



## Wilhelma in bad weather

### Station Nr. 1: The Glasshouses

In the historical glasshouses, all built in a row, the visitors are able to see in a condensed area all the wonders of the plant realm. Grouped according to the different climatic needs, cactuses, bromeliads, orchids and numerous other tropical and sub tropical plants are there to delight the visitor. Perhaps they will remind some people of holidays ...this botanical paradise certainly makes one start to dream. Depending on the season you can enjoy differing flowering highlights - either azaleas, fuchsias or camellias.

### Station Nr. 2: The Aquarium

Going along the Moorish Covered Walkway you can reach the Aquarium, which was inaugurated in 1967, dry-shod. There you can take a round-the-world trip through all the underwater realms. From the North Sea to the River Neckar, from the Mediterranean to the Congo, from the Mekong to the Great Barrier Reef: big and small, bright-coloured and well-camouflaged inhabitants of the water accompany you on your way through the house. In the middle of the Aquarium you will find the Terrarium. In view of crocodiles, turtles, snakes and strange lizards one can let oneself be carried away to distant countries ...

### Station Nr. 3: The Moorish Villa

Once again via the (almost completely) Covered Walkway you can reach the Moorish Villa with dry feet: the first section is devoted to the cactuses, especially to the large pillar cactuses, the prickly pears and the most primordial of all cactuses, the pereskias. In the adjoining House for Tropical Crop Plants there grow papayas, jackfruits, cinnamon, carambolas, sweet potatoes, cotton,

cocoa, vanilla, coffee, pepper and lots more. With most plants it is quite difficult to guess what edible or luxury crop can be harvested from it. The central part is a home to tropical birds and the Department for Nocturnal Animals.

When this was opened in 1962 it was the first time in Europe that night-active animals were shown in full activity. Today, amongst other animals, Surinam toads, flashlight fish, fruit bats, bats and lesser mouse lemurs are the stars of the house. The adjoining hothouse is where the tropical ferns are installed. In the second Cupola House there are giant tree ferns and primeval conifer plants.

#### **Station Nr. 4: The Giraffe House**

If it's getting late, you can take a short cut here and go straight to Nr. 7 (the Ape House). If you have plenty of time and are in good condition, put up your umbrella and race up the hill to the Giraffe House. In addition to a group of long-necked reticulated giraffes, short-necked rainforest giraffes, that is, okapis, also trot around here. These mysterious animals were not discovered until about 1900 in the rainforests of the Congo, then to be scientifically described. Boards in the house give information on the history of their discovery.

The Congo peacocks, an ornithological rarity originating from the same habitat, can also be seen here. Graceful little desert foxes from the North African deserts, fenneks, greet the visitors and bid them farewell.

#### **Station Nr. 5: At the Elephant and Rhino Houses**

Opposite the Giraffe House are the two houses of the thick-skinned animals. Two houses where everyone lies in the bath tub every afternoon. One has difficulty in seeing how many hippos there really are in the water. Sometimes there's just a gurgling in the pool, then there's a splutter, a pair of ears are shaken dry, one quick lugubrious look at the audience and the animal returns below the surface.... In the Elephant House it's either bath time in the afternoon for the Indian rhinoceroses (rather a stately and calm occurrence) or for the elephants (involving a good deal of splashing about). As soon as bath time is over, peaceful chewing and ruminating noises fill the air.

#### **Station Nr. 6: The House for Animals of Prey (Big Cats)**

Downhill from the Elephant House you can have a quick sprint to the House for Animals of Prey. The big cats are fascinating creatures for lots of people, but it was chiefly fascination for their fur (as well as the destruction of their habitats) which brought many of the species to the brink of extermination. In the large open-air enclosure you can see with the Sumatran tigers that cats are not at all water haters! But the other cats do not necessarily retire to the dry areas indoors when it's raining either, so do have a quick look around the outside enclosure!

#### **Station Nr. 7: The Ape House**

It's quite a long way in the open to reach the apes from the big cats. So up with the old umbrella and ready, steady, go!

All four species of apes can be seen here in family groups consisting of several generations: bonobos, chimpanzees, orang-utans and gorillas. What seems to be a rather plain and bare building really quite suits the necessities of the primates: the things which our closest relatives mostly need

are the possibility to keep themselves occupied or to retire as they wish, regular feeding times spread over the day and life in well-functioning social groups. The visitors themselves are an extra source of entertainment – the apes recognize regular visitors and greet them accordingly.

### **Station Nr. 8: The Young Animal Rearing Facilities**

From the Ape House to the Young Animal Rearing Facilities (what a long name!) it is only a few steps. This is one of the main attractions for young and old alike. Baby apes from various European zoos live here, whose mothers have not accepted them. Here they grow up in an apes' kindergarten, so to speak, looked after by their human foster mothers. When, at the age of four, they become awkward adolescents, suitable places are found for them in other zoos by the European Endangered Species Breeding Programmes. As they have grown up together with others of the same species and have learned the most important rules of social behaviour, it is quite easy to integrate them into family groups in other zoos.

### **Station Nr. 9: The Amazon House**

Our next station is the Amazon House, constructed at great expense and with immense technical expertise. 2,000 plants, such as the mahogany and the floss-silk tree, palms, araceae, bromeliads, orchids, mangroves, tropical crop plants such as cassava, the cacao tree, bananas and many others, all bring about the illusion that you are in a tropical mountain forest of the Amazon. Just as in real nature, the "Stuttgart tropical forest" does not reveal all of its secrets at first sight. In order to discover monkeys, birds, reptiles and amphibians, you must really spy closely into the lush growth of the plants in each enclosure. 25 species of birds fly freely in the building and are often only to be located by their call.

A huge glass pane allows you to view the underwater realm of the Amazon: caimans, turtles and fish inhabit the two huge tanks, which are linked together and hold a total of 100,000 litres of water. Watch out if you wear spectacles – no glass stays dry here! With a jungle climate of up to 28°C and a relative humidity of 80%, Central Europeans can get into quite a sweat! Maybe you can make friends with one of the tame agami birds that patrol the jungle pathways.

### **Station Nr. 10: The Insectarium**

This building with its many-legged inhabitants carries you away into the realm of the arthropods. Insects, spiders and millipedes give a lot of people the creeps. But if you want, you can find out a lot about these fascinating creatures here – about their variety, the accomplishments of their senses and how they can adapt, how they can help but also cause damage for humans, and a whole lot more. The darlings amongst these otherwise not much loved insects are the butterflies. In their own specially built Hall, you can observe these colourful illusionists and maybe even experience seeing a butterfly emerging from one of the chrysalids in the chrysalid box.

### **Station Nr. 11: The Restaurant**

If, in spite of all precautions, you should have got wet and are beginning to freeze, it might be a good idea to warm yourself up a bit and dry off whilst enjoying something to eat and a nice hot drink. You can do this in the restaurant until 6 p.m. (in winter until 5 p.m.).