



Chicago Zoological Society  
*Inspiring Conservation Leadership*

# Guest Accessibility Guide

*Updated 02/23/22*

# Welcome to Brookfield Zoo!

The staff and volunteers of the Chicago Zoological Society welcome you to Brookfield Zoo and are happy to answer your questions, so please don't hesitate to ask. The information contained in this guide will help answer your questions regarding accessibility. Should you have other questions related to accessibility or the resources available at Brookfield Zoo, please visit our website at [www.CZS.org/Accessibility](http://www.CZS.org/Accessibility) or contact the Society's ADA Coordinator at (708) 688-8674.

## Wildlife

Please be aware that wildlife in the park such as geese, nesting birds, guinea and pea fowl at times engage with guests and/or service animals. When this occurs, please leave the immediate area or enter a building until the wildlife no longer attempts to engage. These animals present no dangerous threat to either guests or service animals.

## BZ Care Kits

BZ Care Kits are available at both North and South Guest Relations. These kits are designed for guests with sensory disabilities and include zoo visual schedule books, noise-cancelling headphones, name tags, "if lost" ID bracelets, and stickers.

## First Aid

For emergencies and lost-and-found service, go to the First Aid/Police Department/Lost-and-Found Office near the South Gate. In an emergency situation, any staff member can contact the First Aid/Zoo Police Department on your behalf.

## **Parking**

Accessible parking spaces are available at both our North and South Gate entrances on a first-come, first-served basis. If all accessible parking spaces are taken, please notify one of our Park Safety Officers who will determine if additional accessible parking can be made available. The South Gate parking lot provides closer access to the zoo entrance and may be more desirable for guests with physical disabilities. The North Gate parking lot offers more accessible parking spots due to the size of the lot, but is further proximity from the zoo.

## **General Accessibility Information**

Staff members are available to assist guests who may need assistance during their visit. A park guide can be arranged. If desired, please contact us at the above website address and complete the ADA Accessibility Request you will find there or contact us by phone at least 14 calendar days in advance.

Most of the exhibits at Brookfield Zoo have tactile elements to enhance our guests' experience. A listing of exhibits, the types of animals you will find at each exhibit, and features for guests with disabilities can be found in this guide.

Brookfield Zoo has a large staff of volunteers located throughout the zoo in the summer who talk with guests about tactile artifacts that can be handled and touched. The Hamill Family Play Zoo offers a variety of hands-on activities, including a quiet room for children who need a break.

Zoo Chats are conducted throughout the summer at various times during the day. You may obtain more information on Zoo Chats by visiting one of our volunteers located in the Information gazebos at the North and South Gate entrances or by visiting [www.CZS.org/ZooChats](http://www.CZS.org/ZooChats).

To assist in planning your visit, visual schedule books for guests with communication disorders are available at [www.CZS.org/Accessibility](http://www.CZS.org/Accessibility) to print and assemble prior to your visit. You can also obtain a visual schedule book at the North or South Guest Relations building for use during your visit.

A Sensory Room/Resource Center is located in the Hamill Family Play Zoo. Here, guests can use noise-cancelling headphones, visual schedule books and other accessible resources while visiting the Play Zoo.

## Programs and Classes

### Educational Programs

Our educational programs, a list of which can be found at [www.CZS.org/Learning](http://www.CZS.org/Learning), have been modified or developed to meet the needs of diverse audiences.

American Sign Language (“ASL”) interpreters are available for public programs and classes and must be requested in advance. Complete and submit the ADA Accessibility Request at [www.CZS.org/Accessibility](http://www.CZS.org/Accessibility) or call **(708) 688-8674** a minimum of 14 calendar days in advance.

Hands-on educational programs for groups with disabilities are available through our Conservation Education and Training department by calling **(708) 688-8369** for information.

We also have a Good Works and Bridges Volunteer programs for teens and adults. Please call **(708) 688-8304** for more information.

