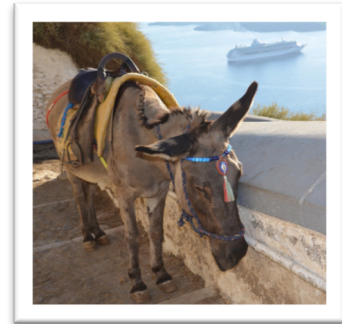


The Donkey Sanctuary urges UK tourists to Take STEPS against animal cruelty this summer

PRESS RELEASE from The Donkey Sanctuary
April 2014

In response to new evidence of suffering experienced by animals working in the tourism industry, The Donkey Sanctuary is urging UK tourists to Take STEPS to avoid participating in acts of animal cruelty this summer.

Donkeys and mules are commonly used as tourist taxis, carrying passengers or luggage. An independent report produced last year¹ revealed that many of these animals are forced to carry overweight passengers and are denied access to shade, water and rest for hours at a time. Poor quality saddles and bridles are often used and safety guidelines are regularly ignored, placing tourists at risk of injury.



A recent YouGov survey² revealed that almost a third (30%) of adults have seen animals that looked like they were being or have been mistreated whilst on holiday abroad and, of these, 55% of people who had witnessed mistreatment had seen it happening to animals working in the tourism industry

Andrew Judge, Head of Operations-Continental Europe for The Donkey Sanctuary, says: *“Being on holiday is not an excuse for ignoring signs that animals are in pain or distress. Tourist taxi donkeys and mules, like those on the island of Santorini, Greece, are made to stand in the baking heat with no shade or water for hours on end and are often forced to carry passengers who are far too heavy which causes injuries and exhaustion.*

“This summer we urge British tourists to stop before riding a donkey or mule and consider if they may be contributing to the animal’s suffering. Sadly, the evidence shows that tourists cannot rely on these business owners to look after their animals properly and tourists must check for themselves that acts of cruelty aren’t taking place. People need to use our Take STEPS checklist before riding a donkey or mule.”

Tourists should Take STEPS before riding a tourist taxi animal and ask themselves:

- **Safety:** Will you be escorted by a conductor at all times during the ride
- **Thirst:** Does this animal have access to fresh, clean water
- **Equipment:** Is the saddle and bridle of good quality or is it causing sores or discomfort
- **Pounds:** Are you an acceptable weight for this animal to carry
- **Shelter:** Does this animal have access to shelter during rest breaks

If tourists are not 100% happy with the answers to the above questions then they should not ride a donkey or mule. We are all responsible for the welfare of these animals and until conditions improve, The Donkey Sanctuary is urging all UK tourists to avoid taking part in acts of animal cruelty.

There is also a petition at www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/santorini to force the mayor of Santorini to comply with required improvements to the standards of animal welfare for the 400+ donkeys and mules working as tourist taxis on the island.

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Notes to Editor

For an interview, further information or images, please contact The Donkey Sanctuary press office on 01395 573142 or mobile 07970 927778.

¹ Santorini Donkey and Mule Taxis. Tim Wass MBE, Animal Kind. Independent animal welfare report for The Donkey Sanctuary

² All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,352 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 17th March 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Take STEPS

Urgent improvements needed to animal welfare in Santorini:

- Additional shelter (near double) must be erected at the top and bottom of the cliffs. All waiting animals need to be in shade.
- Physical changes to the route to allow for correct rotation of donkeys must be completed.
- All animals must have free access to fresh clean water at all times.
- An agreed (measurable by scales) weight limit must be imposed and advertised clearly for the public.
- Veterinary inspections of all animals must be carried out throughout the season.
- Fortnightly tack inspections must be conducted with advice to replace worn tack headed and actioned immediately.
- The local codes of welfare practice needs to be revised and updated with evidence of the willingness and capability for them to be meaningfully enforced.

About The Donkey Sanctuary

The Donkey Sanctuary was founded by the late Dr Elisabeth Svendsen M.B.E. in 1969. We support projects to alleviate the suffering of donkeys in 27 countries worldwide, including sanctuaries across Europe, where more than 16,500 donkeys and mules have been cared for, and major projects in Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya and Mexico, where donkey welfare is improved through community education and veterinary work. We also provide donkey assisted therapy for children and adults with additional needs and therapeutic visits to care homes in the local community from our centres in Belfast, Birmingham, Ivybridge, Leeds, Manchester and Sidmouth.

For further information telephone: 01395 578222, view www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk or visit the charity's headquarters near Sidmouth in Devon (open 365 days/free admission).