



CERTIFIED WILDLIFE FRIENDLY™ TOURISM

MASTER STANDARDS

A Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network program

I. Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism Definition

Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism sets standards for all key stakeholders in the tourism sector to ensure that those who manage, operate, invest, and participate in tourism do so as partners in conservation. These standards aim to incorporate criteria that will maximize travel opportunities for travelers, communities, and businesses to advance conservation of critical habitats and key species* while minimizing negative impacts of tourists and tourism infrastructure on wildlife. *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* aims to incentivize all actors and stakeholders in nature-based tourism to support and ensure best practice management for the well-being of ecosystems, species, and people.

A definition of Key Species can be found [here](#).

Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism standards are designed to meet the needs of all key stakeholders – including, but not limited to, communities, park rangers, researchers, NGOs, tour operators, and park management alike – by recalibrating the incentive structure and helping to ‘reset’ and expand tourist expectations through an awareness raising program that empowers tourists so that they shift from being simply consumers of the tourism product(s) to become more integrated and responsible *partners* in conservation. *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* recognizes the valuable role that researchers can play in supporting site-specific protocols inclusive of monitoring and adaptive management, which can strengthen the overall effectiveness of the certification program.

All entities applying for *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* must meet all the requirements of Certified Wildlife Friendly™. These standards operate under the Certified Wildlife Friendly® guidelines as a sector-specific guideline for tourism industry enterprises operating in wild landscapes.

This initiative builds on an existing foundation of enabling policies and legislation and will incorporate related tourism opportunities to provide tangible benefits to all stakeholders including encouraging longer visitor stays and lower impact tourism. In addition, this program offers increased opportunities to support local communities all through authentic experiences that increasingly sophisticated tourists seek.

Understanding the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* standards

Please read each standard carefully.

To be considered *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism*, tourism ventures or enterprises, such as hotels, lodges, guest houses, and tourism service providers (e.g. tour operators), must adhere to each of the following standards. These standards operate in tourism-based regions across the globe and apply to many different species and landscapes.

There are three types of standards: critical required standards, non-critical required standards, and recommended standards. Please read each of the standards carefully.

Critical required standards. If this symbol **C** is shown next to a particular standards, it indicates that the standards is considered to be critical for Wildlife Friendly® certification. If the self-assessment shows that an enterprise is unable to meet a critical standards it cannot be certified until corrective action is taken.

Non-critical required standards say that something must or must not be done or that something is prohibited. It is expected that enterprises who wish to gain *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* status for their product(s) will meet most if not all of these requirements. However, failure to meet some of these standards need not be a barrier to certification if the enterprise can provide a plan and a timeline for resolving the situation.

Recommended standards say that something “should” be done. These standards are highlighted as **Recommended** alongside the heading and reflect the aims and principles of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program. These standards signpost best practice for enterprises who wish to gain *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* status for their product(s), but do not have to be met at this time.

II. Master Document

This master document lists all standards for all parties involved in *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism*. These are standards for all stakeholders listed below:

- Tour Operators, whether private, government, or community owned. For the purposes of these standards a Tour Operator is a person or business who is directly engaged in delivering some or all of the tourism experience.
- Hotels and Lodges (including Guest Houses and home stays), whether private, government, or community owned.
- Guides and Drivers. Note that freelance guides and drivers should start with section 7 and also meet standards preceded by **G/D**. Guides or Drivers who are employed or contracted by Tour Operators or Hotels and Lodges are not defined as freelance and should instead refer to Annex 1. Tour Operators are the entity responsible for ensuring their employed or contracted guides and drivers adhere to Annex 1 and other items marked with **G/D** in the standard.

All of the stakeholders above can become certified under these standards and are collectively described as “certified enterprises”.

As not all of the standards apply to all potentially certified enterprises and people, the standards are color coded as shown below:

T = Standard applies to Tour Operators

H = Standard applies to Hotels and Lodges (including Guest Houses and home stays)

G/D = Standard applies to Freelance Guides and Drivers

Note: It should be noted that Freelance Guides and Drivers do not need to comply with the standards in Sections 1-***. They must only meet the standards preceded by **G/D**. Guides or Drivers who are employed or contracted by Tour Operators are not defined as freelance and should instead refer to Annex 1 of this document.

No colored lettering = Standard applies to all the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises listed above.

III. Reviewers

WFEN is grateful to the many reviewers who provided input to the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* Standards and its revisions.

IV. Global Sustainable Tourism Council

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has developed broad baseline criteria regarding biodiversity and conservation that can be applied anywhere in the world. However, the diversity of wildlife species on earth is facing context-specific and time-sensitive concerns that require a more targeted and expert-driven approach, with greater clarity as to how tourism operations can contribute to conservation. In developing these standards, the requirements of the GSTC have been taken into account and incorporated whenever possible. Standards that cover GSTC requirements have ^{GSTC} in superscript at the end of the standard.

V. Disclaimer

Travel and interacting with wildlife are inherently dangerous activities. Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN) makes no claims or guarantees about the safety of tourists engaging in wildlife-focused or nature-based tourism with *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* operators, lodges, guides, parks, or other service providers, nor can it vouch for the safety of any certified products; as such, tourists engage in these activities at their own risk.

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1. Conservation Standards

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 **C** *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises must be capable of having and willing to achieve a positive impact on wildlife conservation whether directly or indirectly.
- 1.1.2 **C** There must be at least one named person for each certified enterprise who is familiar with the standards and protocols of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program and responsible for implementing them.
- 1.1.3 **C** Tourism ventures must not involve the killing or harvesting of wildlife (e.g., hunting of native species, commercial or trophy hunting, unsustainable and non-selective fishing practices such as dynamite fishing, bottom trawling or long-lining) and cannot be considered *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism*.