### Backstage Adventures

If you or someone you know has always dreamed of being a zookeeper, Brookfield Zoo has a variety of Backstage Adventures programs from which you can choose. Information on our Backstage Adventures programs can be found at:

<https://www.czs.org/PenguinFeedingAdventure> and  
<https://www.czs.org/PenguinEncounter>

If you or someone you know is interested in taking part in a Backstage Adventure, but may not be sure if a specific program is suitable for someone with a specific disability, please contact our Interpretive Services Manager at **(708) 688-8845**.

## Line Policies

Because some guests with disabilities may find it difficult to stand in lines or to navigate wheelchairs or to walk with crutches, etc. through lines, they are not required to wait in lines to purchase tickets to enter the zoo or special attractions.

### Tram Line Policy

Some guests with disabilities may find it difficult to stand in line or navigate wheelchairs or walk with crutches, etc. through existing Motor Safari tram lines. These guests are given priority seating upon request or will be invited to wait in a convenient and comfortable area near the tram station until it is their turn to be boarded. Their spot in line may be held by a companion or other guest so that they can be boarded on the tram when their turn arrives. Because there is a limited number of wheelchair-accessible seats, guests who are not in wheelchairs will be seated in non-wheelchair accessible seats on the tram to accommodate a guest in a wheelchair. If non-disabled guests are in seats that accommodate wheelchairs and there are other available seats on the tram, those guests will be asked to move to another empty seat on the tram to accommodate a guest in a wheelchair.

Every effort will be made to accommodate a guest with a disability who requests priority seating and asks to be seated on the tram before other guests who are waiting in line.

### The Carousel Line Policy

Guests with disabilities are not required to wait in line at the Carousel. Guests with disabilities are allowed to enter the Carousel through the exit line once guests have exited the Carousel from the previous ride. A ramp onto the Carousel is available, along with bench seating; one of the bench seats flips up and has a mechanism to secure a wheelchair.

## Dolphins in Action Line Policy

Individuals who have difficulty walking or standing are not required to wait in line for the Dolphins in Action attraction. These guests and their companion can bypass the line by entering the stadium on the south side of the Seven Seas Gift Shop. Signage located at the entrance to the show directs the guest(s) accordingly. The ticket taker will provide access into the stadium, and Seven Seas attendants will direct the individual(s) to designated seating areas.

## Resources and Information for Guests with Sensory Disabilities

### Interpreters

ASL interpreters are available for the deaf and hearing-impaired for zoo visits, classes, programs, or other needs. An interpreter is available by submitting a request at least 14 calendar days in advance. Complete and submit the ADA Accessibility Request at [www.CZS.org/Accessibility](http://www.CZS.org/Accessibility) or call **(708) 688-8334** at least 14 calendar days in advance.

Visit our social media pages to listen to animals at play or see photos and videos on our:

- YouTube Channel at [www.YouTube.com/CZSBrookfieldZoo](http://www.YouTube.com/CZSBrookfieldZoo)
- Facebook page at [www.Facebook.com/BrookfieldZoo](http://www.Facebook.com/BrookfieldZoo)
- Instagram page at [www.Instagram.com/BrookfieldZoo](http://www.Instagram.com/BrookfieldZoo)
- Twitter account at [www.Twitter.com/Brookfield\\_Zoo](http://www.Twitter.com/Brookfield_Zoo)

Many of the videos playing in exhibit areas are captioned for the deaf and hearing-impaired.

### Menus

Food menus and price lists in restaurants and admission pricing and packages at each zoo entrance are available in printed form upon request.

Whenever needed, a pad of paper and pen will be made available to guests for communicating with staff. Staff members are always happy to read menus to guests if requested.

## **Maps and Signage**

Staff members are readily available to assist visually impaired guests with tasks such as reading signs, maps, and menus. Maps for the Vision Impaired are available at the North and South Guest Relations buildings. Service Animal Maps are available on line at <https://www.czs.org/ZooMap>.

## **Resources and Information for Guests with Physical Disabilities**

### **Service Animals**

Service animals are welcome at Brookfield Zoo (service dog or miniature horse). Since service animals can pose certain concerns and challenges within a zoo setting, it is important that we advise you of our policies regarding these animals and ask for your cooperation.

