

SAN DIEGO ZOO®

Accessibility Guide



African Elephant 1



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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do you rent wheelchairs?

A: Yes. Manual and electric wheelchairs available to be rented for the day. Refer to page 8 for more details.

Q: What is the cost for wheelchair rental?

A: Prices are subject to change and discounts. Prices are posted on-site at the rental facility.

Q: Can a wheelchair (manual or electric) be reserved ahead of time?

A: No. Wheelchairs are rented on a first-come, first-served basis. Refer to page 8 for more details.

Q: What is the minimum age to operate an electric wheelchair?

A: 16 years old. Refer to page 8 for more details.

Q: If a person with a disability brings an attendant, does the attendant get into the Zoo free of charge?

A: Yes. For your convenience, complimentary passes for attendants may be obtained at any of the ticket windows at the entrance to the Zoo. Refer to page 8 for more details.

Q: Is there a shuttle service for guests with disabilities?

A: Yes. Refer to page 6 for more details.

Q: Where does the shuttle service go?

A: The shuttle travels on the regular roads throughout the Zoo; however it does not operate on the narrower walking only pathways. Refer to page 6 for more details.

Q: Do you provide assistance for guests that need American Sign Language interpretation?

A: Yes. We request that arrangements be made at least 7 days in advance of your visit. Please call (619) 231-1515, ext. 4526 to arrange for an interpreter. See Page 4 for more details.

Q: Do you provide assistance for guests who are blind?

A: Yes. We request that arrangements be made at least 72 hours in advance of your visit. Please call (619) 231-1515, ext. 4526 to arrange for an interpreter. See Page 4 for more details.

Q: Do you allow service animals?

A: Yes. We welcome guests with disabilities that choose to bring their **trained service animal** into the Zoo. Animals "in training" are not allowed in the Zoo.

Q: Can a staff member assist guests in the restroom?

A: No. Zoo employees are neither trained nor permitted to lift a guest or help them inside a restroom. Should it be required, guests needing this assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with someone who can physically help them.

Welcome!

We strive to maintain a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment where visitors of all ages and physical abilities can enjoy the benefits of the San Diego Zoo.

This guide addresses many issues about accessibility. However, if you have other needs or questions, please contact us at (619) 231-1515, ext. 4526. We encourage you to call at least one week before your trip for the best possible assistance. Once on grounds, please feel free to discuss any special needs you have with Zoo employees. In light of changing needs of our guests and other developments, we reserve the right to modify this guide and our accessibility policies as appropriate.

Assistance for Guests who are Blind or Have Low Vision

With an advance reservation, an Access Ambassador will be provided for guests who are blind or have low vision and are visiting the Zoo. A staff member will assist guests who are blind, they will read informational signs or map information, read menus and pricing signs, describe the exhibit habitat and the animals that live there, describe the current activity of the animals in the exhibit, and provide any additional information requested that can be made available. Our Access Ambassador will also accompany you on our bus tour; and they will describe the details of what other guests are viewing on the tour. Please call our Access Coordinator, Monday through Friday at (619) 231-1515, ext. 4526 to make arrangements for an Access Ambassador. Specialized tours will be made available for our guests who are blind or who have low vision with advance notice to our coordinator. We appreciate as much advance notice as possible, 72 hour minimum which will help to schedule the best tours and experiences for you.

Assistance for Guests who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Guided Bus Tours

The Zoo offers a 35-minute guided double-decker bus tour of 50% of the grounds. For those guests who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- You may obtain scripts for the bus tour at Guest Services or at the Bus Loading area. Each tour presentation may vary depending on the animals that are most visible so the script order may vary at times.
- We can translate bus tours into American Sign Language. We request that arrangements for an ASL Interpreter be made at least 7 days in advance of your visit. Please call (619) 231-1515, ext. 4526 to arrange for an interpreter.

Wegeforth Bowl Shows / Backstage Pass Premium Show

- Guests with hearing impairments may obtain scripts at Guest Services at the front of the Zoo. Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) are available at the Wegeforth Bowl show.

Assistance for Guests with Limited Mobility



Please keep in mind that Zoo employees are neither trained nor permitted to lift guests. A guest requiring such physical assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with an attendant.

Easy Access Pass

Guests who have difficulty standing in line or who have limited mobility may request an “Easy Access Pass” at the Guest Ambassadors office located next to the turnstiles at the entrance to the Zoo. This pass may be utilized in any venue areas where waiting lines exist. The attendant on duty will direct the guests to a designated boarding area. Three additional members of the guest’s party may accompany the guest with a disability. If there are more than three guests in your party, you may request to be seated at the loading facility to wait until other members of your party progress through the line to the loading area.