1.2 Conservation plan

- 1.2.1. Each *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprise must have a documented conservation plan that must include:

- 1.2.1.1 A review of all activities conducted by the certified enterprises and their potential direct and indirect impact on wildlife and their environment.^{GSTC}

Note: Conservation activities could include community-based monitoring of wildlife, integrated wildlife management (e.g., use of education, training/capacity building, non-lethal management techniques and long-term planning to reduce human-wildlife conflict), citizen science projects, protection and/or rehabilitation of critical habitat, anti-poaching programs, hatchery programs, and conservation translocations.^{GSTC}

- 1.2.1.2 How any disturbance of natural ecosystems that result from the activities of the certified enterprise will be minimized and what compensatory measures will be implemented.^{GSTC}

- 1.2.1.3 A long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scope and which addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues.^{GSTC}

- 1.2.1.4 A waste management plan, to focus on using environmentally friendly materials and a waste disposal plan.

Note: Tourists must be reminded not to discard litter of any kind except into designated waste receptacles.

- 1.2.1.5 An energy use plan (decarbonization plan) that prioritizes reducing the use of fossil fuels to the extent possible, both for energy and transport.

- 1.2.1.6 Emergency/contingency plans to cover geopolitical instability, disease outbreak (human or wildlife), human-animal conflict mitigation, response to natural disasters including forest fires, and tourist evacuation plans in the face of emergencies such as conflict or pandemics.
- 1.2.2 The conservation plan must be monitored and evaluated at least annually for continuing applicability and effectiveness, and updated as required.
- 1.2.3 **Recommended**
The certified enterprise should produce an annual review of its conservation plan detailing its conservation performance.
- 1.2.4 **Recommended**
The conservation plan should be communicated to all relevant staff members and be made available to other stakeholders.
- 1.3 Wider conservation, wildlife, and biodiversity**
- 1.3.1 **C** Certified enterprises must avoid all actions that may reduce or otherwise negatively impact wildlife habitat.
- 1.3.2 **C** Certified enterprises must not engage in any illegal activities relating to wildlife.
- 1.3.3 **C** Habitat must undergo ecological monitoring to ensure that there are no negative impacts from tourism, especially when small areas of forest (for example) are used
- 1.3.4 Living specimens of wildlife species must only be kept in captivity when this is necessary for their rehabilitation and only then by authorized or licensed facilities that are equipped with trained staff to house and care for them humanely.^{GSTC}
- Note: Tourism ventures may keep wildlife in captivity for approved programs such as: rehabilitation, translocation, or hatchery programs that meet national and international laws and regulations. Animals kept in captivity must be treated humanely.*^{GSTC}
- 1.3.5 Certified enterprises must avoid the use of any captive wildlife species for photo opportunities or similar activities.
- Note: Photographs may be taken of certain activities, such as the release of hatchlings or the feeding of wildlife kept for rehabilitation, but in these cases, the direct interaction (holding, touching) of wildlife must be minimized and strictly monitored and relevant precautions must be taken (e.g., wearing of gloves) and instruction given regarding disabling camera flashes, minimum recommended distance, and other possible disturbances to wildlife.*
- 1.3.6 Where certified enterprises include riding of *domestic* animals (horses, donkeys, mules, dromedary camels, and most bactrian camels), this must be carried out such that these animals have a minimal negative impact on the surrounding habitat and wildlife, and so long as the tourism venture follows internationally-recognized codes of conduct for animal welfare and humane treatment.

Note: The riding of domesticated animals of wild species (such as Asian elephants) will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will only be permitted in areas where the domestic use of that species is both ecologically sustainable and an established cultural or religious norm. All interactions with wildlife as well as domestic and domesticated animals must follow approved best practice guidelines¹ to ensure the health and well-being of such animals.

- 1.3.7 *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises must take measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.^{GSTC}

Note: Measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species include: not deliberately planting or bringing them to the certified site; not bringing vehicles directly from areas known to have invasive alien plants; asking tourists to check they do not have seeds stuck to clothing or in trouser turn-ups; and so on.

- 1.3.8 **H** Landscaping and restoration must prioritize the use of native species and have minimal impact on the surrounding environment.^{GSTC}

- 1.3.9 Trekking must be carried out favoring existing animal trails. New trails must only be cut when there are no other options and to no greater than one meter in width.

1.3.10 **Recommended**

Trekking activities should be in accordance with the park guidelines, terms, and conditions.

Note: The Park Guide or authorized individual in charge of the trek can make the decision whether new trails are needed or not. A new trail may need to be cut when there is no other way to get to the intended destination, but should not be cut solely to save some time, e.g. as a shortcut.

- 1.3.11 **H&T** Historical and archaeological artifacts must not be sold, traded or displayed, except as permitted by law.^{GSTC}

- 1.3.12 **H&T** *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises must contribute to the protection and preservation of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and must not impede access to them by local communities.^{GSTC}

1.3.13 **Recommended**

The tourism venture should monitor behavioral, physiological, demographic, and habitat indicators of wildlife health and well-being at the site. If the tourism venture does not have the capacity for these monitoring activities, they should collaborate with research, wildlife health, governmental, and conservation partners to track the impacts of their program on the conservation of key species.

¹ Selected best practice guidelines are available in References section below

2. Tourist management

2.1 Tourist Bookings

2.1.1 **C** Booking systems should state clearly the rules and regulations relating to visiting wildlife and the rationale behind these.

2.1.2 **Recommended**

Booking directly or booking through tourist agencies should offer tourists a fair and equitable, first come, first served system for obtaining permits.