Upon arrival, please check in at the North or South Guest Relations Building with your service animal. Service Animals are not allowed in the Wild Encounters exhibit. A Service Animal Map can be found at <https://www.czs.org/ZooMap>. Due to the natural predator/prey instinct, some zoo animals may react quickly or violently to the presence of a service animal, which can result in injury or even death. If you notice a zoo animal becoming distressed or overly aggressive by the presence of your service animal, please leave the area immediately. Also, as there is the potential for direct contact between your service animal and some zoo animals, access may be restricted on the day of your visit due to specific animal health concerns, such as recent births.

In addition to the provisions about service dogs, miniature horses are also recognized under the law as animals that work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. These horses are individually trained to work with people with disabilities and due to their longer service life and size, may be a better alternative to some than a service dog. The same service animal rules apply to miniature horses, with some exceptions as noted within this document.

Because we want all guests to be able to enjoy all areas of the zoo, if you would like to visit a restricted area, we are happy to provide the following:

- Guest kennel facilities for your service dog while a staff member escorts you through an exhibit area(s). Unfortunately, we are unable to provide kennel facilities to miniature horses due to their size.
- A guided walk-through of the area by a staff member while another member of your party supervises and safeguards your service animal.

If you would like to use either of the above options, please ask any staff member to contact our Zoo Police Department.

## **Motor Safari Trams and The Carousel**

The Motor Safari Trams and Carousel are both wheelchair accessible.

## **Strollers**

For safety reasons, some buildings at the zoo prohibit strollers because walkways can be narrow and an abundance of strollers can be hazardous for guests who need to evacuate in an emergency. Signage instructing guests where strollers can be parked is posted at these locations.

Guests with disabilities may use a personal mobility device, such as a wheelchair, a stroller for a child with a disability, or other type of mobility device (with the exception of gas-powered devices) in these exhibits and buildings.

## **Mobility Devices Available at the Zoo**

Electronic convenience vehicles (“ECV”s), wheelchairs, child strollers, and wagons are available for rent near the North and South Gates. Due to limited quantities of ECVs and wheelchairs available, we recommend you reserve one in advance of your visit by calling **(708) 688-8347**. You will be prompted to leave your name, telephone number, and the date of your visit. If you call before 5:00 p.m., a staff member will return your call the same day. If you call after 5:00 p.m., a staff member will return your call before close of business the next business day. Same-day reservations are not accepted. Guests can also bring their own mobility device (see below).

A listing of the mobility devices available for rental and their associated costs can be found at [www.CZS.org/Rentals](http://www.CZS.org/Rentals).

If you wish to secure your stroller, locks are available at both the North and South Gate rental locations with a refundable \$10 deposit.

## **Personal Mobility Devices**

Guests with a mobility disability may use a Segway (operated in Turtle mode only) and other assistive mobility devices. Gas-powered devices are prohibited from all indoor areas due to the exhaust fumes. All Segway users are expected to abide by our “Rules of the Road” for such devices and to sign an acknowledgement form at the Zoo Police Department.

Please note, some outdoor areas and indoor exhibits of the zoo may contain narrow walkways, low rock outcroppings, branches, and doorways, and/or uneven terrain. Guests are cautioned to use care when operating electronic mobility devices and wheelchairs at all times.

## Resources for Guests with Social Communication Disabilities

### Visual Schedule Books

If you did not have the opportunity to print a visual schedule book prior to your visit at [www.CZS.org/Accessibility](http://www.CZS.org/Accessibility), you may obtain a copy at the South or North Guest Relations buildings for use during your visit. The Hamill Family Play Zoo also has visual schedule books that can be used during your visit.

## Additional Resources and Information

### Restrooms

Restroom facilities have one or more wheelchair-accessible stalls. Family restrooms (mother/son and father/daughter) are located adjacent to the North Gate ticket booths, Great Bear Wilderness–Bison Prairie Grill, between Great Bear Wilderness and Habitat Africa-The Savannah, BZ Red Hots restaurant, Bramsen Pavilion (located in the building to the west of the Wild Encounters exhibit), and next to the Café del Sol restaurant.

A private room is available at Hamill Family Play Zoo for nursing mothers if desired. There is no admission fee to Hamill Family Play Zoo for nursing mothers who wish to use this room.

