

2017/08/02

RE: Invitation to join the Elephant Camp Animal Welfare Initiative

Dear PATA Members,

The people of Asia have been living and working with elephants for centuries. Many communities, particularly those located in South and South East Asia, are still generating income from elephant-related activities. Some, but not all, also use this revenue to support the welfare of the elephants.

At PATA we believe that as long as such activities are conducted in a respectable and responsible manner they should be deemed acceptable. In other words the approach to elephants and their welfare must be balanced. Indeed, it is vitally important that these elephants are treated humanely at all times.

In acknowledging that elephants in Asia are still regarded as working animals, and that owning an elephant is a significant long-term investment, it must also be recognised that there is a growing rift between communities and pressure groups stakeholders regarding the welfare of elephants. **The Elephant Camp Animal Welfare and Sustainability Standard and Assessment Initiative** has been developed by Travelife for Tour Operators with the support of PATA and the PATA Sustainable Tour Operators Working Group, a sub-division of the PATA Sustainability & Social Responsibility Committee.

As a tour operator offering such services in the region we invite you to be a part of this initiative that not only helps elephant camps to achieve and maintain necessary standards but also helps tour operators to select camps that will meet the exacting demands of their customers.

For more information or to participate please click [here](#) or contact PATA Sustainability & Social Responsibility Specialist Ms. Chi Lo at: chi@PATA.org, or Travelife for Tour Operators General Manager Mr. Naut Kusters at: n.kusters@travelife.info.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Mario Hardy, Chief Executive Officer,
Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

Elephant Camp Animal Welfare and Sustainability Standard and Assessment Initiative

July 27, 2017

PATA acknowledges that elephants in Asia are indeed working animals, and that owning an elephant is an investment. Recognising that there is a growing rift between stakeholders regarding animal welfare, The Elephant Camp Animal Welfare and Sustainability Standard and Assessment Initiative has been developed.

The purpose of this initiative is to **ensure that activities and experiences at elephant camps are conducted in a responsible way**, understanding the increasing concerns from both informed travellers and animal rights groups.

The challenge:

- Growing concern of tourism industry stakeholders (Western travellers and operators) regarding animal welfare
- Elephant camps in Asia lack set standards and an accompanying evaluation system
- Some tour operators are evaluating camps based on self-developed checklists, an inefficient use of resources and a source of confusion on acceptable and responsible management practices amongst camps

Until now, there has been no widely accepted set of criteria for evaluation systems present for elephant camps in Asia.

The solution:

Recognising the above issues, the PATA Tour Operator Sustainability Working Group, under the Chairmanship of Travelife for Tour Operators, developed a first draft of the standard on the basis of the ABTA Animal Welfare Guidance. Stakeholders and experts were given the opportunity to comment the standard. The draft has been revised several times following testing at elephant camps in Phuket and Northern Thailand. A final draft of the standard was ratified in February 2017. The standard includes in total, 166 criteria divided over 7 themes and 24 subthemes (see table). Specific implementation and auditor guidance and tools are presently being developed for the relevant criteria, with an auditors training to be conducted later this summer.

The Elephant Camp Animal Welfare and Sustainability Standard and Assessment Initiative is an answer to the growing concern of tourism industry stakeholders regarding animal welfare.

Who is involved:

The Elephant Camp Welfare and Sustainability Standard is an initiative of Travelife for Tour Operators and the PATA Sustainable Tour Operators Working Group (TOWG), a subdivision of the PATA Sustainability & Social Responsibility Committee, the aim of the TOWG is to develop common standards and tools in order to jointly evaluate suppliers (e.g. accommodations, transport, excursions and attractions).

Present key members of the working group include: EXO Travel, Khiri Travel, Buffalo Tours, Go Vacation, Destination Services, Diethelm Travel, Destination Asia. The initiative is endorsed by PATA, World Animal Protection (WAP), ABTA and the Asian Captive Elephant Working Group (ACEWG), an informal network of elephant welfare experts and veterinarians, who are working to improving welfare standards of elephants in captivity on the basis of a scientific consensus.

Get involved:

The key objective of the standard and evaluation system will be to support in- and outbound tour operators in their objectives to better select camps and to motivate camps towards improved animal welfare and sustainability standards. The initiative is open for other in- and outbound tour operators in Asia and its source markets that are PATA members in good standing.

Participating TOs will have the following benefits:

- Receive annual updates on the performance of their camps
- Opportunity to propose camps for an onsite audit
- Receive information on camps not yet in your portfolio
- Ability to share and access information between in- and outbound partners
- Ability to provide clients a specific choice in compliance with their expectations

Be a part of the solution:

For more information or to participate, please contact PATA Sustainability & Social Responsibility Specialist, Chi Lo: chi@pata.org or Travelife for Tour Operators General Manager, Naut Kusters: n.kusters@travelife.info.

Elephant Camp Animal Welfare and Sustainability Standard

Theme	Subtheme
1. Management and legal requirements(12)	Management Health and safety Elephant identification
2. Staff management (24)	Labor relations and human rights Mahouts
3. Elephant welfare (60)	Elephant living conditions Elephant nurture Medical Breeding Elephant in Musth
4. Elephant interactions(35)	Unacceptable activities Riding Bathing Free roaming Walking with elephant Feeding elephants Observing free roaming elephants
5. Overall camp(9)	Camp set-up and infrastructure Environmental management Other animals
6. Visitor safety and experience(17)	Health and safety Interpretation and experience
7. Community relations and biodiversity	Local community Biodiversity conservation

Note: PATA aims to support, endorse, and provide education about this issue; however, we are not responsible for enforcing how elephant camps and tour operators perform.