



Anti-Animal Exploitation Policy – Frequently Asked Questions

Why does Keemala discourage guests from elephant trekking, rides, or shows?

Elephants that are part of the entertainment industry whether in performances or for rides by tourists, suffer from several forms of abuse.

For example, in order to train them, all elephants are tamed in a ceremony called 'Phajaan'. This 'breaking of the spirit' involves separating baby elephants from their mothers and torturing them into submission. This includes starvation; sleep deprivation, and inflicting physical pain. It could last for days or even weeks. The elephants become so fearful of the torture that ultimately they submit in order to not experience the pain.

Another form of abuse is from riding elephants. An elephant's spine actually cannot support the weight of the chair tied on their back and people sitting in it. The weight can lead to permanent spinal injuries as well as causing blisters from rubbing that can lead to infections.

Why does Keemala discourage guests from visiting or interacting with captive tigers?

Typically, tiger cubs are taken from their mothers at a very young age, sometimes at merely 2 weeks old, to be 'attractions' for tourists. Cubs get overfed milk in bottles and are handled constantly by visitors who pay to interact and take photos with them. This is extremely abusive because the cubs are not allowed to be raised by their mothers or learn natural instincts from them. Therefore they are denied natural behaviours and are completely mistreated.

Adult tigers do not attract as many tourists as they are seen to be too wild for close interaction, and so they are usually kept locked up in small cages and forced into breeding programmes. Tigers get very aggressive toward one another and therefore must be kept separate from one another, hence the small cages.

We often hear the claim that captive tigers are bred as part of ongoing conservation efforts for wild tigers. However, there are many reasons why this is untrue. First, tigers that are bred in captivity can never be released into the wild because they lack the hunting instinct and skills that must be learned from their mothers in order to survive in the wild. Second, there is a huge market for tigers' body parts and captive breeding of tigers actually causes more poaching for this lucrative market. Third, virtually no profit made from tiger petting or photo taking ever goes toward conservation of tigers in the wild.

Finally, just like any other animals that live in a highly stressful and fearful environment, tigers may display aggressive behaviours and hurt visitors.

Why does Keemala discourage guests from visiting aquariums or marine parks that have captive dolphins, sharks, or manta rays?

Dolphins, sharks, and manta rays are all either listed as endangered species or are protected under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which is an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Generally all 3 species are known to swim vast distances in the ocean either for feeding or breeding. As such, no tank or pool no matter how big can adequately replace their natural habitat.

Their lifespan in the wild is much longer than in captivity due to unnatural living conditions and stress. Many die in captivity and are simply replaced by newly captured ones. Captivity, therefore, does not contribute to conservation of wild populations of these species whatsoever.

Species like dolphins have a very complex social structure and very strong connection with their families. When they are captured and forced into captivity, they are literally being taken away from their loved ones. The fact that dolphins are sentient mammals (self aware) means that they are very much aware of this loss, and do become frantic with worry and stress over their wellbeing.

Why does Keemala discourage guests from joining fishing excursions?

While it is acceptable, and often necessary, that fish is caught for food, fishing as a sport however is debatable. By joining excursions like big game fishing, even if caught fish is released back into the sea, the damage will have already been done to the fish that got a hook in its mouth. Will it really survive the injuries? Will be it well enough to outswim its predators or be eaten because it is injured? Even if one intends to eat the fish that is caught, it is very difficult to justify catching large amount of fish just for a meal or a few people to eat.

Why does Keemala discourage guests from eating in restaurants that serve shark fins?

Although shark fin soup has been an Asian delicacy for a long period of time, the process of shark finning is simply cruel and unsustainable. In this process, a shark's fin is sliced off a live shark and its still living body is thrown into the sea. The shark cannot swim and so sinks to the bottom of the sea and drowns, or gets eaten alive by other fish.

The massive quantities of sharks killed to satisfy this market, coupled with the lack of care for age, size, and species, as well as minimal monitoring of finning, have had a devastating impact on shark populations worldwide. Many shark species are on the brink of extinction as a result.