

Apogee Photo Magazine

Detroit, Michigan: Much “Mo” To Motown

by Michael Goldstein



A half-ton polar bear wanders the northern sea ice, looking for a fat seal or two for lunch ... but this ice is in the Detroit Zoo’s Arctic exhibit, a long way from the polar ice cap.

A 300 mm lens put me “up close and personal” with the bear while keeping my feet dry, and careful attention to exposure ensured detail in the fur and ice would not be underexposed. He looks mean and hungry, doesn’t he?

The huge polar bear, fearsome predator of the far North, swims across a small, icy pond and clambers up on sea ice. Known as “Nanuq” to the Inuit who hunt him, this male specimen approaches ten feet in length and weighs in excess of a thousand pounds. The polar bear (*Ursus Maritimus*) is amazingly well adapted to his harsh environment. His fur hairs are hollow to hold warm air close to his body, while his black skin absorbs heat. His small ears minimize heat loss. He is an efficient and deadly hunter, and any seals (his primary food source) in the neighborhood would do well to keep an eye on him. As it happens, he is being observed by a crowd of tourists, including two young boys in shorts and t-shirts, who are jumping up and down with excitement.

Shorts and t-shirts in the far North? Well, not very far north. We’re all standing in a seventy-foot long acrylic underwater tunnel called the “Polar Passage.” It’s part of the Detroit Zoo’s “Arctic Ring of Life” which opened in 2001 (at that time the world’s largest polar bear exhibit). The Polar Passage allows zoo visitors to observe the bears not only on the ice, but also in the water, as well as in transition between the two. Swimming seals (well separated from bears!) are also easy to observe, adding to the realistic environment. A huge iceberg machine, that produces three-hundred-pound blocks of ice daily, keeps the exhibit suitably chilly, even in ninety-degree summer temperatures. The Detroit Zoo has been a leader in the exhibition, management, and breeding of polar bears since the opening of their first bear exhibit in 1928.

Just as there is far more to be seen in Detroit besides cars, there are many more attractions at the zoo besides bears. The African lion exhibit is another area where realistic surroundings enhance an excellent collection of animals and their observation. In addition, a herd of zebra wander a grassy *veld* that might have been transplanted from the Dark Continent.

In existence for almost a century, the Detroit Zoo has accomplished amazing feats within a relatively small space. The entire area is easy to cover in a few hours of easy walking--including many stops for "ooh-ing" and "aah-ing." Photographers will require more time, of course, to take advantage of the many photo opportunities to be had, both indoors and out. However, if "walk and gawk" is not your thing, motorized transport is available in the shape of Safari Cars that carry passengers from exhibit to exhibit. Also, disabled photographers can rent small, motorized carts that are capable of toting a tripod and small camera bag as well as the passenger.

After a day spent with the lions at the Detroit Zoo, I choose to spend the evening with the Tigers baseball team at Comerica Park. Several huge cats guard the portals of this temple to the game which is located at the center of a sea of parking lots. The middle of downtown Detroit is in the throes of a massive rehabilitation. Deserted houses and storefronts, scheduled for future demolition, surround large new buildings, such as the Science Center. Comerica Park occupies such a vast area that it can take restless fans an hour or more to walk its circumference--more if "red hot" stops are made. A trip from your seat at grass level to the concessions for a mid-game drink or some popcorn can be a worthwhile spot of exercise.

New technology is very much in evidence at this stadium. The electronic billboard (the largest in the world) displays photo-quality graphics, as well as data. When a new batter strides to the plate, his face appears on the screen, and his batting statistics flash up. Elsewhere, fans can read the speed of each pitch he receives from the pitcher, some of them approaching an astonishing 100 mph!

Another fun place to bring the kids or anyone who is a "chocaholic" is the Morley Candy Factory. More than just a big candy store, Morley's provides guided tours of their huge production lines. Begun in 1919 as a restaurant and small shop on the east side of Detroit, this family business has been making great candy for almost a century. Gallons of liquid chocolate, bushels of pecans, copper kettles the size of small trucks--this is candy-making in a big way! (A tip to those who wear glasses: if you're privileged to take the "insider tour," they'll provide you with a hairnet to wear while in the production area. Save it. Those hairnets are better for cleaning glasses than the finest lens papers.) At the end of the tour, you're given free rein in their candy store--for a price, or course. This is the best place in Motown to fall off your diet!



The lion enclosure at the Detroit Zoo has been configured to look like a natural rocky area where the big cats would "lie up", to take the sun, and digest their most recent meal of tasty tourist.

Perhaps it was designed by photographers? It is oriented such that the afternoon sun nicely lights up the entire area, providing handy catchlights in the animals' eyes, while beautifully sidelighting them. A 300mm lens puts you nicely within range of fang and claw, while keeping you unshredded.

If you find a sedate stroll through Morley's to be too relaxing, you're primed for a few



This image speaks to me of temptation! I had completed our tour of the Morley Candy Factory, and was waiting in their store while our group made their purchases, when I spotted this small boy. Talk about big eyes and a small appetite... he was absolutely enthralled by the prospects of what lay on the shelves before him.

I set my flash to deliver one f-stop more light than the ambient (which was fluorescent), and angled myself to avoid bouncing flash from the glass front of the candy cabinet.

Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau
211 W. Fort Street, Suite 1000, Detroit MI 48226.
Telephone (313) 202-1800, or (800)-DETROIT.
On the Internet, www.visitdetroit.com

hours of fun at Dave & Buster's, an electronic game emporium. Their "midway" features every possible form of gaming entertainment you could possibly imagine--from simulated racing cars to shuffleboard and back again. The noise level is beyond belief. The kids will love it, but leave the old folks at home! A full bar and restaurant round out the attractions of this complex, so you'll be hard put to effect an escape before your pockets are empty.

Other diverse attractions within the Motor City include the MGM Grand Detroit Casino, The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, the Cranbrook Observatory, and (if you really *are* interested only in cars) the Automotive Hall of Fame.

[More....](#)

For up to the minute information, contact: