



TRAILS OF INDOCHINA

*Artisans of bespoke journeys to
Southeast Asia & beyond*

Animal Welfare Policy





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INTRODUCTION

Animal attractions have become increasingly popular among tourists in recent years. However, with the increase in the number of such attractions, there has been a growing concern about the welfare of the animals and the potential risks associated with human-animal interactions. Some animal attractions have been known to be exploitative, detrimental to the welfare of animals, and pose risks to customers.

To address these concerns and promote responsible tourism, Trails of Indochina has developed an Animal Welfare Policy that prioritizes the welfare of animals. **Purposes of this policy are:**

- To define internal guideline and clearly assigned responsibilities;
- To ensure meaningful customer experiences;
- To contribute to the overall sustainability of tourism in destinations;
- To raise awareness of different species and conservation;
- To avoid the risk;
- To protect strongly established commercial relationships.

DEFINITION – WHAT IS “ANIMAL WELFARE”

What is “Animal Welfare”?

“Animal welfare refers to the state of an animal. An animal is in a reasonable state of welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, well-nourished, safe, able to express innate behavior and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress.”

The Five Freedoms

In 1979, The Five Freedoms were developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC - UK) to set out the criteria in five group and subsequent refinement of the requirements established the Five Freedoms.

The Five Freedoms are:

1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
2. Freedom from Discomfort
3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease
4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour
5. Freedom from Fear and Distress

In 2004, the EC sponsored a five-year research project called Welfare Quality®. The project involved 44 institutes and universities across Europe and Latin America and was designed to establish outcome based parameters to safeguard welfare quality. Following The Five Freedom definition of FAWC, the Welfare Quality® criteria help to assess whether an animal is in a reasonable state of welfare.

The below table shows how the Five Freedoms relate to the Welfare Quality® criteria and includes the additional 3 criteria in bold.

FIVE FREEDOMS	WELFARE QUALITY® CRITERIA
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger 2. Absence of prolonged thirst
Good housing	3. Comfort while resting 4. Thermal comfort 5. Ease of movement
Good health	6. Absence of injuries 7. Absence of disease 8. Absence of pain induced by inappropriate management practices
Appropriate behavior	9. Expression of social behaviours 10. Expression of natural behaviours 11. Good human-animal relationship 12. Positive emotional state
Protection from fear and distress	13. Absence of general fear / distress/ apathy 14. Ability to seek privacy/refuge 15. Absence of surgical or physical medication of the skin, tissues, teeth or bone structure other than for the purposes of genuine medical treatment / manipulation / sedation.

Nowadays, Five Freedoms are internationally recognized as providing the benchmark for an animal's physical and mental well-being.

OUR POLICY

- In general, we do our best to **meet The Five Freedoms** for animals whose lives are impacted by tourism, and to protect animals from exploitation, neglect, and cruelty:
 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst: nutritious food and clean water;
 2. Freedom from discomfort: a suitable living environment that provides shelter, opportunities to rest and considers the species-specific needs of wild animals;
 3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease: preventative and curative health care;
 4. Freedom to express normal behavior: living space that encourages natural behavior;
 5. Freedom from fear and distress: appropriate areas to seek privacy and limited human contact.
- The details of what is important to safeguard the welfare of captive animals will differ from species to species, in line with their specie's specific needs. However, the Five Freedoms provide a useful guide as to what elements of welfare are important across all species. For the species we have much more interaction activities, Trails of Indochina will create specific SOP, such as [Captive Elephant Interactions](#).
- Excursions and attractions in which captive wildlife is held are not offered, except for activities that are properly regulated and are in **compliance with local, national, and international laws**. Excursions that include interactions with wildlife, comply with relevant codes of conduct. Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized. Housing care and handling of all wildlife and domestic animals **meets the standards of animal welfare (15 criteria of the Welfare Quality®)**.
- All company employees are trained, understand and follow this policy. At the same time, we try our best to raise awareness and responsibility of clients to have positive impacts.
- We encourage animal-related suppliers to join us in good animal welfare approach,
- We actively discourage customers to participate in activities that exploit or harm animals, whether they are wild, captive, or domesticated animals.

ANIMAL WELFARE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Our animal-related experience needs to meet all 15 of the Welfare Quality® criteria for all of the species of animals within their care.

Minimum requirements for animals managed and/or dependent upon human beings

1. All animals have regular, daily access to adequate and clean drinking water in line with their specie's specific needs.
2. All animals are fed appropriate food (which includes necessary supplements for animals in captivity), via an appropriate feeding routine, which mentally stimulates the animal(s) and encourages natural behavior (e.g. foraging, browsing, grazing etc.).

3. In captivity, enclosures (including pools) or methods used to contain the animals for temporary periods allow all the animals to move and exercise freely, and to maintain sufficient distance from other animals in case of conflict.
4. In captivity, enclosures are environmentally complex, including natural substrate, furniture, shelter and environmental enrichment, in order to encourage normal/ natural behaviour. All animals should be able to seek shelter from extreme weather conditions and privacy from view.
5. In captivity, enclosures are clean, hygienic and well maintained, (e.g. devoid of excessive faeces, urine or rotting food, potentially harmful litter, not waterlogged, not infested with vermin etc.).
6. The facility employs a vet who is knowledgeable and experienced in the health and welfare of the relevant animals (either employed on site or externally contracted).
7. There is a policy not to surgically modify the skin, tissues, teeth or bone structure of animals, and not to sedate animals to make them safe to handle, unless it is for the purpose of genuine medical treatment under the guidance of an appropriately trained vet.
8. Where customers are permitted to be photographed with animals, this should be free from evidence of bad practice.
9. Complete, accurate animal stocklists, veterinary records and any appropriate licenses or permits should be up-to-date and available for inspection. The required paperwork should be in place for any animals which have been acquired from the wild.
10. Where animals are involved in performances these should only involve natural behaviors and be free from bad practice. Training methods should be based on positive reinforcement only.

Additional minimum requirements for businesses with working animals

1. Tethering and hobbling should be discouraged and where unavoidable should only be conducted using appropriate materials and methods that do not cause risk to the animal's welfare. Tethering should be for a limited time of no more than a few hours per day. The animals should be able to walk, lie down and stand up without putting tension on the tether, and reach basic resources like food, water and shade. Tethered animals should be regularly monitored.
2. Young, pregnant, nursing, injured, ill, distressed or elderly animals should not be ridden, or be required to carry/pull loads. Equids (hoofed mammals) should not be worked before they are three years old; camels should not be ridden before four years. Weaning should not be conducted for horses, donkey and mules before six months; preferably it should be allowed to occur naturally. Weaning for camels should not be conducted before four months; preferably, it should be allowed to occur naturally.
3. Equipment should fit, not causing injury, and should be cleaned and dried after use. Equipment should be removed during rest periods and ideally when eating/drinking.
4. Animals should train and work within their physical capabilities. Loads should be equivalent to the animal's size and ability (e.g. not more than one person on an equine or camel), work should not be in the hottest part of the day and animals should have regular rest periods each day of at least an hour between working periods.

UNACCEPTABLE AND DISCOURAGED PRACTICES

Certain activities are widely recognized as having a detrimental impact on both animal welfare and biodiversity. These activities have therefore been classified as ‘unacceptable’ by experts and scientists:

Unacceptable practices involving animals in captive attractions:

- Animals on display in restaurants and entertainment venues involving bad practices;
- Animal breeding or commercial trade in sanctuaries and orphanages;
- Acquisition of any CITES Appendix I, II, or III listed species except for demonstrable conservation or rescue/rehabilitation purposes;
- Animals used as photographic props involving bad practice. Tourist petting/holding/photo opportunities with wild animals where the animal does not have the choice of terminating the interaction or moving away;
- Wildlife photos: we do not encourage taking photos at the timing when there is a possibility of harming natural habitat (for example taking photo with flash to nocturnal animals)
- Tourists contact and/or feed wild cats, orcas, crocodiles or alligators, great apes (chimpanzees, orangutans, gorillas, bonobos), bears, sloths, animals with live vertebrate prey;
- Animal performances or shows involving animals (elephant/ primates/ marine animals, etc.) where training involves punishment or food deprivation, causes the animal fear, injury, or distress, or when tasks are not based on normal behavior;
- Canned hunting;
- Elephant polo-playing;
- Ostrich riding;
- Unlicensed zoos, aquariums, elephant venues;
- Surgery or physical modification of the skin, tissues, teeth, or bones of an animal, other than for genuine medical treatment;
- Euthanasia practices which do not comply with best practice guidance.

