

AFRICAN EXPERIENCE - Making the most of your visit

African experience

Africa is a huge continent and contains most of the world's major habitats, from dry deserts to wet rainforests and from snow-capped mountains to tropical coral reefs.

The animals that live there are equally diverse:

Naked mole rats are unique among mammals as they live in a social system similar to insects. They have a queen who is the only one to breed and there are even worker mole rats too!

Dung beetles use animal poo for food and as a meeting place. Dung is then rolled away to be eaten and the female lays eggs in what is left over.

Elephants in some areas use and wear down their tusks to gouge out lumps of sandy rock to eat; the rock contains minerals that are in scarce in their diet.



See it · Sense it · Save it

Before your visit

- 1) Take advantage of the free **pre-visit** deal for group leaders. You can familiarise yourself with the Zoo layout, and locate species related to your topic.
- 2) Using an atlas, ask the group to research the wide range of habitats that are found in Africa, from **desert to tropical rainforest and savannah**. Get the group to look at the features of each habitat, including **water, vegetation and temperature**, and make a poster for each habitat listing all of the important features.
- 3) Think about what it would have been like to be one of the early **explorers in Africa**. What dangers would they have encountered? How does this compare to the conditions people face nowadays? Get the group to **write an account** as if they were exploring Africa for the first time, and imagine seeing a lion for the first time. Describe what the lion looks like and how it behaves.
- 4) Africa is famous for its' **grassland mammals**, but there are many more lesser known species. Using the Animal Fact Sheets on the Zoo website, find out about some African animals you are likely to meet at the Zoo, including the rainforest **okapi** and the savannah **meerkat**.

In the Zoo

- 1) Discover fascinating facts at **talks** about our African animals. Here are some times to look out for - flamingo talk, 12.00pm, bat talk 12.30pm, lemur talk 2.30pm, gorilla talk and feed 2.45pm, penguin talk and feed 3.00pm (some penguins do live in Africa!)



2) Visit the **pygmy hippos**, and find out how these animals differs from their much larger cousin, **the common hippo**. Compare the size, diet, habits and social structure of these quite different animals.

3) Find out what the Zoo is doing to help **endangered primates in Africa**, by visiting the **Gorilla House** and listening to the gorilla keep talk at 2.45pm. Find out what **CWAF** means and how it helps gorillas in Cameroon.

4) Visit the **Reptile House, Aquarium and Bug World** to see some of the smaller inhabitants of Africa. In the Reptile House find out why African reptiles are killed and used illegally.

After your visit

- 1) Ask the group to bring in or list **products** in their house that may have come from Africa. Talk about where things come from and how they get to the UK.
- 2) Make **African animal footprints** and compare hooves, paws and claws. Why is it that animals have different feet?
- 3) Find out about some of the African animals in the Zoo. Make **animal face masks** and put on a **play** about their lives in Africa.
- 4) Locate a school in Africa and set up a **penpal** or email scheme (see over for details). It's an unusual way for the group to discover how other people live in different parts of the world.
- 5) Compare the features of an **African habitat** with a **local habitat**. What animals live in each? Why are they different?



African Experience

The atmosphere in the tent will give you a taste of what life is like on the savannah in Africa. You will find out why it is important to sleep off the ground and why you should check your shoes before putting them on!

Your group will learn how some African animals use a variety of techniques to stay alive on the including how they feed, what they feed on, their use of camouflage and lots more.

You will meet live African animals. These may include a giant African land snail, a royal python or an imperial scorpion.

For more information

- 1) Check out the Zoo's website – we have listings of the animals you will see at the Zoo, information about their natural environment and behaviour, and how we care for their needs in captivity. You can download these Fact Sheets and other leaflets.
www.bristolzoo.org.uk
- 2) Find out about famous African explorers at:
www.studyworld.com/famous_explorers_of_africa.htm
- 3) Look for ideas on creating animal footprints at:
www.42explore.com/animaltracks.htm
- 4) Look for emails and addresses of African schools at:
www.theteachernet.co.uk

If you would like to know more about education sessions or the Conservation Education Centre, please contact us:

email: education@bristolzoo.org.uk **phone:** 0117 9747369

Education Department, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3HA

The African experience takes place in a tent in Africa just as day is breaking.

The tent is safe, but outside animals can be heard prowling around...

You will also get the chance to look at lots of our animal biofacts. These include skins, tusks and horns that have been loaned to us by HM Customs and Excise, after they were confiscated from smugglers and tourists.

If you haven't booked an education session this time, but are interested in finding out more, please contact the Education Department on 0117 974 7369, or education@bristolzoo.org.uk