# UK trophy hunting imports under pressure as £116,000 leopard hunts spark outcry



Holidays to hunt endangered leopards are being marketed online for staggering sums, with one package priced at £116,000. As interest in trophy hunting remains vibrant, a promised UK ban on the imports of hunting trophies remains stagnant, raising serious concerns among animal welfare advocates and conservationists alike.

Big-game hunting companies are publicly offering holiday packages, some even featuring auctions for the right to kill exotic animals like leopards, whose populations have been dwindling across Africa. Several firms provide an extensive line-up of hunting trips, featuring “extras” for affluent clients, which include the opportunity to hunt elephants, lions, and cheetahs alongside leopards. A troubling report from the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting exposes the brutal methods employed, such as using live bait to lure leopards and deliberately setting fires to drive them from their hiding spots.

The current state of leopard populations remains alarming. Although exact numbers are elusive, estimates suggest that they could have declined by as much as 90% over the past half-century, with zoonotic pressures leaving populations at roughly 50,000 worldwide. In 2023 alone, 709 leopards' body parts, including skins and skulls, were exported from Africa. Alarmingly, four of these trophies entered the UK, underscoring the persistent allure of trophy hunting for some, despite rising concerns about its impact on conservation.

The UK has seen increasing political will to ban trophy hunting imports, with both Conservative and Labour parties pledging to take action. A public consultation conducted in 2020 yielded overwhelming support for such a ban, with 84% of respondents endorsing the initiative. However, progress has been frustratingly slow. Notably, the proposed Animals Abroad Bill, aimed at enforcing a ban, was abandoned by Boris Johnson's government in 2022. Most recently, a private member's bill from Conservative MP David Reed is poised for a second reading next month, and anticipation is mounting about whether the government will lend its support.

Prominent figures within the animal welfare movement, including Joanna Lumley and Chris Packham, have voiced strong opposition to trophy hunting, advocating for swift governmental action. Lumley has publicly stated the urgency of prioritising a ban, arguing that British leadership is required to halt this violent practice. The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting's founder, Eduardo Gonçalves, passionately points out, "Leopards are shy, intelligent, and iconic animals... yet they’re being massacred for bragging rights." Such sentiments resonate with a public increasingly disillusioned by the delay in enacting meaningful legislation.

Internationally, the situation remains complex. The US was the largest importer of leopard trophies last year, with 356 recorded exports, followed closely by South Africa and Hungary. The ongoing trade in hunting takes a different perspective; for instance, Zimbabwe's wildlife authorities announced plans to pivot toward markets in Eastern countries in response to European bans on trophy imports. This move highlights the difficulties many African nations face in balancing economic benefits against conservation efforts.

Despite assurances from the UK government that a ban will eventually materialise—from a mandate to the expressed intent to follow through—the path forward is fraught with obstacles. Competing arguments have emerged, such as those from the Institute of Economic Affairs, which asserts that the ban could inadvertently harm conservation efforts by removing funding generated by regulated trophy hunting.

