



**San Diego Zoo**

## Accessibility Guide

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## **SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE, AN ACCESS-FRIENDLY ORGANIZATION**

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance is committed to ensuring our wildlife conservation parks are welcoming to all. This is a pledge made by all of our team members. We strive to provide a safe, friendly environment where visitors of all ages and abilities can enjoy getting close to nature as only the San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park can offer. We are committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and California Access Laws.

This guide addresses many of the accommodations San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance provides for persons with disabilities. However, if you have needs or questions outside of the content found in this document, you may contact us via email at [accessibility@sdzwa.org](mailto:accessibility@sdzwa.org) or directly contact the location you are planning to visit by calling:

- Zoo: (619) 231-1515, ext. 3905
- Safari Park: (760) 747-8702, ext. 5126

You will find that we're able to best serve you if you call at least one week prior to your visit. We always welcome calls, comments, and suggestions from our guests. On the day of your visit, please feel free to discuss any special needs you have at our Guest Services/ADA Services Podium at the Admissions Plaza.

Accessibility is a field that changes frequently as new information, technology, and laws evolve. We reserve the right to modify this guide and our accessibility policies as appropriate.

This document reviews offerings specifically at the San Diego Zoo. We encourage guests to access an ADA map at one of the following locations:

- Guest Services/ADA Services Podium at the Admissions Plaza
- Guest Services/Tours & Membership booth inside the Zoo
- Our website at <https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/visit/guests-with-disabilities>
- Download the San Diego Zoo app

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Wheelchairs

**Q: Do you rent wheelchairs?**

A: Yes. Manual and electric wheelchairs are available to rent for the day.

**Q: What is the cost for wheelchair rental?**

A: Prices are subject to change. 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.

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

A: 18 years old.

**Q: Does your Guided Bus Tour accommodate wheelchairs?**

A: Yes. The Guided Bus Tour accommodates one wheelchair per vehicle.

**Q: Do you have a map that suggests the best path to travel?**

A: Yes. Our Zoo map indicates the best path of travel. Look for blue dotted lines.

### Attendants

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

A: Yes. A complimentary pass will be provided for attendants and may be obtained at any of the ticket windows at the entrance to the Zoo. This also applies for special programs and tours at the San Diego Zoo.

### Mobility/Transportation

**Q: How can I see the Zoo with limited mobility?**

A: You have a variety of options, including renting wheelchairs or electronic conveyance vehicles (ECVs), using the ADA map with recommended accessible routes, boarding a Guided Bus Tour, and utilizing our ADA shuttle service for point-to-point transportation.

**Q: Is the Guided Bus Tour accessible for guests using a wheelchair or ECV?**

A: Yes. Guided Bus Tours load from a level dock via a ramp and are accessible for all guests. Each bus has one wheelchair location suitable for securing manual wheelchairs, electric wheelchairs, and some small ECVs. Guests with larger ECVs, including the model available for rental at the Zoo, will need to transfer to a bench seat and park their ECV at the loading dock.

**Q: What are my options if the one securement location on the Guided Bus Tour is occupied?**

A: If you're able to transfer to a bench seat, this option is available to you. Your wheelchair or personal ECV will be parked at the loading dock. At the end of your tour, you may ride forward from the unloading dock with the bus to return to your device. Zoo rental ECVs will be reparked for you at the unloading dock. If transferring to the bench seat is not an option for you, then you are welcome to wait for the next tour.

**Q. Is the Kangaroo Bus accessible for guests using a wheelchair or ECV?**

A. The Kangaroo Bus is accessed via stairs. The lower level requires three 12-inch steps up. The upper level requires ascent of a 12-foot flight of stairs. Handrails are available. For guests using a wheelchair or ECV, the ADA shuttle service provides an accessible alternative.

**Q. Is there a shuttle service for guests with limited mobility?**

A. Yes. Our ADA shuttle service is available on an on-call basis for our guests with mobility-related disabilities. It is equipped with a power lift and can accommodate all standard wheelchairs and the types of ECVs allowed on grounds. Contact any Zoo team member or volunteer to request service and get directions to the nearest pickup location.

**Q. What is the capacity of the shuttle service, and how long will I need to wait?**

A. Space is limited to 6–10 seats and 3–5 locations to secure an ECV or wheelchair, depending on the vehicle in use. In times of high attendance, access may be limited to the guest with limited mobility and an attendant. Other members of the party with memberships or 1-Day Passes may use the Kangaroo Bus. Response times vary. On average attendance days, 5–10 minutes is the most common wait for service.

**Communication**

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

A: Yes—please see “Disability Accommodations” section.

