



# HOLLYWILD

WORDS/ SHERRY JACKSON

Want to go on a safari and see movie stars this summer without breaking the bank? Well, you can do both at Hollywild Animal Park in Inman, S. C. Upon arriving at the park, you'll soon realize this isn't your typical zoo. If the dirt parking lot and no-frills exterior don't give it away, the prompt attention by one of the many roaming animals will. Chickens, peacocks, ducks and other tame animals greet visitors as they enter the park.

Feeding is encouraged for most of the animals at Hollywild (and appropriate food is available for purchase at several locations throughout the park). There's also a bottle-feeding area where you can feed the youngest additions to the park's family. Hollywild staff members are always on hand and willing to answer questions and educate everyone on the animals, their habits and natural environments.

Plan to spend several hours at the park exploring the exhibits and interacting with the animals. Make sure that you don't miss the highlight of the park, the Outback Safari Ride. You'll board an open tram bus and your tour guide/driver will take you through the 70-plus-acre "back" portion of the park. This is home to the larger, wild animals of Hollywild. Be sure to purchase animal food before boarding as many of the free-roaming animals in

this area will come right up to the bus and eat out of your hand. Kids will get a kick out of fallow deer, zebras, bison, watusis, donkeys and emus slobbering in their hands as they eat from them.

Movie stars are plentiful here, although they might not be the typical movie star you would envision. Since the 1970s, Hollywild's founder and executive director David Meeks and his animals have been in over 65 feature movies and a myriad of commercials. Tank, the only working rhino in the United States, is a veteran and has been at the park for 22 years. He's Hollywild's most famous star; you'll recognize him from the current Zicam™ cold and allergy relief commercials.

There's also Zeke the Zebra, who has starred in several Land Rover commercials, and the Siberian Tigers who were in the movie "Manhunter." In the exhibit area of the park you will meet many other leopards, lions, cougars and baboons who have been featured in movies, commercials and television shows.

Each year, the park welcomes new additions: Some are born at the park and others are rescued or taken in from areas all around the world. New this year are triplet Syrian brown bears, born at the park on Jan. 7. They have caused quite a commotion with their cuteness. They've

got a special area set up by the park's waterfall as they aren't quite ready to be out in a regular habitat full time. The cubs are extremely rare as Syrian brown bears are almost extinct in the wild. Hollywild is committed to raising awareness of this and provides an educational focus on wildlife conservation.

Unicorns do exist! And you can see them at Hollywild. Other special additions this year are the gemsbok antelopes whose hollow horns are so delicate that they are easily knocked off or broken. Many of the antelopes end up with only one broken horn and it's been said that the unicorn myth comes from early sightings of these animals.

Because of their showbiz lifestyle and being raised around humans, the animals love visitors. When coming to visit Hollywild, David says, "People often come here for family fun and entertainment, but what they don't realize is that they are just as much entertainment to the animals. We're like reality TV to them all the time and they love it." ☺

*Details: During the summer, Hollywild is open seven days a week. For exact hours, admission prices and directions, it's best to check the website <http://www.hollywild.com> for information.*

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