Guided Bus Tours

The Zoo offers a 35-minute guided double-decker bus tour of 50% of the grounds

- Guests may purchase tickets and board the buses just inside the main entrance, to the right of the flamingos.
- With the purchase of a bus ticket or a ticket package that includes the bus tour, guests may ride unlimited times as well on the Kangaroo Bus Service.
- Guests may board and disembark from Kangaroo buses at various shuttle stops throughout the Zoo.
- Each Guided Bus Tour bus has room for one wheelchair or OPDMD (Other Power Driven Mobility Device, formerly known as electric scooters or ECVs).
- Before boarding, please ask the employee loading the bus to reserve seats in the wheelchair area of the bus for other party members.
- Those guests using wheelchairs that can transfer from the wheelchair and access a bus seat without assistance or with the help of those in their party may leave their wheelchairs at the loading facility to be picked up at the end of the tour at the same location.

Please note that guests with mobility limitations may want to instead take advantage of the free Shuttle Service (see “Shuttle Assistance,” below).

Outdoor Moving Walkway

- A moving walkway provides access from the lower canyons to higher ground. The walkway goes to the top of the Owens Rain Forest Aviary.
- For safety reasons, as the moving walkway is an older design; mobility devices are prohibited to access the moving walkway. Instead, guests can ask an employee or volunteer near the walkway to call for shuttle assistance.
- Guests who do not use mobility devices, but who have limited mobility or difficulty walking up or down hills, should plan their route around the Zoo to fully utilize the moving walkway. These guests may also ask an employee to call for shuttle assistance.

Parking

Accessible parking is available in our parking lot on a first-come, first-served basis. A valid disability parking placard or license plate is required. Please note that the San Diego Police Department strictly enforces the Zoo's disabled parking spaces. Vehicles parking in marked spaces for disabled access, but without the appropriate placard in view or a disabled access license plate are ticketed by the SD Police Department. Be sure to display your current placard issued by an appropriate government Motor Vehicle agency.

Shows

Guests who use wheelchairs or have difficulty walking up and down stairs should look for the accessible areas of the amphitheaters designated by the wheelchair access symbol, or may ask an employee for assistance, if it is needed.

Shuttle Service

For safety reasons, we encourage guests using wheelchairs or mobility devices to use our free shuttle system. We can accommodate most vehicles on our shuttles. Please download and refer to our **Accessibility Map**, which shows the shuttle stops in the Zoo. Please inquire at the Guest Ambassador office to request a shuttle pick up near the front of the Zoo. For all other locations, please go to a Kangaroo bus stop until the next transport arrives, or you can request an ADA shuttle by speaking with any Zoo employee. The shuttle service runs on a continuous route throughout the day.

Skyfari Aerial Tram

The Skyfari Aerial Tram offers transportation over the treetops from one end of the Zoo to the other. Guests riding the Skyfari will experience spectacular views of the Zoo and surrounding Balboa Park.

- The eastern Skyfari terminal is located to the left of the entrance, across from the Reptile House. The western terminal is at the top of the hill from Polar Bear Plunge.
- A guest using a folding manual wheelchair who can access a gondola seat without assistance or with the help of those in his or her party may have the wheelchair transported ahead by gondola. The wheelchair will be available upon arrival at the opposite terminal.
- A guest using a non-folding manual wheelchair or other mobility device who can access a gondola seat without assistance or with the help of those in his or her party may leave the device at the terminal and take a round-trip ride to return to their mobility device.

Wheelchairs

The Zoo is widely accessible to guests using both manual and electric wheelchairs. Consistent with federal guidelines, we define "wheelchairs" as devices designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility disabilities.

- We also accommodate the use of certain nontraditional wheelchairs (e.g. steerable knee walkers).
- We reserve the right to inspect devices to determine whether they are safe enough to qualify as "wheelchairs".

We advise guests using wheelchairs to consult the Zoo's Accessibility Map to determine which areas may be challenging.

Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMDs)

- The Zoo accommodates the use of some Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMDs), which are vehicles that are not wheelchairs, but rather are electric devices designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility limitations.
- In the interest of maintaining a safe and pedestrian friendly environment while at the same time ensuring that everyone has a positive experience at the Zoo, we regulate the operation of mobility devices.

Guests with disabilities using mobility devices may ask employees at Guests Services for a “wheelchair tag”. These tags make it easier for employees to assist guests with mobility disabilities and they ensure that guests will not have to explain their way through the facility.

Acceptable OPDMDs

Permitted mobility devices include the following for guests with disabilities:

- Electric OPDMDs and other single-seat electric scooters with three or more wheels that cannot exceed more than 6 miles per hour.
- Segways® are permitted but must operate only in “turtle” mode.
- It is prohibited to operate a mobility device at a speed significantly greater than the flow of the surrounding pedestrian traffic.

