

Magic After 112 Years

If you are a tangents.org fan, then you've already read two riveting accounts of a little tangents field trip of sorts to Cincinnati Ohio. I don't mean to be redundant, but I'm going to post my take on the excursion for my friends and remote members of my family to read my take on the trip.

We began our journey bright and early Monday morning, July 19, and I like how the other tangenteers failed to mention that the keys were accidentally locked in the trunk. Someone, I forget who (and I'm not going to mention who it was that locked the keys in the trunk except that it wasn't me), but someone had the brilliant revelation that the back seat could pull down, thus saving us a 30-mile round-trip drive to get the spare set of keys. Us 4 adults (3 of my kids were with Grandma, and my little boy stayed with a family friend since he couldn't have gone on roller coasters at King's Island the following day) crammed into a little Sunfire, and somehow I got the privileged front seat for the whole trip – hey no complaints here, I was so much less sore than I was after last year's trip – I don't think I could say that if I had been crammed in the back of the Sunfire for two days. But taking the little car was necessary because we estimate that we saved around \$70 in gas by not taking our gas-guzzling mini-van, so thanks to the owner of the Sunfire for letting us put the miles on his car.

We arrived at our first tourist destination, the wonderful Cincinnati Zoo with more than enough time (or so we thought) to explore the entire humongous zoo complex. I just love the Cincinnati Zoo – we visited years ago, and I don't really remember much about that visit, other than accidentally driving our car into the zoo... But they seemed to have fixed that entry problem by now. Hubby and I visited this zoo last year, but we didn't leave early enough, and after some delays and the 4-hour drive, we really didn't see much of the zoo.

But this year, we had left bright and early and were prepared to stay all day, despite the 90^o+ weather. I was appointed tour guide (why? I don't know – I'm a pretty big zoo enthusiast, I guess, and I'm a pretty good navigator until you throw hills or mountains into the equation. And the Cincinnati Zoo has more than a few large hills and low valleys to navigate around, but we did well – Hubby and I being especially thankful that we didn't happen to have kids to carry or a double-stroller to push up all those hills in that heat!!!)

Cincinnati has a WIDE array of species to see! Some I had scarcely heard of, some I had NEVER heard of; I just wish I had taken better notes and written down which species I saw that I wanted to do more research on when I got home. Oh well, I will be back – Ohio is the only state to exhibit my favorite animal, the manatee, outside of its native Florida, and we are blessed to have not one, but TWO zoos (Cincinnati and Columbus) that exhibit this beautiful creature – so yeah, I will be back downstate to get my manatee fix. Cincinnati has two manatees that arrived from Florida just a few months ago, and they are relatively young creatures – just 3 and 4-years old. Manatees can live to be 60-70 years old, so the manatees at the Cincinnati Zoo were relatively small compared to the others I've seen in captivity. No less breathtaking, the little guys did move a little bit faster and seemed more playful than their adult counterparts. I knew about the 'Sleep With the Manatees' program that Cincinnati offers before this visit, but I was reminded again – that is of course something I would love to do. But "Sleep with the Manatees"? I think I'd probably have to call it something different since I wouldn't be doing much sleeping if I got to spend the night in the manatee exhibit! Someday...

Another remarkable, highly endangered creature housed by the Cincinnati Zoo is the [Sumatran Rhino](#). There are five rhino sub-species left on this planet, and the Sumatran is the most

rare – estimated at less than 275 individuals left in the wild. A Sumatran Rhino successfully gave birth at the Calcutta Zoo in 1889, but as decades passed without any further successful reproduction in captivity, people grew concerned and developed a program designed to save the Sumatran Rhino. Widely considered a failure, the program ran from 1984-1996 and consisted of capturing 40 wild Sumatran Rhinos and trying to reproduce them in captivity. By the late '90s, no rhinos had been born of the program, and half of the captured rhinos had died. In 1997, the United States was down to only 3 captive Sumatran Rhinos: two females (in the Los Angeles Zoo and Bronx Zoo) and one male (Cincinnati Zoo). It was decided that the animals be united for one last breeding attempt in Cincinnati. In September 2001, the first captive-born Sumatran Rhino calf in 112 years was born (this was the 6th pregnancy for the mother; the previous 5 pregnancies were not successful)! Another calf followed in 2004, but sadly that same year a disease outbreak killed all of the Sumatran Rhinos in captivity in Malaysia, reducing the number of captive Sumatran Rhinos in the world to **only eight**. Another calf was born in 2007, and that same year the calf who was born in 2001 was returned to Sumatra to try to breed him there. If you are not an animal lover like I am, then you might find my little rant about the Sumatran Rhino boring, and I apologize. But there aren't words for how fascinating it was to see an live animal walking around and making noise who is so rare in our world. Although this particular rhino species is the smallest of the 5 currently in existence, it is fascinating in other ways; such as its light coat of reddish-brown hair, its almost constant vocalizations (which we were able to witness), and its ability to twist saplings into patterns to communicate with other rhinos in the wild. A truly fascinating creature; if you are going to be in the Cincinnati area, I highly recommend stopping by the zoo and glimpsing this historic animal specimen. Here is a video of Emi's 3rd and final calf who was born in 2007:

We stopped for lunch and took in one of those 4D shows; which was alright – being in the air-conditioned theater for 30 minutes was worth the admission fee alone. The 4D consisted of a 3D movie of animals with some additional effects – water spraying, high-powered fans blowing (Ahhh...), things to poke your back, etc. The air blasters on my seat were not working, and neither were my feet ticklers, but no matter, for the air blasting sound in my ears is not one of my favorite things anyway.

By the time we got around to the other side of the zoo, I was so hot and tired that I was becoming willing to skip certain parts of the zoo. We did stop in the petting zoo, another one of my usual favorites (I know a secret spot on goats where they tend to feel sore, and my patented ‘goat rubs’ are usually very much appreciated... not as much in the heat though).

Two exhibit buildings of note: I really enjoyed the nocturnal house and the cat house (which housed more than just cats, and many species of animals with which I was not familiar – maybe they should change the name – ‘Cat House And Friends’? ‘Cats and More’? ‘Cats, Etc.’? That sounds like the work of the zoo’s marketing department; clearly my talents do not lie in that area). The nocturnal house had plenty of species outside of the usual fruit bats you see in the nocturnal houses of many zoos. Along with its share of nocturnal marsupials (a few species of gliders and something called a potto), Cincinnati also has vampire bats (complete with ones feeding out of little dishes of blood – delightfully and creepily fascinating!) as well as flying foxes – bats the size of my large parrot at home with faces resembling foxes or small bears.

Overall, a wonderful day with some great friends, even if it was super hot! Up next, my run-down of the following day spent at King’s Island!