



GaiaPark
Kerktrade Zoo

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Gaiapark Zoo Kerktrade
Congo - Pigmy Hippopotamus

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KEY WORDS: water, underwater view, naturalistic barriers, conservation, EEP, Africa

ANIMALS:

Family: Hippopotamidae

Species: *Hexaprotodon liberiensis*

Common Name: Pygmy hippopotamus

Capacity: 1.1 and Offspring

AWARDS: 2006 EAZA Education award for whole park

DESCRIPTION: GaiaPark is a zoo where the animals live in spacious naturalistic enclosures. It is also a zoo with one central theme, the Gaia theory, which views the Earth as a complex living organism. The name of the zoo also pays homage to Gaia, the Greek goddess of the Earth. One important goal of GaiaPark is the conservation of nature and species. GaiaPark opened its gates in April 2005. After two years of construction, the first part of the master plan was completed. The theme area Congo was part of this master plan. The pigmy hippo enclosure is part of the Congo region of the zoo. The zoo currently keeps two adults and one juvenile pigmy hippo. In the outdoor enclosure three basins are available to the animals: one large basin, connected to a filter-installation, and two smaller basins. The rest of the enclosure is made of sandy and grass stretches and elevated areas with vegetation. These elevated areas are inaccessible to the animals. A viewing point for the visitors provides benches. Visitors can also see the animals from the restaurant "De Veelvraat". A glass panel near the restaurant's terrace gives an opportunity to observe the animals underwater.

SIZE: The enclosure of the pigmy hippopotamus belongs to the part of the zoo that shows the animals originating from Congo. The Congo region of the zoo measures about 12% (22.207 m²) of the entire zoo. 526 m² of the outside enclosure consists of water, 269 m² of land is accessible for the animals.

Behind the scenes two separation enclosures of about 35 m² each are available. In the indoor enclosure 4 stables can be used: three stables of 18 m² (two of which have a basin of 9 m² surface and 1,5 m depth) and one of 6 m². Space allocation in square meters:

	indoors		outdoors		total exhibit
% use	accessible	total	accessible	total	
animals	60	60	870	1,114	1,174
visitors	0	0	590	1,444	1,444
others	12	12	435	435	447
total	72	72	1,895	2,993	3,065

COSTS: 136,200 Costs comprise indoor enclosures (including stable equipment), underwater view and water filtering installation. Landscaping of the outdoor enclosure was done for the entire area of the current zoo; no exact costs of the outdoor enclosures of Congo - Pigmy Hippopotamus are available.

DESIGN: Beginning: January 2002· Design basic master plan: [pja architects + landscape architects, p.s., Seattle, USA](#)· Landscaping: J. Füss, Vollenhove, France



Site Plan

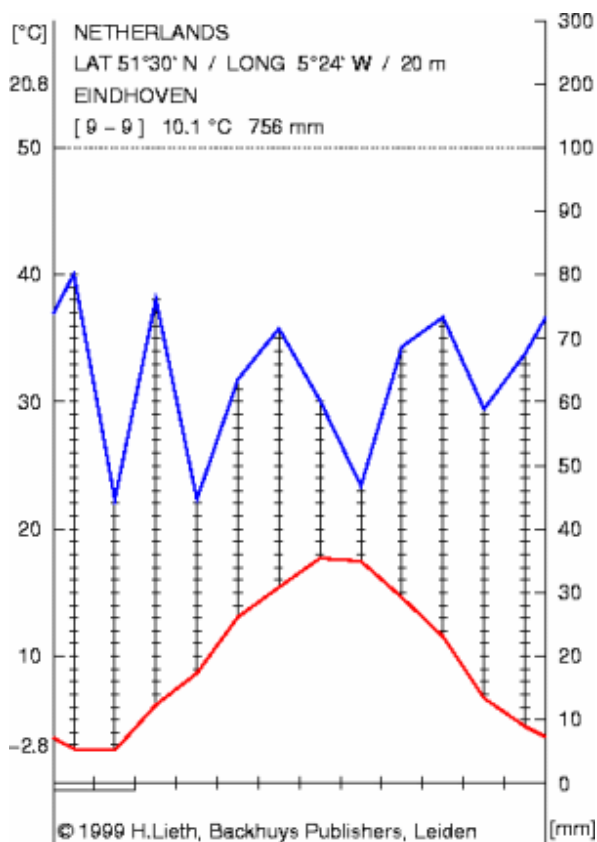
CONSTRUCTION:

Beginning: March 2003

- Indoor enclosure: Weerens Bouwbedrijf bv, Stamproy
- Outdoor enclosure: T&G Terrein- en Groenvoorzieningen BV, Schijndel
- Barn equipment: Vacon bv, Susteren
- Installation gas, water and electricity outdoor: Daniels, Voerendaal
- Heating installation: Breman Maasland Installatie, Haelen
- Electro technique: Insta Zuid, Beek
- Filter technique: Bio Water Systems bv, Beverwijk

LOCAL CONDITIONS:

This is a climatic diagram for the closest weather station.