**Q. Do you offer Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)?**

A. Yes. They are available at Wegeforth Bowl and the 4D Theater during our regularly scheduled presentations.

**Special Assistance**

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

A: Yes—please see “Disability Accommodations” section.

**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 team member assist guests with disabilities in the restroom?**

A: No. Zoo team members are neither trained nor permitted to lift a guest or help them inside a restroom. Guests needing this assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with someone who can physically help them.

**Q. Do you have an adult changing facility?**

A. Yes. Please visit Health Services, near the Reptile House.

## **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS**

If a person with a disability requires an attendant, a complimentary pass will be provided for the attendant and may be obtained at any of the ticket windows at the entrance to the Zoo.

The following complimentary interpretive services can be arranged for guests who participate in the Guided Bus Tour or who purchase a special experience or tour.

- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI)
- Tactile Interpreter
- Lip Reading Interpreter

Please email [accessibility@sdzwa.org](mailto:accessibility@sdzwa.org) or call (619) 231-1515, ext. 3905 to make arrangements for an interpreter. Please note that we require a minimum of 7 business days' notice to book an interpreter. Services are subject to availability.

If you'd like to purchase special experiences or tours, you can do so with our Reservation Sales team at (619) 718-3000. Please notify the Reservation Sales representative that you will need a professional interpreter. A complimentary additional seat will be held for your interpreter, and you will be directed to confirm the arrangement with our Guest Services team at [accessibility@sdzwa.org](mailto:accessibility@sdzwa.org) or (619) 231-1515, ext. 3905. A nominal charge will be added to cover the cost of an attendant's food and/or drinks on Zoo tours that include meals.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, we are happy to provide you scripted information for our Guided Bus Tour. The script can be picked up at the Guest Services/Tours & Membership booth inside the Zoo. Each tour may vary depending on the route and/or the wildlife that are most visible, so the script order may vary from the presentation.

If you are hard of hearing, we have Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) available for Wegeforth Bowl presentations and the 4D Theater.

### **For Guests Who Have Sensory Processing Needs**

The San Diego Zoo has partnered with KultureCity to improve our ability to assist and accommodate guests with sensory needs. Our objective is to provide an inclusive and seamless experience for all guests, including those with sensory needs. We strive to raise awareness of the needs and challenges faced by individuals with sensory processing disorders by supplying our team members with continuous training and by offering the resources and accommodations below to our guests.

#### **Sensory Bags**

Complimentary sensory bags containing special KCVIP badges, fidget tools, noise canceling headphones, and other resources are available for checkout at our Guest Services/Tours & Membership booth located just inside the entrance next to Map Locator #4.

#### **Weighted Lap Pads**

Complimentary weighted lap pads are available upon request at our Guest Services/Tours &



Membership booth located just inside the entrance next to Map Locator #4.

### **Social Story and KultureCity All-Inclusive App**

Download the KultureCity All-Inclusive App to get your social story to help you with your visit to the San Diego Zoo.

- App Store: <http://bit.ly/KCiphone>
- Google Play: <http://bit.ly/KCandroid>

Summer, holidays, and weekends are busiest at the Zoo. We suggest coming earlier in the day, on weekdays, and during the offseason to avoid larger crowds. Please see the Easy Access Pass section for more information.

### **Limited Mobility Guest Assistance**

The San Diego Zoo has many natural hills and valleys, which are inherent barriers to easy mobility access. The Zoo has many accommodations to make our hills and valleys more access-friendly. Please pick up a map for the most accessible routes. Additionally, we have a shuttle service and elevators. Please note the Zoo has many changes in surfaces, and guests are advised to use caution when traveling throughout the Zoo.

When attending a Wegeforth Bowl presentation, look for the accessible seating designated by the wheelchair access symbol, or ask a team member for assistance.

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

## **SPECIAL ACCESS RESOURCES**

### **Bashor Bridge and Elevators**

The Bashor Bridge provides accessible pedestrian access between Treetops Plaza and Elephant Odyssey, crossing over the lower canyon and offering outstanding views overlooking Asian Passage and Africa Rocks. At the Treetops side of the bridge there are three elevators providing access between the lower level of Asian Passage and the upper level of Treetops Plaza—with food stands, Albert’s Restaurant, the Treetops Room, and other facilities—along with an accessible path to the front of the Zoo and the exit.

### **Easy Access Pass**

Guests who have difficulty standing in line or have limited mobility may request an Easy Access Pass at the Guest Services/ADA Services Podium at the Admissions Plaza or at the Guest Services/Tours & Membership booth located just inside the entrance next to Map Locator #4.

