Pachyderm Parade

You never want to mention
That elephant in the room
But all of your attention
So fixated and consumed…

So go the opening lines of Elephant, by poet John Marsh. One elephant in the room would be difficult to ignore, but how about an entire herd of giant pachyderms strolling through a hotel lobby? Such an event actually takes place during one season of the year in a Zambian hotel.

Built in 1998, Mfuwe Lodge in Zambia’s South Luangwa National Park, plays host to the elephant herd in late November when nearby mangoes are ripe. An architectural error put the lodge in the center of their natural path to the fruit, and provides a spectacular thrill for visitors.

Andy Hogg is director of Bushcamp Company, which runs Mfuwe Lodge. He told the Telegraph, “This is the only place in the world where elephants freely get so close to humans.”
Led by an old lady nicknamed “Wonky Tusk,” the pachyderm parade ambles through the lobby, seeming not to notice the delighted visitors snapping cameras.

Although the animals aren’t actually tame, they appear to be perfectly comfortable in the company of amazed onlookers. Some have even stopped and fallen asleep in the shade of the lodge lobby.

The grounds of the lodge also became a maternity ward when baby, “Lord Wellington,” was born there in 2009.

According to The Daily Mail, Ian Salisbury, general manager of the lodge, says, “There is usually great excitement when the elephants walk though, but we try to keep everyone calm.”

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