



Via electronic delivery

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24 July 2023

Dear Zoe,

**UPDATE TO TRIP ADVISOR - THE TREATMENT OF ELEPHANTS AT THE BUDDHIST KANDE VIHARAYA TEMPLE, SRI LANKA**

We hope that this correspondence finds you well.

The undersigned members of [PREN](#) engaged with you in [the letter](#) of the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2023 in relation to TripAdvisor (TA)'s [Animal Welfare Policy](#).

Our concern is related to the continued listing of the [Guruvayur Elephant Camp](#) and Temple in Kerala, India, on the TripAdvisor website, which incredulously continues to receive positive ratings.

Your response to PREN's letter on the 8th of March 2023, clarified that TA does not sell tickets to such businesses and attractions, but that TA still lists those attractions, "*so that travellers can share their genuine, first-hand, positive or negative experiences of Guruvayur Elephant Camp and Temple for future potential tourists.*"

It is our strongly held view that TA's current listing of the Guruvayur Elephant Camp and Temple might continue to provide this establishment with credibility in the eyes of tourists, thereby perpetuating the exploitation and abuse of Elephants.

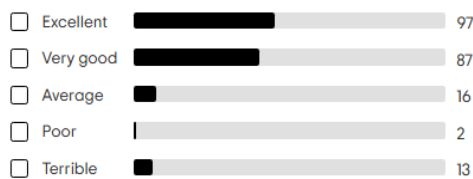
The ill-treatment of Elephants at the [Guruvayur Elephant Camp](#) includes the fact that Elephants are forced to partake in [unnatural activities](#) such as endurance races, during which they are beaten and forced to unnaturally run, often injuring their ligaments or joints.

In May 2023 the Kerala High Court ordered a [Committee of experts](#) to conduct an inspection of Punnathur Kotta (Anakkotta), Guruvayur, after a [Court case](#) was launched early this year (SANGITA IYER Vs GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM & OTHERS, WP(C) NO. 16514 OF 2023). The inspection resulted in a [report](#) flagging that the conditions of the Elephants were inadequate and unhygienic and that nearly half of the Elephants inspected had a history of serious health issues including foot rot and disabilities for which they could not stand or lie down and had suffered with life-threatening conditions for captive Elephants such as colic and impaction.

Some tourists, though, are seemingly unaware, or fail to understand, the extent of the exploitation and resulting cruelty to these Elephants. This reflects in [excellent reviews of Punnathur Kotta on TA](#)

## Reviews (222)

### Traveler rating



### Traveler type

- Families
- Couples
- Solo
- Business
- Friends

### Time of year

- Mar-May
- Jun-Aug
- Sep-Nov
- Dec-Feb

### Language

- All languages
- English (215)
- French (2)
- German (2)
- [More languages](#) ▼

### See what travelers are saying:

1 - 6 of 215 reviews



830jagannathk  
Bengaluru, India

55 16

★★★★★ Reviewed July 3, 2022

### Great place to watch elephant feeding

I never miss this place whenever I go to Guruvayur. We get to see giant elephants in this place. Elephant feeding and their behaviour is always a feast to our eyes.

**Date of experience:** June 2022

[Ask 830jagannathk about Punnathur Kotta \(Anakkotta\)](#)

Thank 830jagannathk



This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews as part of our industry-leading trust & safety standards. Read our [transparency report](#) to learn more.



harivaramyuga  
Thrissur, India

1

★★★★★ Reviewed March 29, 2022

### nice place for trip

good place for a trip. you can see different aged elephants. There is a place for children for their fun moments

**Date of experience:** March 2022

[Ask harivaramyuga about Punnathur Kotta \(Anakkotta\)](#)

Thank harivaramyuga



[Image: Reviews of Punnathur Kotta, Guruvayur - TripAdvisor](#)

The undersigned members of PREN are of the view that TA should consider implementing a red-light or alert system of the facilities known to exploit elephants or not conforming to animal welfare standards, therefore disabling TA to “*sell tickets for or generate booking revenue from*” the facilities. This approach might incentivise such facilities to improve their criteria.

The consideration of the development of a methodology able to detect keywords in order to penalise tourist attractions with low or non-existent animal welfare standards will be a lifesaving tool for the Elephants.

The development of an overarching system that is able to detect keywords in order to penalise touristic attractions with low or non-existent animal welfare standards, could be an effective and impactful solution that is worthy of further consideration.