2.1.3 **C** Websites and advertising must clearly state that tourists tracking wildlife in their natural habitat may or may not see the target species and if they do see wildlife, they may not see them clearly. Websites and advertising must not give the impression that viewing target species is 100% guaranteed.

Note: It may be helpful to shift marketing towards tracking wildlife and visiting their habitat rather than suggesting that every tourist will definitely see a specific animal.

2.2 Tourist Information

2.2.1 **C** *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* information must be provided (**H** in-room for all guests) [**T** to tourists along with their tour information]. Information must include but is not limited to:

- the importance of wildlife conservation and local conservation programs and initiatives
- minimum viewing distances
- behavior when viewing wildlife or in close encounters with wild species
- what to and what **not** to do when wildlife is encountered
- specific approach distances and approach patterns, based on the best available science and management recommendations
- limits on groups and group numbers
- any time limits and time-of-day restrictions
- reminders on responsible energy and water use as well as waste disposal and any other items highlighted in the conservation plan for the site (see above)

2.2.2 **C** All age restrictions in place for wildlife viewing must be adhered to.

Note: There are various age restrictions in place for wildlife viewing (eg gorilla trekking), underwater experiences (eg scuba diving) and these must be followed to reduce any risk of disease transmission (such as 'childhood' diseases to great apes) or harms to tourists and wildlife.

2.2.3 Tourism ventures must use adaptive management in response to any negative behavioral change observed in individual animals at the tourism site (e.g., stress behavior, threat displays, moving away from nursing or certain resting, socializing, or foraging/hunting periods). The tourism venture should develop a list of observable stress responses to provide to tour operators, and such responses observed should be documented.

2.3 Management of human-wildlife conflict

- 2.3.1 Human-wildlife conflict mitigation programs must be in place for any eventuality arising on certified enterprise land.
- 2.3.2 **C H & T** Tourists must be dissuaded from approaching wildlife that roam onto tourism infrastructure grounds such as Hotels, Lodges, and Guest Houses. This policy must be communicated to guests upon arrival in areas prone to wildlife presence.
- 2.3.3 **C H & T** Staff must have an established policy of communicating with Park Authorities if wildlife is spotted on tourism infrastructure grounds outside the Park.

3. Local economy and working conditions

3.1 Human and workers' rights

- 3.1.1 **C** There must be no child labor.^{GSTC}

Note: Child labor, as defined by [the International Labor Organization](#), refers to work that:

- *is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and*
- *interferes with their schooling by:*
 - *depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;*
 - *obliging them to leave school prematurely; or*
 - *requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work*

- 3.1.2 **C** Certified enterprises must have a policy against modern slavery and commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment of or against anyone, particularly children, adolescents, women, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and minorities.
- 3.1.3 **C** Certified enterprises must not contribute to the exploitation of women or disadvantaged communities or tribes.

Note: Exploitation includes any activity which promotes women or disadvantaged communities without their full consent or without their full integration into the decision-making process and benefits sharing.

3.1.4 **Recommended**

There should be action to empower women and disadvantaged groups to become involved in certified enterprises.

3.2 Employment and remuneration

- 3.2.1 **C** Certified enterprises must have a hiring policy that prioritizes employment opportunities for those living in adjacent communities, including management positions.^{GSTC}
- 3.2.2 **C** All certified enterprises must offer equal employment opportunities to women, local minorities and others, including in management positions.^{GSTC}

3.2.3 **Recommended**

All certified enterprises should have outreach programs for the recruitment of women, local minorities and others.

- 3.2.4 All certified enterprises must provide local employment opportunities, including management positions.^{GSTC}

Note: Pre-employment training and work experience should be offered to those living in adjacent communities.

- 3.2.5 All employees must have written contracts that include labor conditions and job descriptions.

- 3.2.6 **C T** Tour Operators must ensure that employed or contracted guides and drivers meet their allocated standards.

- 3.2.7 **C** Terms of employment must meet all relevant regulations including minimum wage.

- 3.2.8 **Recommended**

Employees should be paid at least a living wage to minimize temptations to break regulations for higher tips.

Note: A minimum wage is the amount set by law. A living wage is the amount required by the employee to fulfil their basic needs such as nutrition, housing, healthcare, childcare, etc and will be higher than the minimum wage.

- 3.2.9 **C** In developing tipping policies, Tourists must be informed that tips cannot be used to encourage staff to break regulations.

- 3.2.10 **Recommended**

Tips should be distributed equally among all tourism employees.

Note: This could be through a shared tip box or through gratuities included when tourists pay for excursions etc.

- 3.2.11 **Recommended**

The pooled and shared tipping policy should be clearly communicated to both employees and tourists.

- 3.2.12 **Recommended**

Regular monitoring and staff supervision should be used to reinforce tipping policies and to avoid incentives that encourage breaking rules and regulations.

- 3.2.13 **Recommended**

Tourists should be given guidance on appropriate amounts to tip.

3.3 Partnership and equity with local communities

- 3.3.1 **C H&T** Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism enterprises must have a documented and communicated community relation policy and be transparent in how they present their involvement with the local communities. [Community-owned enterprises should document and communicate an established governance and benefits-sharing policy].

Note: Examples of community participation may include direct employment, training opportunities, community-based monitoring, as well as educational opportunities and involvement in citizen science.

3.3.2 **Recommended**

H&T Accommodation in lodges or campsites should be managed to maximize community benefits through community-ownership, employment opportunities, or revenue-sharing schemes that provide income to members of the community or funding for social services.

3.3.3 Certified enterprises must be aware of how they impact adjacent local communities, and their activities must not jeopardize or adversely affect the following:^{GSTC}

- provision of basic services, such as food, water, energy, healthcare, or sanitation
- local access to livelihoods, including land and water resource use
- access to rights-of-way
- access to transport and housing

Note: This will require an inventory of the baseline position to establish current levels of provision of basic services in relevant communities to determine whether the activity of certified enterprises is affecting these.