This pass may be utilized at the Guided Bus Tour and Skyfari Aerial Tram. The team member on duty will direct the guests to a designated boarding area. Up to three additional members of the guest’s party may accompany the guest with a disability. Some waiting may still be required.

### **Parking**

Accessible parking is available in our parking lot on a first come, first served basis. Please note the San Diego Police Department enforces the San Diego Zoo’s disabled parking spaces. Be sure to properly display your placard issued by an appropriate government motor vehicle agency.

### **ADA Shuttle Service**

Our ADA shuttle service is available on an on-call basis for our guests with mobility-related disabilities. This shuttle is equipped with an electronic lift and can accommodate all standard wheelchairs and the types of ECVs allowed on grounds. Contact any Zoo team member or volunteer to request service and get directions to the nearest pickup location:

- Safari Kitchen
- Restrooms by Map Locator #15
- Arctic Trader
- Kangaroo Stop #1
- Kangaroo Stop #3
- Kangaroo Stop #4

Space is limited to 6–10 seats and 3–5 securement locations, depending on the vehicle in use. In times of high attendance, access may be limited to the guest with limited mobility and an attendant. Other members of the party with memberships or 1-Day Passes may use the Kangaroo Bus.



### **Kangaroo Bus Service**

The Kangaroo Bus is a complimentary, non-narrated transportation service that lets you hop on and off at four stops throughout Zoo grounds.

Designated stops are marked by yellow kangaroo signs and can be located on the map. Just wait at a designated stop and a Kangaroo Bus will be there shortly, stopping automatically to pick you up.

Access to the Kangaroo Bus is via stairs for all levels of the vehicle. The lower level requires three 12-inch steps up, and the upper level requires ascent of a 12-foot flight of stairs. Guests with limited mobility or balance or who use wheelchairs or other power-driven mobility devices may ask the driver to call our ADA shuttle service for assistance.

Guests may bring folded strollers on board with them, space permitting. All 1-Day Passes and memberships include unlimited use of the Kangaroo Bus.

### **Wheelchairs and Electric Conveyance Vehicle (ECV) Rentals**

Manual wheelchairs and ECVs are available for rent just inside the main entrance to the Zoo. Weight restrictions apply. Rentals require a picture ID. You must be 18 years of age to operate a rented ECV. ECVs may be used by one person at a time. Rental prices are subject to change; please call for pricing.

### **Non-Powered Mobility Devices**

We also accommodate the use of certain nontraditional wheelchairs (for example, steerable knee walkers). We reserve the right to inspect devices to determine whether they are safe enough to use in our facility. We advise guests using mobility devices to consult the Zoo's ADA map and follow signs to determine which areas are accessible.

If your child is using their stroller as an accessibility device and is unable to transfer out of it, please visit the Guest Services/ADA Services Podium at the Admissions Plaza and request a wheelchair tag. Albert's Restaurant does not routinely allow strollers but will make exceptions for strollers that are serving as wheelchairs.

Any tricycles with a push handle are allowed, provided an adult (18 years of age or older) is holding the handle at all times.

Please note, all personal property is the responsibility of the owner.

### **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 electric devices designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility limitations.

In the interest of maintaining a safe and pedestrian-friendly environment while ensuring everyone has a positive experience at the Zoo, it is prohibited to operate a mobility device at a speed significantly greater than the flow of the surrounding pedestrian traffic.

**Acceptable OPDMDs**

Permitted mobility devices include the following:

- Electric OPDMDs and other single-seat electric scooters with three or more wheels that cannot exceed more than 6 miles per hour. OPDMDs may be used by one person at a time.
- Segways with a steering handle are permitted but must operate only in “turtle” mode.

**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 (for example, two-wheeled electric bicycle or motorized scooters).
- Any device that has been structurally or mechanically altered.
- Any gas-powered vehicle.
- All hoverboards or any Segways without a steering handle.
- Any golf carts or similar type vehicle.

Notwithstanding the above list, we reserve the right to inspect any mobility device to determine if it is safe to operate at the Zoo. We consider various factors, including but not limited to the following: the type, size, weight, dimensions, stability, and speed of the device.

Bicycles, tricycles without a push handle, and scooters are not permitted.

**The Operation of Manual Wheelchairs, ECVs, and OPDMDs**

There are areas inside the Zoo with steep terrain. Please consult the Zoo’s ADA map and follow signs to determine which areas are accessible.

