

# The Wildlife Souvenirs Guide

In a number of tourist locations, exotic souvenirs made from body parts originating from animals or plants, or live animals and plants may be offered for sale. However, just because items are openly displayed for sale does not mean it is legal to buy them and bring home. If you consider bringing such wildlife souvenirs with you back home you should be aware that a number of animal and plant species are subject to international regulations and



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may require permits. It may even be illegal to bring certain souvenirs back home and these will be seized by Customs upon arrival. To avoid having your wildlife souvenir taken away and risking hefty fines, make sure that you are not bringing home souvenirs made from an animal or plant species that is banned in international trade. This Wildlife Souvenir Guide is intended to provide you with some examples of the types of wildlife souvenirs that you may encounter while on holiday and to provide you with information about the

regulations that may apply. However, you should always check with the relevant authorities on whether it is legal to bring a certain wildlife product back with you and whether you will require a permit.

## AMAZON REGION (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela)

In all Amazon countries, the sale of wild animals (except fish), including their skins, feathers or other parts (claws, skulls, etc.) is illegal even though some of these specimens can be found in local markets and curio shops. In Peru, however, butterflies may be sold. Some species are CITES-listed and also endangered (including jaguar, ocelots, macaws, toucans, etc.), so the best option is not to buy any handicrafts that include parts of wild land animals in the Amazon region, as they may be protected and could be seized by Customs; you may also be fined.

## ANDEAN REGION (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru)

You may be tempted to buy some of the region's famous musical instruments: rain sticks made from cacti, which can, for example, be found in Peru, Chile and Bolivia. Although trade in all cacti species is regulated by CITES and the EC Wildlife Trade Regulations, you can import up to three rain sticks per person into the EU without any additional documents, as "personal effects". If vicuña clothes seduce you and you would like to bring them back to the EU, you may require export and import permits. In addition, your item should bear the logotype corresponding to the country of origin and the trademark "VICUÑA – [COUNTRY OF ORIGIN]". The Andean region is also home to many rare timber species so

## CITES - Regulation of international trade in wild animals and plants

Uncontrolled trade in wildlife including parts and derivatives e.g. souvenirs, can be a threat to the survival of animal and plant species.

However, if properly managed and regulated, wildlife trade does not necessarily threaten wild species. CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, has 175 Parties, and was set up to ensure that international trade in wild animals and plants is not threatening the survival of the species. Currently, CITES bans the international trade in almost 900 species of animals and plants (e.g. Tigers, Marine Turtles, Rhinos, which are listed on Appendix I) and controls trade in a further 33 000 species through permits (e.g. corals, cacti, many parrot and reptile species; listed in Appendix II). In the European Union, CITES is implemented through the EC Wildlife Trade Regulations, which are automatically applicable in each of the 27 EU Member States. CITES only applies to international trade, and therefore it may be legal to sell an animal or plant species inside a country although all international trade is banned.

A TRAFFIC document – [www.eu-wildlifetrade.org](http://www.eu-wildlifetrade.org)

TRAFFIC is part of a wildlife trade monitoring network, which works to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. TRAFFIC is a joint programme of WWF and IUCN - The World Conservation Union. (Address: 90 Bd. E. Jacqmain, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium)

beware of this when you buy carved wooden ornaments. Tagua, or vegetable ivory, can be an alternative souvenir, as it does not require documents and originates in most instances from sustainable sources.

## AUSTRALIA

The vast majority of Australia's wildlife is protected and many items cannot be exported without a permit issued by the Australian Department of Environment and Heritage. This includes all live native animals (e.g. including birds, reptiles and insects), and wildlife items such as marine shells (e.g. giant clams) and stony corals. Australian authorities impose strict penalties on violators which can include prison sentences. Souvenirs and gifts made from kangaroos can be exported provided that you do not intend to sell, trade, exchange or use them in any other form for commercial purposes.

## THE CARIBBEAN

You will require an export permit for all souvenirs made from stony coral. In some countries, you may find jewellery made of sea turtle shells or black coral for sale. International trade in these species is regulated and in some cases, not allowed - you may risk having these souvenirs seized upon arrival in the EU. Sharks' teeth, hardwood carvings and ornamental plants may be legal to purchase and to bring home, however for some species you may need permits (e.g. for all cacti and orchids, and for White Shark teeth). Note that some orchids are listed in Annex A of the EC Wildlife Trade Regulations and can therefore not be traded except under exceptional circumstances.



