



Teen Camp Frequently Asked Questions

What are the times, dates and prices?

Please go back to the [Camp Programs page](#) and click on the link on the page for Camp KangaZoo. Links are in the yellow bar at the top of the page, or in the yellow boxes below each photo.

How do I register?

Please review complete registration information [here](#). Registration for Zoo Friends members opens March 15 and General Public registration opens March 16. Registration is online only.

Is financial assistance available?

Yes! Financial scholarships are available for under-resourced families. The scholarship application will be available on our website in April 2022. Camp spaces are set aside for campers who are awarded scholarships, so if you see that a session is sold out, you can still apply for a scholarship for that session.

What are the COVID-19 safety protocols?

The Zoo relies on guidance from the St. Louis City and County Health Department and recommendations from the CDC for schools, child-care facilities, and camps. The Zoo's Safety and Risk Management Department also helps us to create the policies that the Education Department follows for our programs, based on the newest guidance.

Currently (as of February 2022) the Education Department requires all staff, volunteers and program participants over 2 years old to wear a mask over their mouth and nose during all programs, whether indoors or outdoors. We have maximum capacity guidelines for all of our classroom spaces, enforce physical distancing indoors, outdoors and when masking isn't possible (while eating), encourage frequent hand-washing, minimize shared spaces and materials, and mixing of camper groups, and require a daily Health Screening for all participants at multi-day programs, such as Camp. All Zoo staff and volunteers are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and will also wear masks during programs. Some of our policies may change as guidance changes. We will send updates before your program begins.

You may notice that the Education Department has more requirements than the Zoo's general policies for Zoo visitors. This is due to the lower vaccination rate for children, the longer period of time spent together, and our increased ability to enforce policies and monitor behavior in a Zoo program environment.

More information can be found on our website [here](#).

Will my child be with children his/her own age?

Yes. The Teen Campers only spend time with the younger campers at the beginning of the day for the daily introduction and the end of the day, while awaiting pick up. With only 16 teen campers per session, they are all together for most activities, and may divide into smaller groups for other activities. The Teen Campers are the only campers with an overnight this year, so they will have the Zoo to themselves on Thursday night.

Check in/drop off for both Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp occur at the same time and location each morning, and with up to 52 KangaZoo campers and only 16 Teen Campers, your teen camper may not see campers their own age until they get to the Camp location.

My camper is entering 7th grade (Teen Camp age,) but his/her buddy is entering 6th grade (Camp KangaZoo age.) Can they attend Camp together?

Maybe. We do NOT allow 6th graders to attend Teen Camp, however, we will allow 7th graders to attend Camp KangaZoo with a 6th grade buddy, if space allows after the first week of registration. Please contact the Camp Director to ask for this exception cooney@stlzoo.org.

What do the Teen Campers do all day?

Each day starts with small group games and get-to-know-you activities. At about 8:40 a.m., we join together for our amazing "Camp Rocks" music session with our Camp Musician, and then the Teen Campers join their own counselors for the day's activities. Each day, campers participate in games, crafts, Zoo tours and small group activities or projects. The Teen Camp schedule is more flexible than the Camp KangaZoo schedule and counselors try to meet the camper's unique interests whenever possible and appropriate.

Along with visiting our amazing animals, campers visit Stingrays at Caribbean Cove, attend the Sea Lion show, and ride the Zooline Railroad. Camp concludes with an overnight on Thursday night. A complete list of what to bring to Teen Camp, and the overnight can be found in the parent packet that will be mailed to you.

What is the overnight like?

The overnight is the grand finale to a jam-packed week at Camp. After check in, the teen campers eat dinner together, go on a Zoo Scavenger Hunt or other Zoo Adventure and a night hike, and perform skits that they have worked on during the week. Teen Camp bedtime is between 11 and 11:30 p.m., and as long as the weather permits, the Teen Campers will sleep outside under the stars!

