



Center for Responsible Travel
Washington, DC and Stanford University
Transforming the Way the World Travels

CREST's Position:

Animal Welfare is an Important Component of Responsible Travel

Dr. Martha Honey, CREST Co-Director, will give the keynote address at [TBEX North America](#), which will be held September 11 – 13, 2014, in Cancun, Mexico. In advance of her speech she has been asked to comment on an ongoing debate about captive dolphin tours in Cancun. Here is how CREST views the issue:

Respecting animal welfare is an essential component of responsible travel. CREST believes that when at all possible, wildlife should live in their natural habitats. If wild animals are held in captivity, they should be guaranteed, at minimum, the following "Five Freedoms":

- **Sufficient and good quality food and water**
- **A suitable living environment**
- **An opportunity to exhibit natural behaviors**
- **Protection from fear and distress**
- **Good health**

Check out Born Free UK's [Guide to the 5 Freedoms](#), which discusses the Five Freedoms in detail in the context of captive wild animals.

Dolphins are socially complex and self-aware creatures, and we agree with [World Animal Protection](#) in that these animals "deserve to live a life free from captivity, where they can properly fulfill their social and behavioral needs." A tank simply cannot provide them with the space, environment, and social freedom they need to thrive as they would in the wild. As stated by the tour operator [Intrepid Travel](#), a highly respected leader in responsible travel, it is best to view wildlife where it belongs, but if a zoo or aquarium is ever visited, a visitor should make sure the facility adheres to the [World Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Code of Ethics](#) before entering. What more, interactions with wild animals should never involve physical contact with people, feeding, or other actions that disturb or alter their natural behavior. These actions often cause extreme distress for the animal and is a health risk for both parties.

Finally, CREST works often in close collaboration and partnership with The Ocean Foundation. On the topic of captive marine animals, President Mark Spalding says, "We have admirable facilities that rescue and when possible rehabilitate and release marine mammals, sea birds and sea turtles. Some of these allow the public to visit and volunteer. And, many have advanced our knowledge of marine wildlife through research during their recovery. But like hospitals for humans, this is not where we want wild animals to spend their entire lives. We prefer to see them in the wild where they thrive." For more information on the topics of marine mammal research, rehabilitation, and the human relationship with marine mammals, see Mark's [blog post](#) following the Southern California Marine Mammal Workshop.

CREST looks forward to discussing this and other issues with both bloggers and media professionals, who have at their fingertips a powerful tool for public education, which can ultimately *transform the way the world travels*.