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Wild Times at Disney's Animal Kingdom!

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A NEW SPECIES OF THEME PARK



Animal Kingdom "cast members."

By Cindy Lowe

Animals were always important in the life of Walt Disney. "Some of the most fascinating people I've ever met were animals," he once said. In the early years, his artist's pencil chose to give form to the whimsical animal characters who lived in his imagination. Walt Disney's nephew and now Vice Chairman of the Walt Disney Company, Roy E. Disney, says that when the major film studios of the 1930s crowded over their "stable of stars," Disney's "stable" literally contained animals: Mickey,

— "Nature is perhaps the greatest storyteller of all. The unpredictability of animals will take center stage. Every trip will be different; every journey, a different story," Eisner says. —

Donald, Goofy and Pluto. In Disney's first full-length feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, artists depicted animals as cuddly little forest friends. *Bambi* was colored in a more realistic tone; the drawings reflected years of studying animals' movements and behaviors. "Fifty years before *The Lion King*, *Bambi* was all about the 'circle of life,'" Disney comments. In 1994, *The Lion King* "harkened back to *Bambi* and how strongly we Homo sapiens are drawn to animals," according to Disney.

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The 145-foot-tall Tree of Life stands at the heart of Safari Village.

With that in mind, it seemed natural that the new Disney theme park would be about animals. "Animal Kingdom is the culmination of our fascination and love and respect for the world of animals," says Michael Eisner, Chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company.

"Nature is perhaps the greatest storyteller of all. The unpredictability of animals will take center stage. Every trip will be different; every journey, a different story," Eisner says.

"Disney's Animal Kingdom is like the animal world: It will live and grow!" Disney adds.

Embark on a fascinating journey of exploration and adventure. Begin by passing through the threshold of Disney's Animal Kingdom into a peaceful oasis. Wandering paths lead explorers into lush, green gardens, past waterfalls and through rocky grottoes to

discover the tufted deer, anteaters, two-toed sloths, otters, colorful macaws and scarlet ibis that abide there.

Adventurers continuing their passage in the midst of the jungle have no need of a compass. An astonishing sight looms up leading expeditions to the clearing. The great, towering Tree of Life beckons travelers across Discovery River to Safari Village.

At this island crossroads, get acquainted with Earth's smallest and least understood creatures that live under the roots of the Tree of Life: insects. As honorary bugs, guests see the world from a bug's point of view with the help of "bug eyes" in "It's Tough to Be a Bug." This 3D special effects presentation involves the audience in surprising and hilarious capers.

"The bugs had their turn!" says a smiling Earl Bradley, whose family from Waynesville, North Carolina, was enthusiastic

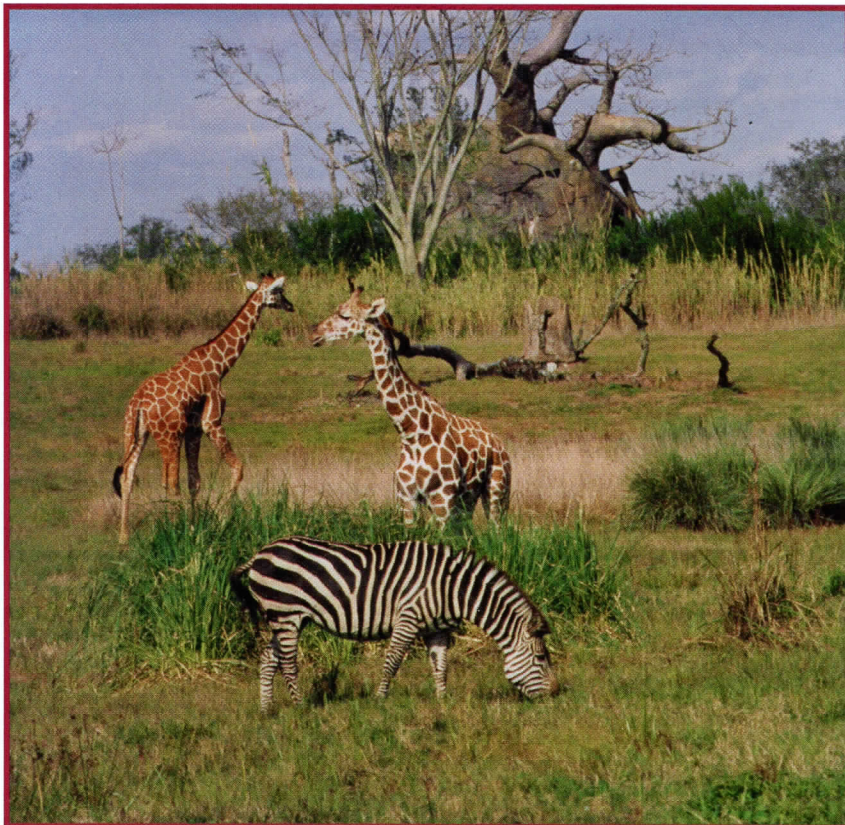
about the show. "Everybody in our row put their feet up!" he exclaims.

