

We're Talking all kinds of LIONS!

By Lakendra Lewis

This kind



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and even
this kind

In that time of year where the beauty and majesty of downtown San Antonio begins to shine its brightest, there is nothing more equally beautiful and majestic than that revered King of the Jungle, the lion... or an animal who also happens to have "lion" in its name. If you have never explored these massive/enchanting creatures, why not do something a little different to kick off the holiday season and take in a "lion's share" of the following interactive exhibits and shows?

DISNEY'S THE LION KING AT THE MAJESTIC THEATRE

Get ready to break out those animal prints and sing "Hakuna Matata" as one of San Antonio's best-loved musicals, The Lion King, returns to the Alamo City for performances at the Majestic Theatre that are currently running through Nov. 7.

Based on the hit 1994 animated film of the same name, this tour de force production features live action versions of Simba, Nala, Mufasa, Scar and the rest of the gang in a stage adventure that pits good against evil in the quest to preserve the Circle of Life.

The stage adaptation, which showcases giant puppets, actors in stunning animal costumes and an award-winning score composed

by songwriting duo Elton John and Tim Rice, also features six indigenous African languages that are spoken throughout the show. This coupled with unforgettable, show-stopping tunes, stunning visual artistry and exhilarating choreography has made this modern day theatrical classic one of the most awe-inspiring ever brought to life onstage, and is certainly not one to be missed.

A winner of six Tony Awards, including Best Musical, the musical adaptation of The Lion King has garnered 70 major theatre awards internationally and is the third longest-running Broadway show in history next to Phantom of the Opera and Chicago respectively.

San Antonio theatergoers will definitely be feeling the love tonight!

BIG CAT VALLEY AT THE SAN ANTONIO ZOO

For those adventurous folk who want to see the real thing, this lion habitat at the San Antonio Zoo is about as close as you can get to coming “face-to-face” with the royals of the jungle.

The lion portion of Big Cat Valley features two male African lions—Tau and Josh; and two female African lions, Sarabi and Axelle. The habitat includes a heated rock, as well as areas for the lions to lay elevated towards the back wall, and a pool. Oh, did I also mention visitors who are feeling spunky can challenge a lion to a tug-of-war during designated hours? There is a rope that extends in between multiple barriers that separate the habitat from the guests so participants can safely test their strength against a big, furry contender behind the barriers.

The habitat’s enhancements, completed in 2016, cost in the neighborhood of a million dollars, providing additional space for the lions to roam along with an improved viewing of the majestic felines thanks to the installation of a larger, tempered and reinforced glass.

The exhibit, which also houses Sumatran tigers, is one of the zoo’s most popular attractions.





SEA LIONS AT SEAWORLD® SAN ANTONIO

Lions aren't only found on land. Some of them can be viewed at SeaWorld San Antonio where oceanic lions of a different kind can be found swimming, frolicking and just being overall adorable with us humans.

The sea lions, who are members of the seal family and are descended from the larger, now extinct Japanese sea lion, are featured in a variety of different interactive exhibits in which the entire family can participate:

- **SEA LION HIGH**

Located at Sea Lion Stadium, audiences will witness amazing animal behaviors and fun interaction as the zany sea lion duo of Clyde and Seamore go back to school in what turns out to be a rather slippery pursuit of their diplomas.

The show, which takes place in an aquatic-themed high school where laughter and education go hand-in-flipper, makes for some hilarious hijinks as Clyde and Seamore float to the heads of their class in a fun, fast-paced storyline.

- **SEA LION TOUR**

Participants will get up-close and personal in this interactive exhibit that features a meet-and-greet with a sea lion. Visitors also will learn about these delightful animals from the trainers who get to work with them every day. Other activities include touching and feeding a sea lion as well as photo opportunities with them.

- **IN-WATER SEA LION INTERACTION**

This popular two-hour interaction is back for sea lion lovers who would just as soon prefer latching on to a welcoming flipper as they would catching a ride back to shore with a dolphin. Participants will get to play the role of an animal ambassador in training during their swim, interacting with sea lions both in and out of the water who will provide a thrilling tandem tow across their habitat.

- **SEA LIONS (AND OTTERS) AT PLAY**

Did you know that sea lions are powerful swimmers using their front flippers to propel through the water? Or that otters have a thick coat of fur that helps keep them warm in frigid temperatures? These and more fun facts are shared during this spotlight on whimsical sea lions (and quirky otters) as they engage in play in this family-friendly show in which guests will get a closer look at these remarkable creatures and learn more about them.

WRITER'S BIO

Lakendra Lewis is an arts and entertainment journalist, editor and author whose articles have appeared in *Edible San Antonio Magazine*, *The Texas Observer* and *San Antonio Christian Woman Magazine*. She enjoys movies, music, cooking, singing and telling other people's stories. You can contact her/read more of her stories at lakendralewis.journoportfolio.com.

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