Unacceptable practices involving animals in cultural events and activities:

- Animals used for begging (for example: dancing bears, snake charming, primates);
- Bear baiting;
- Bear bile farms.
- Bear pits.
- Any animal fighting, whether against humans or other animals (for example: bullfighting and bull running; cockfighting; crocodile wrestling, etc.)
- Reptile farms involving bad practice.
- Tiger farms.
- Surgery or physical modification of the skin, tissues, teeth or bones of an animal, other than for the purposes of genuine medical treatment.
- Ritual animal slaughter as part of the tourism experience.

Unacceptable practices involving free-roaming wild animals:

- Unregulated animal and plant collection from the wild;
- Human-initiated contact with or feeding of animals in the wild;
- Trade and sale of endangered wildlife products;
- Trophy hunting.

SUSTAINABLE SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES FOR ANIMAL-RELATED SUPPLIERS

We encourage and support the supplier providing animal-related experience not only meet the minimum requirement of Animal Welfare as mentioned above, but also to have these best practices:

Working animal

- Ensure applicable legal permits & permission to access the activity area are in place;
- Ensure insurance for participants and team is in place;
- Identify health & safety risks, implement management systems, and provide appropriate safety equipment;
- Ensure enough team members are available in case of emergency;
- Monitor activity area conditions (including weather) in advance & during the activity;
- Be familiar with the activity area, and ensure that navigation and communication tools are in good working order;
- Maximize local economic benefits through employment and purchasing;
- Avoid single-use & disposable items, pack out what you take in, and pick up rubbish found along the way;
- Use eco-friendly products, e.g., for cleaning purposes;
- Be waterwise and take proactive measures to use water sparingly;
- Minimize energy used in the activity as part of a climate action strategy;
- Provide information in advance about your sustainability actions, activity accessibility, what to expect, and what to bring with;
- Provide best practice in animal welfare – “Five Freedoms” – freedom from hunger & thirst, discomfort, pain/injury/disease, fear/distress, and freedom to express normal behavior;
- Ensure caretakers are suitably equipped, trained, and experienced to provide best-practice care;
- Monitor the physical health of animals, e.g., check for lameness / similar, and provide veterinary advice/care as needed;
- Do not require young, pregnant, nursing, injured, ill, distressed, or elderly animals to pull/carry loads nor be ridden;
- Ensure equipment, e.g., harness, fits the animal well and does not cause distress or injury;
- Ensure work done by an animal does not exceed its physical capacity;
- Manage group size to minimize impacts and ensure a safe guide: participant ratio;
- Obtain written confirmation, e.g., via indemnity, that participants are aware of activity risks;

- Brief participants, pre-departure, about do's and don'ts, safety, what to expect, hazards to be aware of, logistical considerations, applicable conduct, not disturbing/removing flora and fauna, and rubbish collection and disposal;
- In sensitive environments, clean animal hooves, coats, and equipment before the activity starts, and provide weed-free feed for the preceding 48 hours to prevent the spread of invasive species;
- Cross properties at gates/stiles, and leave them behind as you found them;
- Cross watercourses at designated points or available bridges, otherwise at firm / stony sections to avoid erosion, and at 90° to bank/shore;
- Rest animals periodically throughout the workday, removing equipment during rest periods;
- Avoid working with an animal during the hottest part of the day (in hot climates);
- Do not allow animals to roam freely during rest stops;
- Do not tether animals for long periods, nor in an unnecessarily restrictive way; animal must be able to walk, lay down, stand up, and reach food, water, and shade;
- Water animals at designated water points, where possible;
- Do not allow animals to graze on natural vegetation in the activity area;
- Share information about local nature & culture, as well as social development/conservation projects that participants may want to support;
- Repair and compensate for any damage caused to the activity area;
- Participate in conserving activity area integrity; notify authorities of concerns and participate in rehabilitation projects.

Captive animal

- Ensure applicable legal permits (including for wildlife breeding and trade);
- Ensure insurance for participants and team is in place;
- Identify health & safety risks, implement management systems, and provide appropriate safety equipment;
- Ensure enough team members are available in case of emergency;
- Monitor activity area conditions (including weather) in advance & during the activity;
- Be familiar with the activity area and ensure that navigation and communication tools are in good working order;
- Maximize local economic benefits through employment and purchasing;
- Avoid single-use & disposable items, provide adequate waste collection facilities for safe disposal, and pick up rubbish found along the way;
- Use eco-friendly products, e.g., for cleaning purposes;
- Be Waterwise and take proactive measures to use water sparingly;
- Minimize energy used in the activity as part of a climate action strategy;
- Provide information in advance about your sustainability actions, activity accessibility, what to expect, and what to bring with;