After this lighthearted show, take a few moments to examine the solemn beauty of the artists' touch on the majestic 145-foot-tall Tree of Life. Some 325 animal forms emerge out of its gnarled roots and sturdy trunk. Beneath its 160-foot-wide leafy canopy live red kangaroos, deer, otters and exotic birds.

A Discovery River Boat takes on passengers at Safari Village. Voyagers are launched into a peaceful, scenic river ride around the island where they encounter unusual animals, including a 30-foot iguanodon! But aren't these giant reptiles extinct?

Wait a minute, a crazy paleontologist, Grant Seeker, just might have succeeded with his plan to save one of these colossal prehistoric lizards from destruction. It must have escaped his research lab.

Thrill to the sight of real, free-roaming antelope, giraffes, zebras, rhinos, ostriches, elephants, hippos, lions, among many other creatures roaming the savannah. And join in on a wild chase after dangerous game poachers.



By way of a trans-dimensional Time-Rover, Seeker sends unsuspecting time-travelers plunging into the Cretaceous Period to snatch a dinosaur from the jaws of extinction. Bringing them perilously close to an end themselves, they barely escape the impending crash of a fiery asteroid! And he's continuing this course of action every day!

Just as the earth shook under the dinosaurs' feet 65 million years ago, feel their jarring presence again in Countdown to Extinction in DinoLand, U.S.A. This lurching, twisting thrill ride sends passengers careening through a dark, prehistoric forest full of "living, breathing" dinosaurs.

"I loved it! It was shaky!" exclaims excited 7-year-old Jimmy McNerney of Bridgeport, Connecticut. He was impressed with the big dinosaur that was eating the little dinosaur.

"This is his third time on, and the first time he saw anything!" teases his mother Norma McNerney, who, with the rest of her family, enjoyed the special effects, too.

For a calmer look at these ancient creatures, stand in awe of their stature at The Field Museum. Guests can examine actual skeletons and study how they were excavated.

Tickle the funny bone of a triceratops or brontosaurus at a paleontological dig in The Boneyard, a playground for kids of all

ages. But, watch out for the T-rex—he's bad to the bone.

Swing over to Journey into Jungle Book on the edge of Asia. Relive the Disney animated classic through this funny, live-action stage musical that takes Mowgli the man-cub on jungle adventures with Baloo the bear, King Louie the orangutan, and other animal friends.

But Mowgli learns that life is not always carefree when he encounters the fierce Bengal tiger Shere Kahn, and curiously discovers the female of his own species.

In Asia, Flights of Wonder features free-flying birds. Young treasure-seeking Luke learns from the wise Phoenix that valuing our flighted friends is greater than any treasure.

The presentation showcases the natural talents of at least 20 different species of birds and teaches their diversities.

Caravan with fellow pilgrims to the East African port village of Harambe, which means "coming together." This town of Arab-influence and Swahili culture is the departure point for the Kilimanjaro Safaris. Adventurers take an exciting ride through a forest, across rivers and into the African savannah.

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The Schwartz and Hogan families of Hollywood, Florida, enjoyed the safari. Lindsey, 6, liked the giraffes, saying, "They're fun."

Monica, 13, said she liked the rickety bridge and having the animals so close. "They're not in cages. It's real!"

Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail is next. Visitors join research students, compiling field data in their study of various African species.

But the highlight of the tour is having an opportunity to meet members of a lowland gorilla family through an observation window. A dominant male, two females, and two male offspring live in this habitat.

Stand quietly. Gorillas are timid and are easily shooed away by loud noises.

One of the juvenile males—a 3-year-old—is under a bush foraging in the grass. Selectively, he chooses berries for a snack. Then, to the delight of his audience, he waltzes across in front of them to roll and spin and frolic in his bedding nest.

