

September 25, 2023

Steve Heapy, CEO
Jet2holidays

Via e-mail: Steve.Heapy@jet2.com

Dear Mr. Heapy:

I understand that Jet2holidays continues to sell tickets to marine parks where orcas and other dolphins are forced to perform, and therefore, I wanted to share my firsthand experience as a former senior orca trainer at marine parks in the hope that you'll conclude, as I did, that these facilities cause orcas a world of suffering and are not worthy of your support.

During my 14-year career, I worked at three different marine parks and with over 20 orcas—including with orcas now held captive at Loro Parque, one of the parks your company sells tickets to. One of these orcas, Kohana, who recently died, lived her short life being forced to perform tricks in a tank reaching a mere 40 feet at its deepest point. Given that an orca can dive to depths of 1,000 feet, I'm sure you'll agree this environment is wholly unsuited for these animals. Sadly, the orcas do not even have regular access to this biggest pool.

The stress of such intense confinement takes a great toll on these magnificent animals. It leads orcas to gnaw on anything they can, including the gates and sides of their tanks, wearing their teeth down, even breaking them. Most develop ulcers, and all of them develop infections due to their living conditions. Marine parks routinely drug animals to manage their behavior and to keep them alive in this artificial world.

In their ocean homes, orcas search for food and enjoy complex social groups, nuanced communication, and playful behavior as they swim vast distances each day. But I have witnessed that held captive in cramped, shallow tanks, they are often starved of food to force them to perform. And I have personally been caught up in the inevitable aggression that stems from their frustration and lack of enrichment, with experience of swimming with Keto, who went on to violently kill and mutilate trainer Alexis Martínez at Loro Parque on Christmas Eve 2009. Of course, orcas aren't to blame when this happens—they are the victims.

Public support of marine parks has long been declining, and fewer people than ever want to watch physically and emotionally damaged animals being treated like unwilling circus clowns. Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, and India have banned cetacean captivity, while major travel companies have stopped promoting marine parks in response to customer feedback.

I urge Jet2holidays to be on the right side of history by ending the promotion of attractions that exploit orcas for human amusement. I can assure you from my own experience, having been close to them every day for many years, that orcas and other dolphins belong in one place and one place only—the ocean.

I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards,



John Hargrove