

The penguins are back!



Penguins Rock, the revamped outdoor penguin pool at Edinburgh Zoo has reopened to members of the public , and hurray hurray the [Penguin Cam](#) is back. When it was launched the penguin cam quickly became a diversion for all disillusioned office workers...and went viral!

Launching in the Zoo's centenary year, the impressive new enclosure development cost £750,000 and has created a unique new and exciting experience for visitors and penguins alike.



The new enclosure, called Penguins Rock, features lowered perimeters made from glass and wood that will make visitors feel much closer to the birds. Enhanced viewing areas have also been created and interactive interpretation draws inspiration from the birds themselves – with feathers, nesting rings, parasols and eggs featuring. Mock sandy beaches and rocky areas add great visual touches, but also provide the birds with different textures that are perfect for their feet. Visitors can also see the birds have fun with a beautiful stone waterfall feature, a water shoot in the shallow end of the pool, and a diving board made out of carved rock.

Behind the scenes the development also includes the introduction of a state of the art filtration system.



In March last year, Edinburgh Zoo announced their iconic penguin enclosure would be the focus of an extensive redevelopment and upgrade to create a 21st century exhibit perfect for one of the Zoo's best loved species. The existing

pool had served the large colony of king's gentoos and rockhoppers extremely well for over 20 years; however the pool was starting to need some behind the scenes TLC and it made sense to combine maintenance upgrades with a visual overhaul too.

Darren McGarry, Head of Living Collections at Edinburgh Zoo, commented:- "We are delighted to open our new penguin enclosure, Penguin's Rock, to visitors to Edinburgh Zoo once again.

"Our penguins have been reintroduced back into their home over the last few weeks, with the 28 gentoos and 27 rockhoppers that remained at Edinburgh Zoo going in first. It was a pleasure to see the birds start to interact with the new features of their enclosure – trying out the water slide and sticking their beaks into their new waterfall. The waterfall has actually proved to be a real hit with the gentoos!

"Next, a week later, came gentoo birds that had been staying in Belfast and Denmark and there was lots of calling out as birds definitely recognised old friends. As well as old faces returning, we also welcome a mix of new one and two year old gentoos to Edinburgh Zoo as it is important to keep genetic diversity within populations.

"We are really looking forward to see the reactions of our visitors as they see our new enclosure and see our famous black and white birds enjoy all its new features – the mock sandy beach, the clear aqua blue water and creative bird themed interpretation – to name just a few of exciting changes. However, it is the opportunity to feel so close to the birds due to the new lowered sightlines, and glass barriers and wood perimeters, that we particularly hope people will be thrilled with."



Colin Oulton, Team Leader for Birds at Edinburgh Zoo, commented:-The other bird keepers and I are so happy to see Penguins Rock filled with penguins once again! The new enclosure is a wonderful addition to our visitor attraction and perfect for our penguins.

“The birds, both returning and new, have settled in very quickly to the Penguins Rock. In fact, breeding season will shortly be here and many of our returning birds are already claiming their favourite nesting spots. Creatures of habit, penguins tend to return to the same spot each year to nest. We plan on putting out our nesting rings and pebbles – gentoo males offer females pebbles to win them over and to help them build their nests – later this week.

“Visitors will have to wait a little longer to see our kings return though, as the warmer weather down in Gloucestershire has meant they have started to moult a few weeks earlier than normal. Moulting can be a little stressful for penguins, so obviously we do not want to do anything to add to this and it will be in the best interests of the birds for them to travel afterwards. We plan to bring them back all together when they have all moulted in around four weeks’ time, however apparently Sir Nils Olav is taking his imperial time and has not started yet!”

The Penguins Rock Appeal was the most successful ever by the Society, raising over £138,000 in total. In particular, penguin brick footprints with personalised messages proved to be very popular, with 100 dedications made in remembrance of or for loved ones. The remainder was raised through grants, trusts and RZSS funds.

The penguins will walk over the footprint bricks when the world famous Penguin Parade will begin again once the birds have had time to settle back into their redeveloped home. A date will be announced for the Parade re-launch in due course.



All these lovely photos courtesy of Ivon Bartholomew