3.3.4 If certified enterprises have a revenue sharing policy this must be documented and the impacts of the policy on local communities monitored and reported.

3.3.5 **H&T** There must be a documented and implemented code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities that have been developed and implemented with the collaboration and consent of the affected community.^{GSTC}

3.3.6 Certified enterprises must purchase and offer local services and goods following fair-trade principles.^{GSTC}

Note: Fair Trade principles include:

- *Long-Term Direct Trading Relationships*
- *Payment of Fair Prices*
- *No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor*
- *Workplace Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity, and Freedom of Association*
- *Democratic and Transparent Organizations*
- *Safe Working Conditions and Reasonable Work Hours*
- *Investment in Community Development Projects*
- *Environmental Sustainability*
- *Traceability and Transparency*

3.3.7 **Recommended**

Certified enterprises should offer local small entrepreneurs opportunities to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history and culture.^{GSTC}

Note: Products could include food and beverages, local and traditional handcrafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.

3.3.8 **C** Certified enterprises must not provide alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs to local communities as a means of compensation or influence.

3.3.9 **Recommended**

H & T Hotels, Lodges and Guest Houses, and Tour Operators should make every effort to book through other *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises such as other Tour Operators, Hotels, Lodges and Guest Houses.

- 3.3.10 **C H & T** There must be a documented and implemented code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities that have been developed and implemented with the collaboration and consent of the affected community.^{GSTC}

4. Information provision and training

4.1 Education and training

- 4.1.1 **C** All employees in *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises must receive initial and ongoing training to enable them to meet these standards and any other agreed policies. Training must include:

4.1.1.1 the conservation plan required in Standard 1.2 above and the employees' part in meeting its requirements

4.1.1.2 employee roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental, social, human rights, cultural, economic, quality, health, and safety issues.^{GSTC}

4.1.1.3 understanding that tourist satisfaction must not be given priority over wildlife well-being and conservation.

4.1.1.4 training in best practices for wildlife tracking and visitation rules.

4.1.1.5 First aid

4.1.2 **Recommended**

Employee training should include language skills for the most common languages of a site's tourists.

4.1.3 **Recommended**

Ongoing or refresher training for employees and management should take place at least once per year.

4.1.4 **Recommended**

Those delivering training, whether directly employed by the certified enterprise or external trainers should be competent as recognized by the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program.

4.1.5 **Recommended**

Records of initial and ongoing training should be kept and be made available to auditors on request.

4.1.6 **Recommended**

Employees should have the opportunity to follow a personalized annual training program to update their knowledge and skills.

4.2 Provision of information

- 4.2.1 **C** There must be engagement with local communities to provide information on *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* and how it might affect them.

- 4.2.2 **C** Information provided to the local community must be in languages and through means that they can understand.

Note: Radio and/or text messages can be effective methods of communicating with local communities.

- 4.2.3 **C** Before they depart on treks or other wildlife viewing activities tourists must be provided with regionally harmonized and agreed information on *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* and how it supports wildlife and habitat conservation, and their part in that, plus what they should expect from their visit.

4.2.4 **Recommended**

Certified enterprises should notify guests of the times of year when key wildlife species may be present.

- 4.2.5 **C** Guests must sign a form to show that they have read the information provided by the tourism enterprise describing appropriate and inappropriate behavior around wildlife.

Note: This undertaking could be part of a guest waiver signed at check-in as well as any relevant local protocols that exist regarding wildlife tourism and tourist dos and don'ts.

- 4.2.6 **C** Certified enterprises must encourage guests to report any evidence or individual sightings of key species. Observation logs can be maintained by the tourism enterprise for the areas where their activities occur.

4.2.7 **Recommended**

In areas where poaching is a threat, certified enterprises should provide guests with educational opportunities to learn about poaching and how to report poaching activities and signs of illegal activities if they witness them.

- 4.2.8 **C** Visitor feedback and satisfaction surveys must be carried out.^{GSTC}

4.3 Websites and advertising^{GSTC}

Advertising includes both online and hard copy materials such as leaflets, posters and other communication to tourists and potential tourists. Wherever possible, online advertising should be prioritized and recycled materials should be used for any hard copy materials.

4.3.1 **Recommended**

Websites and advertising certified enterprises should provide suitable visitor information on the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program and visit expectations.

- 4.3.2 **C** Websites and advertising must not use photographs that provoke unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of wildlife tourism.

Note: Photographs must not be manipulated or enhanced to promote unrealistic or inappropriate experiences or expectations relative to species encountered, proximity to wildlife etc. Unsuitable photos (whether manipulated or not) could include pictures of wildlife ranging on or around tourist infrastructure and pictures of tourists feeding or handling wildlife.

- 4.3.3 Websites and advertising must highlight other wildlife and natural habitats in the region, as well as other tourist opportunities, such as bird watching or cultural tours.
- 4.3.4 **H&T** Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage must be provided, and include information on appropriate behavior when visiting these sites.^{GSTC}
- 4.3.5 **Recommended**
Websites and advertising should detail the Park/Hotel, Lodge and Guest House, and Tour Operator commitment to sustainable tourism and the benefits of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program to the environment.
- 4.3.6 Websites and advertising for *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* enterprises must show the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™* logo and provide a link to the wildlifefriendly.org website and the full *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* standards.
- 4.3.7 **C** The use of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™* logo must comply with the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™* style guide.