WWF-Canon / Homo ambiens/  
R.Isotti-A.Cambone

## CHINA

Be aware that you will require permits for most products made from snake and lizard skin such as briefcases, handbags and shoes. Traditional Asian medicines can contain parts of wild animal and plant species (e.g. bear, musk, tigers or certain plants) and their sale may either be forbidden, or you may require a permit before you can bring them back home. Also, remember that there are very strict controls on taking ivory carvings out of China and into the EU and also that you will need permits for products made of hippo ivory.

### When do I need a permit?

If you are an EU citizen returning from your holidays abroad you will only be allowed to bring back souvenirs made from animals and plants listed in CITES and the EC Wildlife Trade Regulations if your souvenir:

- *is made from a species that is not included in Annex A of the EC regulations*
- *if your souvenir is made of a dead specimen or products,*
- *is brought back for your own private use and for non-commercial purposes,*
- *is contained in your personal luggage*
- **and you always need an export permit from the country of origin!**

This does not apply to live specimens and to species listed in Annex A.

For further information see our section on "[Personal Effects](#)"

## INDIA

India has very strict wildlife protection legislation and the trade and use of native species is strictly regulated. Shahtoosh, the "King of Wools", comes from the highly endangered Tibetan antelope "Chiru". Because of their rarity, shahtoosh shawls can be extremely expensive. Unfortunately, not only the monetary cost of this luxury is high: the Tibetan Antelope has been hunted to the brink of extinction for its wool. You should also be aware that other products such as spotted cat skins, elephant ivory products, reptile leather products, stony corals and turtle shells, are protected in India and banned from export.

## INDONESIA

The thousands of islands in Indonesia's large archipelago are home to some of the world's greatest biodiversity. You may be bewildered by the array of wildlife products offered for sale. But beware that many of these items are subject to national and international restrictions. You will not be allowed to bring back products made from bear claws, ivory, tiger or marine turtle shells or curios such as stuffed birds-of-paradise, as international trade in these species is banned. Remember that you may need special permits if you want to take home goods made from reptile or amphibian skin such as handbags or shoes, and that permits are also required for stony corals and orchids. Note that some orchids are listed in Annex A of the EC Wildlife Trade Regulations, and can therefore not be traded except under exceptional circumstances.

## KENYA

Kenya prohibits the collection of corals and the export of products made from elephants (ivory), rhinos (horn) and marine turtles (shells, jewellery and combs). In addition, national law also prohibits trade in reptile leather products such as handbags, belts, shoes, watchstraps and briefcases and you will not be allowed to export these products. Although trade is allowed for some wildlife products, you should always check whether a permit is required, especially for the export of plants, insects and shells.

## MALAYSIA

Remember that some butterfly and tarantula species are protected and may require permits to be imported into most countries. Also remember that souvenirs such as stony corals and products made of reptile skin will require permits before you can bring them home, and trade in items from the feathers of hornbills is banned.



C. Reymakers

## MEDITERRANEAN RESORTS

You may find marine shells such as Giant Clams, which actually originate from the South Pacific, as well as seahorses offered for sale in several seaside resorts along the Mediterranean. All seahorses and Giant Clams (if more than three specimens of Giant Clam) require permits for trade to the EU. In some countries, coats made from spotted cat furs may also be offered, as well as jewellery made from marine turtle shell, ivory and other wildlife products and tourists interested in these should remember that international trade in most of these wildlife products is prohibited.

## MEXICO

Mexico strictly regulates the export of its native animal and plant species, such as parrots, reptiles, cacti, palms, cycads and orchids, some of which are rare and endangered in the wild. It is advisable to avoid purchasing them unless you have the required documents for bringing them with you. If you consider buying a pair of cowboy boots, make sure they are not made from the leather of endangered species and beware that you may need permits for bringing reptile leather products home. Also remember, that international trade in sea turtle products (e.g. combs, sunglasses, jewellery, etc.) is banned, and that you will not be allowed to bring these back home with you.

### What happens if I don't have the right documents?

- ➔ If you do not have the required permits, your wildlife souvenir will be likely to be confiscated at the customs
- ➔ You may have to pay a fine, the amount of which generally depends on the value of the good. In Estonia e.g., this fine may be as high as € 65 000
- ➔ You may be subjected to a penal prosecution
- ➔ In some cases, you also risk being arrested. In Germany e.g., a person caught by Customs importing prohibited wildlife goods is liable to up to 5 years imprisonment.

