



Puerto de la Cruz, 8th August 2018

### Thomas Cook's Mistake

At the end of a working week and in full summer vacation time, precisely on Friday, July 27, at 16.06hrs, Loro Parque was taken by complete surprise when it received an e-mail from the CEO of the British tour operator Thomas Cook, announcing that due to a change in their animal welfare policy they will cease the ticket sale to Loro Parque.

Loro Parque was even more surprised when hardly 30 minutes later it started to receive the first inquiries from the British press asking for a statement on the decision of Thomas Cook to remove from sale any attractions featuring orcas under human care.

With this scenario it was clear to us that the British tour operator had announced its unilateral decision to the British press even before it was communicated to us; and this after 45 years of an honest and satisfactory business relationship for both parties.

This decision came to us completely unexpected and without any advanced warning.

A little less than a year ago Loro Parque, on request of Thomas Cook, has been audited by Global Spirit (a company linked to the Born Free Foundation) to determine the compliance in our facilities according to the ABTA animal welfare guidelines. The inspection confirmed the 100% compliance of these standards, which is not only the highest score, but guarantees that not only the orcas but all animals at Loro Parque are kept under the highest welfare standards and the strict regulations of ABTA are fulfilled.

Therefore, we ask ourselves: what value does the ABTA certificate with 100% compliance have, if within no time a tour operator decides to finalize a long term good business relationship? Will there be any other zoological institution in the future that will accept an audit of this kind? Are the ABTA guidelines for animal welfare of any use?

In its announcement Thomas Cook states that 90% of their customers take animal welfare serious. We are more than happy to hear that since the welfare of the animals is our outmost concern however, Loro Parque in the last 45 years of cooperation has not received a single complaint or any comment of concern regarding the welfare status of the animals in our care, neither from a Thomas Cook customer nor from the tour operator itself.

Which concerns are we talking about? Unless the customers of Thomas Cook, that have chosen to visit Loro Parque, and many of them repeatedly, are watching over the same standards that Loro Parque manifests in its daily work, offering the best welfare to all the animals in our care.





The same Friday, July 27, Loro Parque was obliged to publish the following statement:

**In response to Thomas Cook's new policy on sales of attractions featuring orcas Loro Parque communicates the following:**

First of all, Loro Parque wants to publicly express its gratitude to the more than a million visitors that have come to our park with Thomas Cook during the last 45 years. In all these years we have not received a single complaint from any of them regarding the welfare of our animals.

In April 2017 Loro Parque was inspected by Global Spirit (a company linked to the Born Free Foundation) following the request of Thomas Cook, in order to determine the compliance of our facilities and procedures with the ABTA animal welfare standards. The inspection obtained the highest score (100% of compliance), which guarantees that not only the orcas, but all the animals in Loro Parque have the best welfare conditions under the strict regulations of the Association of British Tour Agents. The decision of Thomas Cook not only diminishes the value of this inspection, but also is against the animal welfare regulations of ABTA, which are the most rigorous of the world.

Thomas Cook sustains that its decision is based on scientific evidence, but fails to provide any. They also argue that 90% of their clients are concerned about animal welfare, but it does not mean that they have expressed concerns about the orcas housed at Loro Parque.

In our company not only 90% but 100% of our staff is concerned about animal welfare, and we proudly work every day to provide every single animal under our care with the outmost love and respect. That's the reason why we have obtained the maximum qualifications, not only by Global Spirit, but also by the American Humane, TÜV, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, the Iberian Association of Zoos and Aquaria, the European Association for Aquatic Mammals or the Alliance for Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. This is a clear proof of excellence in animal care, and excellence is the main reason why Loro Parque has been also honoured with the Trip Advisor's Travellers Choice Award as the best zoo in the world. There is no doubt that many of the visitors that voted to give this award to Loro Parque were Thomas Cook clients.

In fact Loro Parque is the highest decorated zoo in the world having received every single Gold Medal on regional and national level in Spain as well as the highest distinction that any company in Spain can receive: the Prince Felipe Award of Entrepreneurial Excellence.

Furthermore, Loro Parque founded in 1994 led Loro Parque Fundación which has invested until today more than 19 million US dollars in over 150 conservation projects worldwide. As a result nine parrot species have been saved from extinction and many others have improved their population in the wild.



Premio Príncipe Felipe®  
Excelencia Empresarial, 2000  
Ministerio de Economía. España



Medalla de Oro  
"Mérito Turístico, 2009"  
Consejo de Ministros.  
España



Placa de Oro  
al Mérito Turístico, 1995  
Ministerio de Comercio y  
Turismo. España



Medalla de Oro  
"Canarias 2010"  
Gobierno de Canarias



Medalla de Oro  
de la Isla de Tenerife, 2013  
Cabildo Insular  
de Tenerife



Medalla de Oro  
de la Ciudad del  
Puerto de la Cruz, 1997



Medalla de Oro  
"Wilhelm- Pfeiffer", 2013  
Universidad de Giessen  
Alemania



The decision of Thomas Cook is clearly led by anti-zoo organizations led by a minority of activists not really concerned about the animals, but just aimed in destroying the zoos and their conservation, research and educational activities. But this will not change our determination to continue working for the welfare of every single animal in this world, and for the conservation of the biodiversity in a planet threatened by the sixth extinction as has been scientifically proven. Already now with 700 million visitors in zoos worldwide it is clear that a zoo visit is a highly demanded activity which in light of the destruction of our nature and environment will become an absolute “must” in the future.

Fortunately, Loro Parque is this year welcoming more visitors than ever, and even without the partnership of Thomas Cook we will continue offering all our visitors a unique opportunity to get to know the wonders of wildlife and become part of our mission: to protect and preserve the animals and their natural habitats for future generations.

On Tuesday, July 31, Loro Parque sent a letter to the British tour operator confirming that we are willing to end the contractual agreement with Thomas Cook by August 1, 2018 if they wish.

On Thursday, August 2, Thomas Cook answered us that they do not wish to end the contractual agreement before the end of June 2019.

It is important to note that the British tour operator Thomas Cook took this decision, despite the fact that Loro Parque has all documents on animal welfare in order and up-to-date, on its own account and individually, while this kind of decision can be very harmful for all ecological institutions worldwide.

This is why we are making this case public and transparent. We want to share with you the multiple letters of support that we have received since Thomas Cook published its announcement and we ask you to read the scientific argument prepared by Dr. Javier Almunia, Director of Loro Parque Fundación, which explains in detail why our orcas or any orca under human care cannot be released.

Recently we have also learned that the multinational financial company Fosun from China holds shares of the British tour operator Thomas Cook. Amongst the many activities of this company, they are also active in the tourism sector and own leisure facilities where the interaction with cetaceans is no problem at all. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that the animals in these facilities originate from the cruel drive hunts in Taiji.

These hunts have been strongly rejected by the whole zoological community worldwide since many years and no zoological institution in Europe has ever accepted an animal from Taiji.

Finally we would like to state that Loro Parque receives this year more customers than ever and with or without the collaboration of Thomas Cook, we will continue to offer our visitors an opportunity to get to know the wonders of wildlife and make them part of our mission: protect and conserve the animals and their natural habitats for our future generations.