5. Sustainability

Sustainability protocols should consider ways to reduce the purchase and use of disposable and non-compostable goods for tourism enterprises. Enterprises should catalogue the extent of reduction as part of their conservation plan implementation. Purchasing policies should favor locally appropriate and ecologically sustainable products, including building materials, capital goods, food, beverages and consumables.^{GSTC}

5.1 Infrastructure and sustainability

- 5.1.0 New enterprises that hope to become *Certified Wildlife Friendly™* in the future are **Recommended** to follow the standards in this section when engaging in new development on sites they intend to certify.

Note: The pre-construction phase is the most important phase for environmental planning and for establishing a clear commitment to best practices. This is the phase where the placement of roads and buildings and patterns of access are established by design. In addition, it is in the pre-construction phase that workers typically bulldoze access roads, cut bush, fell native trees, dig trenches, burn debris and may in general be subject to less supervision than the more skilled workers who follow them.

- 5.1.1 **Recommended**
Certified enterprises should contribute, when invited, to the production of national and regional tourism development plans.
- 5.1.2 **C** Certified enterprises must adhere to the provisions of national and regional tourism development plans.
- 5.1.3 **C H** Tourism product or infrastructure development must be subject to all relevant regulations regarding environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA) and community consultation.

Note: The ESIA must include possible impacts of the following and the steps taken to reduce them:

- *access roads*
- *vegetation removal and/or burning*
- *excavation*
- *erosion*
- *lights and work activity.*

5.1.4 **C H** Tourism infrastructure such as lodges, campsites and visitor centers must only be constructed in areas where there will be minimal impacts on wildlife and their habitats.

5.1.5 **C H** Land and water rights, and property acquisition for tourist infrastructure must be legal and comply with local communal and indigenous rights, including their free, prior, and informed consent, and not require involuntary resettlement.^{GSTC}

5.1.6 **H** New infrastructure development must be appropriately planned [**H&T** in consultation with the Park authorities] to discourage human-wildlife conflict situations on the property.

5.1.7 **H** Where there is obsolete infrastructure, the intent must be to “build back better”, minimizing and offsetting any negative social or environmental impact.

5.1.8 **Recommended**

H Green building standards should be used in new or renovated building designs and construction.

Note: Suitable green building guidelines include the international Finance Corporation’s EDGE criteria. See <https://edge.gbci.org> for further information.

5.1.9 **Recommended**

H Construction and renovation of tourist infrastructure should maximize the use of low embodied energy and sustainable and recycled materials, locally sourced where possible.

5.1.10 **Recommended**

H Construction or renovation of tourist infrastructure should allow access for persons with special needs where appropriate.^{GSTC}

5.1.11 **C H** Tourism infrastructure must not introduce additional disease risks to vulnerable wildlife (such as great apes, big cats, etc). Careful attention must be paid to appropriate sanitation, hygiene, and waste disposal.

5.1.12 **H** Elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage must be incorporated in the certified enterprise’s management, design, decoration, food, or shops, while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.^{GSTC}

5.2. Energy and Water

5.2.1 **H** Consumption of firewood and charcoal is measured, sources are indicated, and measures, such as use of energy saving stoves, are adopted to minimize overall

consumption.^{GSTC}

- 5.2.2 **H** Water consumption is measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimize overall consumption.^{GSTC}

5.2.3 **Recommended**

H Wastewater, including gray water should be effectively treated.^{GSTC}

- 5.2.4 **H** Wastewater must only be reused or released when there will be no adverse effects on local communities, wildlife, and the environment.^{GSTC}

- 5.2.5 **H** There are clear and enforced guidelines in place for the siting, maintenance, and testing of discharge from septic tanks and wastewater treatment systems.^{GSTC}

5.2.6 **Recommended**

Certified enterprises should increase their use of sustainable energy sources such as solar, wind and water generated power and minimize the use of fossil fuels.

- 5.2.7 **H&T** Certified enterprises must encourage their customers, staff, and suppliers to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.^{GSTC}

- 5.2.8 **H&T** Certified enterprises must minimize pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone- depleting compounds, and air, water, and soil contaminants.^{GSTC}

5.3. Waste

- 5.3.1 **H&T** Waste produced by the certified enterprise must be monitored.^{GSTC}

Note: Wastes that could be monitored include food, plastic, and paper/cardboard.

- 5.3.2 Waste must be stored and disposed of with no adverse effects on local communities, wildlife, and the environment.^{GSTC}

Note: Waste bins must be inaccessible to wildlife and must be emptied regularly.

- 5.3.3 Single use plastic bags, cups, straws, and other disposable items that can be replaced with non-plastic alternatives, must be phased out within 3 years of certification.

5.3.4 **Recommended**

Waste should be re-used or recycled wherever possible.^{GSTC}

5.4. Harmful substances and chemicals

- 5.4.1 **H** The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, must be minimized and/or substituted by innocuous products or processes.^{GSTC}

- 5.4.2 **H** All storage, use, handling, and disposal of chemicals must be properly managed.^{GSTC}

6. Beach management

Note: This section applies solely to those tourism ventures carrying out activities in coastal landscapes.

6.1 Environmental management

- 6.1.1 There must be an emergency plan to cover possible environmental disasters, which should include the following:
 - 6.1.1.1 Focal point person and their contact details
 - 6.1.1.2 Responsibilities of individuals in the case of an environmental disaster
 - 6.1.1.3 Procedure for the protection or evacuation of guests
 - 6.1.1.4 Procedure for public warning and information

Note: The emergency plan should cover a clearly identified procedure in the case of an emergency. An emergency could result from oil spills, hazardous/toxic waste spills entering the beach from the sea, discharge of stormwater, hurricanes, algal blooms that could be dangerous, etc. An emergency in this context would be defined as an event that leads to a large-scale impact on the beach.

