

# THE HOLIDAY HOOVES GUIDE



Simple and effective ways  
for holidaymakers to  
improve the lives of working  
animals involved in the  
global tourism industry

These guidelines are  
designed to help you  
identify responsible  
animal tour providers and  
animal-related activities  
that demonstrate good  
animal welfare, so you  
can be assured that the  
animals are well cared for.

Thousands of animals, including donkeys, horses, mules and camels, work in the tourism industry globally on rides, treks and tours. These working animals support the livelihoods of their owners, making it possible for them to earn a meagre income.

Sadly, some animals used to pull carriages or carry tourists and luggage endure poor welfare conditions. They may not have access to fresh water, proper breaks (including time to eat), shelter from the hot sun or safe and comfortable equipment. Animals may be overloaded, overworked and neglected. Many working animals in low-income countries may have no access to routine veterinary or professional care, such as foot trimming and dentistry, which can lead to serious health and welfare issues.

As a tourist, you are in the unique position to positively influence the way in which owners treat their animals. SPANA's Holiday Hooves guide provides travellers with the information you need to help make ethical choices for working animals. By following this advice, you can choose to support the owners who care for their animals with respect and kindness. In turn, this will encourage others to do the same.

## Who we are

**SPANA – The Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad** – has been the charity for the working animals of the world since 1923, transforming the lives of donkeys, horses, mules, camels and other working animals in need across the world. The charity improves the welfare of working animals by ensuring the treatment and care of animals, the training of owners and the teaching of animal welfare and compassion towards animals. We receive no government funding and rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to fund our vital work. Please support us today and help us to care for more working animals.



## Stay in touch

SPANA  
37 Gondola Road  
North Narrabeen  
NSW 2101  
Australia  
Tel: 1300 149 080

Email: [support@spana.org](mailto:support@spana.org)

[www.spana.org/au](http://www.spana.org/au)

Registered charity no: 209015  
Registered office: 55 Ludgate Hill, London EC4M 7JW, UK







**Whether you are booking a horse-drawn carriage trip, a donkey ride, a camel safari or a pack mule mountain trek, follow SPANA's Holiday Hooves Guide to help ensure the welfare of working animals.**

## 1 Select a fit, healthy and respected working animal

- Only choose an animal that appears fit, healthy and in good condition – you should not be able to see prominent hips or back bones and they should be able to walk comfortably without limping. They should be alert and interested in their surroundings and not appear dull or in pain.
- Animals should be free from wounds, especially around the mouth, saddle, harness or noseband, and their equipment should be in good working condition (no broken straps or flat tyres). Their hooves should be in good condition and not overgrown or misshapen.
- Your chosen animal should never have excessively tight hobbles or tethers – you'll be able to see scars or wounds around its legs if they have been tied too tightly.

- Very young, pregnant, elderly, or visibly sick or injured animals should not be ridden or used to pull carriages.
- Always check that the animals do not have patchy or bald skin, which can be signs of contagious mange.
- Do not ride animals with obvious signs of diarrhoea around their tail and back legs. Be aware of other factors that can affect the welfare of working animals, such as whether they are being made to work in extreme weather conditions (heat or rain), and if they have adequate access to shade and water.
- Owners should handle their animals calmly and be considerate over difficult terrain. They should have a positive bond and their animals should not shy away from their touch.
- Ask your tourist company, hotel or holiday representative for their recommendations of tour providers who treat their animals with kindness and respect, and the most ethical animal-related tourism activities to take part in.

## 2 Be mindful of your animal's capability

- Animals should only be asked to work within their capabilities. Donkeys, horses, mules, and camels should only ever carry one person at a time.
- Choose tour providers that are conscious of not overloading their animals. The maximum load should not exceed 15-20 per cent of the animal's weight. An average adult camel should carry a maximum load of 150kg/12 stone, a horse or mule 100kg/15.7 stone and donkey 60kg/9.44 stone.
- Consider your own size and weight when selecting an animal to ride. For example, if you are tall and broad, choose a larger animal. If you think you might be too large for an animal to take your weight, don't get on it!
- If you are going on a carriage ride, ask your driver to go no faster than a walking/trotting pace so that you can take in the views. Faster speeds can cause injury to the animal's legs from the carriage when it stops.



## 3 Praise good welfare and encourage best practice

- Do praise your chosen tour provider or owners for having animals in good condition or treating the animals well and explain why you have chosen them.
- Ensure you pay a fair price for your trip, ride, tour or activity and do not encourage owners to undercut each other. This money will not only help the owner to earn a living, but will ultimately allow them to care for their animals.
- Make sure you let the company you booked with know that you'll be leaving a positive review for their animal welfare standards, and that you'll be recommending them to others.
- Tell family, friends and fellow tourists about SPANA's Holiday Hooves guide and how they too can positively influence the treatment of working animals.



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## 4 What to do if you have welfare concerns

- Contact your tour operator or hotel about your concerns if you see an animal that is suffering.
- If you have any animal welfare concerns on holiday, report what you saw by writing to or emailing the relevant country tourism board. A list of some tourism board contact details can be found at [spana.org/tourism](http://spana.org/tourism)



**Find out more about how holidaymakers can help to positively influence owners and tour operators working in the tourism industry globally at [spana.org/tourism](http://spana.org/tourism)**