If rain is in the forecast, Teen Campers will spread out and sleep inside the Exploration Outpost. They will rise at 6:45 a.m., roll up the sleeping bags, eat a tasty breakfast, and then go for an early morning stroll around the Zoo. Morning pick up is at 8:30 a.m.

Where is Teen Camp located at the Zoo?

Indoor activities occur in classrooms on the lower level of the Primate House. Outdoor activities take place primarily in the yard and tents between the Primate House and the Herpetarium, and at the green space in the Chain of Lakes. We also spend time at many animal exhibits, both indoors and out.

How do I pick up my campers if I have children at multiple Camps with the same pick up time, like Camp Joey or Camp KangaZoo?

Full details about pick up, drop off and other Camp policies are sent to you in the Camp information packet which you will receive later this spring, after you register for Camp.

Since some camps (Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp) pick up on the south side of the Zoo on Wells Drive, and some (Camp Joey and Specialty Camps) pick up on the north side on Government Drive you may need to stop at both locations.

Camp KangaZoo and Teen Camp pick up is in the same location and usually begins by 2:50 p.m. If you have a Camp Joey camper along with KangaZoo or Teen Campers, just plan to arrive around 2:50 p.m. You should still be able to pick up a Camp Joey camper at the north side around 3 p.m. Or you can pick up your Camp Joey Camper first. We will never leave your camper unattended, even if you are a little late to a pick up. Specialty Camp pick up is at 3:30 p.m., so there is no need to arrive early.

Please be patient with us during pick up. We do camper pick up as quickly and efficiently as we can; however, your safety and the safety of your children and our other visitors are our top priorities, *followed by efficiency.*

Can my child attend Teen Camp with a friend?

Since we only have on-line registration this summer, if you want to register for Camp with a buddy, you should both plan to register early and around the same time to have the best chance of getting into the same camp session. Due to capacity limits of our classrooms, we are not able to exceed the maximum number of registrants for a Camp session in order to accommodate a buddy.

The Teen Campers are usually all together once at the Zoo, so buddies will have plenty of time to interact with each other and make new friends.

One of the most valuable benefits of summer camp is the opportunity for your child to grow mentally, emotionally and socially by participating in activities, meeting new people and making new friends! Check out the research about the benefits of camp on the American Camping Association website.

<https://www.acacamps.org/campers-families/because-camp/benefits-camp>

Who are the Camp Staff?

Teen Camp has a staff of two Educators (counselors), and an older teen volunteer. The Educators are primarily teachers, college students or recent graduates. The volunteers are high school students at least 16 years old.

We also have a team of Inclusion Facilitators who are dedicated and trained to help the staff meet the needs of campers who need a little extra attention or have special needs, so they are fully included in Camp experiences.

Eve Cooney is the Camp Director and Shelby Cady is the Assistant Director this summer. Eve has been the Camp Director since the summer of 2001. She also manages the Zoo ALIVE teen volunteer program. This will be Shelby's first summer at Camp KangaZoo; however, she has been working in the Zoo's Education Department for three years, helped lead our virtual Camp KangaZoom last summer (so she knows all of the songs!) and she is a Supervisor of our School Break Camps and Overnight programs.

Marisa Diaz will be helping as our Administrative Assistant in the Camp office and helps to coordinate and organize camper health forms, t-shirts, nametags, and the Camp Scholarship program. This will be her first summer at Camp KangaZoo.

Educator/Counselor Biographies will be emailed to you in the week before your child's camp session.

What is the counselor to camper ratio?

Teen Camp maintains an approximate 1 to 5 camper ratio.

How can I be sure my teen will be safe?

Your child's safety is our top priority, and we have many procedures in place to assure the safety of your child. All of the Educators are trained in First Aid, CPR and Epi-pen administration. Most are also trained in AED use and Oxygen administration. We have medics from St. Louis Children's Hospital at the Zoo every day in the summer to help with medical emergencies, as well as our Zoo Security team who are always available.

