



AFRICAN ELEPHANT CROSSING

CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

African Elephant Crossing

A Living Classroom

Majestic, amazing and in need of our help, African elephants coexist with people and other living things in a delicate balance for survival. Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is improving the future for wildlife by creating compelling visitor experiences such as African Elephant Crossing to connect people with wildlife and illustrate how balanced decisions and the sustainable use of resources can affect how people, elephants and other wildlife can live together.

Elephants are fascinating creatures that captivate zoo visitors in a way no other animal can. African Elephant Crossing offers the opportunity to learn about every facet of elephant life, including their physiology, habitat, social structure and how they interact with humans in their native Africa.

The experience begins at a viewing trellis, which provides an orientation to the exhibit along with sweeping views of the Savanna Range. Several yards from the trellis is the Crossing, a common pathway that elephants and people will share. Visitors will use the Crossing to travel between the outer perimeter of the exhibit and the African village inside. Elephants will use the path to go from the Savanna Range to the Mopani Range. When it is the elephants turn to cross, visitors may be able to help close the gates to the pedestrian path by turning a series of cranks. Visitors will get a true sense of the elephants' size as they cross their path a mere 15 feet away!

- The Crossing itself signifies how elephants and people need to share spaces – in the wild and at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Visitors will learn they sometimes need to yield for other living things, including wildlife.
- African elephants are awe-inspiring creatures with extraordinary physical adaptations. African Elephant Crossing meets all of the unique needs of these massive, yet delicate animals. The exhibit's circular design allows the elephants to roam, and encounter a variety of terrain including sand, mud, grass, water and rocks.

Once through the Crossing, visitors are immersed in a village constructed to resemble an African village in Botswana. In the center of the village is the kgotla, or meeting place, where the people of the village come together to solve problems and have their voices heard.

- In the village, visitors can learn about African culture through a variety of interactive story panels, interpretive presentations by Zoo staff and art work.
- From within the village, visitors will be able to see into both elephant ranges, and see some of the other native African animals that are part of the exhibit including a pair of meerkats, and in the aviary, 10 different species of birds and a Kirk's dik-dik, one of the smallest species of antelope. Kids will be able to get a special up close view of the meerkats through a crawl-up window under an artificial termite mound.

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At the rear of the kgotla is the entrance to the new Sydell L. Miller Elephant Care & Visitor Center, a state-of-the-art facility showing the best practices in elephant management. The facility is respectful of the elephants' well-being, health and safety, and the safety of our dedicated elephant keepers. All interaction between the keepers and the elephants is through protected contact.

- In the Elephant Center, visitors can learn about every feature of the elephant's unique physique through biofacts -- replicas of an elephant's tusks, skin, ears and feet.
- Visitors will look through a lens to see an example of how an elephant sees the world.
- A working wall is in full view of the public area of the Elephant Center allowing keepers to demonstrate how they interact, train and care for the elephants.
- A giant scale built into the floor allows visitors to see how many of them it would take to equal the weight of an elephant.
- In southern Africa, people and elephants must compete for limited resources, including water. An individual elephant can drink up to 50 gallons of water per day. To show how important conservation of this crucial natural resource is, African Elephant Crossing was designed to reduce the total amount of water used over the former elephant exhibit by 72 percent. In addition to their water consumption, elephants can eat up to 300 pounds of vegetation in a single day. An eye-opening exhibit within the Elephant Center provides a representation of the amount of food and water elephants need to survive.
- Inside the Elephant Center, visitors are introduced to some of the other creatures including underground-dwelling naked mole rats and an African rock python.

Along the perimeter pathway, visitors can almost circle African Elephant Crossing, with only a portion of the elephants' Night Range inaccessible to viewing. Along this path is the kopje rock, an outcropping or small hill that rises up from the Savanna Range. The base of the rock is a "nose-to-trunk" viewing area where kids will be just inches away from the elephants on the other side of a window.

With numerous hands-on and interactive opportunities, African Elephant Crossing offers visitors of all ages a unique educational experience. Whether visiting as part of a school group, family outing or distance learning program, everyone will gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the world's largest land animal.