Animal Kingdom

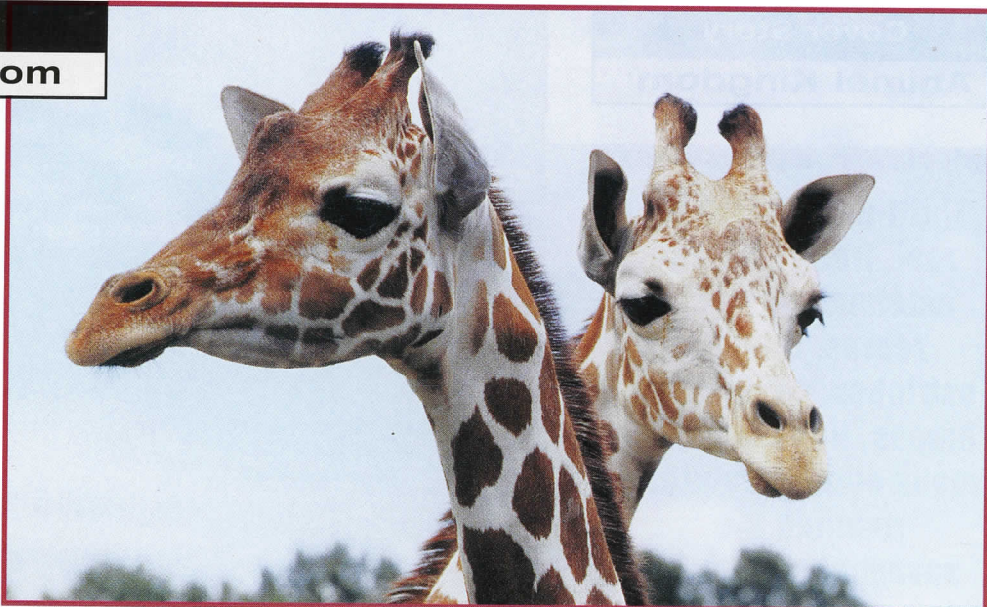
On the other side of the suspension bridge, another group of delighted observers watch two gorillas playing and climbing on rocks.

"They were cool!" says Samantha Feliz, 7, of Bloomfield, New Jersey, who had previously seen gorillas in pictures.

Famed primatologist Jane Goodall says that the natural habitat here at Gorilla Falls "almost appears to be in the wild."

She says she can use her binoculars to view more closely these gentle primates. "The people get a very real experience. [The gorillas] aren't cooped up in a tiny cage. I think it's wonderful!"

Nearby, guests board the Eastern Star Railroad for Wildlife Express. This picturesque, historic steam train—reminiscent of British railroading in far-off colonies—appears to be well-used by the natives: old worn suitcases, trunks, ancient bicycles, crates and old washtubs are



strapped to the rooftops of the cars, giving it an "out of India" look.

This welcome chance to relax gives visitors a backstage overview of modern animal care facilities and takes them to Conservation Station.

Throughout Disney's new park, which opened on April 22, Earth Day, the underlying theme is one of nurturing our love for animals and encouraging a sincere concern for their welfare—and

nowhere else is it emphasized more than at Animal Kingdom.

Upon arrival, meet and get acquainted with baby animals and talk with veterinarians about their care and treatment. Become more intimately involved with unusual creatures, such as the boa constrictor or the kinkajou, or the more familiar opossum, lop-eared rabbit or great-horned owl, through demonstrations given frequently throughout the day. Bond with friendly domestic animals in the Affection Section.



Cover Story

Animal Kingdom

At Conservation Station, humans explore the challenges and rewards of sharing this planet with other species. The greatest danger to animals is Man, but also Man is the greatest hope for their survival. As Jane Goodall says, "Animal species are vanishing. Join the fight to preserve them—for their sake and ours."

After a fun and fulfilling journey into times past and faraway lands, come home to a summer camp in the Adirondacks. In this woodland retreat, catch up with Mickey and his friends having vacation fun at camp Minnie-Mickey.

Follow the song of Pocahontas floating with the colors of the wind and sit with her at the roots of Grandmother Willow. The young Indian maiden learns much from the animals in the forest by the teachings of this wise, old tree.

In "Colors of the Wind, Friends from the Animal Forest," a stage presentation with an actress and real animals, discover that the "protector of the forest" is you.

The mighty roar of the king of beasts calls the animal world into the "circle of life." From high atop Pride Rock, Simba, the Lion King, dominates over the "Festival of the Lion King."

A theatrical troupe consists of singers in ornate African tribal robes, trapeze-swinging, trampoline-bouncing acrobats costumed as monkeys, and a brightly plumed pair of bird dancers. The entertainers wow the audience with their exhilarating excitement and pageantry.

"It's fantastic! I've never seen anything like it!" exclaims Helen Button of Suffolk, England. "It was colorful and well put together. It looked exactly like the film!"

"And the music was good, as well," agrees her teen-age daughter, Rebecca.

After a full day of excitement, wonder and joy at seeing many exotic places and real animals, Suzanne Richardson of Morehead City, North Carolina, asks her 2-year-old daughter Holly, "What was your favorite thing about Animal Kingdom?"

Her tiny voice replies, "Mickey."

Some things never change.

For more information on Animal Kingdom or any other Disney theme park, call (407) W-DISNEY. ■



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