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## Animal Avenue – The Adventure

Tacoma, Wash. – Pack your bags for a trip to Animal Avenue. Cross Lemur Lane, gawk at Meerkat Mansion, and encounter Fabulous Families, a Critter Community, and Animal Abodes. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium invites Animal Avenue travelers to start their journey through its newest exhibit May 31.

Animal Avenue is brightly colored and designed for the way we learn: through touch, exploration and movement. The addition of 17 new species in Animal Avenue will offer children and adults the chance to discover an animal's place in the world through families, homes, and communities.

Take a stroll down **Lemur Lane** to see that, just like humans, lemurs grow up in family units. Allowing visitors to see the similarities and differences of the animal family and their own family provides a visual and emotional connection to the animal world. The exhibit will also hold a similar version of the jungle gym provided for kids in the adjacent Magical Movement. This unique feature provides two families of scampering lemurs hours of fun and a captivated group of children another chance to relate to the animals.



Current Kids' Zone jungle gym to be replicated for a smaller lemur playground in Animal Avenue

Set up camp at **Meerkat Mansion** to watch a community of animals interact in their home. The meerkats protect their home with a lookout, sentry, who warns the community when a threat comes near. The exhibit will feature a child-sized cave for children to get up close and view the meerkats taking care of their home.

Follow the path to **Fabulous Families** where hands-on activities, small animal exhibits, and an intimate presentation area spotlight unusual animal families. The Toddler Turtle Dig allows the youngest visitors to play with their own families in a fun sand pit that replicates an endangered Western Pond Turtle nest.

Creep along to **Critter Community** to explore a variety of animal neighborhoods that illustrate how neighbors work together in their communities. Damaraland mole rats are a great fit for this area because these subterranean critters rely on each other to build intricate tunnel communities. Kids can discover who lives in a northwest forest by playing a game of "I spy" on a giant interactive mural.

Adventure into **Animal Abodes** to witness unusual species and their ingenious tactics to make a home. Kids will explore a variety of animal dwellings and see how similar animals can create

very different living spaces. They can climb a giant spider web, then turn around to see an enormous tarantula who buries himself in the ground rather than create a web for a place to live.



“Research indicates that children begin developing attitudes toward the natural world and animals at a very early age,” said Carla Collette, education curator for the Zoo. “We know that engaging the whole child in discovery and exploration is essential to learning and Animal Avenue makes a fun, entertaining place to put these ideas into action.”

The Zoo worked in collaboration with a diverse team of designers including BCRA architectural firm, Dillon Works! Inc., and Ray Mendez from Work As Play, Inc. Jody Miller Construction is the general contractor. Company president Jody Miller says he is excited to work on the project. “Animal Avenue is fabulously designed with lots of special nooks and crannies,” he said. “Everyone is really going to have fun at Animal Avenue.

For more information on Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, visit [www.pdza.org](http://www.pdza.org) or call 253-591-5337.

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*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only Zoo & Aquarium, is located in Tacoma’s beautiful Point Defiance Park, 5400 North Pearl Street. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium promotes responsible stewardship of the world’s resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The Zoo, a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).*