PLANTS:

The plants around the pigmy hippo enclosure were chosen for durability and strength, ensuring that they require little maintenance. The plant list specifies the Latin names of the plants used for this exhibit.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS:

The pigmy hippos always have access to water. In the outdoor enclosure three basins are available to them. The largest of these basins contains between 150 and 200 m² water. There are also two basins in the indoor enclosure. One of these can be closed off in case a newborn is present.

These indoor basins can be filled with both hot and cold water to keep the animals comfortable throughout the year.

The indoor enclosure is divided into four stables. Usually at night, the male and the female with her young each have access to two stables. In two of the stables "beds" of bark clippings are available. The rest of the indoor furnishing consists of regular stable equipment. Lighting and heating are installed on the ceiling.

The outdoor enclosure is covered with sand and grass to accommodate the animals. Through the positioning of the elevated parts with vegetation the animals can retreat from public view and each other if they desire. The entire outdoor enclosure can be divided into two, to create one small enclosure with one of the smaller basins and a large enclosure with the other two basins. Also through positioning of the elevated areas, two separate pathways were created between the two parts of the enclosure, so that no animal can be cornered. Between the outdoor and the indoor enclosure, two small enclosures are available for separation.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS:

All gates and slides of the indoor enclosure can be operated from the keeper area, so that no direct contact with the animals is necessary. The gates between the indoor stables are operated by tow bars, whereas the slides to the outdoor enclosure can be opened by use of levers. The levers drastically reduce the strength needed to open the slides, compared to tow bars or chains.

All of the basins can be drained separately, except for the two small basins in the outdoor enclosure, which are connected to each other. The pipes to drain the basins can be accessed directly outside the indoor enclosure and are easy to operate.

The keepers have a separate entrance to the outdoor enclosure, right next to the entrance for the animals, for safety. Just outside the indoor enclosure a small shelter was built, in which hay and straw can be stored. A sink is available in the indoor enclosure.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS:

In the large basin of the pigmy hippo enclosure a glass wall was installed, to provide the visitors with an underwater view of the animals. The terrace of the zoo's restaurant is situated close to that glass wall, so visitors can enjoy lunch while watching the pigmy hippos swimming.

A comfortable viewing point was created on the other side of the enclosure, with benches, from which nearly the entire enclosure can be viewed. Through a low fence made from logs and a stretch of vegetation, the visitors are kept out of the pigmy

hippo enclosure. At this viewing point a feeding presentation is given with the pigmy hippos once a day.

INTERPRETATION:

Visitor attention is gained by the underwater view of the exhibit. As visitors sit down to eat at the restaurant, they automatically see the animals in the enclosure.

At the entrance and the centre of the zoo large signs show at what times the feeding presentations in the zoo are given, including the pigmy hippo presentation. A large panel near the hippo enclosure also shows the presentations times.

At the enclosure one large and one small sign give general information about the species. All signs and panels are written in Dutch, English and German.

MANAGEMENT:

The basins are managed separately. The large basin in the outdoor enclosure is connected to a filter-system, constantly cleaning the basin. The other two basins in the outdoor enclosure are drained and cleaned two to three times a year. In the indoor enclosure, the basin used by the male is cleaned every four to five days, whereas the basin for the female and young is cleaned daily or once every two days, as it gets noticeably dirty. The rest of the enclosure is cleaned daily which adds up to about half a day's work for one keeper. The smaller outdoor basins are also connected to the moat around the gorilla enclosure. If water levels at the gorilla enclosure rise too high.

RESEARCH:

No research has been done relating to the exhibit at this point in time.

CONSERVATION:

The Pigmy hippopotamus is managed in an EEP. GaiaPark strives to breed the species in order to ensure a viable and healthy population in zoos around the world.



Pigmy Hippopotamus



Outdoor Enclosure

LOCAL RESOURCES:

Almost all of the companies involved in design and construction are situated near Kerkrade. Most of the companies not situated around Kerkrade have been recommended through GaiaPark's partner, Apenheul, and are located near

Apeldoorn, where Apenheul is situated.

Photos by :
GaiaPark, Kerkrade Zoo, 2007
Richard J. van Sluis, 2007