

# ANIMAL EMBASSY

*The Message of the Animals*



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**L**ORO Parque was voted in 2015 the best zoo in Europe and the second best in the world (by Trip Advisor, the largest Internet portal for attractions). This is not only a wonderful appreciation of the work done in Loro Parque for the animals and visitors, but also an incentive to continue along the same path. The transparency shown in hundreds of TV documentaries for many years, where the audience can look behind the scenes of Loro Parque, is what we want to share now with all visitors in our latest project. Therefore, a completely new part of the park with more than 2,200 square meters has been developed.



In this area themed as an African village, visitors have the opportunity, in different pavilions separated by glass panels, to observe the employees directly in their daily work without disturbing them. We want to show how much love and dedication with which our animals are cared for, but also how much expertise and effort is needed for such a large animal population, to meet all the needs of the creatures entrusted to us. We also want to promote respect for animals and the environment among our visitors, to address our commitment for the preservation of the planet and nature for future generations. So, in this new part of the park visitors connect with the animal species and nature conservation in a wonderfully clear and easily comprehensible manner.



In a tour through “Animal Embassy”, the first African pavilion encountered houses the Baby Station for parrots. Here visitors can experience through the glass panes how our nurses lovingly feed the newly hatched parrot chicks. They can even see their growing stages and how they finally perch in a large aviary where they become slowly independent by starting to fly and, step by step, to eat alone and become independent from the feeding syringe. On average three hundred young parrots are reared by hand here every year, and especially in endangered parrot species this is an important method to maintain and increase the populations.

The second pavilion is dedicated to research. To this end, there is collaboration between Loro Parque the renowned German Max Planck Institute. From a darkened room, visitors can observe behavioural experiments with different species of parrots. The birds are not disturbed, because the examination rooms are designed so that viewers can see inside, but the birds in the rooms cannot see the audience. The main objective of the research is to examine in more detail the cognitive abilities of parrots because, as with crows, parrots are among the most intelligent bird species and many researchers put them on the same level of intelligence as dogs, dolphins or even apes. The Director of the international research team is Princess Auguste von Bayern, who has a doctorate in biology and internationally known in science circles for her pioneering research on New Caledonian crows. Thus, Animal Embassy offers a unique opportunity to learn more about our parrots and simultaneously therefore the Zoo supports an important area of research.

Continuing the tour, visitors pass in front of two huge artificial, but completely realistic African baobabs, which in the base of one is a large aviary for Grey parrots (*Psittacus erithacus*). Like the group of Blue-headed macaws (*Primolius couloni*) in a second aviary, these parrots are regularly integrated into the research programmes of the Max Planck Institute and otherwise live in this beautiful aviary.



*On-site diagnostic laboratory - Abaxis, Inc.*

In the following pavilion are the Loro Parque laboratories, which give visitors the chance to see with how much technical equipment the two biologists are working with daily to manage the essential routine tests of a zoo like Loro Parque. Thus every day, sometimes several times, in all pools and ponds at the orcas, dolphins, sea lions, the aquarium and the lakes water samples are taken, which are immediately analyzed and evaluated. Furthermore, many virus tests for parrots, such as Circovirus and Polyomavirus, are also done here.



This is followed by three grouped pavilions where, with four visible rooms, the clinic of Loro Parque is located. Here, visitors also have the opportunity to see live, and separated only by glass panels, the treatments and even the operating theatres and to see with how much effort the three-member veterinary team and technicians work to help the animals. Visitors can see the X-ray room and diagnostic work taking place in the clinic's laboratory next door. This is where the blood analyses take place, and where the professional cooperation with Abaxis is most in evidence. Abaxis has for fourteen years partnered with Loro Parque and the Loro Parque Fundación to provide an out-standing service and first-class cooperation. This has included the constant use of an array of Abaxis blood analyzers, as well as rotors, for in-house diagnostics, the net result being a much better understanding of the health of the animal collection, and consequent improvements in welfare and conservation, in particular for the parrots. With the analyzers on view at close range, the visitors can appreciate the extent of partnership between Loro Parque and Abaxis. This professional relationship between the two parties has recently extended into fundamental research, including to establish blood profiles of parrot chicks as they grow and develop, and to map the changes that take place in the profiles over time.



The tour concludes in the largest pavilion, where Loro Parque Fundación (LPF) is presented. On a video wall, visitors can select each one of the 36 current protection projects for endangered species by using one of eight front-mounted tablets. The 30 to 40 second videos are in English, Spanish or German and present the most important things about the projects that are initiated and supported by LPF. In its 20 years of existence, LPF has invested almost US\$ 16 million in 109 different projects. As a result, in more than two thirds of the projects, the populations of endangered species are increasing again, an effect most clearly seen in the IUCN Red List. Now, nine species of parrots that have been supported by LPF in conservation projects in the field have been down-listed in their threat category due to the positive population figures, for example, the Yellow-eared Parrot (*Ognorhynchus icterotis*) and the Lear's Macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*) from the category "Critically Endangered" to "Endangered."

In the LPF pavilion the employees are available to answer any questions. The most relevant is that 100% of the membership fees and donations flows to the conservation projects. Since Loro Parque has committed to pay all maintenance costs of LPF, such as salaries, maintenance, care of animals, etc., LPF has the possibility to invest all donations directly for protection programmes. This is an important motivation for visitors to become members or make donations to the LPF as a result of experiencing Animal Embassy.

Animal Embassy has a lower level, reserved for the staff. Here the Baby Station, the Max Planck research centre, the clinic and the Loro Parque Fundación have their spacious administration and service areas. The LPF library is equipped as a conference room for visitors, students or student groups of up to 40 participants. Also from Animal Embassy, videoconferences directly into the classrooms of schools are regularly conducted. This is an innovative way by which the educational department of LPF brings the animals, their needs and the need to protect them, closer to children and young people, because it is precisely the children in whom the basics for a sustainable understanding of nature have to be laid.



*Living every day close to wildlife definitely inspires a love of nature. In this sense, the most important goal of Loro Parque with this new facility is that the animals of the park are the ambassadors of their own species, raising the awareness of the visitors to support their conservation in their natural habitats*

*- The Message of the Animals*

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