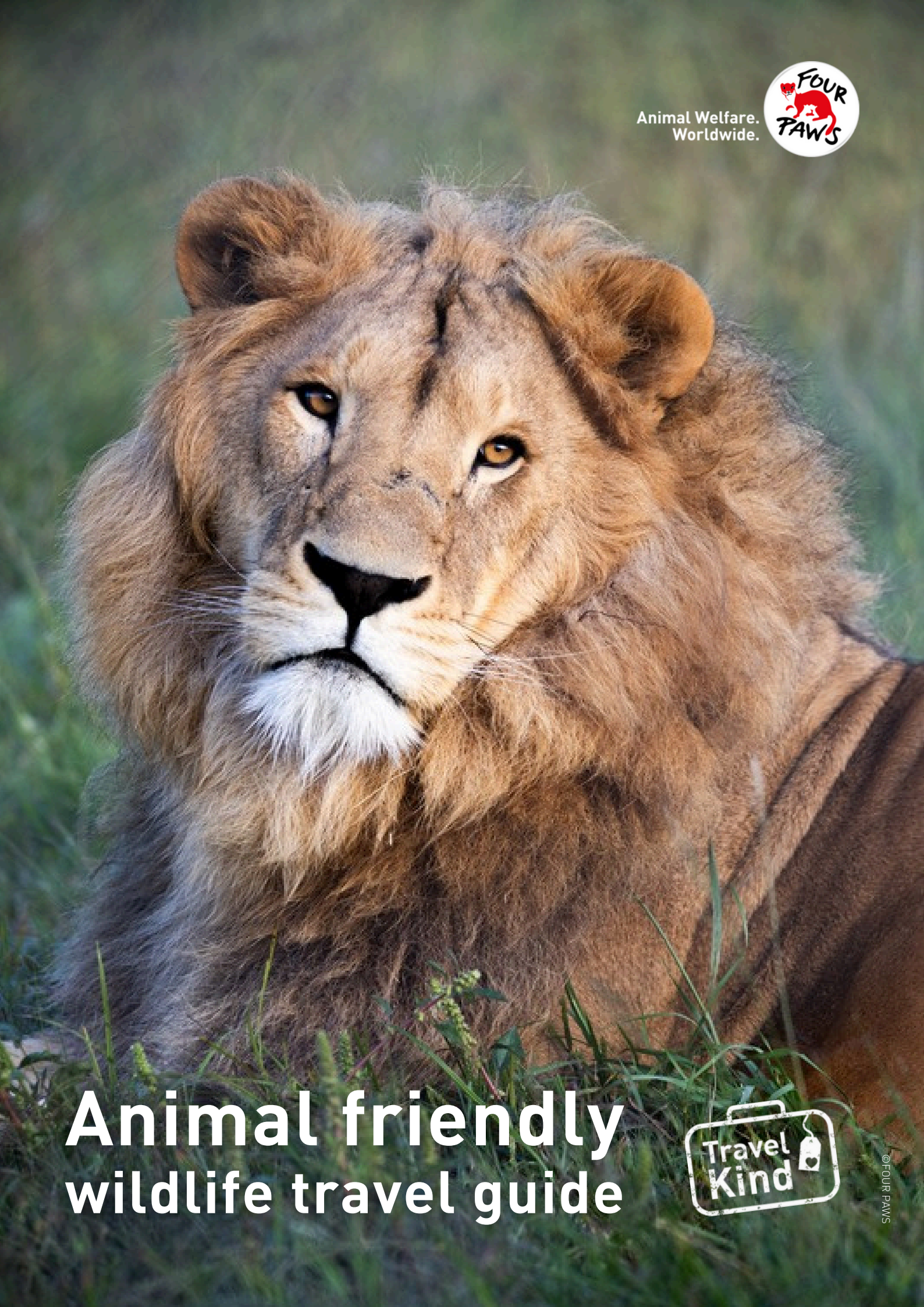
Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.



Animal friendly wildlife travel guide

Travel Kind

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Why we #TravelKind

FOUR PAWS' #TravelKind movement empowers and encourages travelers to make ethical choices that protect animals, specifically by avoiding activities that exploit animals. We instead encourage supporting cruelty-free experiences that benefit the welfare of animals.

It promotes respecting wildlife by observing them in their natural habitat from a distance, choosing genuine sanctuaries over entertainment-based facilities, and making compassionate choices when traveling to protect animals as well as their environments.

By avoiding exploitative attractions and supporting responsible tourism, you can help create a kinder world for all of us - including animals.

Every choice matters. Travel with purpose and compassion. #TravelKind

South African wildlife

South Africa isn't just a world-class travel destination - it's a sanctuary for those who want their holidays to protect and not harm the natural world. With its iconic beaches, majestic mountains, rich cultural heritage, and 10 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, South Africa offers unforgettable experiences. But its greatest treasure is its wildlife: home to 10% of birds, fish and plant species, and 6% of all mammal and reptile species, including over 800 bird species and of course the legendary Big 5.

For animal lovers and conscious travelers, South Africa is the ideal place to see wildlife ethically, and where animals roam free in their natural habitats. However, not all attractions are created equal. Many still promote hands-on interactions with wild animals, masking cruelty behind photo ops and entertainment. These experiences often involve suffering and exploitation.

This is your chance to make a difference. Choose sustainable, true sanctuaries. Observe wildlife from a respectful distance. Let your travel choices reflect your values.

TRAVEL **with empathy.**
with purpose.
with kindness.

Tips to #TravelKind

Skip the Cruelty

Avoid attractions like rundown zoos or any places that keep animals in unnatural, cramped, or inhumane conditions. If it doesn't prioritise the animals' well-being and welfare, it's not worth your time or money.

