

## Wander through the zoo, see what's new

Visitors to the Edmonton Valley Zoo can now enjoy expanded facilities, a new café, more educational opportunities and the chance to *Get Closer* to the animals, thanks to the addition of a new Entry Plaza and Wander Trail.



The Entry and Wander, which were officially opened on Friday, July 11, 2014, are the latest in a series of projects transforming and renewing the zoo. Visitors will notice a dramatic difference when arriving at the zoo and are sure to enjoy exploring the Wander Trail, a central corridor that interprets the plants and small animals of the North Saskatchewan river valley.

"The Edmonton Valley Zoo is a place of learning and discovery cherished by many Edmontonians," said Mayor Don Iveson. "The City of Edmonton is creating a vibrant new zoo with improved habitats, better opportunities for guests to closely interact with animals, and state-of-the-art research and education facilities."

Construction on the Entry and Wander began two years ago at a cost of \$23.5 million, funded by the City of Edmonton. Surrounded by a unique rammed earth wall, the Entry Plaza welcomes guests with an improved River Otter Habitat, the EdVenture Lodge education facility, Wild Earth Café, Zoo-tique, Guest Services and a water play area. The new entry also provides easy and direct access to all of the zoo's exhibits.

The Wander Trail includes trout ponds, a melt-water play area, cobbled stream and aspen parklands, interactive play structures, picnic spots, and working wetlands.

"This is a transformational moment for our zoo and a huge leap forward in our continuing transition to a zoo noted for innovative learning opportunities," said Denise Prefontaine, Director of the Edmonton Valley Zoo. "This is not only a place to wander, it is a place to learn."

In keeping with the City of Edmonton's vision to build with sustainable principles in mind, the zoo's new plaza buildings take advantage of natural light and air ventilation. Green features include using regionally sourced and recycled materials, and harvesting wood from sustainably managed forests that promote reforestation and protect habitats against clear-cutting. These methods leave a small ecological footprint on the natural systems and wild places our zoo is working hard to preserve.

The Entry and Wander project is the final component funded through city council's \$50-million commitment to transforming the zoo from its 1959 Storyland roots. Arctic Shores opened two years ago as home to the Harbour Seals, Northern Fur Seals and Arctic Ground Squirrels. Major upgrades to the Lemur Habitat, Reptile Wing, Nocturnal Wing and Veterinary Hospital have also been completed.

The next proposed phase in the zoo's renewal is Nature's Wild Backyard, which will continue the inner zoo's history as an area dedicated to young families. Nature's Wild Backyard will further establish the zoo as a leader in its field, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to animal welfare, education, conservation and environmental stewardship.

It will include habitats designed as naturalized educational areas to allow the public to interact with and Get Closer to a wide variety of animals – including lemurs, gibbons, meerkats, fox, deer, farm animals, and a variety of other animals. The backyard is engaging and playful, enticing the young and the young at heart to experience and learn about animals and habitats. The Valley Zoo Development Society is actively fundraising toward Nature's Wild Backyard. City Council will be asked to consider funding the City's portion of the project in phases over the next three budget cycles.

More information on the Edmonton Valley Zoo's construction projects can be found at [valleyzoo.ca/construction](http://valleyzoo.ca/construction).

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