

London Zoo



London Zoo or **London Zoological Gardens** is the world's oldest scientific zoo. It was opened in London, in 1828, and was originally intended to be used as a collection for scientific studying. In 1831 or 1832, the animals of the Tower of London menagerie were transferred to the zoo's collection. It was opened to the public in 1847. Today, it houses a collection of 673 species of animals, with 19,289 individuals, making it one of the largest collections in the United Kingdom.

History

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) was established by Sir Stamford Raffles and Sir Humphry Davy in 1826, who obtained the land for the zoo and had seen the plans before Raffles died. After his death, the third Marquis of Lansdowne took over the project and supervised the building of the first animal houses. The zoo opened on 27 April in 1828 to the fellows of the Society. The Society was granted a Royal Charter in 1829 by King George IV, and in 1847 the zoo opened to the public to aid funding. As well as being the first scientific zoo, ZSL London Zoo also opened the first reptile house (1849), first public aquarium (1853), first insect house (1881) and the first children's zoo (1938). In 1902, Dr Peter Chalmers Mitchell was appointed a secretary of the Society. He set about a major reorganisation of the buildings and enclosures of the zoo, bringing many of the animals out into the open.

After the beginning of the Second World War, London Zoo was closed multiple times for over a week. On 27 September 1940, high explosive bombs damaged some of the enclosures in the zoo. Animals were not harmed during the incidents, although a zebra, a female ass, and her foal escaped from the zoo during the bombings. For safety reasons, all venomous animals were killed. During the war, wounded men were reportedly let into London Zoo for free.

In the 1980s London Zoo housed 8,000 animals of more than 900 species, and in the 1990s the zoo possessed 7,000 animals of 850 species. Although this vast collection was part of the zoo's appeal, it may also have been one of the main causes of its financial problems. The zoo also suffered dwindling visitor numbers. However, when it was announced that London Zoo would close in 1991, a swell of public support in visitors and donations allowed the zoo to continue its work.

Areas and attractions

The 36 acres that London Zoo covers consist of three large areas of gardens all linked together by tunnels and bridges. It has a collection of nearly 750 different species of animals. They are exhibited in numerous different exhibit areas. These include Asian Big Cats, Blackburn (Bird) Pavilion, B.U.G.S, Giants of the Galapagos, Gorilla Kingdom, Komodo Dragons. There are also Australian-themed exhibits, an indoor Rainforest Life exhibition, and a new Penguin Beach which opened in the spring of 2011, and contains England's biggest penguin pool.

The zoo is split up into different sections such as the African Bird Safari, Fruit Bat Forest, the Butterfly Paradise, and the Reptile House, so there's no telling what type of animal species you'll come across during your visit to the zoo.

If you're interested in learning more about marine life, the Zoo's aquarium is home to angelfish, stingrays, seahorses and even piranhas, while the Reptile House is home to crocodiles, rattlesnakes, chameleons and even poison dart frogs!

If you want to learn more about exotic-type animal species, there's a Land of the Lions exhibition, as well as other sections like the Tiger Territory, the Gorilla Kingdom and Into Africa, which houses zebras, hippos, and even a high-viewing platform so you can see the giraffes face-to-face.

Children will especially enjoy the Animal Adventure section, which is a petting zoo area that includes sheep, donkeys, rabbits and pigs, just to name a few.

Research & Educational Centre

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is an organisation devoted to research and education, the worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats.

ZSL's Institute of Zoology offers research training through PhD studentships, and hosts undergraduate and masters level research projects conducted as part of MSc courses and courses at other institutions.

Secondary school students can join ZSL live online, from classrooms or from home, and it will give the opportunity to meet experts. Via Zoom, students are given the opportunity to meet ZSL early-career scientists, exploring careers in animal husbandry and research. The experts share their experiences and insights, and give students the chance to ask their own questions. There are free interactive, online chats that run during Biology Week (October) and British Science Week (March) each year.

ZSL London Zoo has a range of online resources available to download and use before, during and after a visit to the zoo. Some of the resources are for the pupils to use and some are for the accompanying adults.

Notable former animals

Throughout its history, the zoo has had many well-known residents. These may have been scientifically important individuals or simply beloved by the public.

Obaysch was the first hippopotamus to be seen in Europe since the Roman Empire, and the first in England since prehistoric times. The hippo arrived at London Zoo in May 1850 as a gift from the Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt in exchange for some greyhounds and deerhounds. Obaysch led to a doubling of the zoo's visitors that year.

Winnipeg the Bear (or Winnie) was an American black bear given to the zoo in 1914 by a Canadian lieutenant, Harry Colebourn. A. A. Milne visited the zoo with his son Christopher Robin, and the boy was so enamoured with the bear that Milne wrote the famous series of books for him entitled *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

One of the zoo's most famous giant pandas, Chi Chi, arrived in 1958. She immediately became the star attraction at London Zoo. As the only giant panda in the west she was the inspiration of Peter Scott's design for the World Wildlife Fund logo.

Location and travel options for visitors

London Zoo is situated at the northern edge of Regent's Park, on the boundary line between the City of Westminster and the borough of Camden (the Regent's Canal runs through it). That's why the zoo is sometimes called Regent's Zoo.

Individuals wishing to reach London Zoo by public transport can make use of a range of bus services in the local area, with full details of times and stops provided by Transport for London. A number of London Underground Tube stations can be found in the vicinity of Regent's Park and provide a swift and easy way for travellers to get to the zoo (Regent's Park, Warren Street, Baker Street, etc). Finally, travellers looking for a relaxed and unique way to get to the Zoo might like to consider arranging their travel with the London Waterbus Company, which offers drop-off and pick-up from the main entrance.