- Keep detailed records (stocklist) of animals, including where and how wildlife was acquired (removal from the wild or captive breeding prohibited, unless part of a conservation program), and their destination/death (“canned hunting” / similarly inhumane destinations prohibited);
- Provide best practice in animal welfare – “Five Freedoms” – freedom from hunger & thirst, discomfort, pain/injury / disease, fear/distress, and freedom to express normal behavior;
- Ensure caretakers are suitably equipped, trained, and experienced to provide best-practice care;
- Behavioral needs are provided for, e.g., intra-species socialization needs, and species separation as required (e.g., to prevent predator-prey stress, and conflict due to aggression);
- Animals are not prematurely separated from their young;
- Training does not involve food deprivation;
- Monitor physical health of all captive animals, providing veterinary advice/care as needed;
- Animals are not drugged or mutilated, unless for veterinary/similar care, e.g., safe medical treatment, de-horning, etc.;
- Contraception, if deemed appropriate/ necessary, is based on veterinary advice;
- Euthanasia, if deemed necessary, is administered humanely, ideally by a veterinarian;
- Do not remove wildlife from enclosures unless for welfare purposes, e.g., husbandry, veterinary, enrichment / similar;
- Prohibit practices not aligned with best practices for captive wildlife, e.g., wildlife ‘selfies’, encouraging unnatural behavior, walking with predators or elephants, riding elephants or ostriches, swimming with cetaceans, feeding live vertebrate prey, and tactile interactions with infant predators, great apes, bears, sloths, cetaceans, crocodiles, or alligators.

Horse Riding & Pony Trekking

- Ensure applicable legal permits & permission to access the activity area are in place;
- Ensure insurance for participants and team is in place;
- Identify health & safety risks, implement management systems, and provide appropriate safety equipment, including suitable, well-fitted tack;
- Ensure enough team members are available in case of emergency;
- Monitor activity area conditions (including weather) in advance & during the activity;
- Be familiar with the activity area, ensure that navigation and communication tools are in good working order, and pack spare tack in case breakage occurs during the ride;
- Maximize local economic benefits through employment and purchasing;
- Avoid single-use & disposable items, pack out what you take in, and pick up rubbish found along the way;
- Use eco-friendly products, e.g., for cleaning purposes;
- Be Waterwise and take proactive measures to use water sparingly;
- Minimize energy used in the activity as part of a climate action strategy;
- Provide information in advance about your sustainability actions, activity accessibility, what to expect, and what to bring with;

- Provide best practice in animal welfare – “Five Freedoms” – freedom from hunger & thirst, discomfort, pain/injury/disease, fear/distress, and freedom to express normal behavior;
- Ensure caretakers are suitably equipped, trained, and experienced to provide best-practice care;
- Train horses/ponies to ensure a reasonable standard of behavior during activity;
- Keep detailed records of behavioral incidents with horses/ponies used for activity;
- Ensure horses/ponies are adequately fit & healthy for the nature of the activity;
- Monitor physical health of animals, including checks for lameness and shoe condition (if applicable), providing veterinary advice/care as needed;
- Ensure animals on the same activity are familiar with each other, to prevent the incident;
- Groom animals before saddling;
- Plan routes to maximize the safety of riders and animals, and avoid trails after significant rainfall;
- Screen riders ahead of time to ensure the activity is suitable for their fitness and level of ability, especially for children;
- Manage group size to minimize impacts and ensure a safe guide: rider ratio;
- Obtain written confirmation, e.g., via indemnity, that participants are aware of activity risks;
- Provide ‘test ride’ opportunity to ensure riders are confident with allocated horse/pony;
- Brief riders, pre-departure, about do’s and don’ts, safety, what to expect, hazards to be aware of, logistical considerations, applicable conduct (including handling horses/ponies, communication, etiquette around other users, vehicles, other animals, and in populated areas, etc.), not disturbing / removing flora and fauna, and rubbish collection and disposal;
- In sensitive environments, clean riders’ footwear, horse/ pony hooves, coats, and equipment before the activity starts, and provide weed-free feed for the preceding 48 hours to prevent the spread of invasive species;
- Secure loose items to prevent entanglement with riding equipment;
- Stay on designated trails and remain in the middle of the trail to avoid widening;
- Cross properties at gates/stiles, and leave them behind as you found them;
- Cross watercourses at designated points or available bridges, otherwise at firm / stony sections to avoid erosion, and at 90° to bank/shore;
- Do not allow horses/ponies to remain in or be washed in natural watercourses;
- Water horses/ponies at designated water points, where possible;
- Do not allow horses/ponies to graze on natural vegetation in the activity area;
- Do not allow animals to roam freely during rest stops;
- Provide food at overnight rest stops, and keep animals in a designated area that allows sufficient space (minimum 15m² as a guideline);
- Rotate the use of different overnight/rest stops to minimize cumulative impacts;
- Share information about local nature & culture, as well as social development/conservation projects that participants may want to support;
- Repair and compensate for any damage caused to the activity area;
- Participate in conserving activity area integrity; notify authorities of concerns and participate in rehabilitation projects.