Prohibited OPDMDs

Prohibited OPDMDs include the following:

- Any device that has or should have a registered license plate
- Any device that has only one wheel
- Any device that has two tandem wheels (e.g. two-wheeled electric or motorized scooters)
- Any OPDMD that has been structurally or mechanically altered
- Any OPDMD that is not listed as acceptable (above)
- Any gas powered vehicle

Notwithstanding the above lists, we reserve the right to inspect any mobility device to determine whether it appears safe enough to permit on the grounds. During such an inspection, we will consider various factors, included but not limited to the following:

- The type, size, weight, dimensions, minimum speed, and maximum speed of the device
- The high volume of pedestrian traffic the Zoo receives
- The Zoo’s unique natural and architectural characteristics (e.g. hills, pathways)
- The potential harm the device might cause to its operator, other guests, and the environment
- Whether the device appears stable and can balance on its own without the use of a kickstand
- Federal, state, and municipal regulations (e.g. whether the device is permitted on sidewalks)
- Other information the Zoo might find in the device’s use manual or through other investigation

The Operation of Wheelchairs and OPDMDs

Please consult both the standard Zoo map and the Accessibility Map before operating a wheelchair or OPDMD on the grounds. Familiarity with the areas of the Zoo that have steep slopes and other limitations will ensure a safe and enjoyable visit.

- We recommend guests consider only operating their wheelchairs and OPDMDs on mild slopes. Our free shuttle assistance allows guests to visit areas of the Zoo that are difficult to access.
- Guests with disabilities who use OPDMDs may ask employees at Guest Services at the entrance for a “wheelchair tag”. These tags make it easier for employees to assist guests with mobility disabilities and they ensure that guests will not have to explain their way through the facility.
- It is also required that guests operate their wheelchairs and OPDMDs within the applicable manufacturer guidelines.
- Operation of wheelchairs and OPDMDs is restricted to those for whom the devices have been fitted.
- Before operating an OPDMD, please read the device’s manufacturer guidelines to determine whether the vehicle is susceptible to electromagnetic interference. The Zoo has areas with steep grades that limit accessibility. In the interest of safety, we recommend that guests in manual wheelchairs avoid these areas. All guests using these routes should use caution to avoid serious injury.

Wheelchair Rentals – available on a first-come, first-served basis

Manual wheelchairs and electric scooters (an OPDMD), are available for rent just inside the main entrance to the Zoo. Rentals require a picture ID and the age requirement to operate an electric OPDMD is 16 years old. Rental Prices are subject to change; please call for pricing.

Admission

All guests with disabilities must have a valid form of admission to the San Diego Zoo. However, an attendant who is needed to assist a person with a disability will be admitted at no charge. If a guest with a disability purchases tickets for the Guided Bus Tour, Skyfari Aerial Tram, or any other program or tour, the attendant will be provided admission at no charge to the same event.

- For your convenience, complimentary passes for attendants may be obtained at any ticket window at the entrance to the Zoo.

Drinking Fountains

Drinking fountains accessible to guests are located throughout the facility. Cups of water may also be requested at any food stand or restaurant.

First Aid – Refrigeration for Medicine



Our First Aid office is located next to the Reptile House. If at any time you need immediate assistance, please ask any Zoo employee.

- If you have special medical needs, please consult with our health service personnel at this location.
- Refrigeration for medication is available at this location.

Restrooms

All the restrooms in the Zoo are accessible. We encourage guests with disabilities to use the restrooms at the Children's Zoo Picnic Area near Reptile Mesa.

- Family restrooms are located at the Children's Zoo Picnic Area, Urban Jungle, Sydneys and Panda Gift Shop behind Canyon Café.
- Zoo employees are neither trained nor permitted to lift a guest or help them inside a restroom. Should it be required, guests needing this assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with someone who can physically help them.

Service Animals

We welcome guests with disabilities that choose to bring their trained service animal into the Zoo. Pet and animals "in training" will not be allowed entry.

- Service animals permitted to the Zoo are dogs and miniature horses.
- Service animals must remain on a leash or a harness, be under control of its handler at all times, and be house broken. Leash cannot exceed 6 feet in length.
- If, at any time your service animal's behavior is out of control, you will be asked to remove your service animal from the premises.
- You may temporarily house service animals in our kennel while visiting the Zoo. Please see the Guest Service office for assistance.
- For your convenience, any accessible planter may be used as a 'relief area'; please pickup after your animal.
- A drinker for service animals is located next to the restrooms in the Children's Zoo Picnic Area.
- As noted in the **Zoo's Service Animal Map**, the use of service animals may be restricted or limited in certain areas due to the sensitivity of the Zoo's animal collection.
- Please visit an attendant at the turnstiles at the entrance to the Zoo to check-in your service animal, and receive a service dog bandana.

Contact Us

Zoo Accessibility Questions
(619) 231-1515, ext. 4526

Customer Service
(Comments, suggestions, and questions about the Zoo)
(619) 231-1515