

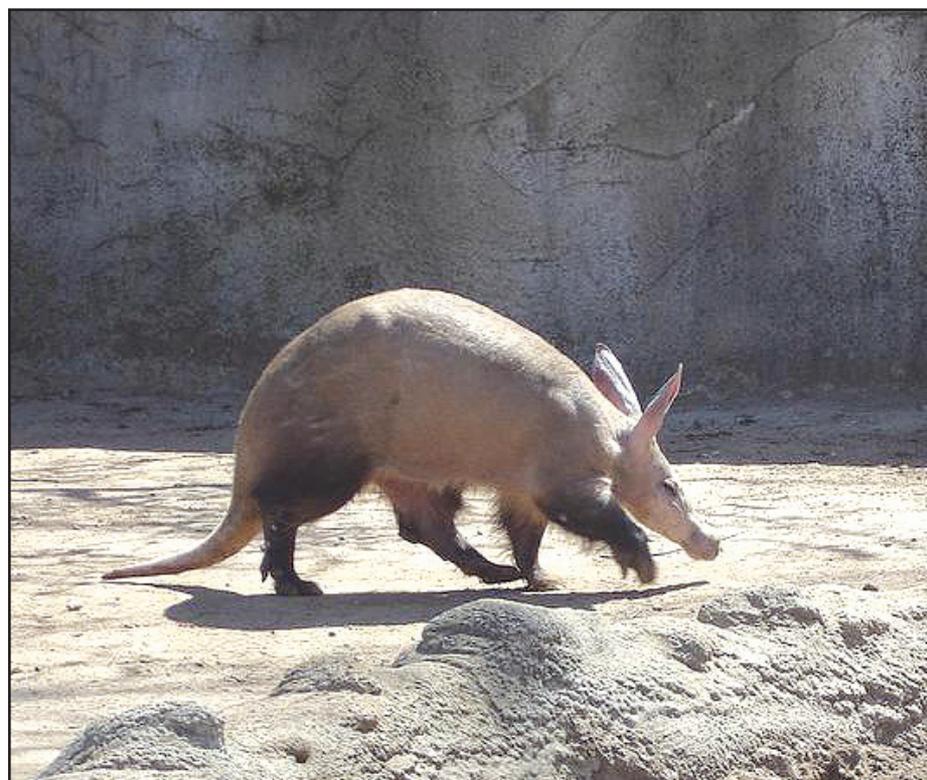
# Visit The Wildside!

## The Aardvark

The aardvark is a medium sized, nocturnal mammal native to Africa. It likes to burrow in the ground to make its home, which earned its name from an Afrikaan word meaning "ground pig". However, the aardvark is not related to the pig. Its closest living relatives are the elephant shrew. Can you believe aardvarks are related to an animal that small?

Aardvarks look a bit like pigs with their stout noses and short bodies. They also have an arched back and four toes in the front, five toes in the back! Their toes are like shovels, they're flat and large. Aardvarks weigh 88-140 pounds, and can reach up to 7 feet long, but normal lengths are around 3-4 feet long. The aardvark has a long, snake-like tongue used to eat termites.

Aardvarks like to eat termites and ants only, but will also eat a fruit



called the aardvark cucumber. When it finds the scent of food by swinging its long nose back and forth, it digs with its powerful front legs, digging up to 2 feet in 15 seconds. It can actually seal its nostrils shut while it digs, so no dust or dirt gets in. They can eat as many as 50,000 insects a night! Aardvarks have to be careful of lions, leopards, hunting dogs and pythons while they search for their food.

### Interesting Facts About Aardvarks

- Arthur from the popular children's show on PBS is an aardvark.
- Aardvarks can live up to 24 years in captivity.
- Aardvarks don't have enamel on their teeth like people do, so they wear their teeth down and grow another set!
- Aardvarks have extremely good hearing and sense of smell.
- The Egyptian god Set is said to have the head of an aardvark.
- The aardvark is often confused with the anteater, an animal found in South America. Despite similar appearances, it is not related to the aardvark.
- Aardvark is the first noun in the English dictionary.
- An aardvark's claws are as strong as a pick axe.
- Aardvarks are mammals, just like humans!