Diapers are sold in the Wildlife Trading Post, Stuffed Animal Kingdom, and Coast Gifts.

An adult changing room is available at the Public Safety Office located just inside the South Gate entrance. Please keep in mind that while staff members are always eager to assist our guests in need, they are not trained or permitted to physically lift or assist in lifting a guest.

## Miscellaneous

Accessible picnic tables, many in shaded areas, are also located throughout the zoo.

## **Exhibits and Attractions**

The following information will assist you in planning your zoo visit. You can experience a wide variety of fun and educational activities at Brookfield Zoo.

Listed below are some features of our exhibits. Also, “insert a face” activities are scattered throughout the park along with life-size cutouts of animals. Educational placards with large photos can keep children engaged while walking from exhibit to exhibit and benches are stationed throughout the park for guests to rest and observe native wildlife.

### Australia House

Several cutouts of animals are located throughout the building. A pouch activity helps guests understand how a pouch can be useful to an animal. Open enclosures for wombats allow guests to use their senses to experience the animals more closely. There are also free-flying bats which have distinguished smells and sounds. Please be advised that this building contains low rocks in the bat area on the ceiling.



## **Big Cats**

At Big Cats, you will find Amur tigers, Amur leopards, snow leopards, and sloth bears. Life-size cutouts are available along with low viewing areas and fences to see animals from different angles.



## **Butterflies!**

This is a seasonal exhibit that allows guests to experience butterflies up close.



## **The Carousel**

The relaxing rhythm can calm anxious guests, and hand-carved wooden animals allow for a tactile experience. The Carousel is a very colorful, enhancing visual stimulation. The Carousel is also wheelchair accessible.



## Dragonfly Marsh

Dragonfly Marsh is a quiet place where guests can walk and observe natural wildlife.



## Feathers and Scales

This exhibit contains low viewing windows and guests can hear the birds.



## **Forest Preserve Nature Trail**

Guests can relax and learn more about their native wildlife through field guide illustrations of plants and animals and journal entries from a naturalist. Other fun facts and games are available to engage younger visitors.



## **The Formal Pool**

This is a relaxing place to enjoy native wildlife and the pelicans that were rescued from the Gulf Oil spill. The formal pool is also beautifully landscaped with animal topiaries. There are also



## **The Fragile Desert and Clouded Leopard Rain Forest**

Interactive educational activities are located throughout these exhibits. Open viewing for the caracal and binturong (bearcat) areas allow guests to experience these animals with their senses. The rain forest is built like an

outpost, and a popular activity is to follow the placards throughout the exhibit. Please be advised that these exhibits contain some narrow walkways, low illumination, and rocks in certain pathways.



### [Great Bear Wilderness](#)

The animals you will encounter at Great Bear Wilderness include grizzly bears, polar bears, bison, eagles, and Mexican gray wolves. Educational placards emphasize conservation issues, the zoo's breeding history, and the history of our grizzly bears, Jim and Axhi. Life-size animal cutouts are also available along with a narrated and captioned video about conservation. An ice floe jumping activity is located on the floor of the exhibit and underwater viewing brings guests closer to the animals.



## **Habitat Africa! The Forest**

Do you know the difference between a zebra and an okapi? To find out, visit Habitat Africa! The Forest. Many educational placards are located throughout the trail. Please be advised that this trail contains uneven terrain.



## **Habitat Africa! The Savannah**

Rope doors between various sections of the exhibit are interactive. Free-flying birds provide a searching activity and a more intimate auditory experience. Two interactive activities are available for the African wild dogs. Please be advised that the mongoose area has a low ceiling and low illumination.



## [Hamill Family Play Zoo](#)

At Hamill Family Play Zoo, you will find a wide variety of animals such as lemurs, lizards, house cats, guinea pigs, snakes, African hedgehogs, rabbits, and salamanders. The Play Zoo is designed for children up to age 10 and provides them with a setting where they can play, explore, build, and do. A Play Garden and Sound and Sensory Play Garden are located in the backyard of the Play Zoo. All activities are very interactive and easily adapted for all developmental levels. Crafts rotate during the year and Play Partners are located throughout the zoo, giving guests the ability to touch and learn about certain animals. The Play Zoo also offers a quiet room for children who need a break.



