



Volume 2, No. 7. April 12, 2002

New Arrivals

It's a geodesic dome!

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska, announces the arrival of the Desert Dome, March 26, 2002. Measurements: 137 feet high (42 meters), 230 feet in diameter (70 meters), total of 84,000 square feet of space (25,455 square meters), three deserts, 10 exhibits and 21 species of animals. Delivered by Larson Company (man-made rocks and trees), Temcor Co. (cristogon dome), Stan Howe and Associates (architects) and Kiewit Construction.

The Henry Doorly Zoo got a rainforest in 1992 (the Lied Jungle) and an ocean in 1995 (the Scott Aquarium). A desert seemed the natural progression, but to do so in Nebraska required construction of a man-made wonder. At a cost of \$31.5 million, the Desert Dome now gives Omaha arguably the strangest claim of all: "the world's largest indoor desert."

The hype is well-grounded, though. First for the donors, VIPs and local officials attending the ribbon cutting at a Tuesday evening gala, and then for the public streaming in the next day, the Desert Dome was dropping jaws. About 6,800 people showed up on the Dome's first public day, and in the first week the zoo drew 57,000 people. Spring break helped, and Good Friday saw 15,000 people, but the Dome is obviously the draw.

Its size is wowing enough, but what's inside comes as a surprise for the average Nebraskan, like the 30-foot-high (9 meters) Namibian sand dune (which uses a conveyor belt to return fallen sand back to the top), the 55-foot-tall (17 meters) Central Mountain, the expanse of Sonoran desert and the replica of the Uluru, the world's largest monolithic rock from Australia's Red Center. Representing deserts on three continents, the exhibits have fauna to match, from bobcats to caracal cats to meerkats.

Next year the world's largest indoor desert will open the world's largest nocturnal exhibit, Kingdoms of the Night.

©2002, Minton Enterprises LLC
All rights reserved