



Since 2009: Nature Discovery Park
12 km² area
Canton of Zurich



The gate to the Wilderness

Zurich Wilderness Park with its unique combination of forest, wilderness and animals lies directly before the gates of the city of Zurich. Unforgettable encounters with wild animals and a primeval, almost mystical forest wilderness create a stark contrast to urban life. These encounters enable the confrontation between urbanity and the wilderness. Together with Zimmerberg, Reppischtal and the whole Albis chain, Sihlwald is the largest continuous mixed deciduous woodland of the central Swiss lowlands.

From timber forest to nature forest

Sihlwald came into possession of the City of Zurich in 1309 as a gift from the Hapsburgers and in 1524 through the dissolution of the Fraumünster convent. But up to the present development it would last several hundred years, during which it was utilised by the City of Zurich as firewood and building timber. From 1876 on, there was even a forest railway which facilitated the work in the forest.

The foundation stone for the change back in the direction of a nature forest was laid in 1986 with the project "Nature Landscape Sihlwald". The then forestry commissioner of the city Andreas Speich had the vision of creating a

primeval forest landscape out of the former supplier of timber. Since the year 2000 all human interventions have been relinquished and the Sihlwald can again follow its own dynamic processes. Thus 200 years-old beech trees stretch their branches to the sky, while felled trunks decay beside them. The black woodpecker and the agarics are happy, for where else do they find today such wonderful possibilities for habitat and nourishment? The visitor can expect a variety of impressions and the experience of nature, which can develop in its own rhythm. Rest, experience and observe ...

In order to ensure this development in the long-term, in 2007 the City and Canton of Zurich signed a forest reservation agreement valid for the next 50 years. Additionally since 2008 the cantonal Protection Act came into force, which divided Sihlwald up into six zones. The most important two are the core zone, in which rambling is only allowed on paths and any collecting of plants is forbidden, and in contrast to this the recreation zone, where visitors may leave the path and picnic at campfire sites.

Also very important for the development of the Zurich wilderness park is the identification of the population involved. Without the agreement of the municipalities of the district of Horgen and the overwhelming 89.6 % majority of the citizens of Zurich in favour of transferring the Sihlwald and Langenberg to a foundation, the

development of the Zurich wilderness park would not have been possible.

Experience takes centre stage

Every year about 350,000 visitors come to see the Zurich Wilderness Park. The visitor centre in Sihlwald offers an extensive educational range of nature trails, guided tours and workshops and presents in addition to one permanent exhibition two others which change every year concerning the history and the nature of Sihlwald. In Langenberg 18 indigenous species of animal live in spacious and near-natural enclosures almost like in the wild. The enclosures create the connection to Sihlwald, where these animals once lived or still exist today.

On September 20, 2009 the opening of the Zurich Wilderness Park will take place with a great celebration. You can expect worlds of sound beneath the trees, Trudi Gerster telling stories from the forest, Linard Bardill and culinary offerings from do-it-yourself barbecues up to wild boar on the spit.

www.wildnispark.ch