impact of the amplifying call to end animal interactions (irrespective of how ethical their approach to animal interactions may be) – and it is also beginning to impact how South Africa is perceived as a tourism destination.
Q	How was the research conducted?
A	The year-long research study included: • Extensive consultation with the wider tourism industry and relevant stakeholders (including tour operators, captive wildlife centres and attractions and animal rights activists) • Nationwide public workshops • A public questionnaire • Desktop research examining local, regional and international guidelines and best practice
Q	What is the aim of the study?
A	The Animal Interactions study aims to develop ethical guidelines for all animal interactions in tourism, including: • A long-term vision of where the SA tourism industry would like to be with regard to animal interactions in tourism (in 10, 20 ... 50 years' time) • An ethical framework, which will form the basis for all discussions and guidelines in order to move the industry forward • An interactive tool that can be used by the industry and tourists alike in order to identify which captive animal activities/facilities to support – and which to avoid • High-level suggestions of key areas for legislative intervention and regulation Ultimately, the aim of the study, and resultant guide, is to raise awareness and encourage introspection, examination and dialogue that will lead to ethical choices and transformation in the sector, in order to improve the lives of individual animals, ensure the long-term conservation of South Africa's wildlife, and position South Africa as an ethical tourism destination.
Q	What is the scope of the study, i.e. what Animal Interactions does the study address?
A	• The study looks at all tourist attractions and activities involving captive wild animals. Captive means that one or more animals are kept in a human-made enclosure that is of insufficient size for the management of self-sustaining populations of the species, and designed to hold the animal/s in a manner that prevents them from escaping and facilitates intensive human intervention or

	manipulation in the provision of food and/or water, artificial housing and/or healthcare.
Q	What falls outside of the scope of the study?
A	This study does not examine the welfare of wild animals outside of captive wildlife attractions and activities, including: • Free-roaming wild animals in and around nature reserves, game reserves, game farms and other protected areas • Marine animal attractions where the animals are not in a captive environment, e.g. shark cage diving, boat-based whale watching, snorkelling with seals etc. • Free-roaming wild and domesticated animals naturally occurring in and around tourist establishments • Domesticated animals such as cats, dogs, horses, donkeys and farm animal located in or near tourism establishments • Hunting of free-roaming wild animals
Q	Why is animal welfare not covered in the guide?
A	Animal welfare is an extremely complex field that requires specialist expertise to evaluate. Assessing animal welfare is not within the realm of visitors or operators in the tourism industry and it is beyond the remit of this study to provide welfare guidelines for the range and extent of wildlife currently in captivity. Whilst not dismissing the importance of welfare, this guide is instead focused on ethical choices and transformation of the sector, guiding visitors and decision-makers on which attractions to visit and which to avoid. Evaluating welfare alone would not necessarily consider the reason why the animal is in captivity in the first place, how the animal is used whilst in captivity as well as the source and potential destination of the animal i.e. the ethics of the operation.
Q	What does the study recommend?
A	• That the following activities involving captive wild animals are considered to be unacceptable: ○ Performing animals ○ Tactile interactions with infant animals ○ Tactile interactions with predators and cetaceans ○ Walking with predators or elephants ○ Riding of wild animals • That attractions that offer unacceptable activities be avoided and that true sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres be supported. Those attractions involving captive wild animals that don't fall into either of these categories can be supported but the tourism trade and visitors are advised to ask lots of questions and be cautious. • SATSA, South African Tourism, the National Department of Tourism and affected bodies and organisations all support and adopt the guide and tool • The establishment of a panel of experts to provide oversight and guidance in terms of the welfare of captive animals in attractions • The formation of a 'hotline' for reporting of animal welfare issues

