

Bison Exhibit at Yukon Bay Theme World | Hanover Adventure Zoo



The Bison Exhibit makes up part of the Yukon Bay theme world encompassing an overall surface area of approximately 26,500 sq. metres. Opened to the public in May 2010, Yukon Bay is the seventh theme world at Hanover Adventure Zoo. At Yukon Bay, wolves, caribou, bison and prairie dogs are presented in the rugged wilderness of Canada and Alaska. Here, visitors come eye to eye with polar bears, fur seals, sea lions and grey seals in an enormous saltwater harbour basin equipped with a wave generator. All enclosures can be viewed from a variety of angles.

The 1,250 sq. metre Bison Exhibit is designed as a lifelike, transitional zone between the edge of a forest and an open prairie. Within Yukon Bay, the enclosure borders the south side of the Caribou Exhibit and is also positioned behind the Wolf Exhibit so that the wolves and bison can be viewed together from beyond an inconspicuous dry ditch. Protective plantings completely conceal the bison's massive steel fence, giving the exhibit the look and feel of a natural landscape. In addition to the wood bison, the enclosure is populated with wild turkeys, waterfowl and Canadian geese.





The planting design centres around the bison's native, North American habitat. Plant species that are ill-suited to local conditions or not farmed in Germany have been replaced by visually similar ones. A balanced relationship is achieved between evergreen, coniferous trees that provide visual density and North American deciduous trees with their characteristic autumn colouration. Existing trees were largely retained. Where the project necessitated the removal of certain trees, this was offset by planting recognized substitute species like birch, poplar and maple, since these are also native to North America. Dense perimeter plantings provide forest-like covering for the bison fence and service path located behind. Deadwood, big rocks and mild electric current are used to protect the plants from the animals. Groups of trees have been planted alongside and in front to provide the enclosure structure, divert the eye and emphasize the natural transition from woodland to open landscape.

Given the animal's extreme weight, the ground covering inside the enclosure consists primarily of mud or clay-based pathways. Large sand baths and surfaces with coloured, patterned concrete are also present. The animals have access to two shelters as well as a water basin for bathing. A kind of punching ball designed to resemble an old water pump is provided as behavioural enrichment for the animals and sees frequent use. The animals can circulate freely around luxuriant clusters of plants, which also provide spots for seclusion.

When needed, a wheel loader can access the enclosure from the service path in the rear. The stall building and side enclosure also border on the zoo service path so that visitors are not disturbed by exhibit operations. The side enclosure is positioned between the stall and the main enclosure and is serviced by caretakers via a sliding gate.



The northern view of the Bison Exhibit is designed as a small, abandoned railroad station located in the middle of the wilderness. Modelled after an original design, a steam locomotive with cargo cars forms the border between bison and caribou enclosures. When required, the cars can be moved forward on the rails, creating a gate wide enough for a wheel loader to pass through. The southern view of the enclosure looks out over the bison bathing pool. Designed as a geyser landscape with regularly timed eruptions, this area provides a special highlight.