

Visual Schedule Helpful Planning Tips

This guide was compiled to provide information and suggestions that may help caregivers of individuals with Autism and other special needs make the most of a visit to the Saint Louis Zoo. As every person with special needs is different, caregivers need to decide how best to plan a visit based on the needs of the individual. We hope that this information will provide the basis for a successful and enjoyable day trip to the Saint Louis Zoo. Please remember that the Zoo is a dynamic and every-changing place. These guidelines are to assist you in planning your visit, but there may be day-to-day changes as we continually attempt to make the Zoo better. We strongly encourage you to visit the Guest Services desk at either entrance to get the most up-to-date information.

Visiting times

The Saint Louis Zoo has over 3 million visitors each year. The busiest months are May, June and July, with lesser numbers March through April and August through November. The least busy months are December, January and February. Weekends and holidays are the busiest days of the week. School groups often visit in the morning during the weekdays, so afternoons may be less crowded. Also, the calendar of events will outline dates for special events, which result in larger crowds.

There are two entrances to the Saint Louis Zoo, the North Entrance (also called The Living World) and the South Entrance. Prices for parking and operating hours are located on the website under Visit. To help you plan the best route and best resting places for your group, maps are available at several locations throughout the Zoo: at guest services at the South Entrance, at the Welcome Desk at the North Entrance inside The Living World and at the Information Booth (seasonal) in Schnuck Family Plaza. Of course, any Zoo employee is also a wonderful resource for information!

South Entrance

From the South Lot, the Zoo is accessed by a pedestrian bridge that slopes down to the main entrance. While the slope is wheelchair and stroller accessible, visitors who have difficulty walking may find the North Lot an easier option. The South Entrance has turnstiles to pass through, but there is also a gate for wheelchairs/strollers and this can be used for individuals that find the turnstiles a challenge.

There is a guest services booth immediately on the right after entering, strollers and wheelchairs can be rented to help make travelling around the Zoo easier. See the Zoo Services section of the website for prices and more information.



North Entrance

Please note: The North Entrance area will be under construction until the end of 2013.

A short walk from the North Lot will bring you to the North Entrance. This option provides a slightly shorter and flatter walk than the South Entrance. Once inside The Living World, you will find guest services located on the right, where strollers and wheelchairs can be rented to help make travelling around the Zoo easier. Prices and more information are available in the Zoo Services Section of the website. Please note that this rental location will change with the new design and construction of the building. A central staircase, elevators and a wide outside ramp provide access to the ground level.

Bathrooms with changing facilities and water fountains are on the left of the entrance, with the same facilities provided on the lower level. Hand dryers in the restrooms may be too loud for some individuals and the air movement of the dryers may cause some sensory discomfort.



Looks like now



Will look like this

River's Edge

This beautiful exhibit is home to the hippos, Asian elephants, cheetahs and black rhinos, just to name a few, and is always a Zoo favorite. The paths and viewing areas are wide enough to allow guests to move through the area at their own pace. There are gift shops and seating areas along the trail. These areas provide a place to stop and let people pass by if your friend or family member would like to take a break before continuing through River's Edge. Please note that River's Edge will be under construction May 2012 through Spring 2013 as we build new homes for our Andean bears, Malayan sun bears and our soon-to-be-added painted dogs! This will result in very minimal disruption to the visitor viewing experience, but there might be a slight increase in sound due to construction. We invite guests to watch the progress by peering through the looking portals in the construction barriers!

As you exit the River's Edge you will have to pass through a 'cavern'. This area is only a few feet long and the exit into the sunlight can be clearly seen. It may be best to advise your friend or family member that there will be less light as they walk through, although it is not completely dark and you can easily see where you are going. Inside there is a floor to ceiling fish tank, but there is plenty of room to bypass this if you so choose. Immediately on the right as you leave the cavern there is a small seasonal waterfall feature and on warm days it is not uncommon to find some children splashing in the cool water. The waterfall is set back and the path is wide enough for you to exit the River's Edge without becoming wet.

Red Rocks

A stroll up the Historic Hill will bring you to Big Cat Country and the Antelope Area. As the name suggests, there is hill, but there are plenty of seats, that are usually shaded, along the way. The exhibit is very open with plenty of space to allow visitors to move freely. Big Cat Country is always popular but quite open, with space that provides the opportunity to wait and take your time. The tree-lined paths in the adjacent Antelope Area, where the giraffes, zebras and camels reside is quieter, and the walkway past the wallabies is quieter still.

