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Press release

Tierpark or Jurassic Park?

A fierce dinosaur gets its teeth into the former Pachyderm House

A monster is on the rampage at Tierpark Berlin! Within the high concrete walls where elephants and rhinoceroses once peacefully chewed their hay, a voracious beast with strong jaws and razor-sharp teeth is gnawing through steel, concrete and glass, leaving devastation in its wake. This may sound like a scene from Jurassic Park, but the mechanical “T-Rex” that is making short work of the roof is actually playing a role in a carefully worked-out plan. It is helping make way for Europe’s most modern elephant house.

When construction work is finished, the completely redesigned building will lie at the heart of a savannah-like landscape. Over the coming months, a brand-new 3,500 m² roof will be placed atop the existing strong concrete walls. Instead of housing a variety of pachyderms and other animals, the new-and-improved building will be the exclusive home of African elephants – and plenty of them! Covering nearly 3,000 m², the Elephant House will offer its inhabitants almost ten times the amount of space available in the old building, which opened in 1989. In the past, roughly two thirds of the building’s floor area was reserved for visitors. Unfortunately, progress on the new building has been slow: “Like almost everything in the past two years, construction work has been hindered by the various challenges posed by the pandemic,” says project manager Johannes Gramse. “We’ve experienced delays due to raw materials shortages and lost work hours through sickness and quarantine. Therefore, as things stand at the moment, we won’t be able to open the new building until 2023.”

“We are very happy that we were able to secure the regional GRW funding needed to redesign the building in a way that properly meets the needs of African elephants,” said Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. “For a long time, the Pachyderm House did not fulfil our standards for modern, species-appropriate habitats.” Next to the new Elephant House will be an expansive savannah-like habitat for giraffes, zebras and antelopes.”

This new African landscape will cost around €41 million, €35.4 million of which is earmarked for construction of the modernised Elephant House alone.