

Tips on how to have an ethical elephant experience

Encountering one of nature's most majestic creatures, elephants, can be quite an experience. While there are many opportunities to get up close and personal with elephants when travelling to places like Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka, it's important that these encounters happen with the elephants in a happy and humane environment.

Here are the five ways to have an ethical elephant experience abroad, so you can appreciate the beauty of these wonderful animals, knowing their well-being is paramount.



1. Know what to look out for

Elephants are wild creatures and should be seen as such. Ones that have been born into captivity have telltale signs of mistreatment. Does the elephant look well fed? Are its foot pads in a good condition? Is it in a clean environment? Does it have company? Is it able to move around freely? Be observant of its surroundings and make sure the elephant is healthy and contented.

2. Only visit them at a responsible centre

Make sure you visit elephants at a place you know has their welfare at heart, whether it's a conservation centre, sanctuary or national park. For instance, somewhere like Udawalawe National Park in Sri Lanka. Udawalawe was created as a sanctuary for displaced animals and focuses on conservation of the area and its animal inhabitants. It's Elephant Transit Home cares for orphaned calves, and lovingly looks after them until they're old enough to be released into the wild.

In Thailand, Friends of the Asian Elephant is the world's first elephant hospital that tends to sick or weak creatures that would otherwise not survive. Visiting a place like this supports the conservation of this captivating species.

3. Sign up for Wildlife SOS to find out how you can help

Wildlife SOS is an India-based non-profit foundation that protects and conserves wildlife in distress. They have two elephant centres to prevent trafficking and rehabilitate them from tourist attractions. Signing up to their newsletter will help you stay connected and inform you how you can help save India's elephants.

4. Watch, don't ride

It may seem like a fun, authentic wildlife experience when travelling, but do not ride elephants – they're not built to carry the weight of humans. Make sure you only support elephant foundations where their well-being is of paramount importance, rather than supporting those that have captured or bred elephants in captivity.

5. Sponsor or volunteer

If you'd really like to get involved with elephant conservation, sponsor an elephant or better still, volunteer at a centre or sanctuary. Visit the [WWF](#) or [Wildlife SOS](#) to find out more about how you can do this.

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