Jungle of the Apes

This is the indoor habitat for the great apes, where they can typically be found in late fall, winter and early spring. This building is temperature controlled and at times can have a slight odor. The exhibits allow visitors to watch the animals closely; many of them will sit right next to the large windows. The walkways can become crowded during busy times and people will often linger as they watch these fascinating primates. As a result, the journey through this very worthwhile and interesting exhibit can be slow at times. It may be to your advantage to look into the exhibit and assess the number of Zoo guests before entering if you feel that this slower paced environment may be challenging for members of your group. Also, keep an eye out for signs about great ape etiquette—your behavior influences how the animals act and you may just get one to come and sit quietly for a while!

Lipton Fragile Forest

Here, you will find the gorillas, chimpanzees and orangutans in the summer months. These beautiful outside viewing areas allow visitors to see the apes in a more natural environment. Guests can watch them play, sleep and sometimes just sit and watch as the humans walk by.

This exhibit is quite remarkable and draws many visitors. Part of Fragile Forest provides a slightly elevated view, and there are also large windowed viewing areas that are at ground level. The antics of the apes will often result in crowds that may stay a while, but there are benches in these ground level areas, so families can take a seat and wait for a less busy moment to take a look at the animals.

Monsanto Insectarium

Our wonderful displays of all things that creep and crawl provide an excellent opportunity to view both domestic and the more exotic spiders and insects. The Insectarium is roomy and warm, with the opportunity to skip exhibits that are being viewed by other visitors and come back to them later. Inside the Mary Ann Lee Butterfly Wing, the temperature is warm to accommodate the many beautiful insects that fly freely through the vegetation. There are seats inside the Butterfly Wing, if your family member would benefit from a little time to adjust to the new environment, they can sit and look on as the brightly colored butterflies move through the exhibit. Butterflies may land on guests from time to time, and visitors are requested not to touch them as our hands could injure or even kill these lovely animals.

Primate House

It is fun to visit the monkeys, lemurs and other primates at the Zoo. For those guests that have a heightened sensitivity or sensory concerns, remember before you enter the Primate House that there is a strong odor. The building is also temperature controlled. The primates are usually active, and sitting on the viewing benches in front of the exhibits can be very entertaining for our guests. The Primate House is roomy and visitors can move past the animals at their own pace.

Charles H. Hoessle Herpetarium

This building, which houses our reptiles and amphibians, is temperature controlled. During busy times, it can become a little crowded due to narrower walkways and slower walking pace. The exhibits are smaller and often the animals are camouflaged so it may take a little longer to spot them. If someone in your group finds crowds, slower pace and a slightly darker environment challenging, it may be better to visit these truly unique animals earlier or later in the day.

Bird House

There are many beautifully colored birds on display from all over the world. Generally this house is quieter and much less crowded, and is often a good place to spend a little “down time” with your group. Remember, while you are enjoying the exhibits the birds may choose to let you know that they are there by using their unique songs and calls. Most are gentle and melodious, but there are a couple that have calls that are louder and may therefore startle. Perhaps you can use this “bird call possibility” as an opportunity to have a game, and see how many of the birds will “talk” to you.

Stingrays at Caribbean Cove featuring Sharks

Open April 20 – September 30, 2012

See Hours, Prices & Directions for prices.

This up-close-and-personal experience is truly unique. All the rays have no barbs, and all of the sharks are docile and sometimes even a little shy. Visitors are able to put their hands into the water and gently touch the animals as they swim past. To keep both the exhibits and our guests safe, hands must be washed before and after visiting Caribbean Cove at the hand washing stations provided.

This is a popular attraction and the wait to enter the pool area could be trying for our special needs visitors. We suggest visiting later in the day, typically any time after the lunch hour, to avoid larger crowds. If there are enough people in your group, have a caregiver sit with your friend or family member while another person holds a place in line for them. Please, as a courtesy to our other guests, let the person in the line behind you know that you are holding a place for a special needs individual to avoid any misunderstanding. If your friend or family member is in a wheelchair, please speak with the attendant at the front of the line for accessibility.

It may take a little longer to acclimatize some visitors to the slight fish smell, or to the idea of putting their hands into the water. An attendant around the pool will demonstrate how to use gentle hands to touch the fish and we invite you to speak to the attendants should your group need a little extra time to make this an enjoyable experience for the guests and the animals.

Sea Lion Sound (Opening June 30, 2012)

We are very excited to offer our visitors a chance to walk through underwater viewing tunnel, the first-of-its-kind in North America! The tunnel is accessed by a slight ramp that will take guests through a beautiful shimmering mosaic to the underwater world of the animals. There is also an underwater viewing window at the Enterprise Rent-A-Car Family Sea Lion Landing prior to the tunnel entrance, similar to the ones at Penguin & Puffin Coast and Anheuser-Busch Hippo Harbor.

First Bank Sea Lion Show

See Hours, Prices & Directions for prices.

