



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Monarto Safari Park Asian Elephant programme

Who are the elephants in the Monarto Safari Park herd?

Monarto Safari Park is the forever home to five Asian Elephants, who were transferred from other zoos within the region to provide them with the opportunity for social interactions to support welfare outcomes.

Burma (43 y.o. female) arrived in November 2024 from Auckland Zoo, along with her dedicated keepers with a combined 70+ years of experience working with Asian Elephants who have stayed on to form the foundation of the Monarto Safari Park elephant team. Burma was born in Myanmar (formerly Burma) and spent her early years in a logging camp before moving to Auckland Zoo in 1990. She is a lovely, gentle elephant who enjoys exploring her new environment, you can spot her as the smallest elephant of the herd with the longest tail – it touches the ground!

Permai (35 y.o. female) arrived in January 2025 after a 40-hour, 2700km road trip across the Nullarbor from Perth Zoo. Permai is known for her mischievous and cheeky personality – she loves to be the centre of attention and is known as a bit of a rascal! She was impacted by the loss of Perth Zoo matriarch, Trisha, in 2022 and we still see the effects of that on Permai today. Being at Monarto Safari Park has been a big change for Permai, but we're seeing her slowly settle in. Keepers say her personality is starting to shine through again, as she builds relationships with new keepers and we're seeing her engaged in training, enrichment, and interactions with other elephants.

Pak Boon (32 y.o. female) arrived at Monarto Safari Park in April 2025 after a smooth 22-hour road trip from Taronga Zoo Sydney. Pak Boon is strong-willed and energetic, and loves her daily baths. Her Thai name means "morning glory flower," which suits her lovely round face and pink ears.

Tang Mo (26 y.o. female) also arrived from Taronga Zoo in April 2025. Her Thai name means "watermelon." Tang Mo is highly intelligent and a keen participant in training sessions and enrichment challenges. With her high forehead and very long legs, she is easily identifiable and is the tallest of the Asian Elephant cows at Monarto Safari Park.

Putra Mas (35 y.o. male) is the sole bull elephant to call Monarto Safari Park home, and the fifth and final member of the founding herd to arrive in November 2025, also coming across from Perth Zoo. Putra Mas is a spectacular bull, known for being highly intelligent, incredibly strong, and quite vocal. Weighing in at nearly 5 tonnes, he is easily identifiable through his impressive size and beautiful tusks – which he uses to hold his food while he is roaming his habitat!

Why did you move the elephants to Monarto Safari Park?

Monarto Safari Park is part of the Australasian Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) Asian Elephant regional breeding and advocacy program, raising awareness and education about this endangered



species with a continuing declining wild population due to habitat loss/fragmentation and human-elephant conflict.

Managed by the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA), this program enables zoos to educate and inspire visitors, contribute to the conservation of wild elephants, and work together to provide the best possible care for all elephants in the region.

The Monarto Safari Park Asian Elephant programme is intended to provide a forever home for elephants that were living in single or paired environments, and provide them with the dynamic social opportunities this species needs.

Can we see them?

All five elephants are spending time on habitat, being moved through different areas to benefit from varied terrain, waterholes, and side by side interactions with other elephants. Keepers provide each elephant with choice and agency to indicate where they would like to spend their time. This means elephants may opt to stay in the barn, or in off-habitat spaces.

Visitors to Monarto Safari Park are able to access the elephant habitat via walking tracks or the Zu-loop bus, and are likely to see at least one elephant on any given day. Many guests have reported seeing all five from the Zu-loop bus. You can pre-book tickets to Monarto Safari Park via our website, monartosafari.com.au – noting Zoos SA or reciprocal members do not need to book in advance, and can enter at any time with a valid membership card and photo ID.

The Monarto Safari Park Asian Elephant visitor precinct is still in development and we look forward to opening this in 2026.

Will the elephants breed?

At this stage our priority is the care and welfare of the elephants who now call Monarto Safari Park home, supporting all five elephants to settle into their new forever home and providing every opportunity for them to form a cohesive herd.

We are not currently exploring breeding opportunities, and will defer to ZAA's regional Species Management Program to determine what this may look like in future.

When will the elephants be introduced to each other?

Keepers are working to foster a cohesive herd, providing the elephants time and opportunity to build confidence, explore connections, and discover what works best for them – both individually, and as a herd. We are providing regular opportunities for the elephants to interact, with managed introductions giving them time and choice to safely communicate and build familiarity, sometimes side by side, between bollard barriers, or through sound, scent and sight.

Elephants communicate over vast distances and use a variety of different methods including sight, sound and scent; they don't need to be next to each other to communicate and we're seeing this in action every day.

We're "on elephant time" – taking our cues from each elephant and working on their terms. Rushing on a short-term agenda could negatively impact long-term trust and social dynamics; it's so important that we're giving the elephants time to become familiar not only with each other, but with their new environment as well.