Do your Homework

Before visiting any place that features animals, take time to research. Look for transparency, ethical practices, and conservation-driven missions. If it is hard to find clear information, it's a red flag!

More tips to #TravelKind

Watch for Warning Signs

If a place offers hands-on encounters like selfies with tigers or elephant rides, it's likely not ethical. Wild animals used for entertainment cannot be released back into the wild and are often kept under false claims of conservation.

Choose Better, Travel Kinder

You don't have to support animal exploitation to enjoy wildlife. Follow our Guide to Compassionate Tourism below to make sure your adventures are cruelty-free and truly unforgettable.

Wildlife First: A Guide to Compassionate Tourism

Respect wildlife: Admire from a distance and avoid businesses that charge for animal photos or any kind of animal interactions.

Support ethical tourism: Choose eco-friendly safaris and avoid any trips involving hunting.

No touching: Wild animals are not pets. Petting or holding them can cause harm - way more than you think.

Say no to animal rides: To ride on them, they need to be tamed and this involves cruelty. Avoid any attractions where you can ride, wash, hold.

Shop consciously: Skip souvenirs made from animal parts like ivory, fur, teeth, or exotic leather.

Report abuse: If you see working animals such as horses, donkeys or camels in poor condition, alert local welfare groups.

Avoid animal shows: Circuses, marine parks and informal street performances often involve cruel training.

Be cautious with strays: Stray animals such as dogs may carry diseases like rabies. Don't approach or feed them.

Skip exotic meats: Eating endangered species or 'bush meat' supports cruelty and has health risks.

Go plant-based: Many countries offer great vegetarian, vegan or plant-based options. Learn key phrases to help you order your meals and shop in foreign countries.

True Sanctuaries in South Africa

A group of big cat sanctuaries in South Africa have united to pave the way for ethical big cat tourism. The focus is animal welfare, education and cooperation. These sanctuaries are opposed to any hands-on interaction, breeding as well as trading of big cats. There are currently four members in the group, and the aim is to continuously increase this number as more and more facilities upgrade their standards, and new true sanctuaries are created. The group works towards educating the public and creating awareness about the current situation. Many facilities might call themselves 'sanctuaries' but they exploit and use the animals in their care for financial gain with very little regard for the welfare of these animals.

We encourage you to join the movement to conserve wildlife by only visiting and promoting ethical sanctuaries.

Characteristics of a True Sanctuary:

- **No hands-on interaction**
- **No breeding & trading**
- **Focus on animal welfare**
- **Education and advocacy**
- **Transparency**

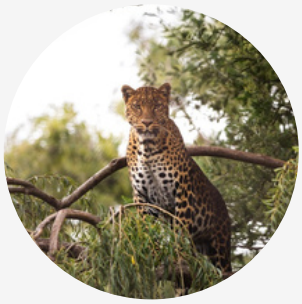
LIONSROCK Big Cat Sanctuary

Bethlehem, Free State Province, South Africa
A 3-hour drive from Johannesburg
www.lionsrock.org

LIONSROCK Big Cat Sanctuary was established in 2006 by FOUR PAWS, the global animal welfare organisation dedicated to revealing animal suffering, rescuing animals under direct human influence and protecting them. The sanctuary was opened after the property was taken over by the non-profit organisation and transformed from a facility that exploited big cats, to a world-renowned refuge.

LIONSROCK is home to around 100 rescued animals. The majority of these are lions, but several other big cats such as tigers and leopards, as well as other species have found lifetime care at the sanctuary. These rescued animals have come from Romania, Austria, Bulgaria, Congo, France, Switzerland, Jordan, Iraq and South Africa. Some have been rescued from captive breeding facilities, inappropriate tourism destinations, closed down zoos as well as private keeping.

As per True Sanctuary principles, there are no interactions with animals at LIONSROCK Big Cat Sanctuary. Instead, there are numerous other ethical activities to partake in. Children from local schools also regularly partake in educational visits and learn about big cats in the wild and how they should be treated.



Drakenstein Lion Park

Paarl, Western Cape, South Africa
A 1-hour drive from Cape Town
www.lionrescue.org.za

Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary

Stanford, Western Cape, South Africa
A 2-hour drive from Cape Town
www.pantheraafrica.com

Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary

Plettenberg Bay, Western Cape, South Africa
A 2-hour drive from George Airport
www.jukani.co.za

Addo Elephant National Park

Eastern Cape, South Africa
1-hour drive from Gqeberha
www.sanparks.org/parks/addo-elephant

iSimangaliso Wetland Park

KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
3-hour drive from Durban
www.isimangaliso.com

Mountain Zebra National Park

Eastern Cape, South Africa
3-hour drive from Gqeberha
www.sanparks.org/parks/mountain-zebra

Marakele National Park

Limpopo, South Africa
3-hour drive from Johannesburg
www.sanparks.org/parks/marakele

Kruger National Park

Limpopo and Mpumalanga, South Africa
5-hour drive from Johannesburg
www.sanparks.org/parks/kruger

FOUR PAWS is the global animal welfare organisation for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. Founded in 1988 in Vienna by Heli Dungler and friends, the organisation advocates for a world where humans treat animals with respect, empathy and understanding.

The sustainable campaigns and projects of FOUR PAWS focus on companion animals including stray dogs and cats, farm animals and wild animals – such as bears, big cats and orangutans – kept in inappropriate conditions as well as in disaster and conflict zones. With offices in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa, Thailand, Ukraine, the UK, the USA and Vietnam as well as sanctuaries for rescued animals in eleven countries, FOUR PAWS provides rapid help and long-term solutions.
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