The Lichtenstein Sea Lion Arena is located in the same area as Sea Lion Sound, and provides an 811-seat amphitheatre with excellent viewing for the amazing skills of our sea lions. The show involves some splashing, possibly a seat towards the top of the arena might better suit our guests with sensory concerns or those easily startled. Also, there is a large rock area in the center of the lower seating area. There is the potential that the animals could be brought out to that rock area in the audience. As with all Zoo animals, we ask guests to refrain from reaching out to touch the animals. Please visit the ticket booth for available show times the day of your visit.

Penguin & Puffin Coast

Outside, in the Humboldt Haven, visitors can admire our active little Humboldt penguins. Once inside, visitors will experience the first sub-Antarctic walk through experience in North America. On a sunny day in the summer, the difference in temperature is quite noticeable. Preparing your friend or family member for this change is advisable. There is also a distinct fish smell in the indoor exhibit area. However, you will enjoy watching the gentoo, king and rockhopper penguins both on the rocky outcrops and underwater. Our lively, chilly friends have been known to splash, and fingers should definitely be kept away from the birds.

This is a popular attraction at the Zoo and it can be noisy and crowded. Visiting the puffins and penguins is a truly worthwhile experience, and so stopping by at the beginning or the end of the day will usually provide a more relaxed and less crowded environment.

To exit, you will pass from the puffin exhibit into a gift shop. Between the exhibit area and the gift shop there is both a revolving door and, immediately to the left of it, a traditional exit door.

Bear Bluffs

The Bear Bluffs have wide open viewing areas along the broad path between the Mary Ann Lee Conservation Carousel and The Living World. Benches are available beside the path. These benches are a great place to sit and rest, and perhaps wave at the Zooline Railroad as it chugs by!

Docents

To make your visit to the Zoo more enjoyable there are docents available throughout the grounds. They are easily identifiable by the red sashes they wear from right shoulder to left hip. Docents have items like bones, teeth and animal skins for visitors to look at and gentle hands to touch. This is a great opportunity for our guests to “feel” the animals and it really helps them to connect on a different level with our wonderful Zoo residents.

Activities

Face painting is available during the warmer months outside the Children’s Zoo, at the top of the staircase in The Living World, and near the South Entrance Plaza. There is a small charge for this activity, and children can chose from a variety of designs.

Caricaturists are available outside the lower level of The Living World and near the South Entrance Plaza. There is a charge for this service.

Build-A-Bear Workshop® At The Zoo

Located by the main entrance to the Lakeside Cafe, Build-A-Bear Workshop provides an opportunity to make your own friend to take home. The inside of the store follows the usual layout for the retail chain and allows you to move between stations as you complete each step of the process. As with all other Build-A-Bear stores, there is a machine to add stuffing and one to assist in fluffing the stuffed animal. These noises may present a challenge for some individuals, as may the crowds on busier days. There are benches close by, perhaps your friend or family member may prefer to sit and watch the store from a short distance until they feel comfortable enough to enter. Another alternative is to stand just inside the door with them, if they are able, and wait until they have had a moment to process the sensory information before beginning your bear building.

Emerson Zooline Railroad

See Hours, Prices & Directions for prices.

The train is a great way to see the Zoo and, weather permitting, runs year round. You may leave the train, visit exhibits and re-board. It is a 20-minute narrated tour passing through some areas that are only available for Zooline passengers. The sound is relayed to guests through a system of loudspeakers placed along the length of the train. It may be advisable to locate seating not immediately in front of the speakers, although during busier times this could be more difficult. The Zooline railroad may be an activity that could be enjoyed earlier or later in the day to avoid the crowds. There are three tunnels during the train ride, two of which are fully enclosed and lighting is very minimal. During these brief sections of the journey the noise level is greater and visibility is reduced.

Strollers and large personal items are permitted if they fit in a seat with at least one passenger. These items are not permitted to be in a seat by themselves at any time.

The Zooline railroad is ADA accessible. Passengers in wheelchairs have a large area on the train car, with fold down seats for companions. The Zoo has also added ramps with lower slopes.

Emerson Children's Zoo

See Hours, Prices & Directions for prices.

The Emerson Children's Zoo offers an opportunity for our younger guests to enjoy viewing a variety of animals up-close. All of the animals are displayed with children in mind. It provides a relaxed atmosphere and includes guinea pigs that may be gently touched. You may need to wait until you can pet an animal, but there are other exhibits to keep you interested until a place becomes available. The Children's Zoo can offer a change of pace, and the option of playing outside before or after entering the indoor portion of the attraction.

There are several outdoor areas that can provide some physical activity. The "Just Like Me" area has water jets to play in, great for cooling off on a hot day, and a metal climbing structure. Children can also slide through an acrylic see-through chute that passes from the lookout above the otter pool, through the water, to the viewing area below, allowing you to slide past some of the most playful animals in the world and stay completely dry. (Children should be less than 54"). The chute is accessed by using steps. Also, feel free to stop by our Goat Yard to give a goat a good brushing! There is a "goat safety area," where the animals can go if they need a break and we do ask that guests not brush or pet the goats in that area.