6.2 Access to natural areas

6.2.1 Recommended

Pedestrian access to natural areas, such as forests and wetlands, should be confined to specific locations and strictly regulated to minimize destruction of habitat by trampling.

6.3 Litter and Debris

6.3.1 Recommended

Marked wildlife-proof trash/litter bins should be placed for convenient disposal of garbage. Waste should be disposed of in the most environmentally appropriate manner for the site.

Note: Visitors and Guides should make every effort to remove any waste or trash that they find when visiting the area.

- 6.3.2 Natural areas must be regularly cleaned and litter and debris collected and removed.

- 6.3.3 Trash/litter bins must be emptied regularly.

Note: If trash receptacles are not emptied regularly they will look unsightly and also form an attractant to predators that could then take sea turtle eggs or hatchlings.

6.3.4 Recommended

Support should be given to community or conservation group efforts to carry out clean-ups.

- 6.3.5 Tourism enterprises must remind guests to place trash in bins or take it with them when leaving the area, for proper disposal later on.

Note: Signs should be posted on the beach to remind visitors of the impacts of waste on sea turtles and other marine species. It is understood that handling of recycling can be a challenge at some resorts, particularly island resorts, and the solution may be to provide guests with the means to take their recycling with them when they leave if they are likely to pass through locations with recycling facilities.

6.3.6 **Recommended**

Litter wardens should be hired to collect and dispose of any trash/litter left by visitors.

- 6.3.7 Guests must be reminded to refill any holes that they or their children dig in the sand as these can become obstacles for both nesting adults and hatchlings.

6.4 **Motorized vehicle use**

In some areas, beach driving has become a popular activity. However, driving on beaches can seriously degrade the coastal environment by damaging beach vegetation, compacting sand, crushing incubating eggs, creating deep ruts and tire tracks that can trap hatchlings trying to reach the sea and accelerating erosion (potentially resulting in the loss of nests to the sea). Vehicles can also strike and kill hatchlings crawling to the sea or frighten females away from nesting. Hatchlings huddled just below the surface of the sand (waiting to emerge later in the evening, when the sun sets and the beach surface cools) are particularly vulnerable to being crushed by passing vehicles.

- 6.4.1 Motorized vehicles, other than authorized patrol or emergency vehicles, must not drive in sensitive habitat areas, such as forests, wetlands and sandy beaches, except at authorized sites.

- 6.4.2 The certified enterprise must talk to authorized patrol or emergency vehicles that must have access to natural areas, to request that they stay on specific paths.

6.5 **Vegetation**

- 6.5.1 Existing native vegetation, especially any woody vegetation, must be left in place whenever possible.

- 6.5.2 Efforts must be made to restore native vegetation and natural habitat.

Note: Planting beach gardens, even when native species are used, does not replace the requirement to protect existing beachfront/maritime forest.

- 6.5.3 Certified enterprises must take measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.^{GSTC}

- 6.5.4 Native species must be used for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes.^{GSTC}

- 6.5.5 Non-native plants must not be planted on or near areas where key species are likely to forage or reproduce.

6.5.6 **Recommended**

When planting away from foraging and breeding areas, the use of non-native vegetation for landscaping should be avoided and native vegetation should be prioritized.

- 6.5.7 Guests and visitors must be excluded from any important habitats (such as nesting areas) and/or fragile coastal areas.

Note: Raised walkways or other designated pathways can help to guide beachgoers while keeping them off sensitive areas.

6.5.8 **Recommended**

Signs should be posted to communicate to guests and visitors the importance of coastal planting and habitats and the need to keep to designated paths.

6.5.9 **Recommended**

Certified enterprises should exercise care to protect submerged habitat of key coastal species.

Note: Dredging, chains, anchors, propellers, even swimmers can cause damage by uprooting seagrass, scarring the seabed, reducing water quality and destabilizing sediments which, in turn, inhibits seagrass growth, reduces fish and wildlife habitat, and can threaten entire coastlines.

7. Freelance Guides and Drivers (G/D)

Note: These standards are ONLY applicable to Freelance Guides and Drivers (G/D)

7.1 Familiarity with the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism Program

7.1.1 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers who wish to be certified must be familiar with the standards and protocols of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program.

7.1.2 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must comply with all local legislation, regulations, and environmental protocols.

7.2. Freelance Guide and Driver Services

7.2.1 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must provide suitable visitor information on *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* and visit expectations.

7.2.2 **C G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must not provoke or market unrealistic expectations of wildlife tourism.

Note: For example, this could include leading tourists to believe they will be able to touch wildlife.

7.2.3 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must support the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program aim of resetting tourist expectations about wildlife tourism.

7.2.4 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must not tell stories of irresponsible tourism practices, such as overly close wildlife encounters or physical contact with animals.

Note: It may be helpful to shift marketing towards tracking wildlife and visiting their habitat rather than suggesting that every tourist will definitely see a specific animal.

7.2.5 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must highlight the regions' other wildlife and natural habitats.

Note: This is to align with the Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism policy to reset and expand tourist expectations to encompass wider wildlife and conservation outcomes.

7.2.6 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must treat tipping as a discretionary act and avoid putting undue pressure on tourists to provide tips. Nor should solicitation of tips be made in exchange for breaking any rules or regulations regarding tourist wildlife experiences

7.2.7 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should tell tourists that they are certified as part of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program and invite them to ask for more details on the program.

7.2.8 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should take part in training on *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* if this is available.

7.3 Freelance Guides and Drivers Behavior & Tourist Management

7.3.1 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must use integrity, honesty, and fairness at all times particularly when dealing with local communities, and respect local culture, traditions and customs.

