



TRAVEL EDVENTURES | POSITION ON RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

The innate love of nature and wildlife is one of the most powerful motivations for travel. The Minnesota Zoo's Travel EdVentures provide guests with opportunities to see, experience, and get up close with wildlife and nature. However, some experiences can be detrimental to animals and nature, and ethically challenging, especially when animals are under inappropriate care, or their welfare is minimized. The Minnesota Zoo adamantly believes in the importance of animal welfare, high quality animal care, and employing highly trained professionals.

However, many organizations that offer hands-on experiences are not conservation organizations, but businesses that stay in operation by putting animals in unnatural situations and/or asking them to do unnatural things. Thus, the Minnesota Zoo and its partners thoroughly researches operators, providers, and experiences to ensure animal welfare and responsible tourism are priorities.

The goal of responsible tourism is to help travelers understand the impact that their behaviors and decisions have on the destination, and to strive to make that impact a positive one. At the Minnesota Zoo, we are especially concerned with how these decisions effect the wildlife and natural areas of the destination. As responsible travelers, we all should be aware of and avoid the following:

- ☐ Experiences with a 100% guarantee of seeing a specific animal in the wild.
- ☐ Facilities where water, food, shelter, and space for the animals are not visible.
- ☐ Facilities where chains or other restraints, large crowds, and loud noises are commonplace.
- ☐ Animal photo opps in unnatural settings, in staged poses, or with physical restraints.
- ☐ Animal interactions that allow people to feed or touch wild animals.
- ☐ Animal interactions that allow people to ride or wash animals.
- ☐ Animal interactions that use animals as props.
- ☐ Sanctuaries, refuges, or reserves where animals aren't free to move and behave naturally, and experiences are hands-on instead of observation only.
- ☐ Markets where souvenirs and items are made from animals or animal products, especially threatened and endangered animal products such as Ivory, tortoise shell, coral, and furs.

Experiences that value animal welfare and guest safety, will follow these protocols:

- ☐ Animals are observed from a safe distance.
- ☐ Animals are not disturbed by your presence.
- ☐ Animals are not pursued if they decide to move.
- ☐ Animals with young present, are given even more distance and caution.

Additionally, central to Minnesota Zoo Travel EdVentures is the adherence to the Zoo's mission and vision. All trips must provide meaningful connections between guests, wildlife, nature, and the local

people. And all responsible tourism opportunities are expected to make a positive impact on the destination. The Zoo believes these are best accomplished through the lens of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism itineraries and experiences should always include the following:

- The Economy:
 - ensure the trip benefits, supports, and empowers the local community.
 - ensure the trip contributes to long-term, viable revenue operations.
- The Society:
 - ensure the local culture, heritage, and values are respected.
 - ensure to professional exemplify understanding and tolerance.
- The Environment:
 - ensure the minimal impact on and use of resources.
 - ensure the trip helps to conserve the local natural biodiversity.

Lastly, a key component to any Minnesota Zoo Travel EdVenture is the “Wow” moment when guests see, experience, and get up close with wildlife and nature. However, responsible tourism activities and principles will always be the priority.