If frogs are more their idea of fun, kids can visit the indoor building to crawl through the Frog Surround to see tree frogs above them and climb about a cool tree house. They can even take turns pretending to drive a jeep through the savannah. Floor-to-waist level glass allows young children to see the fennec foxes and meerkats on exhibit. And, don't forget to look up high in the trees to see our tree kangaroos! It is not

unusual to see a docent and one of our friendly animals come out to meet the young visitors. Gentle hands are often allowed to feel the skin and feathers of these Children's Zoo residents.

At the amphitheatre to the left of the Children's Zoo Building, there are shows featuring the Children's Zoo animals during the summer months. Check the ticket booth the day of your visit for more details.

As the Emerson Children's Zoo is an area for children, there are times when the play areas can be noisy. If your friend or family member does not usually find playgrounds a challenge, this attraction may be somewhere for you to stop and explore during your Zoo visit. We suggest visiting later in the day to avoid larger crowds.

4-D Motion Simulator

Located near the 1904 Flight Cage.

See Hours, Prices & Directions for prices.

Children under 42 inches tall must be accompanied by an adult, and children must be 36 inches tall to ride in a motion seat.

This very exciting 4-D ride is full of breakthrough digital 3-D and 4-D multi-sensory effects. Full of thrills and wild rides, this amazing attraction may prove to be over stimulating for some of our guests with autism or sensory challenges. If your friend or family member enjoys this kind of exciting ride, jump right in and experience the fun! We would not recommend this ride for more sensitive individuals, and visitors that generally avoid attractions like this may find one of the Zoo's many other activities more suitable.

Mary Ann Lee Conservation Carousel

See Hours, Prices & Directions for prices.

Not all of the animals on the carousel move up and down, so for concerned riders there is the option of sitting on beautifully carved, but very still animal. There are also a couple of bench seat-type additions on the carousel if it is easier to sit alongside your group member. If you need to physically accompany your friend or family because of a disability, you can stand with them on the carousel at no charge to the caregiver. Please contact Dustin Deschamp in Human Resources at least 24 hours in advance at (314) 646-4816 to make prior arrangements for this service. In the event that HR cannot be reached, please contact Ryan Jeffery in Guest Services at (314) 646-4797.

3-D Movie

See Hours, Prices & Directions for further information.

Movies change throughout the year, check with guest services or on the website for the current film title. Like other movie theaters, the lighting is minimal and the usual cinema rules apply. The theatre is being retrofitted to a 4-D experience, so please speak to a guest service representative with any questions you may have about the experience.

Dining

We know that all the excitement of visiting the Zoo will make our visitors hungry, and there are many different venues throughout the Zoo grounds where guests can purchase something to eat. The main food service facilities are The Painted Giraffe, in The Living World, and Lakeside Cafe, located in the center of the Zoo. During lunchtimes these two locations can be very busy and noisy. If you are looking for a quieter place to sit down and enjoy some lunch, Hippo Hideaway in River's Edge and River Camp at the end of River's Edge, the East Refreshment Stand at the top of Historic Hill, or the Carousel Cafe may be a little less noisy. All have plenty of tables and chairs. Please note that some food locations are open only certain times of the year.

Quieter Seating

Whether you to bring your lunch, purchase something from one of the many food stands located throughout the Zoo, or just need some down time, you will have plenty of spots with seating or tables and chairs to choose from. Attendance and weather will effect how busy these alternate seating areas are, but a few of the many quieter areas are:

- Around the Cypress swamp and Edward K. Love 1904 Flight Cage, (the train does pass by here, but it is travelling particularly slowly at this point in the journey, and is usually quiet and not a distraction)

- Outside Peabody Hall and all along Historic Hill

- At the base of the staircase and by the drinking fountain opposite Red Rocks Zooline Railroad station

- By Fragile Forest

- Close to River Camp Cafe, a canopy provides a shaded area

- Behind Hippo Hideaway

- Behind the Conservation Carousel

- By the wallabies and emus in the Red Rock area

Family Restrooms and First Aid Station

Family restrooms are located by the South Entrance, River's Edge exit, First Aid Station and, coming soon, The Living World. The First Aid Station, staffed by Children's Hospital EMTs and Zoo volunteers, is located by the Conservation Carousel.

Weather

Some of the attractions and areas of the Zoo are weather dependent. This includes the Zooline Railroad, Conservation Carousel, Bird Garden and Flight Cage path, River's Edge and the bridge in Big Cat Country. Please check with a guest services representative when you arrive at the Zoo for the most up-to-date information for that day.

Also, there are plenty of shady areas for visitors to take a moment and regroup. It may be a good idea to include a "stop in the shade" break on warmer days as part of the visual schedule.