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TripAdvisor Announces Commitment to Improve Wildlife Welfare Standards in Tourism with Industry-Leading Education Effort and Booking Policy Changes

Hundreds of Animal Attractions Where Tourists Come into Physical Contact with Captive Wild Animals or Endangered Species Will No Longer Be Bookable on TripAdvisor or Viator

With endorsements from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), TripAdvisor to create a wildlife tourism education portal for travelers in partnership with top accredited trade groups, conservation organizations, academic experts, tourism experts, and animal welfare groups, including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, ABTA — The Travel Association, Global Wildlife Conservation, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Sustainable Travel International, The TreadRight Foundation, Think Elephants International, Asian Elephant Support, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and World Animal Protection

NEEDHAM, Mass., Oct. 11, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site, today announced its commitment to launch a set of industry-leading actions, including changes to its policy on selling tickets to animal attractions, and the launch of a new education portal to help inform travelers about the standards of care for wild, captive, and endangered species in tourism and their interactions with tourists, and their impact on wildlife conservation.

TripAdvisor and its Viator brand will discontinue selling tickets for specific tourism experiences where travelers come into physical contact with captive wild animals or endangered species, including but not limited to elephant rides, petting tigers, and swim with dolphin attractions.

While some attractions will cease booking through TripAdvisor immediately, the company plans to have both the educational portal and booking policy changes fully-launched and implemented by early 2017.

TripAdvisor is also committing to the development and launch of an education portal linked to every animal attraction listing on TripAdvisor. The portal will provide links and information on animal welfare practices, helping travelers to write more informed reviews about their experience, and to be aware of opinions that exist on the conservation implications and benefits of some tourism attractions. In turn, TripAdvisor believes that better reviews will enable travelers to make more informed booking decisions and improve the standards of animal care in tourism worldwide.

The content on TripAdvisor's education portal will provide numerous points of view from experts in the fields of sustainable tourism, animal welfare, wildlife conservation and the zoological and marine sciences. Initial partners include the trade accreditation organization Association of Zoos and Aquariums; the conservation organization Global Wildlife Conservation, Asian Elephant Support and Think Elephants International; tourism experts ABTA — The Travel Association, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Sustainable Travel International and the TreadRight Foundation; academic leaders in the sciences of animal conservation and animal welfare like Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) and animal welfare groups including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and World Animal Protection.

"TripAdvisor's new booking policy and education effort is designed as a means to do our part in helping improve the health and safety standards of animals, especially in markets with limited regulatory protections," said **Stephen Kaufer, president and CEO, TripAdvisor**. "At the same time, we want to celebrate those destinations and attractions that are leaders in caring for animals and those in the tourism industry who help further the cause of animal welfare, conservation and the preservation of endangered species. We want to thank the dozens of trade groups, academics and nongovernmental organizations who helped us design our path forward as a company."

"TripAdvisor's leadership position in travel means we can help educate millions of travelers about the diverse opinions that exist on matters of animal welfare," added Kaufer. "We believe the end result of our efforts will be enabling travelers to make more thoughtful choices about whether to visit an animal attraction and to write more meaningful reviews about those attractions."

Booking Policy

For several years, Viator has supported animal welfare standards in its booking policies, inclusive of a prohibition on bookings where captive wild animals are killed or injured for blood sport. Building on those initial standards, the following changes and amendments were made to TripAdvisor and Viator's booking policy concerning animals:

TripAdvisor and its Viator brand will no longer sell tickets to, or generate booking revenue from, specific attractions where tourists come into physical contact with captive wild animals or endangered species, including but not limited to elephant rides, "swim with" programs where tourists touch or ride on dolphins, the petting of captive wild or endangered species, etc.

For attractions that can provide evidence that they are in-policy, but were impacted by today's decision, TripAdvisor and Viator will implement an appeals process to re-establish ticket sales to certain experiences that may have been excluded through our booking policy update.

The policy includes several exemptions, including:

- Domestic animals, e.g. horseback riding, children's petting zoos with domestic animals like rabbits, etc.
- Aquarium touch pools used for education purposes where tourists are under the supervision of zoo, aquarium and or wildlife officials
- Feeding programs where tourists are under the supervision of zoo and or wildlife officials
- Volunteurism programs for endangered species preservation at zoos, aquariums or sanctuaries where it is possible that there might be some level of physical interaction with an animal

Listings, Reviews and Education

For years, as a matter of practice, TripAdvisor prohibited listing or the publishing of reviews for businesses that used captive wild animals or endangered species for blood sport, e.g. bullfights, captive hunts, etc. That policy will continue to stand.

