

Dolphin Encounters

The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) is campaigning to end cruelty to animals worldwide. Travelers can help animals by avoiding tourist attractions and events involving animal suffering and by reporting incidents of cruelty to local and national authorities.

Tips for Being a Dolphin-Friendly Compassionate Traveler

- Avoid visiting theme parks, zoos and aquaria that keep marine mammals in captivity.
- Take a responsible dolphin or whale watching trip.
- Share any concerns about treatment of dolphins with your travel agent, tour operator or hotel manager.
- Educate others about how to be a Compassionate Traveler using tips from this brochure and from others in WSPA's Compassionate Travel Guide series.

Swimming with wild dolphins can disrupt their normal feeding, resting, and nursing behaviors.

Where they have been repeatedly disturbed by boatloads of swimmers, wild dolphins will frequently seek quieter areas.

WSPA's Compassionate Travel Guide Brochures

Tips for Tourists
Tourism and Wildlife Trade
Dolphin Encounters

For more information about WSPA's Compassionate Travel program or to order copies of our Compassionate Travel Guide brochures, please visit: www.CompassionateTravel.org.

WSPA

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The Hidden Cost of Dolphin Encounters

Dolphins have long been loved for their grace, playfulness, and perpetual “smile.” For many, the chance to interact with a dolphin is a dream come true, and it only costs the price of admission.

Sadly, the cost to the dolphins is much higher – oftentimes they end up paying with their lives. Sadder still, the animal-loving tourists who pay for personal dolphin encounters actually perpetuate the suffering of these amazing animals.

Where Do Captive Dolphins Come From?

In order to supply the captive dolphin industry, dolphins are often captured from the wild. Capture methods can be shockingly cruel and animals are violently separated from their family. Scientists estimate that for every wild dolphin taken captive, another is injured or killed in the process.

Behind a Dolphin’s Smile

Dolphins cannot actually move their facial muscles, so they appear to smile even when injured or seriously ill. The “smile” is a feature of dolphin anatomy unrelated to their health or emotional state. The dolphin’s toothy grin masks their suffering and contributes to the myth that dolphins in theme parks enjoy a happy life.

Captivity Is Harmful for Dolphins

- Even the largest enclosures are designed primarily to give audiences a good view and don’t come close to accommodating a dolphin’s need for space.
- In captivity many dolphins die young – forced to live in stressful, chlorinated, cramped, artificial conditions, away from their companions.
- Captive dolphins cannot hunt for their food and are forced to eat dead fish, something they would never do in the wild.
- One captive dolphin “trick” is jumping onto the concrete pool deck. Since dolphins’ bodies are adapted to life in water, when on land for any length of time, the weight of their bodies can crush their internal organs causing great discomfort to the animals.



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Education or Entertainment?

At theme parks, visitors learn very little about how dolphins live in the wild. In captivity, dolphins are trained to perform abnormal behaviors in the form of “tricks” as opposed to acting naturally. The audience is usually unaware that methods used to train dolphins to perform “tricks” often include food deprivation.

They also don’t know that the dolphins were likely captured from the wild and separated from their family. Hardly any captive facilities are involved in dolphin conservation efforts, meaning a mere fraction of their generated income actually aids wild dolphin populations.

Captive Dolphins Can Be Dangerous

- Dolphins are wild animals and thus are unpredictable even when “trained.” Trainers and swimmers have incurred bites, bruises, scratches, abrasions and even broken bones.
- Dolphins carry diseases and parasites that can be transmitted to humans. Individuals who swim with dolphins often report skin rashes. Trainers have reported numerous health problems including tuberculosis.
- Dolphins’ powerful jaws contain as many as 250 sharp teeth. They can weigh 300 to 1200 pounds and could easily overpower a human adult.

Swimming with Dolphins

Swimming with captive dolphins in a pool causes stress to the animals, who are not free to end the interactions when they want to.



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