

Hong Kong-based airline adopts baby rhino in support of Investec Rhino Lifeline project

Cathay Pacific has adopted an orphan baby rhino as part of its ongoing partnership with the Investec Rhino Lifeline (IRL) project. Lula is one of many injured and orphaned baby rhinos in South Africa in need of care and rehabilitation, based at the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre (HESC).



Baby orphan rhino Lula. Image source: www.hesc.co.za

The IRL project, in partnership with Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary, ensures the orphan baby rhinos receive daily care before being safely released back into the wild. As part of its commitment to the conservation initiative, Cathay Pacific will provide funding to IRL to cover the costs of relocation and transportation, veterinary care, feeding, security, and rehabilitation for Lula.

“The decline in South Africa’s rhino population, as a result of poaching, is currently one of the biggest conservation challenges the country faces,” says Ashish Kapur, Cathay Pacific country manager for South Africa. “Thanks to initiatives like the Investec Rhino Lifeline, these numbers have dropped slightly in recent years, but there is still a lot of work to be done to eradicate the problem of poaching completely. We are proud to be working with trusted partners and supporters to make a difference.”

Collaboration with celebrity influencer Ma Weidu

Cathay Pacific also worked with the IRL project to fly Chinese influencer and celebrity with an online talk show that has a following of almost 63-million online viewers, Ma Weidu, to South Africa earlier this year. Weidu joined WildAid in 2016, and uses his platform and influence to discourage collectors from purchasing all ivory products.

With Weidu's help, Cathay Pacific, in association with the IRL project and all partners and sponsors, hopes to reach more people with the message, 'When the buying stops, the killing can too', debunking the myths surrounding the possession of rhino horn in China, where it is often seen as a symbol of wealth and prized for its medicinal value.

"As a long-haul carrier based in China and one of the main transportation hubs between China and South Africa, Cathay Pacific feels strongly about the need to protect all indigenous wildlife. It is important that we take a stand against the practice of rhino poaching to ensure the protection of these precious animals," says Kapur.

"Cathay Pacific has also banned the transportation of hunting trophies, shark fin, ivory and ivory products on its flights, adding another barrier for poachers."

The Hong Kong-based international airline is a signatory of the United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce Buckingham Palace Declaration and a member of the Wildlife Taskforce under IATA's Environment Committee.

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