We use the "rule of three" at Camp, which ensures that an instructor is never alone with a camper. Instructors always work in pairs, and have assistants and volunteers with them, so there are plenty of eyes to watch your child and for staff to watch each other. Educators carry two-way radios, so if a child gets separated from the group, we can immediately mobilize Zoo Security and others to help locate the child.

Staff and volunteers are all trained on our Youth Protection Code of Conduct regarding appropriate "touch, talk and territory," and staff practice 360 supervision to ensure that everyone is following the code. Camp staff and volunteers also undergo a background check, as well as a thorough interview process and reference check.

Our pick-up procedures are designed so that the parent can designate who will pick up their child. If the procedures are not followed, or we have any doubt whatsoever, we will not release the child without contacting a parent or an emergency contact person by phone.

It is important for parents to help us by notifying us of any allergies, special needs, behaviors to expect, etc. Please indicate these on the Health/Information form when you register. If your child's condition changes, or if your contact information changes, please notify us before your child's Camp session.

If your child engages in unsafe behaviors (leaving or running away from the group, not following safety guidelines, attempting to harm other campers, staff, or property, refusing to wear a mask, etc.) and is not responding to our interventions, they may be asked to leave for their own safety, and for the safety of others. We are happy to have them return to Camp the next summer or recommend a Zoo program that may be a better fit for them.

Please check out our [Inclusion Statement](#) and Inclusion FAQ's to learn more about how we support children with special needs.

This can be a tricky age for kids, as they transition from children to young adults. Please help us to create a safe environment by talking to your teen about appropriate touch, boundaries and conduct with peers. We have a "No Put Downs" policy and the staff are trained to enforce it, but they will not see or hear every interaction between the Teen Campers. Make sure your teen knows to tell someone – a counselor or parent - if they feel uneasy about any situation. If your child notifies you of any bullying or other inappropriate behavior at Teen Camp, please contact the director immediately so we can address the issue promptly and provide a safe place for everyone.

What is the cell phone policy for Teen Campers?

We prefer that Teen Campers leave cell phones at home, because these expensive and personal items can easily be lost at the Zoo. Camp is not responsible for lost cell phones. However, if a Teen Camper wants to bring a cell phone as a camera or clock, we will allow it. The counselors will tell the teen campers when they are allowed and are not allowed to use their cell phone, and for what purpose. If the Teen Camper chooses not to follow the counselor's guidelines, the teen's phone may be confiscated and returned at the end of the day.

The overnight sometimes includes a photo scavenger hunt or other photo-related activity. Some teens may be asked to bring their cell phone to use as a camera on Thursday night.

We want to keep all of our camper's safe. Pictures taken of other campers should not be posted to social media sites without the other camper's parent's permission.

We understand that there is a plethora of inappropriate content on the internet and want to keep your teen away from these sites while at the Zoo. By closely monitoring and limiting cell phone use by the Teen Campers, we believe that they are more likely to interact with their fellow Teen Campers, engage in the activities of Camp, connect with our animals and nature, and have a unique experience that they can't have anywhere else.

If you, the parent, need to contact your Teen Camper during camp, we ask that you please contact the camp director or the camp office. Phone numbers will be on the front cover of your Parent Packet. We will bring your camper to the office to receive your phone call or contact the counselor and ask them to call you right back.

Will my teen feel welcome at Camp?

That is our goal. We pride ourselves on our ability to make every camper feel welcome, respected, and included at Camp KangaZoo. Camp staff receive training each year on how to meet the needs and create a welcoming environment for a diverse range of campers, including diversities of race and gender identity, culture, religion, economic status, ability, thought, etc. Valuing and respecting (not just tolerating) diversity is part of our Camp culture. We believe that Camp is better for everyone because of the experiences your teen brings. If you have concerns about your camper fitting in or being welcome, please contact the Camp Director or Inclusion team to discuss your concerns.

If your teen reports that he/she is being bullied at Camp, please contact the director, and give us a chance to help the situation before the week is over. Your open communication helps us to make Camp better for everyone.

