

Mara the ex-circus elephant retires to Brazil



Photo shows elephant Mara after arriving from the road journey from Buenos Aires Zoo to the Elephant Sanctuary Brazil.



Handout picture released by the Brazilian Elephant Sanctuary showing elephant Mara after arriving from the road journey from Buenos Aires Zoo to the Elephant Sanctuary Brazil at the Chapada dos Guimaraes, Mato Grosso state, Brazil.—AFP photos



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Mara, an Indian elephant rescued from an Argentine circus, arrived at an animal sanctuary in Brazil Wednesday to start a new life at 50-something — beginning with a celebratory frolic in the dirt. Mara, who weighs around 5,500 kilograms (more than 12,000 pounds), spent much of her life as a circus attraction, then was brought to the Buenos Aires Zoo in 1995.

The city closed the zoo in 2016 over complaints about animal cruelty and turned it into an “eco park.” Officials decided to send Mara off to a roomier retirement at an elephant sanctuary in the state of Mato Grosso, in west-central Brazil. Mara, who is believed to be in her early 50s, was transported in a huge crate built for the occasion and loaded onto and off of a truck with the help of a crane. The logistics of the four-day, 2,000-kilometer (1,250-mile) trip were all the more complicated because of the coronavirus pandemic. “We are grateful to everyone who has helped to make this happen — especially the EcoParque Buenos Aires, our supporters and the officials in both Brazil and Argentina who have made an international elephant transport possible during this pandemic,” Elephant Sanctuary Brazil said on its Facebook page, where it live-streamed Mara’s arrival.

“Mara will have a large habitat with trees, grass, ponds, creeks, mud wallows, specialized care staff and elephant friends.” The trip was overseen by two teams of specialists, who followed customized protocols to protect both themselves and Mara from the new coronavirus. Upon arrival, Mara timidly stuck her nose out of her container, then cautiously stepped out into the tropical sun. Soon, she was lounging about in a pile of red dirt in her enclosure, where she will adapt to her new surroundings before being released into the 1,133-hectare (2,800-acre) sanctuary.—AFP