



AN ENDANGERED SPECIES IS NO SOUVENIR

Help us to protect endangered species of wild fauna and flora



Federale
Overheidsdienst
FINANCIËN
Douane en Accijnzen





Travel brochure for souvenir hunters

You are going on holiday?

We wish you an excellent journey and hope you have a pleasant stay. But please allow us to look ahead and already think about the journey home... Customs will check your luggage. No problem, you suppose, as you don't intend to buy any prohibited products.

A nice souvenir? Yes, perhaps. But you don't expect customs to make a problem of that...

And yet... Every year, plenty of protected animals and plants and their derived products like furs, caviar and works of art enter Belgium illegally. Organised crime? Sometimes, yes. But very often it is tourists who, unaware of any harm, take these products home, as souvenirs. Such an ill-considered purchase may have far-reaching consequences. First of all, the trade in those products is pernicious to many protected animals and rare plants. Of course, you may expect customs to confiscate such souvenirs. And sometimes they lead to a heavy fine or even imprisonment.

Risks entailed in purchasing illegal souvenirs

- » Customs will confiscate your souvenir.
- » Fine or imprisonment.
- » You jeopardise the survival of endangered wildlife.

So think twice before you buy a souvenir made of natural material.
And in case of any doubt: don't buy it!



Let us list the major categories:

- > rainsticks and orchids
- > corals
- > ivory
- > clothing made of feline skins
- > reptile skins
- > jewellery and sea turtle shells
- > traditional Chinese medicines
- > certain shells
- > caviar
- > shawls made from the wool of the Tibetan antelope

Safe souvenir hunting

Being on the alert for illegal souvenirs does not mean that you have to stay away from all souvenir shops, workshops and cosy markets in your holiday resort. No, most of the products offered for sale do not constitute a problem. In many countries, the souvenir trade is even an important source of income for the local population. So do not hesitate to buy a nice souvenir, but do check whether it is quite kosher.

A bit of background information

As a result of poaching the population of black African rhinoceros dropped by 95% from the 70s onwards. Good news though: today, this trend seems to have shifted.

This is partially the merit of CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. This convention between 181 countries regulates the trade in endangered animals and plants. Its purpose is to prevent the extinction of endangered wildlife. The sale of more than 900 species of wild animals and plants is now prohibited worldwide. For about 34.000 species, special permits are needed. More information can be found on www.eu-wildlifetrade.org



An endangered species is no souvenir

Where and in what form are endangered animal and plant species offered for sale? These practical tips will help you in choosing the right souvenir.

Rainsticks and orchids

In South-America, rainsticks (sticks that make the sound of rain) are very popular souvenirs. They are made of a protected species of cactus. Most of those sticks are sold in Peru, Chile and Bolivia.

You can import 3 rainsticks per person without any documents. If you want to import more, you will need a permit. This also applies to the importation of wild orchids.

Orchids
Orchids are sold almost everywhere in the world. Sometimes cultivated species are sold, but occasionally also wild plants. If you have any doubts about the souvenirs made from those plants, it is best not to buy them.

©National Botanic Garden of Belgium



Rainsticks
A well-known cactus souvenir is the rainstick, i.e. a long cactus stem that makes the sound of rain when it is turned upside down. The seeds the stick is filled with make the sound of rain as they make their way through the maze of cactus spines that are pushed inwards.

©Guido Sterkendries

Corals

Almost one million sea species need a coral reef to survive. However, a number of endangered coral species are often used in jewellery and ornaments. Corals are mainly found at the Australian coasts and the countries by the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. You need a permit to be allowed to import them.

Corals
Interesting to know is that corals are composed of animals. When corals are broken off, the animals die and it takes years for the reef to recover.

©stock.xchng - M. Constant



Ivory

Watch out for dealers selling ivory carvings and jewellery, particularly in Africa and Asia.



Ivory carvings and jewellery
Elephant ivory is often used in jewellery, carvings, chopsticks and stamps. Ivory can also be taken from other animals, like walrus or hippopotami. The import of such ivory products is also subject to a license.

©Guido Sterkendries

Clothing made of feline skins

The furs, claws and teeth of felines like tigers, jaguars and cheetahs are much sought after in order to be used in these products.

As a result, these animals are endangered all over the world. You should especially be careful when travelling to Asia.

