

MEET THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

ABOUT ME

Hippos are among **the largest land mammals in the world**. After elephants and some rhino species, they are the next largest.

They have a large barrel-shaped body, short legs, a short tail and an enormous head. Hippos can grow to about **1.5m tall** and weigh up to about **3 200kg**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Despite their enormous size, hippos can move through water by walking along the riverbed and pushing off it. They do not really swim but can hold their breath for up to five minutes underwater. When completely submerged, their ears and nostrils fold shut to keep water out.

How long can you hold your breath for?

Hippos live in Africa, where the sun's UV rays are very strong. They produce a red, oily substance that helps protect their skin from the sun and also helps prevent infection.

Hippos spend most of their day in rivers and lakes to keep cool. Their eyes, nose and ears are on the top of their head, which means they can see and breathe while mostly submerged in the water.

Do you know how tall you are?



INTERESTING FACT

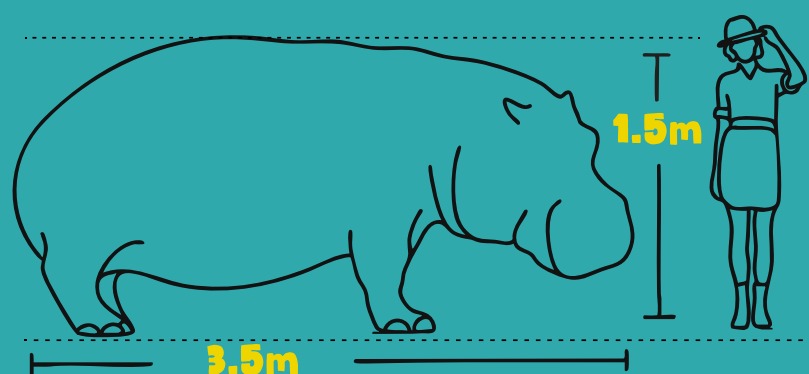
Hippos can recognise other hippos by the smell of their dung.

They use dung middens, shared outdoor areas where they repeatedly defecate (go to the toilet). By smelling these areas, hippos can tell which hippos have been in the area.

MY NAME

My name, Hippopotamus, comes from Greek words meaning **river horse**.

Do you know the meaning of your name?



MY FAMILY

A male hippo is called a **bull**. A female hippo is called a **cow**, and a baby hippo is called a **calf**.

Hippos usually live in groups (or herds) that can range from about 10 to 40 individuals, led by one large dominant male. The other members are females, their young and a few younger non-breeding males.

In the wild, hippos live for around 40 years. In captivity, they tend to live longer and may reach up to about 50 years old.

How big is your family?

WHY WE ARE IMPORTANT

A hippo's enormous size helps create **micro-habitats** for smaller organisms. By repeatedly walking along the same paths between water and land, hippos help create channels that support fish and other aquatic life.

OUR BIGGEST THREAT

Hippos are classified as **"vulnerable"** (threatened) due to habitat loss and hunting by humans. Vulnerable means the species could disappear from the wild if it is not protected.

WHAT WE LIKE TO EAT

Hippos are **herbivores**, which means they eat plants. They eat, on average, about **35 to 40kg** of grass each night.

An adult hippo drinks about **200l** of water per day.

How much water do you drink everyday?

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Hippos can run at speeds of up to about 30km per hour, but only for very short distances.

How fast can you run?