



WILD SCOTLAND

GUIDANCE FOR WILDLIFE, ADVENTURE & ACTIVITY TOURISM
OPERATORS IN SCOTLAND

COVID-19 GUIDANCE / WILDLIFE WATCHING
DAY TOURS

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WILDLIFE WATCHING

WILDLIFE WATCHING GUIDELINES FOR OPERATORS DURING COVID-19

Relating to Day Tours

Your wildlife watching experiences are having to change due to COVID-19. Everyone in the industry, following government guidance, is working to ensure the safety of clients and colleagues. This good work is supported with relevant government and other organisations' advice, but the successful return to business will also require changes in client behaviour. The suggestions here should be used in conjunction with the checklist within the [Wild Scotland General Guidelines](#).

The following guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive or finite, but are here to give you suggestions and pose questions you need to take into account when revising your own offerings and procedures. They presuppose that wildlife watching will take place in the great outdoors in small group ratios of one guide to six or seven guests. Different considerations need to be taken into account if the wildlife watching takes place in an enclosed space such as a hide or a boat. These guidelines do not cover those circumstances, but some of the considerations will be common to both.

Vehicle & Vessels Guidance for Wildlife Watching Activity Operators

If you depend on the use of a vehicle or a vessel to transport guests for their days activity, then please follow the [Transport Scotland Guidance for Transport Operators](#) which covers physical distancing requirements and risk assessments for vehicles and vessels (as opposed to on premises). It is framed broadly as being applicable to operators of transport services and provides for 1 metre physical distancing requirements in respect of vehicles and vessels.

Whilst tourism and hospitality activities consistent with passenger transport services are included in the existing regulations providing a physical distancing exemption of at least 1 metre, all other activities or elements of an experience should adhere to the [Scottish Government Guidance for the Tourism and Hospitality sector](#), which covers the whole sector, including marine and adventure tourism.

Please note that any overnight activities must also adhere to the General Guidance and Tourism and Hospitality Guidance, meaning that the usual household limits apply.

In short, the Transport Guidance for Operators allows businesses to operate at 1 metre on board vehicles and vessels and would enable for example a larger capacity for day trips on boats or transport to and from activities in minibuses etc.

Customer Facing Information

Consider the following:

- Amend your website/printed leaflets to include information about what you are doing to counteract the risk of COVID-19, to cover any different wildlife watching experiences you provide.
- Include what you will be altering in your experiences to take account of the restrictions in place regarding hygiene/ physical distancing/risk reduction.
- Include what extra information you will require from your guests prior to them taking part in a wildlife watching experience, including information relating to Test and Protect.

Booking Procedures

Consider the following:

- Can you restrict those who book to members of the same household/family group/bubble?
- Amend booking conditions so extra information to be provided is confirmed by guests whilst making the booking and to ensure all alterations made by you have been acknowledged by the guest.
- Include the health form/ declaration as part of the booking process even though they may need to sign it and bring it with them on the day (you could consider asking guests to submit an electronic health declaration).
- Advise guests that it would be preferable for them to bring along their own optical equipment.

Pre-Experience Information

Consider the following:

- Do you normally collect your guests from their accommodation and take them to the outdoor location(s) you will use during your wildlife watching experience? This is still feasible under the [Transport Operators Guidance](#).
- Consider whether it would be better to ask your guests to meet you at the location for the start of the experience instead?
- Consider using screens in your minibuses/ vehicles to separate guests from the guide/driver.
- Consider asking your guide to travel to the guests' accommodation in their own vehicle, so that the guests can travel behind them in convoy?

On the Day Experience

Consider the following:

- Choose a location to meet at that allows plenty of space for guide and guests to exit their vehicles and collect their own equipment etc. from their own vehicles whilst maintaining physical distancing rules.
- Consider a location that lends itself to everyone being in the great outdoors for the whole of the time spent out and about.
- Consider whether the route the guide will be taking allows physical distancing measures to stay in place during the whole time, whilst still giving guests the opportunity to see wildlife i.e. choose wide tracks and avoid narrow paths.
- Allow for the lack of toilet facilities being available in locations and consider keeping the locations close to the guests' accommodation so that a comfort break can be factored into the day's activities.

- Consider alternative locations that are close to one another and can be combined during the day, so that travel between them can be done quickly, with guide and guests in their own vehicles.
- As sharing of optical equipment isn't practical, consider camera/phone technology that allows the guide to share live images of wildlife with the guests quickly and easily whilst adhering to social distancing rules.
- Consider increased First Aid requirements/ regimes that need to adhere to physical distancing rules and mitigate virus transmission (Inform your clients that where possible, you will be asking other group members (within social group) to assist with any first aid, under your direction and that should you need to administer first aid directly, you will do so, taking all the necessary and available precautions).
- Be aware that during lockdown wildlife has been relatively undisturbed by people. It is possible that you may have unexpected wildlife encounters and plant life may be more abundant. Take care not to cause disturbance or destruction and be aware of protected species.
- Consider all aspects of wildlife watching that could be incorporated into the experience including plants/insects etc.
- Consider how you can make this a good experience for your guests given the current restrictions.
- For further best practice guidance relating to Wildlife Watching, please familiarise yourself with the [Wild Scotland Best Practice Guidelines](#).

Post Wildlife Watching Experience

Consider the following:

- Contacting accommodation provider to ensure they haven't received information that guests have shown COVID-19 symptoms since the wildlife watching experience.
- Incorporate any additional COVID-19 information/ alterations into your post-experience guest questionnaire.

This Wildlife Watching Guidance has been produced by Wild Scotland with support from Speyside Wildlife.

DISCLAIMER



This information is provided in good faith as an aide memoire for operators and others to use during this period of COVID-19 restrictions. It is not intended to do anything other than provide a sign post to possible ways of working to make all activities/experiences as safe as possible for staff; clients and the wider public during this time. It is not intended to be a complete list of actions but as an aid to start thought processes for any operators and to make suggestions on areas for consideration.

All operators remain liable for their own actions and for the safety and security of their staff and clients and must continue to ensure that they always have this in the forefront of their minds.

We shall update this document from time to time as and when other information becomes available, but when completing procedures, all operators must check the current requirements applicable to their own operations.

The authors do not accept any liability for the information provided.