7.3.2 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should have a checklist of requirements that they review with tourists at the outset of the journey to avoid tourists forgetting essential items e.g., suitable clothing, passport, permit, water, hand sanitizer and other items.

7.3.3 **G/D** The reasons for the rules that tourists must abide by must be explained in order to promote compliance and responsible tourism.

7.3.4 **G/D** Vehicles used to transport tourists must be roadworthy and maintained to ensure that they can cope with local road conditions without breaking down.

7.3.5 **C G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must drive responsibly and within the law. This includes but is not limited to:

- Driving within the speed limit
- Not using mobile phones while driving
- Not driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics
- Not driving on roads that are closed
- Only stopping on or at the side of the road when it is safe to do so
- Avoiding reversing or turning the car

7.3.6 **C G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must ensure they and the tourists they are accompanying respect all wildlife when driving. This includes but is not limited to:

- Not disturbing any animal whether by making unnecessary noise, flashing lights, getting closer than 20m or in any other way
- Driving attentively on roads adjacent to forest to avoid any road collisions with wildlife exiting the forest/crossing the road
- Giving right of way to wildlife crossing roads
- Slowing down when passing wildlife on or at the side of the road
- Not getting out of the vehicle to see wildlife
- Not sounding the horn when passing wildlife

- Putting on hazard lights to warn approaching vehicles of wildlife on the road and slowing down.
- Not shouting, touching, or gesticulating at wildlife
- Not using flash photography
- Not making any attempt to feed any animal

7.3.7 **G/D** Parks and private lands must only be entered/exited via authorized entrances and exits and within authorized hours and with the authorization of the landowner. No areas closed to the public should be entered.

7.3.8 **G/D** There must be no harm caused to the environment, whether by damaging vegetation, structures, signposts, or in any other manner.

7.3.9 **G/D** No litter of any sort must be discarded anywhere except into designated waste receptacles.

7.3.10 **G/D** No burning object must be discarded, and no fire hazards must be created in any other way.

7.3.11 **G/D** Tourists must not be permitted to take pictures of any person without their consent.

7.3.12 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should talk to tourists about local wildlife conservation measures in place, such as local conservation programs, and include opportunities for tourists to engage with and support local conservation initiatives.

7.4 Health Management

7.4.1 **C G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must provide tourists with information on how their health status could affect certain wildlife (such as great apes), and what health problems would exclude them from going to a Park or landscape to undertake activities that would bring them into close contact with vulnerable species.

Note: People with communicable diseases include those with symptoms of fever, sneezing, coughing and/or diarrhea.

7.4.2 **G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must not work when they are ill so as not to infect tourists going to see vulnerable wildlife species.

7.4.3 **C G/D** Freelance Guides and Drivers must ask tourists about their health, monitor them for obvious symptoms and must not take anyone who is clearly unwell to see vulnerable species or undertake other activities.

7.5 Sustainability

7.5.1 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should make efforts to reduce fuel consumption, for example by purchasing economical vehicles, turning the engine off when stationary, and not unnecessarily revving engines.

7.5.2 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should use reusable water bottles and encourage tourists to bring or purchase reusable water bottles.

7.5.3 **Recommended**

G/D Freelance Guides and Drivers should avoid the purchase and disposal of non-recyclable materials, except into designated waste receptacles.

7.6 Other certified enterprises

7.6.1 **G/D** *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* Tour Operators, Hotels, Lodges and Guesthouses must be promoted.

Note: For example, when it is necessary to stop on route, or tourists ask for recommendations, Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism hotels should be favored over other options.

Annex 1. Standards for Guides and Drivers that are employed or contracted by Tour Operators (T)

A1.1 Familiarity with the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism Program*

A1.1.1 Guides and Drivers who work for Tour Operators (T) must be familiar with the standards and protocols of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program.

A1.2 Freelance Guide and Driver Services

A1.2.1 T Guides and Drivers must provide suitable visitor information on *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* and visit expectations.

A1.2.2 C T Guides and Drivers must not provoke or market unrealistic expectations of wildlife tourism.

Note: For example, this could include leading tourists to believe they will be able to feed or touch wildlife.

A1.2.3 T Guides and Drivers must support the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program aim of resetting tourist expectation about wildlife tourism by focusing on the wider experience of trekking and appreciation of landscapes.

A1.2.4 T Guides and Drivers must not tell stories of irresponsible tourism such as overly close wildlife visits or direct physical contact with animals.

Note: It may be helpful to shift marketing towards tracking wildlife and visiting their habitat rather than suggesting that every tourist will definitely see a specific animal.

A1.2.5 T Guides and Drivers must highlight other wildlife and natural habitats in the region.

*Note: This is to align with the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* policy to reset and expand tourist expectations of wildlife tourism to encompass wider wildlife and conservation outcomes.*

A1.2.6 T Guides and Drivers must treat tipping as a discretionary act and avoid putting undue pressure on tourists to provide tips.

A1.2.7 Recommended

T Guides and Drivers should inform tourists that they are certified as part of the *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* program and invite them to ask for more details on the program.

A1.2.8 Recommended

T Guides and Drivers should take part in training on *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* if this is available.

A1.3 Guide and Driver Behavior & Tourist Management

A1.3.1 T Guides and Drivers must use integrity, honesty and fairness at all times particularly when dealing with local communities, and respect local culture, traditions and customs.

A1.3.2 **Recommended**

T Guides and Drivers should have a checklist of requirements that they review with tourists at the outset of the journey to avoid tourists forgetting essential items e.g., suitable clothing, passport, permit, water, hand sanitizer and other items.

A1.3.3 **T** The reasons for the rules that tourists must abide by must be explained in order to promote compliance and responsible tourism.

