

Press release

A topsy-turvy world at Zoo and Tierpark Berlin

2020 inventory: Berlin's zoos take stock of the Covid-19 year

Following a hugely successful 2019, the world turned upside down last year for Berlin's zoos – as it did for many people and businesses around the globe. Celebrity panda brothers Pit and Paule enjoyed their long-awaited first outing without an adoring public, and polar bear teen Hertha played in front of empty stands when Zoo and Tierpark Berlin closed for six long weeks in the spring of 2020.

Not only did the year-on-year increase in overall visitor numbers take a turn with the pandemic, the Zoo and Tierpark suddenly experienced a bit of a role reversal. At Zoo Berlin, traditionally a tourist magnet in the heart of the busy City West area with no lack of visitors to complain about, a ghostly emptiness hung over the facility even after it reopened on 28 April. But out in the east, the Tierpark, which has always come second to the smaller but far more central Zoo in terms of visitor numbers, was impacted far less by the worldwide pandemic. While short journey times and plenty of tourists in the western city centre was previously an advantage for the Zoo, it was during this crisis that the Tierpark's special strengths became apparent: extensive grounds and a high number of loyal regulars who are committed to the beloved attraction in good times and, especially, in bad.

“The total operating costs for Zoo, Tierpark and Aquarium Berlin amount to around €140,000 a day,” says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. “Due to the lack of visitors, we are now facing revenue losses in the tens of millions – almost half of our expected income. This has made the wonderful support we've received from the Berlin Senate, but also from many private individuals and companies, all the more important. I have been personally very moved by the numerous donations – an expression of the solidarity and trust people place in us and our important work. My heartfelt thanks go out to all our supporters.”

Despite the difficult circumstances, two openings were celebrated (albeit on a small scale) last year: Tierpark Berlin's historic Alfred Brehm building reopened with a brand-new look as the Rainforest House, and the first part of the new African landscape was also inaugurated, in the presence of Berlin's Senator for Economics Ramona Pop. During 2021, too, there has been no lack of activity at the Zoo and Tierpark. Four large-scale construction projects are currently proceeding apace thanks to pre-acquired funds. The Zoo's new-and-improved Predator House will welcome guests as early as summer 2021, while the Tierpark's new Himalayan habitat is scheduled to open in the spring of 2022. Heavy construction machinery is also hard at work on the building sites for the new Rhino House at the Zoo and the former Pachyderm House at the Tierpark. The latter will be the site of Europe's most modern

elephant house, which is scheduled to be finished by 2023 and will form the centrepiece of an extensive savannah-like landscape populated by giraffes, zebras and antelopes.

Zoo and Tierpark are dependent on financial support to enable further improvements to be made to the habitats of other animals. The next major project will be a new Primate House at the Zoo. Baby female gorilla Tilla is the poster child for a donation campaign currently running at www.zoo-berlin.de/gorillatilla.

2020 in facts & figures

Zoo & Aquarium Berlin

2,267,398 visitors (2019: 3,729,999 visitors)

20,892 animals in total

1,115 different species

Tierpark Berlin

1,220,166 visitors (2019: 1,726,143 visitors)

7,874 animals in total

634 different species

- Zoo, Tierpark and Aquarium Berlin were closed during the first lockdown in spring 2020 from 17 March. The Zoo and Tierpark reopened on 28 April, while the Aquarium stayed closed until 27 June 2020.
- Aquarium Berlin was forced to close for a second time from 2 November 2020 to 12 March 2021 and is currently offering time-slot visits for Aquarium annual pass holders only.
- Donations increased hugely. During the “coronavirus winter” of 2020/2021, the sum of donations doubled compared to the previous December/January (€900,000 as opposed to €450,000).