Reptile skins

Handbags, shoes, wallets, etc. can be made of skins of lizards, snakes or crocodiles.

The import of many of those products is subject to a license.



Crocodile handbags
Crocodile leather is often used in fashionable articles like wallets, handbags, boots and belts. Stuffed crocodiles in large or very small formats are offered for sale. But also the skin, the meat, the claws or even living animals are offered for sale.

©Guido Sterkendries

Jewellery and sea turtle shells

Jewellery, hair combs and sunglasses are often made from sea turtles. The import of these products is prohibited. This ban also applies to stuffed turtles that are often illegally for sale on tropical beaches of e.g. South-East-Asia.

Traditional Chinese medicines

These medicines can contain parts of endangered species like tigers, rhinoceros and leopards. Moreover, they may be dangerous to your health.

Certain shells

Large shells like giant clams and queen conchs are popular souvenirs. Giant clams, however, may only be imported with a special license. And only three queen conchs may be imported per person.



Queen conch
Large special shells like the giant clams and the queen conchs are sold all over the world. Many of those shells are sold in an unprocessed state but sometimes they are processed into ashtrays, lamps or shell compositions.

©KBIN, Thierry Hubin

Caviar

The import of all sturgeon species and their caviar is monitored. You can import up to 125 grams of caviar for personal use without a permit.

Caviar
Caviar is an outstanding example of a luxury article, but don't forget that the sturgeon is endangered with extinction in the Caspian Sea as a result of plundering. It is best to always buy caviar in a shop and always check whether the can is sealed and whether it carries a CITES-label.

©Pol Meuleneire



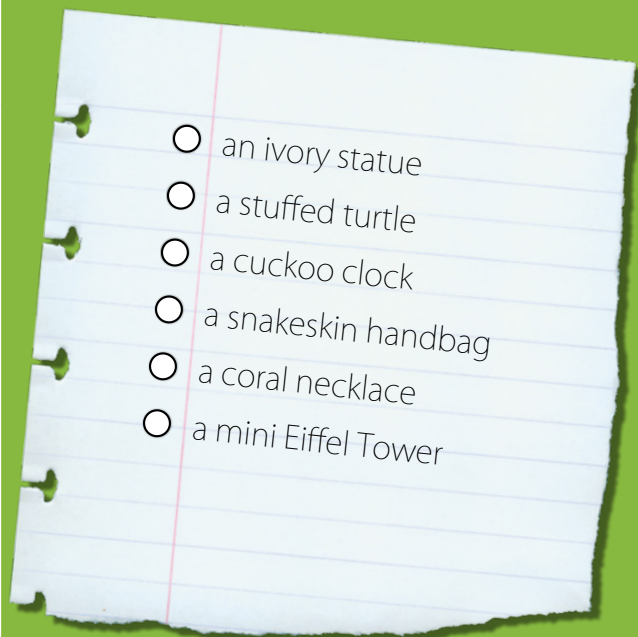
Shawls made from the wool of the Tibetan antelope

In order to make one shawl from shahtoosh (Persian word meaning "Pleasure of Kings"), poachers have to kill three Tibetan antelopes. The shahtoosh shawls are mainly sold in India. The wool of the critically endangered Tibetan antelope may not be imported into the European Union.

Returning home from a holiday, WITHOUT...

This brochure gives you a survey of popular but illegal – because threatened – souvenirs. A practical reminder when you go shopping.

But you can start practising now. Tick the souvenirs not to include in your luggage. The solution can be found below.



No problem as to the cuckoo clock or the mini Eiffel Tower. But be careful with the ivory carving, the stuffed turtle, the snakeskin handbag and the coral necklace.

Solution:

Help to protect endangered animal and plant species

Do not buy souvenirs made from endangered animals and plants. Mother Nature will be grateful. Any questions or demands for more information

can be addressed to the **CITES** unit.

Tel: +32 524 74 01 (or 21)

E-mail: cites@environment.belgium.be
www.citesinbelgium.be or www.cites.org

Please contact the police, customs or **TRAFFIC** when you come across suspect or illegal practices during your holiday. **TRAFFIC** is a joint programme of WWF and IUCN (the World Conservation Unit) that monitors the trade in wild animals and plants.

TRAFFIC Europe

Tel: +32 2 343 82 58

E-mail: contact@traffic-europe.com
www.traffic.org