Are the elephants friends yet, and sharing space together?

Our intent is to provide a forever home that meets the different welfare needs of all five elephants, both individually and as a herd. It's our hope to build a cohesive herd where they can thrive, but this will take time – social dynamics between mature elephants are inherently complex and fluid, with no set timeline or single guaranteed outcome.

We are providing regular opportunities for the elephants to interact, with managed introductions giving them time and choice to safely communicate and build familiarity, sometimes side by side, between bollard barriers, or through sound, scent and sight. Just like people, each elephant has a unique personality, as well as a different social style – their past experiences, age, and history all influence their behaviour.

The Monarto Safari Park Asian Elephant programme is working towards something quite unique, that's not been undertaken in the region before. We're bringing together four unrelated cows at a mature age to fabricate a herd, where ordinarily female elephants would be born into a herd and remain with their familial unit throughout their lives, and know their place within a social structure. We're seeing the value for each elephant in being around each other, and that they like the company, but not necessarily in the same space. Over time, the cows will work this out – we're starting to see alliances forming like they would in a normal herd structure, and keepers are nurturing that – but it's going to take time.

Keepers are seeing some clear communication between Tang Mo and Permai, and between Burma and Pak Boon, which is encouraging – but also has the flow-on effect of creating a shift in the connection between Tang Mo and Pak Boon, so keepers are navigating this with care and consideration.

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Have Putra Mas and Permai been reunited?

Putra Mas and Permai were housed separately at Perth Zoo, and were not close companions. They have seen and acknowledged each other, and they certainly remember each other.

We're seeing that Putra Mas is more interested in exploring the new sights, smells and spaces of Monarto Safari Park, and Permai is more attentive to opportunities for interaction with the other cows, rather than with Putra Mas.

Will Putra Mas spend time amongst the females?

Putra Mas will have access to three of the four distinct areas within the 12-hectare elephant precinct at Monarto Safari Park, where he will move between different habitats to provide access to varied terrain, water holes and mud wallows.

He will initially spend his time adjacent to the spaces shared by the four female elephants. This is reflective of natural social dynamics for elephants, where females live in matriarchal herds and males typically live alone or in small bachelor groups.

There will be important opportunities for him to interact and socialise with the cows through bollard barriers. As always, this will be guided by the elephants, so we'll be watching for cues to indicate curiosity and interest before beginning gentle introductions through bollard barriers.



Have Putra Mas's tusks been cut?

Putra Mas had an incident at Perth Zoo some years ago, and damaged one of his tusks; they were then cut to prevent the damaged one from becoming infected. Shortly prior to moving to Monarto Safari Park, Putra Mas's tusks were also cut back slightly, to ensure he remained safe and comfortable during travel.

This is a non-invasive procedure. It doesn't hurt him or cause him discomfort; in human terms, it could be likened to filing your nails.

Is there plenty of water and shade for the elephants?

In just over two years, the Monarto Safari Park team has designed and built an enriching elephant habitat that gives these animals the space, choice, and comfort they need to thrive – with access to varied terrain, multiple waterholes, mud wallows, vegetation and shade.

There are also two custom-built elephant barns, both designed to give the herd genuine choice in how they use their space. The barns offer spaces with thermal control, water misters, and comfortable areas for rest and care, allowing the elephants to move between warm, cool, wet or dry environments depending on what conditions suit them best at any time.

Creating a home of this scale and complexity in such a short time is an incredible accomplishment – it reflects extraordinary planning, dedication, and collaboration from everyone involved, including Monarto Safari Park, Auckland Zoo, and Perth Zoo.

The result is a habitat shaped around the elephants' needs, offering room to move, places to explore, and the freedom to choose how they spend each day.

What is musth?

Shortly after his arrival at Monarto Safari Park, Putra Mas entered his annual musth period. Musth is a surge of hormones and part of their reproductive strategy – it's a natural period that occurs for all mature bull elephants, where testosterone levels rise up to 60 times their normal levels. You tend to see an increase in aggression towards other male elephants as they reinforce dominance hierarchies for breeding receptive females.

During musth, we expect some shifts in Putra Mas's behaviour, such as more restless energy, increased roaming around, often referred to as patrolling, and showing a stronger interest in other elephants.

According to our colleagues at Perth Zoo, this is a little earlier than Putra Mas has historically entered musth, but it's not unexpected. With four female elephants around, the new social and environmental cues he's experiencing have naturally encouraged the hormonal changes that bring musth on.

Historically, Perth Zoo has seen Putra Mas prefer the presence of certain keepers while he's in musth. The Monarto Safari Park elephant team will be monitoring Putra Mas and working in line with the cues he is giving.

There's no set time frame for musth to start and end; it's a natural cycle and will run its course over the next three- to six-months. Visitors may still be able to see Putra Mas from the Zu-loop bus, as he roams and explores Habitats 3 and 4 of the Asian Elephant precinct.

