

## **WTTC release key guidelines for Travel & Tourism businesses to advance the prevention of illegal wildlife trade**

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*COVID-19 led to a significant decrease in funding for conservation and an increase in poaching activities*

**London, UK:** The World Travel & Tourism Council ([WTTC](#)) has released major new guidelines outlining how the global Travel & Tourism sector can work together to tackle illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

The new guidelines from WTTC, which represents the global private Travel & Tourism sector, with support from Animondial, a key advisor to the global travel industry on animal welfare in tourism, aim to help interpret the '12 Commitments' of its game-changing Buenos Aires Declaration.

The declaration, which was launched at WTTC's Global Summit in Argentina, showed how coordinated commitment and action could combat the illegal trade in wildlife (IWT) and unveiled its Zero Tolerance Policy.

According to the guidelines, travellers often participate, albeit unwittingly, in the illicit movement of animals, plants, products made from them – and of wild species which are threatened, endangered, and protected by national or international law.

Tourism thrives in every corner of the world. But the challenge is balancing tourism with fragile environments where wildlife is at risk and animals are held and exploited in captivity.

And as demand for the legal trade in wildlife and their products increases, so rises IWT. This illicit market is valued between a staggering US\$8 billion and US\$23 billion per year with over 38,000 plant and animal species threatened by overexploitation and extinction. Yet, wildlife is worth more alive than dead- requiring us to take action.

Virginia Messina, Senior Vice President WTTC, said: "The World Travel & Tourism Council and its Members are determined to help in the fight to eradicate the scourge of illegal trade in wildlife.

"As a sector, Travel & Tourism has a responsibility to tackle this appalling activity which causes misery to countless animals, putting entire species and ecosystems at risk.

"We believe these new guidelines will help businesses around the world in their fight against this corrupt and shameful practice and we renew and reinforce our commitment first made in WTTC's game-changing Buenos Aires Declaration."

John Scanlon, Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime Chair, said: "It is fantastic that the Travel & Tourism sector has joined the global fight against illegal wildlife trade, recognising how it can both protect wildlife at its source and help curb demand. But, what's even better, is that it didn't stop with the Declaration.

“Despite the disruption of COVID-19, the World Travel & Tourism Council has worked with signatories to implement its terms, and it is now issuing practical implementation guidance through its new guidelines.”

However, despite the support of many Travel & Tourism businesses in the protection of animal and plant species threatened with extinction, much more can still be done to increase the endorsement of the sector in this fight.

The guidelines show that Travel & Tourism does and can continue to play a critical role in helping to tackle the IWT.

Unfortunately, widespread travel bans, and restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant decrease in funding for conservation efforts and an increase in poaching activities. Anti-poaching programmes have been starved of funds over the past 18 months.

WTTC is therefore committed to spearheading the drive by Travel & Tourism businesses around the world to embrace policies and practices to help eradicate IWT.

By adopting a shared responsibility to tackle IWT and sign up to WTTC’s Buenos Aires Declaration and the Zero Tolerance Policy, the global Travel & Tourism sector can commit itself to responsible and sustainable wildlife-based tourism activities, to contribute to wildlife preservation.

WTTC’s latest guidelines **include:**

Tour operators and travel agents:

- Adopt the principles advocated by the ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines, promoting responsible Travel & Tourism activities with animals, respectful wildlife viewing practices and improved welfare standards (including no direct human-initiated contact with, or feeding of, wild animals)
- Discourage suppliers from sourcing animals from the wild unless there is a demonstrable and justifiable conservation need. Consult national laws, animal stock list, CITES\* permits and the CITES Management Authority for the respective national government.

**Accommodation providers:**

- Adopt the principles advocated by the ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines, promoting responsible Travel & Tourism activities with animals, respectful wildlife viewing practices and improved welfare standards (including no direct human-initiated contact with, and feeding of, wild animals)
- No commercial trade, breeding or exploitation of animals, including habituated or ‘pet’ animals that may be housed in, or in the vicinity of, the hotel, lodge, or venue.

**Transport providers:**

- Sign up to the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce, the WTTC Buenos Aires Declaration on Illegal Trade in Wildlife and the related IWT Zero Tolerance Policy, and work with ROUTES to implement the commitments
- Airlines should collaborate with industry associations including the International Air Transport Association (IATA), guided by its Live Animals Regulations (LAR), and with the taskforce against wildlife trafficking to support industry-wide action.

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\* Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora