

## Prague Zoo - African House: Giraffes

<http://www.zoolex.org/zoolexcgi/view.py?id=1123> (Published 2013-2-4)

ZooLex



### LOCATION

U Trojského zámku 3/120 , 171 00  
Praha 7 , Czech Republic  
Phone: +420--296 112 230  
URL: <http://www.zoopraha.cz>

### ANIMALS

**Family:** Giraffidae

**Species:** *Giraffa camelopardalis*

**Common Name:** Giraffe (Rothschild giraffe)

**Capacity:** 10

### DESCRIPTION

The African house and the neighbouring mixed species exhibit of the African savannah introduce visitors to the environment of the African savannah. Besides the giraffes, visitors can see blesbok (*Damaliscus pygargus phillipsi*), common eland (*Taurotragus oryx*), East African oryx (*Oryx beisa*), Grévy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*), meerkat (*Suricata suricatta*), lechwe (*Kobus leche*), Nile lechwe (*Kobus megaceros*) and ostrich (*Struthio camelus*).

The exhibit was built in an area where thick layers of sediments were deposited in the geological past and the river Vltava cut deep into them with its valley. The mildly hilly countryside is fully exposed to the south sun and is protected from flows of cold air. The climatic conditions there somewhat resemble the conditions in a real savannah: due to the permeable subsoil, the site is quite



Giraffe. ©Prague Zoo 2003

dry. Grass, scarce bushes and trees are the natural vegetation.

The design of the building was inspired by baroque Czech architecture, curved houses by J.B. Santini (17th century), because the countryside surrounding

the African House in Prague still reflects its baroque character.

The visitor space in the African house resembles a part of an African village. Inside, the visitors can view some typical inhabitants of African savannahs: red river hog (*Potamochoerus porcus*), armadillo (*Orycteropus afer*), black-winged red bishop (*Euplectes hordeaceus*), red-billed hornbill (*Tockus erythrorhynchus*), Southern red bishop (*Euplectes orix*), Sudan golden sparrow (*Passer luteus*), superb starling (*Lamprolornis superbus*), village weaver (*Ploceus cucullatus*), Cape weaver (*Ploceus capensis*), golden-backed Weaver (*Ploceus jacksoni*), common bulbul (*Pycnonotus barbatus*), and desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*).

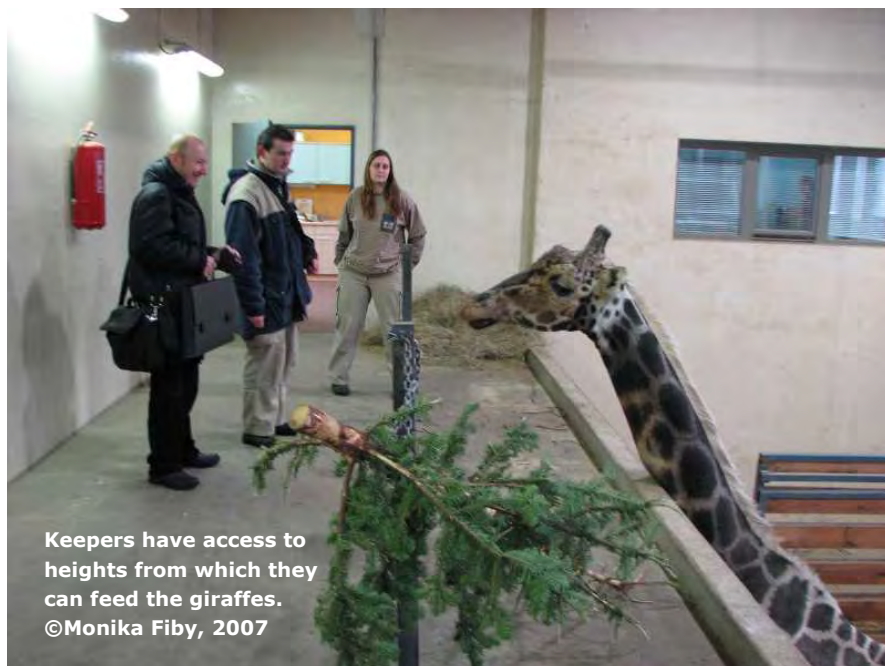
### SIZE

The giraffes have two indoor exhibits with an area of 300 and 105 m<sup>2</sup> and separate boxes totalling 65 m<sup>2</sup>. Outdoors, they can be kept on a paddock of 8500 m<sup>2</sup> together with zebra,gnu, ostrich and antelope, or in an off-view yard of 120 m<sup>2</sup>.



Indoor visitor viewing. ©Monika Fiby 2007

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Pavel Ullmann, AND, s.r.o.  
architektonický atelier (author)  
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Keepers have access to heights from which they can feed the giraffes.  
©Monika Fiby, 2007

Visitors can see the giraffes from the bridge (50 m<sup>2</sup>), the terrace (300 m<sup>2</sup>) and indoors (155 m<sup>2</sup>).

