



## Exploration Into The Giraffe

Whether it is watching [baby Finn](#) on Instagram or enjoying [pictures](#) on the Giraffe Lover's Facebook page, I love giraffes! One of my bucket list items is to [spend an afternoon](#) with one or two giraffes over a glass of wine.

My bucket list aside, I want to share these incredible creatures with you.

### The Basics

Coming from sub-Saharan Africa, the males stand 18 feet tall with the females only slightly shorter at 14 feet. They weigh an average of 2,800 pounds. In the wild, they live an average of 25 years and in captivity that stretches to between 32 and 40 years.

Giraffes spend up to 18 hours searching for food. Each day, one can eat as much as 75 pounds of fresh leaves of acacia, mimosa and apricot, fruits (mangos seem to be their favorite) and flowers.

Pregnancies last about 15 months. The mom gives birth while standing up. So that is a five or six feet drop into the world for the newborn. The baby is about six feet tall and weighs approximately 150 pounds at this point. What is wonderful is that the baby will be standing about 30 minutes after birth and running shortly after that.

## Fun Fact for Trivia

Question: What is a pack of giraffes called?

Answer: A Tower

## Claim to Fame

Tallest animal in the world

## Special Features

Giraffes are unlike any other animal on the planet. Sure, there are some other animals with similar features, but none exactly like the giraffe. I am going to highlight the features that I think are amazing.

**Neck:** A giraffe's neck alone averages six feet long and weighs up to 600 pounds. The neck has the same number of vertebrae as a human (that is seven). The difference is the for a giraffe each one is 11 inches long. The long neck helps to reach those juicy tree leaves and fruits they love so much. It also helps balance the giraffe while running.

**Eyelashes:** These are my second favorite feature on this beautiful animal. They give the eye an elegant and mysterious vibe. However, the giraffe's eyelashes are not just fashion statements. They are extremely helpful to the giraffe. They provide protection from debris and wind to keep the eye healthy. Also, they act as filters for excess light and too much visual information.

**Spots:** Now to my number one favorite feature, spots. The spots not only provide camouflage to help them blend in and out of sight of predators, but they also regulate body temperature by using each spot's own unique blood supply. Before I sat down to write this article, I knew there were different colored spots as I had seen them in my travels both in person and in pictures. What I did not know was that there are four types of giraffes and they can be identified by their spots. Each type comes from a different geographic location across Africa. These are listed below with what the spots look like.

- 1) Reticulated (Somali) – spots are rich orange brown with no particular pattern, outlined by a network of white lines.
- 2) Masai (East Africa)
  - a. Masai/Kilimanjaro - spots are deep brown, surrounded by creamy brown and look like a ragged oak leaf.

- b. Thornicroft/Luangwa – classification is sometimes deemed as Southern spots are irregular and brown to black in color, surrounded by white to yellow bands.
- 3) Northern
  - a. Kordofan – spots are irregular and pale brown, outlined by thick off-white lines.
  - b. Nubian/Rothschild – spots are large and rectangular, chestnut colored, and outlined by off-white lines.
  - c. West African – spots are exceptionally light, rectangular and tan colored, surrounded by a light cream.
- 4) Southern
  - a. Angolan/Namibian – spots are irregular and light brown, surrounded by a pale cream color.
  - b. South African/Cape – spots are star shaped and various shades of brown, surrounded by light tan and look like star shaped.

I hope this exploration of the giraffe has given you a new appreciation for these amazing animals. The next time you see one, whether at a wildlife reserve, zoo, or even in a picture, take a moment to look closely. Can you tell which type of giraffe you are seeing?

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