



## Lake Tobias Wildlife Park is a day of wild adventure

August 16, 2014 - [Bobbi BookerPhiladelphia Cultural Travel Examiner](#) - [LINK](#)



In the heart of Central Pennsylvania live hundreds of wild and exotic animals where a real safari adventure awaits you. Beyond the suburbs of Philadelphia, the Keystone State is chockfull of delightful adventures that are worthy of planning for a daytrip. Located about 125 miles west of Philly sits the **Lake Tobias Wildlife Park**, a private zoo located in Halifax, Pennsylvania.

Guest can traverse over 150 acres of rolling hills on a guided Safari Tour, where they will view herds of roaming animals and flightless birds, such as yak, buffalo, watusi, emus and more. A stroll along 50 acres of zoo-type settings reveals where monkeys, tigers, zebras, and many interesting creatures continuously educate and entertain park visitors.



Since it first opened in 1965, the park has fascinated visitors of all ages with its wild, exotic animals and adventure-seeking safari tours. The late J.R. Tobias founded the park on the same property where he was born and raised. He and his wife, Pauline, reared their seven children here before his passing in 1996. Tobias always had a fascination with animals, especially unusual and exotic ones. He had originally planned to attend college studying animals and agriculture, but in 1943, he decided to join the military and chose to serve as a Marine. According to the zoo's website, he once commented that his desire to open a wildlife park was actually "just a hobby to fall back on in my retirement."

The Lake Tobias Wildlife Park has an area of 1,224 acres in order to house all of its animals from lions, tigers and bears (oh my!) to deer and buffalo playing on the range. It is an experience that impressed visitor Mike Salemi, an employee with Walt Disney World: "Walt Disney's vision was that you can get the ride anywhere - it's the cast member that keeps them coming back. The way you are treated - the people you meet make the difference. From the moment we entered Lake Tobias, there was an immediate connection with the public (from the girl that greeted us on the road and all through the park). The Safari Tour at Lake Tobias was much better than Disney World's – the whole experience was fantastic. Lake Tobias is the 'Old Disney.' It's the way Disney used to be – it's what a theme park should be."





Before his passing, Tobias bestowed his hobby-turned -business to his children, many of whom were already managing areas of the park. The 2010 death of the eldest of the seven children, Dee Ann (Tobias) Hoffman, has resulted in the current ownership of the park being the six remaining siblings and a grandson. According to the park, Mrs. Tobias still resides in the farmhouse which also serves as the park office.

Under their direction, Tobias' love and interest in animals continues to grow as a self-sustaining, family-owned business that has become a favorite family attraction for **over 150,000 park visitors each season**. Lake Tobias relies strictly on park revenue for its financial support and does not receive any state or federal funding.

This unique wildlife park and safari tour features animals from six continents, making it hard for any visitor to believe that they are still in the state of Pennsylvania. The \$12 Safari Bus Tour along the scenic countryside will allow you to view herds of elk, buffalo, water buffalo, emu, deer, antelope, different breeds of cattle, alpacas, and more. One of the great animals to see is the North American bison. They were hunted nearly to extinction in the 1800s, and have since repopulated their herds and are no longer endangered. At Tobias Lake, dozens of white, or a cream color, bison – considered sacred by the Native Americans – roam the plains.



In addition to the aforementioned [Safari Bus Tour](#), there's a [petting zoo](#), filled with friendly African pygmy goats, alpacas, and camels. The Reptiles & Exotics facility will thrill visitors with such creatures as a tree sloth, pythons, tamarins, and tropical birds. You can even touch an alligator -- if you dare!

Lake Tobias Wildlife Park is located 760 Tobias Road, Halifax Pa 17032. Current hours are 10am-6pm Monday-Friday (May-Oct) with the Park closing an hour later on Saturdays and Sundays. (May-Sept). Picnic tables, concessions, and souvenirs are available

For directions and more information, call [\(717\) 362-9126](tel:7173629126) or visit [www.laketobias.com](http://www.laketobias.com).

To pick one of dozens of road trips and hotel options at the official tourism website of the State of Pennsylvania, visit [www.visitpa.com](http://www.visitpa.com). If you wish to get more travel tips, request the [2014 Hershey & Harrisburg Region Travel Guide](#) at [www.visithersheyharrisburg.org](http://www.visithersheyharrisburg.org).