**COSTS:** CZK 73,000,000 including 3.5 % for design.

**OPENING DATE:** 8 September 2001

**DESIGN:** Beginning: 1998  
Architecture: AND, s.r.o.  
architektonický atelier, Prague

**CONSTRUCTION**  
Beginning: 1999  
Construction: PSJ, Jihlava

**PLANTS**  
Existing trees on the site were preserved. The terrace was planted with some bushes and herbs.

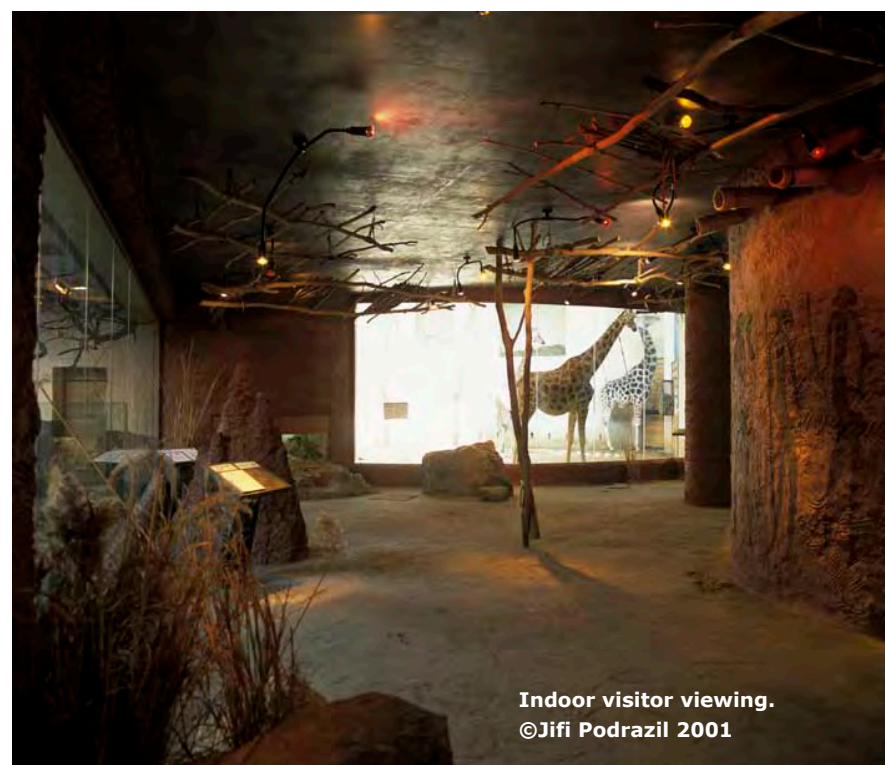
**FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS**  
The food for the giraffes is presented on the level of their heads similar to how they would choose to feed in nature.

**FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS**  
There is an elevator between the two floors of the building and a pathway on the upper floor for feeding the giraffes.

**FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS**  
Visitors can see the giraffes from up close on the ground level of the indoor exhibit and from an overview terrace on a higher level.

Indoors, the visitor area is in the dark while the animal exhibits receive light from windows. These prevents glare on the glass panels when looking inside. Several species are displayed in separate exhibits on the inside and on the outside in order to diversify the visitor experience.

**INTERPRETATION**  
There is a sign in Czech for each species in the Prague Zoo including the species name in Czech and Latin, body size, habitat, feeding, breeding, interesting facts, taxonomic order and family as well as a map showing its range of distribution. Basic information is also provided in English, German and Russian. In the case of the giraffes, additional information in Czech is provided on their anatomy, subspecies and threats. Information about endangered African fauna and fundraising activities is also provided - e.g. EAZA campaigns, our former in-situ program for addax in Nigeria and the current program for Derbians - Czech society for African wildlife with an *in-situ* project for giant eland (*Taurotragus derbianus*) in Senegal.



Indoor visitor viewing.  
©Jifi Podrazil 2001

#### Space allocation in square meters:

use	indoors		outdoors		total exhibit
	accessible	total	accessible	total	
animals		400		8,600	9,000
visitors		150		350	500
others					
total		550		8,950	9,500



Regular feeding time for aardvarks is at 10 a.m., commentary feeding of giraffes is at 2.30 p.m.

#### **MANAGEMENT**

Giraffes can be seen all day during visitor hours, either inside the house (mostly in winter, partly in spring and autumn and once a day in summer during inside feeding (approx. 14:00 - 15:00) or in the outside enclosure. In the mixed species outside enclosure there are also blesbok, eland, oryx, Grévy's zebra and ostrich. The giraffes usually cooperate well with the keepers. The leading male responds well on orders and leads the herd inside or outside the house as needed. Only highly pregnant females are separated to give birth in the stable. There are three behind the scene stables where animals can be isolated.

#### **CONSERVATION**

The Prague Zoo keeps pure blooded Rothschild giraffes. Founders 1,4 came from Dvur Kralove nad Labem which brought them directly from Africa. Animals from other zoos were added over time (e.g. from Cologne, Thoiry, Rapperswill) to avoid inbreeding. There have been 74 offspring born and raised in Prague. The building was carefully insulated for heating efficiency.

#### **LOCAL RESOURCES**

The facade is made of local timber. The terrace of the pavilion was made from a local sandstone, that is usually removed as a waste because it is not hard enough for other purposes.



**Giraffe feeding. ©Jifi Podrazil 2001**



**African house building. ©Jifi Podrazil, 2001**