Q	Can these recommendations be regulated? How can these recommendations be enforced?
A	SATSA is a membership body and not a regulatory authority and therefore is not in a position to regulate or enforce these recommendations. However, SATSA has taken a stand and through the power of market forces we believe there will be ripple effect through the industry, which will lead to the “Avoid” category activities being discontinued.
Q	There are certain markets/individuals that won’t adhere to these guidelines. How do we manage the fact that these markets will continue to request to interact with animals e.g. elephant riding, lion cub petting?
A	We recognise that it is a free market such that tourists, DMCs and other tour operators are entitled to make their own decision about what to support and avoid. However, with this guide we are hoping to spread the message about why it is unethical to support certain activities. With time, it is hoped that the message will reach all operators and markets.
Q	What are the implications for those attractions that have activities that fall into the “Avoid” category?
A	Through this guide, SATSA will be sending a clear message that the “Avoid” activities and hence attractions that provide these should not be supported. We therefore strongly recommend that those attractions that offer such activities adjust their offering such that they rapidly move to the right side of the current line in the sand. In addition, all operators should monitor the advancing line in the sand to make sure that their offering continually advances ahead of the moving line in the sand.
Q	How do we get attractions that are outside of South Africa to support and adhere to these guidelines?
A	These guidelines are voluntary but through the buying power of SATSA members it is envisaged that operators outside of South Africa, in particular in Southern African countries, will be encouraged to ensure that their activities remain ahead of the line in the sand.
Q	Does riding horses fall within this guide? And what about petting farms i.e. with farm animals?
A	No, the guide is only applicable to captive wild animals and specifically excludes domestic animals.
Q	Can we put our own branding on this document and distribute to our clients?
A	Yes, we would like the guide to be shared as far and wide as possible so that tourists, the trade and attraction operators are aware of, and adopt, the recommendations included in the guide.
Q	We would like to have the document translated for our markets, would this be permissible?
A	Yes. See response above.
Q	Does the guide include exotic wild animals e.g. tigers?
A	Yes, the tool includes both indigenous and exotic wild animals in captivity.
Q	Should ostrich, crocodile and other farms that trade in body parts such as meat, feathers and skin, be avoided?

A	As these farms breed animals specifically for the trade in body parts they would fall into the “Avoid” category. Those that would like to support such farms need to be transparent to Clients that these are working farms first before being a tourist attraction. When considering these facilities, the industry is encouraged to consider animal welfare and client preferences.
Q	How do we make sure that the information in this guide is available to tourists?
A	SATSA members are encouraged to distribute the guide to Clients. SATSA will encourage the use of the guide and its distribution via tourism information centres, websites, etc
Q	What does it mean for an attraction if they end up in the orange or light green zone?
A	Based on the current line in the sand, these facilities can be supported. But we recommend that you ask more questions and be cautious. If you are feeling uncomfortable then the safest route would be to avoid the attraction. Those that are striving to move towards the green zone will be transparent and open about their activities and way forward. If you are an operator of an attraction that falls within this zone, we recommend that you take note of the current line in the sand and constantly adapt and transform your operations to ensure that you are continually ahead of the advancing line.
Q	How does one recognise a genuine conservation programme?
A	Not all conservation or research programmes are equal. We therefore recommend that you ask questions. Genuine conservation programmes will: • Have the primary purpose of ensuring the survival of the species and specimens in the wild, in accordance with a conservation strategy and research programme approved by a recognised issuing authority or recognised Biodiversity management plan. • Have been evaluated for its ethical and welfare standards and will conform to the principles of the 4-R Framework i.e. Reduction, Refinement, Replacement and Rehabilitation.
Q	What about feeding elephants? Why does this activity not fall into the “Avoid” category
A	This is a tricky area. Whilst it is recognised that ideally there should be no elephants in captivity, the reality is different and many animals have been habituated to humans. If the captive elephants are not forced, coerced or managed to take food from a tourist, this is considered “acceptable” for those elephants currently in captivity. But with the advancing line in the sand, it is envisaged that this will one of the first activities that will move into the “Avoid” category.
Q	Why is guest safety not included in the guide?
A	The tool is based on the interests of animals. When making a buying decision members of the travel trade are encouraged to consider visitor safety.
Q	Is it possible to set our own line in the sand?
A	Yes, as long as it is to the right of the current line.
Q	Where would snake demonstrations end up?
A	If there are performing snakes, the demonstrations would end up in the “Avoid” category. But most snake demonstrations would end up in the orange “Support” zone.
Q	What do I do if an attraction has the word “sanctuary”, “rehabilitation centre” or similar in its name?

A	Just because an establishment is called a sanctuary or rehabilitation centre or similar doesn't mean that it operates as such. We recommend that you ask and get answers for all of the following in order to identify true sanctuaries and rehabilitation centres: • Does the facility practice all the criteria for a true sanctuary or rehabilitation centre, viz: • No breeding of animals; • No trading of animals; • No performing animals; • No animals in tactile interactions/ walking with the public; • Animals are in captivity because they were sick, injured, orphaned, rescued, donated and/or abandoned; • The animals will have a home for life or will be used for in-situ repopulation by reintegration back to the wild or be relocated as part of a recognised conservation programme; • And the facility is compliant with all relevant legislation and is transparent in its operations and marketing collateral
Q	What are the next steps?
A	SATSA will now collaborate with its members and the broader tourism industry (including those in authority, like South African Tourism, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa, National Department of Tourism and the Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries) to ensure the research findings are translated into broadly accepted and practically applicable animal interaction guidelines.