**Guided Bus Tour**

The Zoo offers a Guided Bus Tour, which is a narrated round-trip adventure through Zoo grounds on our double-decker busses (tours are 35–40 minutes). Guided Bus Tours are included with your 1-Day Pass or membership. Access for guests using a wheelchair is available on the lower deck. Guided Bus Tours load from a level dock via a ramp. Each bus has one wheelchair location suitable to secure manual wheelchairs, electric wheelchairs, and some small ECVs. Guests with larger ECVs, including the model available for rental at the Zoo, will need to transfer to a bench seat and park their ECV at the loading dock.

If you are able to transfer to a bench seat, this option is available to you. Your wheelchair or personal ECV will be parked at the loading dock. At the end of your tour, you may ride forward from the unloading dock with the bus to return to your device. Zoo rental ECVs will be reparked for you at the unloading dock. If transferring to the bench seat is not an option for you, then you are welcome to wait for the next tour.

**Skyfari Aerial Tram**

The Skyfari Aerial Tram offers transportation in four-passenger gondolas 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. Our Skyfari Aerial Tram can accommodate guests who are able to transfer to a bench seat and offers round-trip rides as requested for guests with disabilities.

A guest using a folding manual wheelchair who can transfer to a gondola seat without assistance or with the help of those in their party may have the wheelchair transported ahead by gondola. The wheelchair will be available upon arrival at the opposite terminal. If your device cannot fold, a round-trip ride may be requested prior to loading. Please note the Zoo is not responsible for personal property. Team members are not able to lift guests.

## **SERVICES**

### **Drinking Fountains**

Drinking fountains are located throughout the facility. Please check the Zoo map. Complimentary cups of water may also be requested at any food stand or restaurant.

### **Health Services/First Aid and Refrigeration for Medication**

The Health Services office is located next to the Reptile House. If at any time you need immediate assistance, please ask any Zoo team member or volunteer. If you have special needs (such as a larger changing station, feeding tube, etc.), please consult with our Health Services personnel at this location. Refrigeration for medication is available at this location.

### **Restrooms**

All the public restrooms in the Zoo are accessible. All-gender/family restrooms are located at Wildlife Explorers Basecamp, Urban Jungle, by Sabertooth Mexican Grill in Elephant Odyssey, and by Hua Mei Café in Asian Passage. Zoo team members 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 who choose to bring their trained service animal into the Zoo. Please note that emotional support animals, as well as pets kept for companionship or comfort, are not permitted entry into the Zoo. Companion or therapy animals are not considered service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Service animal trainers may not bring their in-training animals into the Zoo.

Service animals must be checked in by a Zoo team member prior to entering the Zoo. Please visit the Guest Services/ADA Services Podium at the Admissions Plaza to check in your service animal and receive a Zoo service dog bandana. The Zoo service dog bandana must remain visible throughout the day so Zoo team members know your animal has been checked in.

- Service animals are defined as only dogs and miniature horses.
- Service animals must be under control at all times.
- Service animals must be restrained with a leash or tether not longer than six feet in length.
- If during your visit you encounter free-roaming wildlife or Zoo wildlife-in-training, please keep your service animal within two feet of you and stand six feet back.
- Animals must be housebroken. Service animal relief stations are identified on the Zoo ADA Map.
- Service animals must be removed from any area if a conflict occurs or appears likely to occur between the service animal and Zoo wildlife, or when Zoo wildlife appear stressed by the presence of the service animal.
- Service animals must remain in your lap, dog carrier, or on the ground at all times, and not held up even for brief periods next to wildlife habitats.
- A service animal drinking station is located at the top of Reptile Walk.
- Service animals are restricted where there is direct contact with Zoo wildlife or limited in certain

areas due to the sensitivity of the Zoo's wildlife, as identified on the Zoo ADA Map.

- You may temporarily house service animals in the kennel while visiting the Zoo. Please see the Guest Services/ADA Services Podium at the Admissions Plaza or the Guest Services/Tours & Membership booth inside the Zoo for assistance. Space available is first come, first served for trained service animals.
- If at any time your service animal's behavior is inappropriate, you will be asked to remove your service animal from the premises.

### **Dining and Shopping**

Most menus are available on the Zoo's website or app. Our team members can read the menu to you if you are unable to do so yourself. All merchandise locations are accessible.

### **Best Times to Visit**

To avoid large crowds, visit the San Diego Zoo during non-peak times. Typically, fall and winter tend to be less congested, and summer and holidays bring the greatest crowds. Weekdays, non-holidays, and early morning times are generally less crowded.

**CONTACT US**

**Zoo Accessibility Questions**

(619) 231-1515, ext. 3905

or [accessibility@sdzwa.org](mailto:accessibility@sdzwa.org)

**General Customer Service**

**Comments, Suggestions, and Questions**

(619) 231-1515

Website: [www.sdzwa.org](http://www.sdzwa.org)