TripAdvisor remains committed to its philosophy that travelers have the right to write about their travel experiences — be it positive or negative. With millions of travelers submitting more than 380 million reviews and opinions to TripAdvisor, the company continues to firmly believe that our community of contributors can serve as a check-and-balance on matters of quality, customer service, and social issues — such as how animals are treated in the tourism industry.

For this reason, all animal attractions that meet our standard listing guidelines will continue to be displayed on TripAdvisor in order that travelers can review those establishments, regardless of whether they meet the company's criteria as a booking partner.

By early 2017, every attraction listed on TripAdvisor that involves animals will be identified with a "PAW" icon that will link to an education portal that will present all sides of the animal welfare issue from top accreditation trade groups like the U.S.-based Association of Zoos & Aquariums; animal welfare activist groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and World Animal Protection; and experts in tourism who have studied animal and wildlife issues like ABTA — The Travel Association, Sustainable Travel International and the Pacific Asian Travel Association (PATA). It will also provide opinions, research and insights on wildlife conservation, guided by Oxford University's WildCRU, Global Wildlife Conservation, Think Elephants and Asian Elephant Support.

"We are delighted that TripAdvisor are seeking to educate consumers about the importance of animal welfare, and that ABTA's animal welfare guides will feature as such an important part of that education process. Our guides can provide a common, expert frame of reference for companies and individuals to make informed decisions about which attractions to feature," said **Nikki White, Director of Destinations and Sustainability**, ABTA – The Travel Association.

"The Association of Zoos and Aquariums supports vigorous and sustained efforts that seek to improve animal welfare. AZA's 232 members are leaders in providing state of the art animal care and welfare, and are guided by the stringent and ever-evolving AZA accreditation process and regulated by numerous federal and state agencies," **said Kris Vehrs, Interim CEO and President of the** Association of Zoos & Aquariums **(AZA)**. "Many of AZA's members have also been TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Award recipients for many years. We are proud to help educate the TripAdvisor community on AZA's accreditation program which focuses on animal health, welfare and wellbeing; safety for the animals, visitors and staff; financial stability; and conservation and education programs. And you will have great family fun, too!"

Professor David Macdonald, founding Director of Oxford University's WildCRU, said, "The tip of the iceberg, conspicuous above the water, is the welfare of wild animals in tourist attractions, but hidden beneath the metaphorical waterline can be a huge cascade of effects on the welfare of animals in the wild, from which specimens may be taken, and the far-reaching impacts on their conservation. If our involvement in TripAdvisor's education portal can help us inform millions of tourists about the likely impact of their choices on wildlife conservation, WildCRU will be proud, beyond informing them, if we can contribute to driving change in the industry to improve conservation standards in tourism, we will be even more proud. We look forward to collaborating with TripAdvisor to ensure the education portal is effective, and we look forward to collaborate with colleagues at TripAdvisor to research how the education portal affects behavior change and conservation outcomes." **Dr. Tom Moorhouse, a senior researcher at WildCRU** added, "We are convinced that research into the choices of tourists and their impacts on the welfare and conservation of wild animals is a powerful tool for enabling tourism to deliver greater benefits for wildlife."

"By refusing to sell tickets to businesses that treat animals as entertainment or playthings, TripAdvisor is making a precedent-setting statement about the use and abuse of animals for entertainment." **said** PETA **Executive Vice President Tracy Reiman.** "PETA looks forward to contributing to TripAdvisor's industry-leading education portal, which will empower people around the world to make better decisions when it comes to animal-friendly travel."

The following are additional endorsements of TripAdvisor's new effort to improve wildlife and animal welfare standards in tourism:

Taleb Rifai Secretary-General, UNWTO: "The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) welcomes the actions taken by TripAdvisor, a much valuable Affiliate Member of UNWTO, to strengthen its social corporate social responsibility in the area of animal welfare."

Wes Sechrest, Chief Scientist and CEO of Global Wildlife Conservation: "We commend TripAdvisor for taking steps to improve the standards for interactions with wild and captive species in tourism. This will encourage people to visit destinations that promote the safe viewing of wildlife in the wild, such as national parks, as well as legitimate rescue centers and zoological facilities that support on-the-ground wildlife conservation efforts. We want people to connect with wildlife and feel inspired by wild places, and this will help provide a guide for how to do so without further endangering our planet's biodiversity."