**In the EU, most of the seizures relating to wildlife concern tourists bringing home wildlife without permits!**

## NORTH AFRICA

Tourists visiting the colourful markets of North Africa may see a range of wildlife products and sometimes live animals and plants offered for sale. This can for example include musical instruments or fire bellows made of Spur-thighed Tortoises and products made of reptile leather.

Remember that several of these souvenirs, as well as live tortoises, chameleons or lizards will require a permit and some may even be illegal to bring home.



WWF-Canon / Martin HARVEY

## PHILIPPINES

Sea shells may look lovely on a bookshelf but remember that they may be protected. Also keep in mind that you will need permits for all stony corals and souvenirs made from reptile skins. Trade in orchids is also restricted in the Philippines.

## REUNION, MAURITIUS & SEYCHELLES

Products made from marine turtles, such as tortoiseshell jewellery, may be sold as souvenirs, but tourists should be aware that even if labels or advertisements indicate that the turtles were captive-bred, the export of these

products is strictly regulated and therefore the items may be confiscated by Customs upon arrival in the EU.

## RUSSIA

In the Russian live animal markets, especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg, you may find native and exotic species, such as tortoises, snakes, lizards, geckos and parrots, but remember that international trade of these specimens is regulated. If you want to buy caviar during your trip to Russia, you are allowed to bring back (for personal consumption) a maximum of 125 grams per person without any documentation. For quantities of more than 125 grams, you will need to obtain an export permit and an import permit. In any case, you should only buy caviar when the container carries a CITES label.

## SOUTH AFRICA

Exports of any animal or plant species indigenous to South Africa, including a vast range of succulent plants, animal skins and curios, requires an export permit. In addition, agricultural quarantine restrictions may be imposed on some plants and bird species. Feel free to purchase the splendid array of cut flowers and other curios available at most airports.

## TANZANIA

Permits are required for the collection, harvest, trade and export of all wildlife, fisheries and forestry products in Tanzania. The export of products made from many threatened species is prohibited, such as rhino, cheetah, cycads and most elephant and leopard products. Exceptions include a limited number of legally hunted leopard and elephant trophies that may be exported from Tanzania. You will need a permit for hippopotamus and warthog tusks, reptile skins such as python and crocodile, zebra and antelope skins, corals, Giant Clams and all other shells, dead or alive, plants including aloes and some hardwoods, and all live animals including insects.



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## THAILAND

Some of the most exotic of flowers - orchids - grow abundantly in Thailand's tropical forests. Some orchid species are endangered and international trade in all orchids is regulated. However, bringing home cut orchid flowers or orchid seedlings in a flask and live orchid plants grown in nurseries will not be a problem but you will need a permit. There may be other wildlife specimens or products offered for sale, which may include

products made of marine turtles, ivory carvings and crocodile skin products and you should remember that many of these may be illegal to bring home or may require a permit for any international trade.

## UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES AND CROWN DEPENDENCIES

The UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Gibraltar, Falkland Islands, Monserrat, St Helena and Dependencies, Pitcairn and British Indian Ocean Territory and the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey, Jersey and The Isle of Man) are not regarded as part of the EU for CITES purposes. This means that permits are required for trade in CITES-listed species between them and all countries that are Parties to CITES (including the UK).

For more information about taking wildlife products home from one of the Crown Dependencies or Overseas Territories, contact UK Animal Health's Wildlife Licensing and Registration service at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife/trade-crime/cites/index.htm>

### The most commonly seized souvenirs

- ➔ Alligator and crocodile products
- ➔ Queen Conch shells
- ➔ Coral (live or products such as necklaces, earrings and ornaments)
- ➔ Boots, bags, belts, shoes or watchstraps made of snake and lizard skins and leathers
- ➔ Traditional Asian medicines containing tiger bone, leopard, rhino horn, bear bile and musk
- ➔ Live plants, such as orchids and cacti
- ➔ Shawls of shahtoosh, leopard skin or tiger skin coats
- ➔ Turtles & tortoiseshell
- ➔ Elephant ivory and skin products
- ➔ Caviar
- ➔ Live specimens of parrots, birds of prey, scorpions, gibbons and reptiles
- ➔ Woodcarvings made from rare timber species

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Products made from Black Bear, Brown Bear (including subspecies), Polar Bear, whale, and Sea Otter require permits for international trade. In addition, handicrafts made from marine mammals (including Polar Bear, whale, Sea Otter, Walrus and fur seals) may only be legally purchased and exported if they are authentic handicrafts made by Native American artisans. Feathered handicrafts must not contain migratory bird feathers. Permits are also needed to bring coral products and leather goods made from American Alligator, caiman, and crocodile back to the EU.

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