### **A NOTEWORTHY SCENARIO: THE BUDDHIST KANDE VIHARAYA TEMPLE, SRI LANKA**

In 2001 the Thai government donated an Elephant called Muthu Raja to Sri Lanka. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2023, following complex but determined negotiations, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand Varawut Silpa-archa, [repatriated](#) the Elephant, after [reports of abusive conditions](#) in Sri Lanka.

The associated negotiations led to the Thai government rescinding and revoking its gift to Sri Lanka and removing the Elephant from a well-known Sri Lankan Buddhist temple in Kande Viharaya.



**Elephant Muthu Raja is being directed towards his crate, leaving Colombo – Sri Lanka. Credit: RARE**

Concerns persist for the remaining single Elephant, a female known as Kumari, kept at the Kande Viharaya Temple. These concerns result from multiple reports and publicly available photographic evidence of Kumari being utilised in noisy [religious and cultural](#) parades, during hot weather, being

chained with spiked shackles, standing for long periods of time often in her own urine and faeces, being utilised for rides and as [selfie-props](#).

According to reports from eye-witnesses, local mahouts have used bullhooks in the Elephants' eyes and on wounds to enhance dominance and control. Elephants at this Temple have been recorded as having purulent wounds, cracked and infected nails and visible scars and abscesses. There is seemingly an absence of proper veterinary care, therapy or pain relief.

## Kande Viharaya Temple



169 reviews • #1 of 6 things to do in Dharga Town • Religious Sites

Call [Write a review](#)

### What people are saying

"Must see Buddha and Temple"

4.5 stars Mar 2022

Easy access from Kalutara and Bentota by Tuk Tuk ride.

By MarkJamesEdgar

"The Stunning Kande Viharaya Temple"

5 stars Jan 2022

I enjoyed learning the history of the temple, it's part in the 2004 tsunami and the story of Siddhartha Gautama.

[Suggest edits to improve what we show.](#)

[Improve this listing](#)

### Tours & experiences

Explore different ways to experience this place.



[Kumari is kept chained on cement from her front and back legs, in her own urine.](#)  
Image: [TripAdvisor - The Kande Viharaya Temple](#)

Kande Viharaya Buddhist Temple is positively rated on TripAdvisor's website and images showcase Kumari while kept chained on concrete, away from any other Elephant. She is utilised as a prop for visitors to take photographs or for [Elephant rides](#).

Kande Viharaya Temple  
170 reviews • #1 of 6 attractions in Dharga Town  
22 Marikkar St, Dharga Town 12080 Sri Lanka

### Galle Day Tour

4.5 stars 4

Book in advance from ZAR 964.96 per adult

[Check availability](#)

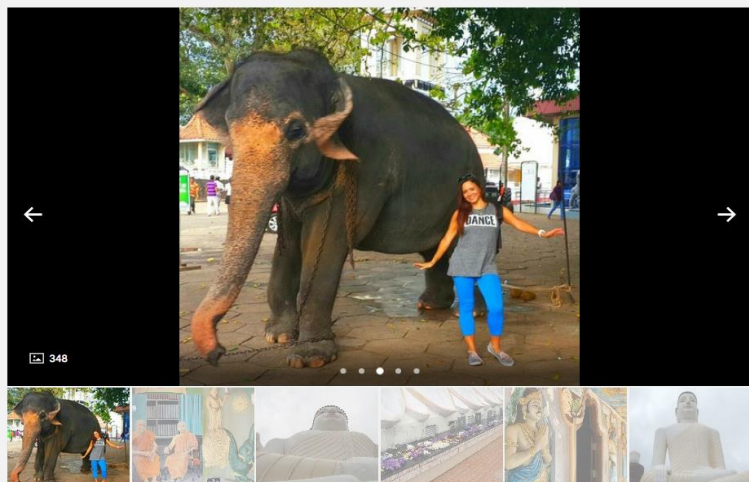
[View full product details](#)

### Other Recent Reviews

"Chained elephant!"  
July 2023

"Second time - excellent"  
April 2023

[Read all 170 reviews](#)



[Elephant Kumari at the Kande Viharaya Temple, Dharga Town - TripAdvisor](#)

There is overwhelming scientific evidence about Elephants' intelligence, [complex cognitive capabilities](#) and [sentience](#), social needs<sup>1</sup>, display of empathy and concern for others<sup>2</sup>, self-determination<sup>3</sup>, [self-recognition](#) and self-awareness.