WILDLIFE SOUVENIRS GUIDANCE FOR CLIENTS

It's great to have a memento to remind you of your vacation, but it's important to keep in mind that any wildlife (plant or animal) souvenirs should not hurt endangered species. Let's remember: Ending wildlife trafficking is everyone's responsibility! Furthermore, it's worth noting that the importation of certain plant and animal products is against the law in many countries and could lead to legal consequences.

Examples of unsustainable wildlife souvenirs:

- Elephant ivory, rhino horns and pangolin scales (raw and carved)
- Traditional Asian Medicine containing endangered species
- Coral, sea turtle, starfish, shells, shark fins, shark teeth, dried seahorse and other items made from marine life
- Animal fur, skins and bones
- Primates
- Harvested wood
- Protected domestic flora; Orchids, Cacti and cycads

For more information, please see our guideline for [Responsible Shopping and Souvenirs](#)

If you have any concerns about a supplier or an included activity, please inform your tour guide and provide details in the feedback survey that will be sent to you at the end of your trip. If you still have questions or doubts about the welfare of animals and want to ensure that the facility meets the appropriate standard of care, please don't hesitate to contact us at responsibletravel@trailsofindochina.com.

GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCTS

- Take courses on Animal Welfare to well understand about this field;
- Products Department uses the TOI Animal welfare Policy (including minimum requirements, unacceptable practices and suggested best practices) to communicate with suppliers: sending them a letter links to TOI published policy on website and let them know the wish that they join us in our approach to ensuring that good welfare approaches are in place. As such, Products Department invites suppliers to respond with details of the approaches they take to ensure good welfare standards within their businesses (supplier self-assessment);
- Evaluate excursions to have continuous improvement and update recommendations to Sales Department;
- Include TOI Animal Welfare Policy document in all animal-related product description;
- Follow Animal Welfare Policy in creating new products.

GUIDELINES FOR SALES

- Travel Consultant will be supplied with TOI products;
- When a new product request comes through, Travel consultant should check with Products Department;
- Actively share to clients TOI Welfare Animal Policy when sending the first proposal;
- TOI does not provide guide, vehicle for animal abuse experience like tiger kingdom, crocodile show, etc.
- Training to be provided on Animal welfare policy, SOP for captive elephant interactions and how to handle requests.

GUIDELINES FOR GUIDES, OPERATIONS AND CARES

- The client survey needs to include Animal Welfare.
- Collect the feedback from guides and clients about animal-related suppliers and actively report to Products Department in case of signs of animal exploitation, neglect, and cruelty. This can be a useful way to effect positive changes.

GUIDELINES FOR MARKETING

- Create marketing documents related to Animal Welfare for Sales to provide the clients
- Marketing animal welfare in all media channels is critical to changing the inaccurate perceptions people have about this sector.

RELATED INFORMATION

Reference: <https://nextcloud.tntoadcorporation.com/index.php/s/oycLAdFQii372sc>

- 2.1. TOI Elephant Venue Standards
- 2.2. TOI SOP - Captive Elephant Interactions
- 2.3. TOI Elephant Camp Myths and Realities

REFERENCES

- ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines <https://www.abta.com/sustainability/animal-welfare>
- Travelife https://www.travelife.info/index_new.php?menu=home&lang=en
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) https://www.panda.org/discover/our_focus/wildlife_practice/problems/illegal_trade/
- CITES <https://cites.org/eng>
- IUCN Red List <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>
- International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) <https://www.ifaw.org/international>
- Fauna and Flora International <https://www.fauna-flora.org/>

