



TROPICAL ASIA: BANYAN WILDS

SELF-GUIDED TOUR FOR TEACHERS AND CHAPERONES

This guide provides questions and suggested answers to help teachers and chaperones guide their students through Woodland Park Zoo's Banyan Wilds in the Tropical Asia bioclimatic zone. The text includes questions (in *italics*) to share with students. Some of these questions have no right or wrong answer, but allow students to express a variety of responses, including sensory impressions as well as factual knowledge and observations. Chaperones should encourage students to think, to feel, and to observe as they progress through the exhibit.



EXHIBIT OVERVIEW

The Banyan Wilds exhibit is one component of Woodland Park Zoo's Tropical Asia bioclimatic zone (along with the Trail of Vines exhibit). The dense tropical forests of Asia hold some of the world's most endangered species including tigers, sloth bears and more. Banyan Wilds reflects the complexity and diversity of Asia's tropical forests and the crossroads we face as all of our (humans and wildlife) needs come to a head.

Entering Banyan Wilds, monolithic rock formations of Southern India bring you into the world of sloth bears, lounging on a log or searching for honey and insects. As you progress past the sloth bears you will see the Field House. Look for signs of field biologists at work, maps and tools-of-the-trade spread out. After you leave the Field House you will come to a crossroads and a forest gate. This signifies the transition from India to the Malay peninsula. Tire treads and wildlife tracks show this is an old gate used for logging and transport of forest products. Down the trail past the Caretaker's Place you will come to a large swirling banyan tree. These incredible plants, types of strangler fig trees, overtake their host trees over time, providing a sheltered space underneath. Here you have the ability to see the tigers cooling in a pool, pushing and scratching trees in search of a treat, or napping in the shade.

1. ASIAN SMALL CLAWED OTTERS

As you start your adventure in Banyan Wilds you will encounter the Asian small clawed otter habitat. With sleek bodies, strong tails and partially webbed feet they are superb swimmers and aquatic hunters, diving underwater for up to six minutes. To communicate, they use 12 different vocalizations, scent markings and “sign heaps” they build out of sand, mud or gravel to signal their territory. As you observe this species compare the amount of time they spend in the water verses land. *What do you notice?*



2. TROPICAL ASIA AVIARY

To find the birds, you'll want to look up, down and all around the aviary, as the birds will be everywhere from high in the trees to low in the bushes. Listen to the sounds of these birds. *How many do you hear?* You'll encounter the azure-winged magpie, Malay great argus pheasant, Chinese hwamei (also called the melodius laughingthrush) and Nicobar pigeon.

The five bird species are a loud crew and are host to an array of colorful feathers. From the call of the great argus as he prepares a spectacular dance for his mate to the sparkling metallic green feathers of the Nicobar pigeon, the aviary evokes the harmony and colors of the forest.



3. SLOTH BEAR

Look around the sloth bear habitat. *What do the tall mounds of dirt represent?* Sloth bears are known as the vacuum cleaners of the Asian forest because they are able to suck and slurp bugs out of termite mounds such as this one. They do not hibernate like the bears we have in the Pacific Northwest due to a warmer climate and the year-round access to food. If you look closely, you can also find a replica of a honeycomb hanging underneath a tree branch, illustrating how sloth bears will forage for honey and honeybees from the honeycombs of wild honeybees.



4. CONSERVATION FIELD HOUSE

As you enter the Field House look for audio, video and touch screen interactive media that turn this space into a conservation action center. It brings to life the stories of those who protect the forest, and invites you to become part of the Show Your Stripes Team. On the small screens on the side table, you can learn about different roles of people involved in conserving wild tigers. *Which role do you identify with and why?* You might also catch a great glimpse of the Malayan tigers from the large window in the Field House!

5. FOREST AT A CROSSROADS

Through the crossroads is the Caretaker's Place, next to the demonstration of an oil palm nursery. *Do you notice how this area feels more built up and has fewer trees?* The development of forest into agricultural land is a serious threat to tigers. Here you'll find an oil palm nursery and learn why Woodland Park Zoo supports certified sustainable palm oil that is deforestation free.



6. TIGER POOL AND BANYAN TREE

From the palm nursery you will continue on the pathway, past shoe prints of the caretaker and field staff to find yourself heading back into the forest. A stream leads to a tiger pool and becomes a dry river bed across the path with tapir and tiger tracks embedded into the concrete. As you continue to walk along, you come to the spreading roots of a banyan tree that offer sheltered observations of tigers. Banyan trees are species of figs that start growing high up in the forest on the branches of other trees. Banyan trees eventually overtake their host trees, thus they are often referred to as “stranger figs”. The fig fruits they produce are a very important food source for many species in southeast Asian tropical forests.



As you observe the tigers, consider that each tigers’ stripes act as a fingerprint. Every individual has its own markings that distinguish it from other tigers. *Can you see the difference in their stripe patterns?* Although it is fun to watch these three play it is important to remember why we have these animals here at the zoo. Less than 300 wild Malayan tigers remain. There are 3,200 in total, but the majority live in places such as zoos that protect them and try to share the message of tiger conservation with all. Show your stripes by joining us and our partners in Malaysia to protect these animals in the wild!

7. THE END

Think back on all that you have seen as you traveled through the Banyan Wilds. What do you remember best? What will you share with your family or friends after you leave the zoo? How can you help save tropical habitats of Asia? By learning more about the forests and wildlife of tropical Asia and sharing what you learned with others, you can help people appreciate and take action for these amazing habitats and animals. The choices you make about the resources you use, such as the products you purchase, can help make the world a more sustainable place for wildlife and for ourselves. Learn more by looking for information in zoo exhibits and on the Conservation section of the zoo’s website at www.zoo.org/conservation. That concludes the Banyan Wilds tour. We hope you enjoyed the zoo and take time to explore the other bioclimatic zones.

Additional background information on this bioclimatic zone is provided in Woodland Park Zoo’s Tropical Asia Teacher Packet, available on the zoo’s website at www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500.