## [Hoofed Animals](#)

Przewalski's horses, camels, zebras, and addax can all be found at our Hoofed Animals exhibit. Placards discuss the animals' origins and the Species Survival Plan. Open viewing allows guests to experience the animals' smells and sounds up close.



## The Living Coast

Life-size cutouts of fish and penguins are displayed along the walls, which also contain different textures. Free-flying birds provide a searching activity and a more intimate auditory experience. Guests can also experience an ocean wave. Guests can “be a penguin.” Sea turtle nesting activities are interactive and can be applied to different developmental levels.



## Pachyderms

Open enclosures allow for animal viewing, smells and sounds.



## Pinniped Point

An “Actions Speak Louder than Words” placard visually explains the different behaviors guests may be seeing, but not necessarily hearing. Low viewing windows and underwater viewing are both available. Woodcarvings on benches provide tactile experiences.



## Playgrounds

Our playgrounds include slides and various types of climbing experiences. Picnic tables are available in shaded areas for resting. These are also great places to rest service animals in need of a break.



## **Regenstein Wolf Woods**

A wingspan activity is available for interpreting the size of an animal. Life-size statues are located throughout the exhibit and a “Kill Site” activity details a hunt with very descriptive images. Guests can view a wolf den in the indoor viewing area. The howling activity allows guests to experience complete darkness and hear actual wolf calls. Camera viewing is also available within the exhibit.



## **Reptiles and Birds**

Low viewing windows and birds in free flight in the aviary provide guests with various sensory experiences.



### [Seven Seas Dolphinarium Arena](#)

In the underground viewing area, guests can find low viewing windows and an educational video. Guests can also attend a Dolphins in Action presentation in the dolphin arena above, where they can experience animal behaviors.



### [Splash Pad](#)

Located outside of the Living Coast, the splash pad offers guests of all ages a way to cool off with a variety of water features. Benches are available in shady areas for resting.



## The Swamp

Alligators, birds, otters, and bugs live in our Swamp. The exhibits are open, allowing guests to experience the animals with various senses. The Swamp boat and video are interactive activities showing guests a real swamp. Bug exhibits are positioned low, allowing for easy access for children or guests in mobility devices.



## Swan Lake

Swan Lake is a quiet place where guests can walk and observe natural wildlife. A number of bird species use Swan Lake as a migratory resting stop, and others make it their home all year long.



## [Tropic World](#)

Educational interactive placards are available throughout the exhibit. A waterfall and a thunderstorm can be experienced up close. A family album for the orangutans is available for guests to follow their family tree. Many of our primates can be quite vocal and give our guests a wonderful, albeit a bit loud, example of their many vocal talents throughout the day.

Please be advised that this exhibit contains low entrances, low hanging branches, and rock outcroppings. Inside, the doors between animal areas are designed to remain closed when not in use to keep free-flying birds from flying from one animal area to another. If you need assistance with an inside door, please ask one of our many volunteers or staff members for help. Also, pathways in this exhibit are designed to mimic the paths one might encounter in the wild. As such, some pathways are uneven and may provide a bumpy ride for those in a stroller, wheelchair, or other mobility device.



## Wild Encounters



This interactive experience includes an aviary with hundreds of free-flying parakeets you can feed using a feed stick. Parakeets can also land on visitors' heads, arms, and hands. Some parakeets may be on the floor of the exhibit. The birds chirp loudly. If startled by a loud noise or sudden movement, parakeets can fly away rather quickly.

Other exhibits include a wallaby and emu yard where guests are free to roam inside. Guests are asked to stay on the pedestrian path of the exhibit. There is a sitting area in the center of the exhibit. In the goat yard, guests can groom and feed the animals.

In the center of the plaza, there is a sitting area with large colorful mobiles that spin with the wind. From time to time, there are animal keepers roaming the exhibit with Animal Ambassadors that guests can meet up close.



**If you have any remaining questions, please feel free to call (708) 688-8674.**

We hope you enjoy your day and come back to visit us often!