

Satsa corrects erroneous media reports surrounding SA wildlife interaction

Satsa has corrected erroneous media reports surrounding its animal interaction guidelines. Media have reported that the association plans to implement a blanket ban on animal interactions as of July 2020. The animal interaction released by Satsa, however, will continue to remain voluntary until such time as the association's members vote differently.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

The animal interaction guidelines which was released in October 2019 was created to provide the tourism industry and its customers with ethical guidelines for all animal interactions in tourism.

These were the result of a year-long research study aimed at developing:

- A long-term vision of where the South African tourism industry would like to be with regard to animal interactions in tourism (in 10, 20 or 50 years' time).
- An ethical framework, which will form the basis for all discussions and guidelines in order to move the industry forward.
- An interactive tool that can be used by the industry and tourists alike in order to identify which captive animal

activities/facilities to support – and which to avoid.

- High-level suggestions of key areas for legislative intervention and regulation.

Ultimately, the aim of the study, and resultant guide, was to raise awareness and encourage introspection, examination and dialogue that would lead to ethical choices and transformation in the sector, to improve the lives of individual animals, ensure the long-term conservation of South Africa's wildlife, and position South Africa as an ethical tourism destination.

Interactions that fell within the scope of SATSA's study included tourist attractions and activities involving captive wild animals, such as:

- Performing animals,
- Tactile interactions with all infant wild animals,
- Tactile interactions with predators or cetaceans,
- Walking with predators or elephants,
- Riding wild animals, this includes riding or sitting on elephants, ostriches, crocodiles, etc.

It is important to note that this study did not examine the welfare of wild animals outside of captive wildlife attractions and activities and that it only extended to captive wildlife attractions and activities that have a tourism aspect to these.

The following captive wildlife attractions and activities were included in the study:

- Free-roaming wild animals in and around nature reserves, game reserves, game farms and other protected areas
- Marine animal attractions where the animals are not in a captive environment, e.g. shark cage diving, boat-based whale watching, snorkelling with seals etc.
- Free-roaming wild and domesticated animals naturally occurring in and around tourist establishments
- Domesticated animals such as cats, dogs, horses, donkeys and farm animal located in or near tourism establishments
- Hunting of free-roaming wild animals

At the outset, there are five Tourism Activities involving captive wildlife that are classified as unacceptable:

1. Performing animals
2. Tactile interactions with all wild animals
3. Walking with predators or elephants
4. Tactile interactions with predators or cetaceans
5. Riding of wild animals

By sharing these guidelines with the tourism sector locally and internationally and independent travellers, the association equips them to make informed decisions on ethical interactions with animals by answering a series of open-ended questions.

Over 60 leading Satsa tour operators and tourism establishments have since committed their support for this organic set of guidelines that takes into account ethical behaviour in terms of animal interactions, tourism growth, Brand South Africa's reputation and employment.

Furthermore, ensuring that the guidelines are inclusive, Satsa's charter supported by industry, states that those establishments which fall into the 'unclear' zone based on the [guide](#) but show concrete steps and a willingness to advance towards the 'acceptable' zone on the right side of the Line in the Sand, will be looked upon favourably and, where

commercially viable, considered for business.

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