A1.3.4 **T** Vehicles used to transport tourists must be roadworthy and maintained to ensure that they can cope with local road conditions without breaking down.

A1.3.5 **C T** Guides and Drivers must drive responsibly and within the law. This includes but is not limited to:

- Driving within the speed limit
- Not using mobile phones while driving
- Not driving under the influence of alcohol
- Not driving on roads that are closed
- Only stopping on or at the side of the road when it is safe to do so
- Avoiding reversing or turning the car

A1.3.6 **T** Tourists must not be permitted to stand up on the roof, or any external surface of a moving vehicle.

A1.3.7 **C T** Guides and Drivers must ensure they and the tourists they are accompanying respect all wildlife when driving. This includes but is not limited to:

- Not disturbing any animal whether by making unnecessary noise, flashing lights, getting closer than 20m or in any other way
- Driving attentively on roads adjacent to forest to avoid any road collisions with wildlife exiting the forest/crossing the road
- Giving right of way to wildlife crossing roads
- Slowing down when passing wildlife on or at the side of the road
- Not getting out of the vehicle to see wildlife
- Not sounding the horn when passing wildlife
- Putting on hazard lights to warn approaching vehicles of wildlife on the road and slowing down.
- Not shouting, touching, or gesticulating at wildlife
- Not using flash photography
- Not making any attempt to feed any animal

A1.3.8 **T** Guides and Drivers must not inconvenience nor disturb other visitors.

A1.3.9 **T** Parks and private lands must only be entered/exited via authorized entrances and exits and within authorized hours and with the authorization of the landowner. No areas closed to the public must be entered.

A1.3.10 **T** There must be no harm caused to the environment, whether by damaging vegetation, structures, signposts, or in any other manner.

A1.3.11 **T** No litter of any sort must be discarded anywhere except into designated waste receptacles.

A1.3.12 **T** No burning object must be discarded, and no fire hazards must be created in any other way.

A1.3.13 **T** Tourists must not be permitted to take pictures of any person without their consent.

A1.3.14 **Recommended**

T Guides and Drivers should talk to tourists about local conservation measures taken to conserve wildlife, such as local conservation programs, and include opportunities for tourists to engage with and support local conservation initiatives.

A1.4 Health Management

A1.4.1 **C T** Freelance Guides and Drivers must provide tourists with information on how their health status could affect certain wildlife (such as great apes), and what health problems would exclude them from going to a Park to undertake activities that would bring them into close contact with vulnerable species.

A1.4.2 **T** Guides and Drivers must not work when they are ill so as not to infect tourists going to see vulnerable species

A1.4.3 **C T** Guides and Drivers must ask tourists about their health, monitor them for obvious symptoms and must not take anyone who is clearly unwell to a Park to see vulnerable species or undertake other activities.

A1.4.4 **T** Guides and Drivers must have a plan for managing tourists who cannot be taken to visit Parks (for example because they are unwell or have visited bat caves within two weeks of visiting great apes), such as the viewing of other wildlife or locations.

A1.5 Sustainability

A1.5.1 Recommended

T Guides and Drivers should make efforts to reduce fuel consumption, for example by turning the engine off when stationary and not unnecessarily revving engines.

A1.5.2 Recommended

T Guides and Drivers should use reusable water bottles and encourage tourists to bring or purchase reusable water bottles.

A1.5.3 Recommended

T Guides and Drivers should avoid the purchase and disposal of non-recyclable materials, except into designated waste receptacles.

A1.6 Other certified enterprises

A1.6.1 T *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* Tour Operators, Hotels, Lodges and Guest Houses must be promoted.

Note: For example, when it is necessary to stop on route, or tourists ask for recommendations, Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism hotels should be favored over other options.

Annex 2. Captivity and Animal Welfare

As noted in Standard 1.3 in the Master *Certified Wildlife Friendly Tourism* standards, tourism ventures may keep wildlife in captivity for approved programs subject to strict regulation (e.g., rehabilitation, translocation or hatchery programs that meet national and international laws and regulations). Animals kept in captivity must be treated humanely.^{GSTC}

However, tourism ventures **cannot** be considered *Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism* if the following activities take place:

A2.1 Wildlife is kept in captivity for the sole purpose of providing photographic opportunities.

Note: See Standard 1.3.5 above regarding allowable activities, ie photographs may be taken of certain activities, such as the release of hatchlings or the feeding of wildlife kept for rehabilitation, but in these cases the direct interaction (holding, touching) of wildlife must be minimized and strictly monitored and relevant precautions must be taken (e.g., wearing of gloves) and instruction given regarding disabling camera flashes, minimum recommended distance, and other possible disturbances to wildlife.

A2.2 Any animal is made to perform, either in captivity or in the wild.

Note: See Standard 1.3.6 in Master Standards regarding riding domestic animals (horses, donkeys, mules, dromedary camels, and most bactrian camels) such that they have a minimal negative impact on the surrounding habitat and wildlife and so long as the tourism venture follows internationally-recognized codes of conduct for animal welfare and humane treatment.

A2.3 The tourism venture cannot engage in actions with the purpose of behaviorally altering any wildlife, either in captivity or in the wild, for the purposes of providing “close encounter” experiences for tourists. This includes breeding, drugging, baiting, inappropriate enclosures, or other forms of stress, including recorded calls.^{GSTC}

Reference Material

Whales - <https://www.handbook.iwc.int/en/responsible-management/guidelines-and-regulations>

Great Apes – IUCN publications in 3 languages (also see Certified Gorilla Friendly™ standards)

Disease prevention - <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/45793>

Tourism - <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/9636>

primates (These are new. Guidelines for tourism operators are in prep) <https://human-primate-interactions.org/responsible-primate-watching-for-tourists/>