



Wilhelma Without Steps

Station Nr. 1: The Flamingos

You will come across the Flamingo Paddock directly behind the Main Entrance near the glasshouses. It was newly planned in 1998 with an electric fence to protect the birds from marauding wild foxes. Apart from the European greater flamingos, white-headed stifftails that come from the same habitat also form part of the fixed inventory of the enclosure. In addition you can see, too, plenty of regular guests there: white storks, grey heron, moorhens, coots, mallard ducks and lots of others.

Station Nr. 2: The Sea Lions

It doesn't matter when you reach this station, there is always something going on (the only exception being Thursdays, when the pool is being cleaned and the animals are in their indoor swimming pool, which is not open to visitors). Swimming, playing, sunbathing, quarrelling, sea lions, who love plenty of movement, always invite the visitors to come and watch! If you can manage it, try not to miss one of their two daily feeding sessions. The animals then show off all their tricks, and afterwards you can ask the keeper anything you ever wanted to know about sea lions.

Station Nr. 3: The Sub Tropics Terraces

After a look around the wonderful Moorish Garden, the tour now takes you past the Ape House and up to the Sub Tropics Terraces. It is unfortunately rather a long haul uphill to get there! But it is

definitely worth the effort. The terraces belong to the loveliest parts of Wilhelma: in this protected spot, flooded with sunlight, some 400 plants from south European countries thrive the whole year over, a further 400 more delicate varieties and part of our collection of carnivorous plants live outside here only during the summer months.

In addition to the colourful and exotic realm of plants a bird world, just as colourful, squawks in the aviaries. The parrots above all, amidst tropical plants and Moorish buildings, give you a feeling of being far, far away from home.

Station Nr. 4: The Enclosures for Bears and Mountain Animals

Passing the birds of prey and owls, be careful not to turn right – that is the steepest path Wilhelma has. Leaving the Terraces you should go straight on, and will reach the large rocky landscape of the Enclosure for Bears and Mountain Animals by going up a more moderate incline. Alpine ibexes, Syrian brown bears, North American mountain goats and South American spectacled bears use different parts of the enclosure. Each section is separated by water and other natural barriers, which are hardly discernible to the visitor.

The polar bears' enclosure is particularly spacious; cool icy rocks to lounge on and plenty of water for them to splash around in. Through a pane of very thick glass you can watch their antics above and below the surface. You will be surprised at how quick these huge and heavy animals can be!

Station Nr. 5: The Giraffe House

Going past the alpacas (here is a nice place for a rest) and the redwood trees (sequoias), you will reach a fork in the path. All depending on how you feel, you have a choice between two possibilities: the longer tour leads straight on to the various Enclosures for African Hoofed Animals. The shorter tour leads off to the right, a little way downhill and then straight off to the left, to the Giraffe House.

You will reach the house going past the bongos, and there you will find not only a group of long-necked reticulated giraffes, but also some short-necked rainforest giraffes, that is, okapis. 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 to be seen here.

Graceful little desert foxes from the North African deserts, fenneks, greet the visitors and bid them farewell. You can either go back from the giraffes to the longer tour, or on to the House for Animals of Prey (Station Nr. 9), then following the tour description until the end.

Station Nr. 6: The Enclosures for African Hoofed Animals

This area is dedicated to animals of the African steppes: Grevy's zebras, blesbocks, ostriches, Somali wild asses, wart-hogs, hornbills and Mendes antelopes are typical representatives, although many of these animals have become very rare today. When you reach the Mendes antelopes, you again have two choices, depending on the weather, your condition or simply what mood you are in. The shorter way bends off to the right towards the Elephant House (Station Nr. 8), the longer path leads you straight on, past the onagers and the bison to the Demonstration Farm.

Station Nr. 7: The Demonstration Farm

For today's town-dwellers, our domestic animals and their forefathers are almost just as exotic as bears and giraffes. There is the Schwäbisch Hall domestic pig and the wild boar, the Syrian and the bezoar goat, the domestic hen and the red jungle fowl, the Shetland pony and Przewalski's wild horse.... But what you can also see at the Demonstration Farm are races of domestic animals that are considered as being unproductive or inefficient today, and are thus just as endangered as many a wild animal. Preserving this gene bank for the breeding of more highly productive, efficient and resistant "modern" domestic animals is the duty of breeding associations and zoos alike. Limpurg cattle and Poitou donkeys are representatives of old races like this.

You can learn more about the relationship between humans and domestic animals in an exhibition on this subject. You can even stroke some of the animals at the Demonstration Farm. On the way back, keep to the left and go past Asiatic buffalos, East Asian Mishmi takins and hippopotamuses to the Elephant House.

Station Nr. 8: The Elephant House

Not only the four elephant ladies can be watched here as they have their backs scrubbed, throw mud, eat or take a bath The great Indian rhinoceroses own the other half of the enclosure. It's bath time for the elephants in the afternoon. This is a very wet and noisy affair – one would never think that the four elephant ladies are all of a ripe old age! When bathing is over, peaceful chewing and ruminating noises fill the air...

Station Nr. 9: The House for Animals of Prey

From the elephants and rhinos you can continue 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!

From the House for Animals of Prey one goes downhill and then quite a long way to the lower part of Wilhelma, not far from the Main Entrance. We will leave out the Young Animal Rearing Facilities, although this can also be reached without steps or other hindrances. The Amazon House is, unfortunately, only restrictedly suitable for wheelchair users – a small stream runs across the path at one point and in some parts it is very narrow.

Station Nr. 10: The black-footed penguins

Towards the end of this route, on the way to the black-footed penguins, one goes past the Free Flying Aviary. Its elegant and almost transparent net roof fits discreetly into the landscape. You can't really miss the red kangaroos. A metre and sixty tall, they can jump a possibly record-breaking 9 metres! The Enclosure for the Black-Footed Penguins lies along the outer wall of Wilhelma. These active and funny-looking little gentlemen in tailed coats normally live in temperate zones, and can therefore stay in their outside enclosure all year round.