Unisex/gender neutral restrooms are available around the Zoo, including in the classroom area that the teen campers use frequently. You can indicate on your Camp Health/Information form whether your teen needs a gender-neutral restroom and can indicate what pronouns we should use to refer to your child.

What if my child has allergies?

Make sure to list your child's allergies, or other information about your camper, on the Camp Health/Information form. Please be specific about nut allergies – peanuts vs. tree nuts or specific types of nuts, and whether foods “processed in a facility that also processes nuts,” like plain M&M's, are OK or not OK to consume at Camp. Likewise with other allergies, please be specific about what campers can and cannot consume, touch or breathe (liquid milk vs. milk as an ingredient, etc.)

If your child carries emergency medication, like an Epi-pen, you will need to complete a [FARE - Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan](#) and the [Medicine Administration Form](#).

What if my child needs to take medicine during Camp?

The best scenario is for children to take their medication before or after Camp, but if your child needs to take medication during the program, you must complete the Zoo's [Medicine Administration Form](#) for prescribed and over the counter medications. We must have this completed form before your child starts camp, so either turn it in to Zoo staff at Camp check in, or before. Our Camp staff will remind your child to take their prescribed medicine. Trained Zoo personnel will only administer medication (such as an Epi-pen) in an emergency situation.

Any over the counter or prescription medication or supplements brought to camp need to be in the original container with prescription information and dosage printed on the label and need to be in the correct pre-measured dose. Feel free to call the Camp Director to discuss any specific needs. This is a relatively new policy, and our goal is to implement an easy and safe procedure for Camp families and staff.

Please note that a physician's signature is required on the Medication Authorization Form (for prescription medication, not required for OTC) and the FARE form.

What if my child follows a special diet?

We have snacks on hand which would meet most if not all dietary needs, including fresh fruit and fruit-flavored, non-dairy, non-gluten popsicles. Our other snacks are Rice Krispies Treats and Camper Chow – a trail mix which includes pretzels, goldfish crackers, animal cookies, raisins, plain M&Ms, and Crispix cereal. We mix the Camper Chow ourselves and are happy to leave out certain ingredients for your child to make it gluten-free, kosher, vegan, dairy-free, etc. depending on the allergies listed on your teen's health form.

If one of our scheduled snacks does not fit with your child's diet, we are happy to substitute one of our other snacks that day, or you can send a snack or meal with your

camper. Feel free to call the Camp Director to discuss what snacks/foods will be served at Camp on which days. This information will also be included in your parent handbook, which you will receive in May. We will call you if we have questions about any food allergies.

Is Camp accessible to children who use wheelchairs?

Although the Primate House lower level is not accessible, our Teen Camp program can be modified, and locations changed so that they are fully accessible.

Is Camp appropriate for teens with other special needs?

Please check out our [Inclusion Statement](#) and Inclusion FAQ's to learn more about how we support children with special needs and who to contact for assistance.

Can I attend Teen Camp with my child?

As a general rule, this is not allowed. However, if your child has special needs or requires one-on-one assistance, you may be allowed to come as your child's aide. Please refer to our Inclusion Statement/FAQs at the link above for more information and details about this procedure and requirements you will need to meet.

Can parents stay for the overnight?

No. But we do have awesome family overnight programs that are designed for parents and their children to attend together. We can't let kids have ALL the fun!

What if my teen does not want to spend the night at the Zoo?

We encourage all of the campers to spend the night at the Zoo. Usually, by Thursday night, the campers have made new friends, are very comfortable with the Zoo and their counselors, and are looking forward to the overnight. However, for those who can't spend the night, we offer an optional 11:00 p.m. pick-up on Thursday night. This allows the camper to participate in all of the evening Camp activities.

The camp registration fee is the same regardless of whether your camper spends the night.

If any of your questions were not answered or you have more questions, please email the Camp Director at cooney@stlzoo.org.