With public sentiment firmly against trophy hunting and the growing recognition of leopards as vulnerable under international law, the call for a ban has never held more weight. As negotiations and legislation continue to unfold, the question remains whether the UK government will act in a timely manner to fulfil its commitments to protect endangered species. The momentum for change is palpable, yet until decisive action is taken, the future of leopards hangs in the balance, overshadowed by the shadow of trophy hunting.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/trophy-hunt-leopards-animal-welfare-b2757840.html), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/importing-of-hunting-trophies-banned-to-protect-worlds-threatened-species)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/trophy-hunt-leopards-animal-welfare-b2757840.html), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-03-17/trophy-hunting-should-importing-hunted-animal-parts-be-banned)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/zimbabwe-look-east-trophy-hunting-export-markets-2024-05-28/), [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/banning-trophy-hunting-imports-from-africa-to-uk-could-harm-conservation-efforts-thinktank-warns-13194029)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/17/bill-banning-import-of-hunting-trophies-into-uk-passed-by-mps), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/21/resurrect-bill-to-ban-selfish-imports-of-hunting-trophies-to-uk-labour-urges)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-03-17/trophy-hunting-should-importing-hunted-animal-parts-be-banned), [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/banning-trophy-hunting-imports-from-africa-to-uk-could-harm-conservation-efforts-thinktank-warns-13194029)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/trophy-hunt-leopards-animal-welfare-b2757840.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/zimbabwe-look-east-trophy-hunting-export-markets-2024-05-28/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/zimbabwe-look-east-trophy-hunting-export-markets-2024-05-28/), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/importing-of-hunting-trophies-banned-to-protect-worlds-threatened-species)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/trophy-hunt-leopards-animal-welfare-b2757840.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/zimbabwe-look-east-trophy-hunting-export-markets-2024-05-28/> - In May 2024, Zimbabwe's wildlife authorities announced plans to explore trophy hunting export markets in Eastern countries, following bans by European nations like Belgium and the UK on importing hunting trophies from endangered species. Fulton Mangwanya, director-general of Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife, emphasized the need to find alternative markets, particularly in the East, to sustain the economic benefits of trophy hunting. The move aims to address the challenges posed by declining European markets due to conservation concerns. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/zimbabwe-look-east-trophy-hunting-export-markets-2024-05-28/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/importing-of-hunting-trophies-banned-to-protect-worlds-threatened-species> - In December 2021, the UK government announced a ban on importing hunting trophies from thousands of endangered and threatened species, including lions, rhinos, elephants, and polar bears. This ban, considered one of the toughest globally, aims to protect nearly 7,000 species and supports long-term species conservation efforts. The decision followed a public consultation where 86% of respondents supported further action to protect endangered animals from trophy hunting. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/importing-of-hunting-trophies-banned-to-protect-worlds-threatened-species?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/17/bill-banning-import-of-hunting-trophies-into-uk-passed-by-mps> - In March 2023, the UK House of Commons approved a bill banning the import of hunting trophies from thousands of species, including lions, elephants, and giraffes. The legislation, supported by MPs across the political spectrum, aims to strengthen the conservation of endangered species and fulfill a 2019 Conservative election manifesto commitment. The bill was set to move to the House of Lords for further debate and potential enactment into law. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/mar/17/bill-banning-import-of-hunting-trophies-into-uk-passed-by-mps?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-03-17/trophy-hunting-should-importing-hunted-animal-parts-be-banned> - In March 2023, the UK House of Commons approved a bill banning the import of hunting trophies from thousands of species, including lions, elephants, and giraffes. The legislation, supported by MPs across the political spectrum, aims to strengthen the conservation of endangered species and fulfill a 2019 Conservative election manifesto commitment. The bill was set to move to the House of Lords for further debate and potential enactment into law. ([itv.com](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-03-17/trophy-hunting-should-importing-hunted-animal-parts-be-banned?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://news.sky.com/story/banning-trophy-hunting-imports-from-africa-to-uk-could-harm-conservation-efforts-thinktank-warns-13194029> - In August 2024, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a pro-free market thinktank, warned that banning the import of hunting trophies to the UK could harm African conservation efforts. The IEA argued that safari hunters bringing animal parts back to the UK can help fund conservation projects and that a ban would be at odds with the UK's membership in the World Trade Organization. This perspective highlights the ongoing debate between conservationists and proponents of regulated trophy hunting. ([news.sky.com](https://news.sky.com/story/banning-trophy-hunting-imports-from-africa-to-uk-could-harm-conservation-efforts-thinktank-warns-13194029?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/21/resurrect-bill-to-ban-selfish-imports-of-hunting-trophies-to-uk-labour-urges> - In September 2023, the UK Labour Party urged ministers to resurrect a bill banning the import of body parts of endangered animals hunted overseas. The Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill, which had cross-party support, was blocked in the House of Lords due to a small group of peers tabling over 60 amendments, causing the bill to run out of time. Labour emphasized the need to pass the legislation to prevent the UK from being complicit in the trophy hunting trade. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/21/resurrect-bill-to-ban-selfish-imports-of-hunting-trophies-to-uk-labour-urges?utm_source=openai))