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MEMPHIS ZOO OPENS NORTHWEST PASSAGE EXHIBIT

MAR 12 2006
MEMPHIS

The grand opening for the Memphis Zoo's new \$23 million exhibit will kick off next weekend March 3.

The Northwest Passage exhibit is a tribute to the animals, First Nations culture and architecture of the Pacific Northwest. It houses polar bears, sea lions, harbor seals, bald eagles, ravens and black bears. Dugout canoes, fishing tools, ceremonial masks and carved medallions decorate the authentic fishing village.

The exhibit includes underwater viewing areas for the polar bears, sea lions and seals, a 500-seat amphitheater for the Zoo's popular sea lion shows and the waterfront Longhouse Classroom for educational classes.

"We can't wait for visitors to enjoy Northwest Passage," said Chuck Brady, Zoo president and chief executive officer. "This is something we have been looking forward to for a long time."

Jim and Carol Prentiss are long-time supporters of the Zoo. Their gift of \$5 million for Northwest Passage is the largest individual gift ever given to the Memphis Zoo. Their names appear on the exhibit's entry sign, which is surrounded by colorfully painted totem poles.

The exhibit features special touches for Zoo visitors certain to enhance their visit. Special "sniffing slots" are along the rockwork of the polar bear's exhibit. Kids can climb up and peek through the slots to catch a glimpse of one of the Zoo's three polar bears. The sea lion and harbor seal pool features a "bubble" large enough for two to three children to climb inside. Children will get the impression of being underwater with the animals swimming around them.

The exhibit has more than 500,000 gallons of purified fresh and saltwater for marine mammals. Since January 22, Memphis Zoo members have had the opportunity to get nose-to-nose with polar bears "Payton," "Haley" and "Cranbeary" in the exhibit's Underwater Viewing Building.

Northwest Passage combines culture with state-of-the-art animal facilities. Zellner Construction Company built the exhibit. Torre/Design Consortium. Ltd., the architects behind Cat Country, Primate Canyon, CHINA and Once Upon A Farm, designed Northwest Passage. The Memphis Zoo celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2006.

For more information, contact Julie Dodson at (901) 333-6568 or jdodson@memphiszoo.org.

[← Back to results](#)

PHOTOS

226 photos



3 of 15 photos

EVENTS

1 of 4 events

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