

Field Guide to Chimps

One passport to three local institutions helps bring out your inner Jane Goodall.

by **Tori Woods**

Perched comfortably inside the Museum of Natural History's replica chimpanzee nest, my mother delivers a convincing "pant-hoot" and takes a look around the Gombe bush. For the rest of the day, we riffle through each other's ponytails to simulate grooming — an important bonding act between chimps.

We aren't just monkeying around. We're on a great Simian Safari, a road rally in pursuit of primates. And we haven't left Cleveland.

Armed with field notebooks, metaphorical pith helmets and Primate Passports that get us into the museum and ape activities at the Great Lakes Science Center and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, we begin our expedition at "Discovering Chimpanzees: The Remarkable World of Jane Goodall."

Mom and I probably aren't the museum's target demographic, but we still have a thoroughly enjoyable time swinging through the lushly decorated exhibit, which is wild with colorful vegetation that evokes Goodall's beloved Africa. Interactive computer displays teach us how to translate primate facial expressions and oral communication. One shows several chimps, and then Goodall, uttering resounding "pant-hoots" — the "hoo hoo hoo hoo hah hah" most often associated with the animals who share 98.6 percent of our DNA. We create and record our own chimp chat, a skill we will refine as the day progresses.

We examine Goodall's original field notes and poke around her first, humble Gombe tent, recreated in exacting, authentic detail, down to a light blue stoneware teapot, a bit of Britain brought into the wild. The highlight of the exhibit for both kids and adults who act like them is the Chimp Forest, abundantly verdant with

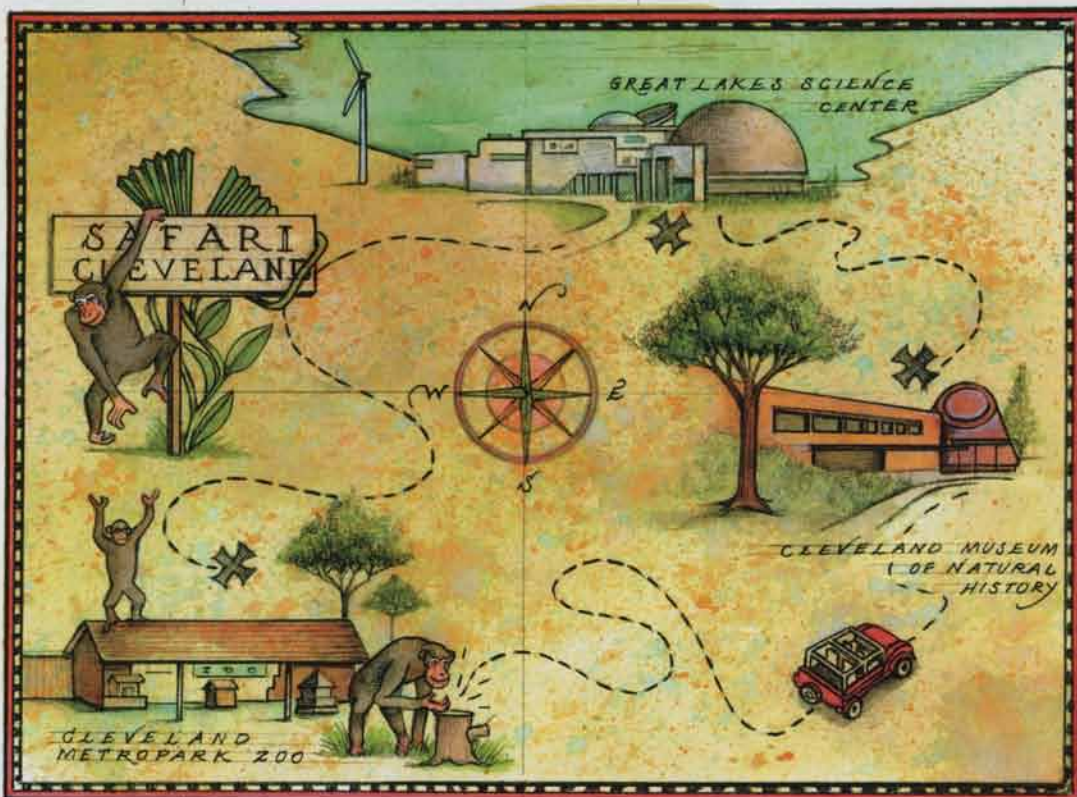
leaves and vines to look like the Tanzanian jungle. Home to the chimp nest, a tree stump for drumming and arm-extenders to facilitate four-legged ambulation, the activity-filled forest prompts many pant-hoots of approval.

We leave the jungle and hop in our safari Jeep (OK, my Corolla) and wind our way

all herself is narrating the experience through us.

"Look at the way the ropes are hung, that probably mimics the tree nest," Mom says.

"See those watercooler jugs?" I say. "They're like the tree stumps chimps drum or like the gas cans that Frodo tossed around to achieve alpha male status."



to the Science Center for the noon showing of "Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees." The Omnimax presents the Elysian forests, empyrean seas and gorgeous mountain ranges of Gombe in striking clarity. I feel as though I can reach out and touch Fifi, Frodo and the rest of the chimp gang. Throughout the film, Goodall evolves from a pioneering, young blonde into one of the most famous women scientists of our time.

The zoo is the last stop on our monkey marathon. It's a Monday — the day Cuyahoga County residents get in free — so we experience our own jungle of humanity. Like Goodall before us, we sally forth on foot to visit representatives of the Great Ape family, lady chimps Jackie, Bo and Binti.

It feels right to watch them, as if Good-

We stand there for a while and watch our distant evolutionary cousins socially groom and play with their gums and teeth. We are transfixed by the napping chimp's hands, by how much they look like our own.

The Primate Passport includes admission to the exhibit, movie and zoo. It's available at the box office of all three locations or at www.travelcleveland.com. The cost is \$19.50 for adults and \$9.50 for children. Tickets may be purchased separately. The exhibit and movie run through Sept 3. For more information on the exhibit, call (216) 231-4600 or visit www.cmnh.org; (216) 694-2000 or www.glsc.org for the movie; and (216) 661-6500 or www.clemet zoo.com for the zoo.