All Elephants require the opportunity to access expansive, diverse habitats in order to traverse long distances and exercise individual autonomy and socialization. Failure to meet these needs inevitably leads to health deterioration. The development of stereotypic behaviours generally reflects a welfare-compromised environment.

Stereotypic behaviour, the invariant restrictive and purposeless repetition of motor patterns<sup>4</sup>, remains the most widely used welfare indicator<sup>5</sup> for Elephants in poor welfare conditions, exposed to psychological stress that had direct physiological consequences on the body's ability to function.<sup>6</sup> This includes neural dysfunctions, [brain damage](#) and compromised survivorship.<sup>7</sup>

PREN members acknowledge TA's efforts to achieve best practices. The TA Animal Welfare Policy could make a greater difference to wild animals utilised in the tourism industry if the institutions where these guidelines are not respected are effectively penalised.

TA could further promote positive change for wild animals utilised in the tourism industry, by setting higher standards and by persuading countries with inadequate animal welfare policies to introduce regulations for the protection and compassionate treatment of those animals.

We would appreciate your considered response to this communication. We are available and welcome the opportunity you have offered, to engage further on this important subject matter.

Members of PREN could form a working group of experts in order to engage with TA specialists on a Zoom forum, as you kindly suggested.

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<sup>1</sup> Wittemeyr G., Douglas –Hamilton I. & Getz W. M. 2005. The sociology of Elephants: analyses of the processes creating multitiered social structures. *Animal Behaviour*, 69:1357-1371.

<sup>2</sup> Bates L.A., Lee P.C., Njiraini N., Poole J. H., Sayialel K., Sayialel S., Moss C. J. & Byrne R.W. 2008. Do elephants show empathy? *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 15(10-11):204-225

<sup>3</sup> 1 Clubb R. & Mason G. 2002. A Review of the Welfare of Zoo Elephants in Europe. RSPCA Report, University of Oxford.

<sup>4</sup> Mason G. J. 1991. Stereotypies: a critical review. *Animal Behaviour*, 41:1015-1037.; Kurt F & Garaï M. 2001. Stereotypies in captive Asian Elephants- a symptom of social isolation. *Scientific Progress Reports in A Research Update of Elephants and Rhinos*. Proceedings of the International Elephant and Rhino Research Symposium, Vienna June 7-11,2001. pp.57-63.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, E, Chadwick, CL, Yon, L & Asher, L (2018) A review of current indicators of welfare in captive elephants (*Loxodonta Africana* and *Elephas maximus*). *Animal Welfare*, 27(3): 235-249

<sup>6</sup> Romero LM. 2004. Physiological stress in ecology: lessons from biomedical research. *TRENDS in Ecology and Evolution*, 19(5):249-255.; Bondi CO, Rodriguez G, Gould GG, Frazer A & Morilak DA. 2008. Chronic unpredictable stress induces a cognitive deficit and anxiety-like behaviour in rats that are prevented by chronic antidepressant drug treatment. *Neuropsychopharmacology*, 33:320-331.

<sup>7</sup> Clubb R., Rowcliffe M., Lee P., Mar K.U., Moss C. & Mason G.J. 2008. Compromised survivorship. *Science*, 322:1649.

Thanks again for you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

We look forward to your response and upcoming arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



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Megan Carr	Founder, Rhinos in Africa
Lenin Chisaira	Founder, Advocates 4 Earth – Green Law Connect, Zimbabwe
Dr Betsy Coville	Exotic / Wildlife Animal Veterinarian
Nomusa Dube	Founder, Zimbabwe Elephant Foundation
David Ebert	Advocate, Founder Director of The Animal Defense Partnership – USA
Stefania Falcon	Co-Founder, Future 4 Wildlife – South Africa
Daniela Freyer	Co-Founder, Pro Wildlife, Germany
Michele Franko	Captive Elephant Caregiver and Advocate – USA
Chief Stephen Fritz	Indigenous Leader, South Peninsula Khoi Council – South Africa
Dr Toni Frohoff	Ethologist and Behavioral Biologist, Founder of TerraMar Research
Dr Marion E. Garai	Elephant Behaviour Specialist - South Africa

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Professor Mohan Kharel	Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
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Jim Karani	Advocate, Lawyers for Animal Protection in Africa – Kenya
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