

### LOCATION

Zürichbergstr. 221, CH-8044  
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URL: <http://www.zoo.ch>

### KEY WORDS

Big cat, predator

### DESCRIPTION

The Gir Forest in the Indian State Gujarat was a reference for the Indian Lion exhibit at Zoo Zurich. Not only do the natural habitat of the lions, but also the cultural environment of the local people serve as themes for the design and interpretation of the exhibit.

An existing building was redesigned for the indoor enclosures for lions, otters and birds, and for keeper facilities. A visitor space with a view into the indoor lion exhibit and an interpretation area was also included in the redesign. The front of the building is a visitor space, while its back side stretches along a slope. A netted exhibit for various species such as small cats, chipmunks or birds is attached to the right side of the building. Outdoor exhibits for otters and lions are linked to its left side. The outdoor lion exhibit stretches along the slope.

### SIZE

Total reconstructed area: 6000 m<sup>2</sup>; Outside Enclosure: 1760 m<sup>2</sup>; Inside Enclosure: 220 m<sup>2</sup>; Outside Visitor Area: 1630 m<sup>2</sup>; Inside Visitor Area: 120 m<sup>2</sup>; Vegetation and Service Areas: 2270 m<sup>2</sup>.

Space allocation in square meters:

use	indoors		outdoors		total exhibit
	accessible	total	accessible	total	
animals	120	120	1,760	1,760	1,880
visitors	120	120	1,630	1,630	1,750
others	100	100	2,270	2,270	2,370
total	340	340	5,660	5,660	6,000



Asiatic Lion (1) ©Monika Fiby, 2009

### ANIMALS

Family	Species	Common Name	Capacity
Estrildidae	<i>Padra oryzivora</i>	Java sparrow	10
Felidae	<i>Panthera leo persica</i>	Asiatic lion	1,3 + young
Mustelidae	<i>Aonyx cinerea</i>	Asian small clawed otters	1,1 + young

### COSTS

Swiss Francs 7,500,000  
The costs include the building and the outdoor facilities around the building for Asian lions, otters and birds as well as all exhibitions and interpretation.

### OPENING DATE

28 June 2006

### DESIGN

Beginning:

- Design and landscape architecture: Vetsch, Nipkow, Partner AG, Zurich
- Architecture: Mark Ryf, Zurich
- Structural Engineer: APT Ing. GmbH, Zurich
- Electrical Engineer: Schmidinger and Rosasco AG, Zurich
- Plumbing: Schudel and Eberle, Winterthur





**Overview of zoo, with the lion exhibit complex highlighted in pink. ©Zoo Zurich, 2015**

- Heating, Air Conditioning: Huwyler and Koch, Zurich
- Exhibition Design: Formwerk AG, Zurich

### CONSTRUCTION

Beginning: April 2005

- Building: Halter Bauunternehmung AG
- Heating: F. Heusser AG
- Artificial Rock: Huber Straub AG
- Plumbing: Preisig AG
- Gardening: Matter Gartenbau

### PLANTS

Plants and bushes with large yellowish leaves, dry grasses and burnt looking ground simulate the dry forest with lava soil. The lava, soil, sand, gravel and rock substrates are used for both indoor and outdoor



**Indian Lion Outdoor Exhibit (24) ©Monika Fiby, 2009**

enclosures. The ground is hilly with plenty of open scrubland.

The [plant list](#) specifies the Latin names of the plants used for this exhibit.

### FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS

The outdoor exhibit is always accessible for the lions, except during daily maintenance by the keepers. It offers various substrates, running water, sunny and shady places and incentives for patrolling. Pieces of meat are hung on ropes and put into boxes in the lion exhibit. The boxes open randomly on a timer, so the lions get continual enrichment without becoming habituated. The lions are not fed regularly for the same reason.



**Indian Lion Visitor Lookout: Visitor viewpoints are themed to reflect the structures in the Gir forest ©Monika Fiby, 2009**



**Cave Drawings and Peek Holes (14) ©Monika Fiby, 2009**





**Elevated Visitor Lookout ©Monika Fiby, 2009**

### FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS

The Indian Lion facilities have a kitchen and a storage area. A shift door system operated from inside the service area ensures the safety and security of the keepers. Keepers can view the indoor animal enclosure from the service area through secure meshed or barred hatches. From the service area, keepers also have access to the electrical and water maintenance.

### FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS

The Indian Lion exhibit has an indoor space and an outdoor shelter for interpretation. A seating area and self-service machines in front of the building offer picnic opportunities. The indoor visitor area is themed to replicate the lion's habitat by, for example, using artificial rock seating and artificial rock barriers. This adds to the immersive feeling of the exhibit. There are plenty of interactive signs spread around the exhibit and the visitor area, which encourage visitors to become engaged with the lion, its habitat and its conservation.

The lion exhibit is stretched along a slope and offers views from various angles and levels.



**Keeper's Kitchen ©Monika Fiby, 2009**



**Indian Lion Exhibition ©Monika Fiby, 2009**

### INTERPRETATION

The buildings were constructed and painted to reflect the Indian tradition around the Gir Forest, even using Indian lettering. The thematic interpretation is made clear throughout the exhibit, and can be seen in the planting representing a dry forest and the artificial rock seating.

More formal interpretation is featured in the visitor area. Here, graphics illustrate how the relationship between man and lion is one of fear and reverence across times and continents. Lion-related artefacts from various cultures - European, Mediterranean, African and Asian - are interpreted in German, French and English. The story of extinction is illustrated and finishes with an electronic count of the present increasing numbers of man and decreasing numbers of lions in the wild.



**Service Area Shift Door Levers ©Monika Fiby, 2009**



**Population Count: Humans and Lions ©Monika Fiby, 2009**

### MANAGEMENT

The lions always have access to their outdoor exhibit and an indoor separation enclosure and rarely use their indoor exhibit. The indoor exhibit is mostly used by the tigers which also have an outdoor exhibit and an indoor separation enclosure and the birds which also have their own aviary.

The keepers enter the exhibits once a day for cleaning, feeding and providing enrichment.

### RESEARCH

Zoo Zurich supported habitat research in Kuno, with the goal of reintroducing wild lions in this region.

### CONSERVATION

For the indoor facilities, an existing building was renovated and newly insulated.

Zoo Zurich supported the development of a new protected nature reserve in the habitat of the lions in India.

### LOCAL RESOURCES

Local companies were contracted for design and construction.



**Visitor Shelter with Exhibition ©Monika Fiby, 2009**



**Lion Enclosure Security Door ©Monika Fiby, 2009**



**Many Languages ©Monika Fiby, 2009**