

Application Story

San Diego Zoo



The San Diego Zoo's new Elephant Exhibit is a hit with zoo patrons, thanks to life-like images.

An elephant odyssey: Walking with elephants is a reality with Christie projection

When the San Diego Zoo wanted to enhance their visitors' experience with their Elephant Encounters exhibit, Christie answered the call and an Elephant Odyssey was born!

Boasting a 2.4 acre expansion that's more than three times the size of the zoo's former elephant exhibit, the Elephant Odyssey is a state-of-the-art habitat that is home to seven African and Asian elephants. The habitat includes a 4600 square foot pool, an open-sided Elephant Care Center where keepers train the elephants, and specially designed 'utilitrees' – durable, elephant-proof false trees that provide shade, food and treats to the exhibit's giant tenants. With such a large habitat to work with, a unique underground tunnel was designed to allow patrons to walk directly under foot of the enormous pachyderms, providing a unique viewing opportunity. To enhance the experience, the Zoo wanted to give the feeling of 'walking with the elephants' by projecting bright, high-resolution, life-like video onto the tunnel walls, coupled with surround-sound audio to make it a total immersive experience.

With the help of Tom Zupner, service coordinator with AVI Systems, the Zoo began the arduous task of sampling equipment and looking for solutions for their unique needs.

"There were many obstacles with this installation," said Zupner. "It would be situated in a dusty tunnel where visitors needed to walk past the display without interfering with the image or equipment. The projector needed a custom enclosure to protect it from the elements of an outdoor venue. It needed to be accessible for easy lamp changes and other maintenance situations. And of course, being a park, there were budget restraints and the board approval process (to contend with)."

To decide on the best equipment, a "shoot out" or comparative sampling of an array of projectors was arranged. Said Zupner, "The decision for using the Christie products was made during the shoot – the proof (was in) the performance between Christie and other comparable projectors. It was clear to the decision makers and our staff that the Christie projector was best suited for this environment."

Customer:

San Diego Zoo

Location:

San Diego, California

Industry/Market:

Edutainment

Partners:

AVI Systems, San Diego

Requirements:

- A high quality, durable projection solution with the ability to run all day in an outdoor environment
- Low cost of ownership

Summary:

To bring the new Elephant Odyssey Exhibit to life, a bright projector was required for a "Walk with the Elephants" tunnel. Since the tunnel is open to the public, a durable, easily-serviced system was required.

Products:

- A Christie HD10K-M projector
- Bose surround-sound speaker system
- QSC amplifiers
- Mac-based computer for audio & video content

Results:

This high-resolution display solution meets the demands of an outdoor venue, while an integrated content system allows video and surround sound to bring the tunnel to life for patrons of the zoo. More importantly, the Zoo is happy with this easily serviced system that minimizes "down time" for a busy, 365 day-per-year business

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Tom Zupner, Service Coordinator, AVI Systems

A single Christie HD10K-M was selected to do the job. The projector was mounted in the middle of the tunnel in a custom Chase enclosure with a plexiglas sheet in front to protect it from patrons reaching into the beam of light. A Mac-based computer was installed and integrated as the platform for audio and video content, while an A/V rack located on one end of the tunnel in a room with AMX control QSC amplifiers, as well as 8 surround-sound Bose speakers in the tunnel all add to the experience.

"The system in the tunnel is programmed to play several encounters throughout the day and evening on a continuous loop, and the projector is used non-stop during Zoo hours (10-12 hours per day, 365 days per year)," said Zupner. The overall effect, with bright, clear video images and sound is convincing. Patrons feel as though they are walking alongside the elephants, complete with realistic sounds of charging elephants intermixed with the delicate soundtrack of a tranquil forest in the background. "The results are remarkable," continued Zupner. "I've personally been in the exhibit numerous times as an integrator, a service provider and as a visitor. It is amazing to watch visitors' reactions to this life-like audio visual experience."



The Christie HD10K-M projector was the perfect solution for the Zoo.

The success of the installation is something Zupner attributes to the ace team of installers, as well as the quality and reliability of Christie products and service technicians. "(By) having an excellent team of designers, installers, programmers and service technicians, we were able to get through the process of running our cables through a tunnel, installing and securing a very heavy projector and enclosure in a very untraditional setting. The final result is what you see on the faces of those entering the tunnel," said Zupner.

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At the end of the day, the parties involved were thrilled to have chosen the Christie HD10K-M for this very unique job. "We chose Christie based on the quality of picture, reliability of the product and support of the sales rep and the technical service department," continued Zupner. "We had some issues in the beginning stages, and a Christie service tech came down to the Zoo with our technical team and was able to resolve the situation very quickly to make sure this highly visible exhibit has very little down time. We value the trusted support that Christie has displayed in this encounter and all other situations where we have needed their help."

Contact Christie

Contact us today to find out how you can benefit from Christie projection solutions.

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