

## My Daily Walk around the Santa Ana Zoo

By Tom Decker, Director of Communications & Technology

Once every day at the Zoo I try to leave the trailer and walk around the Zoo. Sometimes I do more walking and sometimes I do less, but here is my basic route:

I start by walking through the gate behind the Exploration Outpost and head straight toward the entrance to Tierra de las Pampas. I love watching the guanacos notice me and then pretend not to care. They obviously are loving their new home. And our baby rheas are all grown up now. The male albino has gotten very large! I also turn to watch the anteaters walk around. Sometimes they are bathing in their pool and other times they are relaxing in the tunnel. As I approach the tables at the north end, I can look out over the whole new exhibit and almost believe that I am really in the Pampas.

I then head back toward Bindi the Binturong and through the new trail into Monkey Row. I first make the left turn up to visit Kianga, the black and white colobus, who was born the same week I started working here. She just lost her father and is all alone in there, so I always like to say hi to her. Hopefully she will have a friend joining her soon! I then turn around and head back down the other way, passing the spider monkeys and the golden lion tamarin families, who are very active in there.

But now comes the highlight of my journey. Sometimes when I am over by Bindi, I will stop and look through to the crested capuchins. If I make any kind of noise, Matteo, who was born here a few years back, will hear me and come running over to look at me from all the way back. But even if I don't stop earlier, he is always so excited to see me when I approach the front of his enclosure. He comes over and talks to me, sometimes he shows me a new toy he has, and if I ask him about his new baby brother, he will go and bring him over. I will stand and talk to Matteo for several minutes, if not longer.

When I finally pull myself away from Matteo, I also like visiting with the saki monkeys in their newly rebuilt Amazon Rainforest exhibit. I think back to the time when Dakota was the only saki monkey in there and what a proud dad he is now to have his whole family jumping around in there.

I then make my way down to see our new camels, visiting for the winter months. The new females in there are so much smaller than the two males, who gave rides to visitors in the summer months! Those guys were huge, like mutant camels from Mars!

At this point, I like to visit the farm or head up onto the deck at Amazon's Edge, but I don't always have the time and have to head back to my office. My day seems a little less stressful now, though, and the tasks at hand suddenly don't seem all that difficult. Hopefully you can spend some time at the Zoo and find your own "favorite walk" and it will relax you and bring you peace the way it does for me. And if you find your way by Matteo, tell him I say HI!