Geoff Bolan, CEO of Sustainable Travel International: "Right now, it's too hard for consumers to make responsible choices when traveling. Sustainable Travel International wants to make sure consumers' decisions not only give them extraordinary experiences as travelers, but also help improve other people's lives and protect sensitive environments and wildlife around the globe. We look forward to collaborating with TripAdvisor to help educate consumers, businesses, and governments on how responsible travel choices lead to long-term protection of these sensitive destinations."

Dr. Joshua Plotnik, Executive Director and Founder, Think Elephants International: "One of the biggest issues facing wildlife species around the world is a lack of engagement by the general public in their conservation. Think Elephants International is an organization committed to using the scientific study of animal behavior, welfare and conservation to inform and inspire people to take action to protect elephants and their habitats in Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia. We are very excited to work with TripAdvisor on this new initiative that allows site visitors and potential travelers to gain well-balanced perspectives from a diverse group of experts in academia, conservation, welfare and tourism. Travelers are becoming more and more interested in learning what they can do to make informed decisions before they commit to eco- and wildlife-related travel. TripAdvisor is providing a unique platform for Think Elephants International and other organizations to help people make these important decisions, and we are thrilled to be a part of it."

Linda Reifschneider, President, Asian Elephant Support: "AES is pleased to partner with TripAdvisor as we weigh in on this most important topic surrounding the lives of Asian elephants in human care. We encourage the continuation of the human-elephant bond through responsible tourism so that people will be driven to save them."

Brett Tollman, Chief Executive, The Travel Corporation and Founder of TreadRight Foundation: "The TreadRight Foundation would like to applaud TripAdvisor for their new commitment to improve wildlife welfare standards in the tourism industry. It is important that we stand together as an industry community and recognize the immense potential we have to change the world for the better, by working together and steering the industry in the right direction."

Dr. Mario Hardy, CEO, Pacific Asia Travel Association **(PATA):** "On behalf of everyone at PATA, I would like to commend TripAdvisor **for taking bold actions to improve** the responsible development of the travel and tourism industry. As a PATA Strategic Partner, we have a very strong relationship with TripAdvisor and we are pleased to strengthen that relationship by working with them in promoting the wildlife tourism educational portal, both to our members and all industry stakeholders in the Asia Pacific region. More information on responsible wildlife tourism is vital for a responsible travel and tourism industry, which is lacking in the Asia Pacific region. It is extremely encouraging to see the 'world's largest travel site' taking the lead on this issue."

Steve McIvor, CEO, World Animal Protection: "World Animal Protection looks forward to partnering with TripAdvisor to help educate millions of travelers about the cruelties of wildlife entertainment. This is a significant step towards ending wildlife tourism cruelties, and we hope it will have a huge influence on the tourism industry as a whole. We will share our welfare knowledge, expertise and point of view on the cruelties that animals face in the tourism industry. We believe once people know about these wildlife abuses, they will make other travel choices because of their love for animals."

About TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor® is the world's largest travel site*, enabling travelers to unleash the full potential of every trip. TripAdvisor offers advice from millions of travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools that check hundreds of websites to find the best hotel prices. TripAdvisor branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, reaching 350 million average monthly unique visitors**, and reached 385 million reviews and opinions covering 8.6 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions. The sites operate in 48 markets worldwide. TripAdvisor: Know better, Book better and Go better.

TripAdvisor, Inc. (NASDAQ:TRIP), through its subsidiaries, manages and operates websites under 24 other travel media brands:

www.airforwardtrip.com, www.bookingbuddy.com, www.citymaps.com, www.cruisecritic.com, www.familyvacationcritic.com, www.flipkey.com, www.thefork.com (including www.lafourchette.com, www.ellereedor.com, www.iens.nl and www.dimmi.com.au), www.gatecuru.com, www.holidaylettings.co.uk, www.holidaywatchdog.com, www.housetrip.com,www.independenttraveler.com, www.jetsetter.com, www.niumba.com, www.onetime.com, www.oyster.com, www.seatguru.com, www.smartertravel.com, www.tingo.com, www.travelpost.com, www.tripfool.com, www.vacationhomerentals.com, www.viator.com, and www.virtualtourist.com

*Source: comScore Media Metrix for TripAdvisor Sites, worldwide, May 2016
**Source: TripAdvisor log files, Q2 2016

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