



TREETOP TRAIL RAISES MINNESOTA ZOO TO A NEW LEVEL

World's Longest Elevated Pedestrian Loop Now Open

Apple Valley, Minn. (July 28, 2023) --- The Minnesota Zoo Treetop Trail, the world's longest elevated pedestrian loop, is now officially open to the public. The 1.25-mile Treetop Trail takes guests to new heights – *up to 32 feet above the ground* - as they travel into the trees and gain new perspectives of many Zoo animals, including tigers, moose, bison, and camels. The Treetop Trail will be open year-round for guests to experience Minnesota's four seasons in all their glory.

Minnesota Lieutenant Governor, Peggy Flanagan, helped kick off the historic grand opening by proclaiming it "Minnesota Zoo Treetop Trail Day" in the state in front of an enthusiastic crowd of nature, animal, and zoo lovers.

"The Minnesota Zoo has always been a special place for our family. By creating new opportunities to get outdoors and encouraging Minnesotans of all ages to take new perspectives, the Treetop Trail is a treasure and a true gift to Minnesotans," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. "The Treetop Trail takes us one step closer to making Minnesota the best state for kids and families – for generations to come. I'm grateful to everyone who put their time, energy, and care into making this vision a reality."

In his opening remarks, Minnesota Zoo Director John Frawley proclaimed that the Treetop Trail is a gift for Minnesotans. "The Treetop Trail will provide an accessible and immersive pathway to nature for all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and communities."

Opening appropriately on World Nature Conservation Day (July 28), the Treetop Trail reaffirms the Minnesota Zoo as a worldwide leader in wildlife conservation and as a trusted nature destination. The Minnesota Zoo opened in 1978 with a mission to connect people, animals, and the natural world to save wildlife.

"For the last 45 years, the Zoo has done a tremendous job connecting people and animals. The Treetop Trail allows us to reimagine the traditional zoo experience and further the connection between people and the natural world," said Frawley.

The Treetop Trail gives guests year-round access to hundreds of acres of hardwood forest, ponds and marshes, and the diverse wildlife that calls Minnesota home. And, of course, a bird's eye view for bird watchers. It adds more than 70,000 square feet to the Zoo and includes 22 bump-out overlooks to enhance the viewing experience while walking the trail.

Integrating into the Minnesota Zoo's original monorail track, which opened in 1979 and was retired in 2013, the Treetop Trail is the ultimate reuse construction project. Planning began in June 2018 and a ceremonial groundbreaking was held in April 2022. "Thanks to the full support from our Boards, legislative and government champions, as well as the philanthropic community, we have secured \$39 million in public and private partnership to support our Step Into Nature campaign and this transformational project," said Frawley.

The Zoo contracted with award-winning Snow Kreilich Architects; engineering firm Buro Happold (known for its work on the High Line in New York City); TEN x TEN Landscape Architecture and Urbanism; and construction partner, PCL. Together, they have been committed to minimizing disruptions to the Zoo's animals and guests before, during, and after construction of the trail.

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Treetop Trail Fun Facts:

- There are 7.5 miles of conduit running on the underside of the trail. That's equivalent to just under 3,000 African Bush Elephants standing in a single file line!
- The trail is comprised of more than 15,000 composite deck boards that were manufactured in Worthington, Minnesota. That's enough boards to make 165 average residential decks.
- The trail consists of 80,000 decking fasteners.
- The project has a total of nearly 1,000 tons of new structural steel which reinforces angles, walkway frames, and handrails around the curves in the trail.
- Let there be light! The trail has more than 1,800 light fixtures in between the railings, alternating left to right every four feet.
- The trail was built in 20-foot modular sections (400 total). Each was wheeled into place by a custom-made trolley fabricated for this project.
- As of June 2023, the trail has required 80,000+ labor hours to complete, all of which were done with no incidents or injuries reported.

The Minnesota Zoo would like to express profound gratitude to the following for their support of the Treetop Trail: State of Minnesota, K.A.H.R. Foundation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Target, Best Buy Foundation, Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation, Flint Hills Resources, and hundreds of individual donors.

To learn more about the Minnesota Zoo's Treetop Trail, please visit mnzoo.org/treetoptrail. Background and assets can be found here: [Minnesota Zoo Treetop Trail Assets](#).

About the Minnesota Zoo

The Minnesota Zoo is a year-round destination providing a window into the natural world. With hundreds of species of animals, worldwide conservation efforts, and acres of scenic beauty, the Zoo is a resource to connect people, animals, and the natural world to save wildlife. The Minnesota Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and an institutional member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). For more information visit mnzoo.org.

About the Minnesota Zoo Treetop Trail

The 1.25-mile Treetop Trail at the Minnesota Zoo is the world's longest elevated pedestrian loop. An inspired repurposing of the Zoo's original monorail trail, the path brings guests up to 32 feet above the ground providing them a bird's eye view and access to hundreds of acres of hardwood forest, wetlands, wildlife, and, of course, the Zoo's beloved animals. The mission of the Treetop Trail is to provide a year-round, welcoming, and accessible journey into nature for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities through self-guided experiences as well as special events and programming. mnzoo.org/treetoptrail

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