

Jorg and the Leipzig Zoo staff create a City Paradise . . . Gondwanaland, Germany (Press release)

Grand Opening

It was a huge event in summer 2011. Gondwanaland is a milestone on the way of Zoo Leipzig towards a Zoo of the future. The opening ceremony was with lots of guests, e.g. Datuk Masidi Manjun, the environment minister in Sabah/Malaysia. The picture shows the moment, when Jörg Junhold and the mayor of Leipzig, Burkhard Jung, opened the tropical hall for the public. More than 24,000 different tropical plants, around 300 exotic animals and the kind of virgin rain forest which once characterised the lost continent of Gondwana. It is housed in a unique hall covering an area of 16,500 m² and in the shape of an enormous equilateral triangle. This is the tropical experience world Gondwanaland at Zoo Leipzig, an environment of a very special kind featuring the highest standards of species protection and sustainability while providing visitors with entirely new insights into the ecosystems of many threatened species.

It took over a decade to complete the project that opened in 2011. It is home to around 40 species of animals from Asia, Africa and South America. The two-toed sloth, the giant otter, the ocelot, the pygmy hippopotamus, the Komodo dragon and many other species, some of which are rare and threatened with extinction, live here in an environment which is unique in a hall of this kind. The individual enclosures are modelled on the natural habitat of the animals and merge harmoniously with one another.

A great deal of scientific expertise has gone into creating the rainforest in Gondwanaland on a natural model. As in the tropical jungle, vegetation grows in the form of different layers which provide a habitat for a range of species. The diversity and richness of the approximately 24,000 plants to be found in Gondwanaland ranges from dense bushes at ground level, natural bamboo groves and marsh or water plants to giant trees. A fascinating experience to smell, feel and taste is provided by the tropical garden, where around 60 kinds of tropical fruits and spices, including pineapples, bananas, guavas, cocoa, pepper, yams and sugarcane can be experienced with all the senses.

At any time Gondwanaland can accommodate up to 2500 people on their tour of discovery. An ambient temperature of twenty-five degrees Celsius and a high level of humidity give visitors a real feeling that they are entering a tropical jungle. This is created by a technically sophisticated system of heating, irrigation and ventilation which is designed to provide sustainability and protect the climate.

The architecture of sustainability

Gondwanaland uses natural sunlight wherever possible for the purpose of heating itself. With their membrane design they have a light and airy look, while their shape makes them look like a transparent sculpture filled with light. As they allow in all the sun's UV rays, which are vital to animals and plants, no additional artificial lighting is necessary. The warmth, which is generated during the day, is collected in a geothermal storage tank with a capacity of 100,000 litres and is used not only to heat the tropical experience world at night, but also to heat the irrigation water and the pools for the animals. The opening of Gondwanaland was a further important stage in the 'Zoo of the Future' concept developed by zoo director Dr. Jörg Junhold. The project of expanding and converting Zoo Leipzig into one of the world's most modern and innovative zoos is to be completed in the next years.



Burkhard Jung, Mayor of Leipzig, Jörg Junhold and Jörg's charming kids cut the ribbon to open Gondwanaland.



Jörg Junhold, President of WAZA and Director, Leipzig Zoo in front of the amazing Gondwanaland.



Editor's Note: Just for fun I looked up Gondwana in Wikipedia, that at times unreliable but convenient source of dubious knowledge. What Wikipedia says about Gondwanaland is almost unbelievable but fascinating and true!

Gondwana is a geological super-continent which is today, part of Africa, South America, Australia, India, Arabia, Antarctica, Balkans. Smaller continents are Atlantica, India, Australia, Antarctica and Zealandia. There is a Tectonic plate, an African Plate, an Antarctic Plate, an Indo-Australian Plate and a South American Plate.

In paleogeography, Gondwana was originally called Gondwanaland and is the name given to the more southerly of two supercontinents (the other being Laurasia) which were part of the Pangaea supercontinent that existed from approximately 510 to 180 million years ago (Mya). Gondwana is believed to have sealed between ca. 570 and 510 Mya, and joining East Gondwana to West Gondwana.

It separated from Laurasia 200-180 Mya (the mid-Mesozoic era) during the breakup of Pangaea, drifting farther south after the split. Gondwana included most of the landmasses in today's Southern Hemisphere, including Antarctica, South America, Africa, Madagascar and the Australian continent, as well as the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian subcontinent, which have now moved entirely into the Northern Hemisphere.

The continent of Gondwana was named by Austrian scientist Eduard Suess, after the Gondwana region of c.n. India (from Sanskrit gondavana "forest of the Gonds"), from which the Gondwana sedimentary sequences (Permian-Triassic) are also described.

The adjective Gondwanan is in common use in biogeography when referring to patterns of distribution of living organisms, typically when the organisms are restricted to two or more of the now-discontinuous regions that were once part of Gondwana, including the Antarctic flora. For example, the Proteaceae family of plants known only from southern South America, South Africa and Australia, is considered to have a "Gondwana distribution". This pattern is often considered to indicate an archaic, or relict, lineage.



Bird's eye view of one of the zoo world's best exhibits ! Three continents under one roof.



From the Asia sector



South America sector



↑ Plants ... lush vegetation...a rainforest growing in the middle of Leipzig. Over 17,000 plants started their journey in nursery gardens in Thailand, Malaysia and Florida – to create a tropical environment at every level from the jungle floor to the canopy.

↓ Visitors to Gondwanaland enjoy all the services and special touches that makes them feel they are not in Leipzig, but in India, or Ghana, or Brazil ... or wherever any tropical paradise exists.



Zoo director Dr. Jörg Junhold on the Zoo of the future



"Zoo Leipzig belongs to the most modern and innovative zoos in the world. With the concept of the Zoo of the future we are able to combine animal welfare and husbandry with a unique experience for visitors to our zoo."

Since 2000, Zoo Leipzig is realizing the advanced concept. At the same time, the zoological garden is improving its attractiveness, both for the animals living there and for its visitors: The animals feel 'at home' in habitats that have been created to resemble their natural ones and visitors experience nature with all of their senses on a walk round the zoo.

This ambitious program shall be fully realized by 2020. "We have come a long way towards the Zoo of the future. But the remaining tasks are challenging and require a high degree of involvement."

<http://www.zoo-leipzig.de/en/about-us/>

