

Detroit Zoo Summer Safari Camp

Frequently Asked Questions

For registration information, camp titles, dates, times, and fees, please see our current registration brochure.

How do I get a registration form to enroll my child in camp? Visit our website at www.detroitzoo.org or email education@detroitzoo.org or phone 248-541-5717, ext. 3800.

What will my child do while at camp? The Summer Safari Camp combines tours, songs, games and crafts into a fun opportunity to learn about wildlife, wild places, and the ways that people can help animals. All campers **tour** a few animal exhibits during each day of camp. **Songs** are a great way to have a good time in the park, and a fun way to keep the campers together. We play a number of **games** during camp, too. **Crafts** help make a connection with the animals seen during the camp and the conservation and animal welfare messages of the zoo. Our younger campers enjoy coloring, and animal masks are big hit. Older campers get the opportunity to work on projects that are a little more complex, such as animal stamp bandannas, miniature biomes or musical didgeridoos.

Do you have an early drop off / late pick up for the camp? Yes we do. Refer to the registration form to enroll your child. Early Bird Drop Off goes from 7:30 am to 9:00 am and Late Owl Pick Up runs from 4 pm until 6:00 pm. Children can not be dropped off earlier than 7:30 am or picked up later than 6:00 pm. Penalty fees apply for tardy pick up. Children do a variety of activities indoors or outside and get snacks (not meals), but do not tour the park or visit habitats during these times.

After I drop off my child, can I come into the zoo before it opens? No; the zoo opens to the public at 10am every day. Unfortunately the zoo is not staffed to welcome you any earlier.

My child is too young for the camp, but will be the appropriate age just a short time after the camp starts. Can s/he come to camp anyways? No; campers must be the appropriate age for the camp at the time the camp starts, no exceptions.

Who are the staff that will be with my child, and what type of training & experience do they have? The staff to camper ratio is two staff members (one Teacher, one Aide) with every group of 12 campers. They are typically college students, graduates, or teachers out for the summer. A few of the Aides are highly motivated recent High School graduates. All our staff have a high level of energy, enthusiasm, and enjoy working in a fun environment with children. Their degrees range from child development to elementary education, biology to music. There is a camp director and a camp supervisor for the program. All staff members go through the Zoo's 20-hour Employee Orientation Course and attend a one-week Camp Training Program. The Camp Director and Supervisor have a combined experience with the Safari Program of over 13 years and work at the zoo or in the education field outside of the camp season. Many of the camp staff have prior experience with other camp or youth programs, and typically over half of the camp staff are returning after a number of years with the program – most with 3 years or more experience with the Zoo's programs.

Is the camp safe? The camp is a very safe environment for children. All staff members are personally interviewed by a Curator of Education and the Camp Director. Background checks are performed on all staff. Their training includes several hours dedicated to child safety, interaction, and welfare, along with disability etiquette, emergency preparation, and guest interaction and service. For the safety and welfare of all campers, the camp is a camper-only experience, and participation or shadowing/observation of the camp by parents, relatives, or any other individual is not allowed, including photography or videography by anyone except those authorized by the Education Department. Campers are with their groups and the staff at all times while in camp, from the time they are dropped off until the time they are picked up. Staff members are with them during restroom breaks, either in the restroom or at the door, observing visitor traffic, and during the lunch time between camps. Additionally: The Zoo has Park Safety officers on ground at all times, and can respond to any situation within moments. The Zoo has a three-minute response time from both Royal Oak and Huntington Woods Emergency Services. All camp teachers carry radios for quick communication. Groups take numerous water breaks during the tours (at every fountain), and careful attention is paid to heat and weather.

Do I need to provide a photo ID to pick up my child? Yes, **each and every day, no exceptions.** Valid passport, driver's license or state photo ID **only** – we do **not** accept photo credit cards, college IDs, or similar forms of ID.

Will I need to provide proof of age of my child? Not typically. However, if there is some concern as to whether your child is the appropriate age for camp, we may ask you to provide proof of age. A certified birth certificate is the **only** form of proof of age accepted; no copies, doctor's statements or records, or other documentation will be accepted. Children who are not the appropriate age for the camp they are enrolled in will not be permitted to participate, and refunds will not be issued.

Can I bring a dog or other pet to the check site when I drop my child off? No. Pets are not allowed at the check site, on zoo grounds, or in the zoo's parking lots. Pets may not be left in vehicles in the zoo's parking areas.

My child is staying for lunch. What do I do with his/her lunch? You will drop your child's lunch off in the morning and our staff will transport it to the lunch site. You'll pick up your child's lunch bag at the time of pickup.

Can my child buy lunch? No, you must send a sack lunch.

Will s/he be supervised? Yes, a number of our staff will stay with the lunch group during lunch and while playing games until the afternoon camp starts.

Can I meet my child for lunch? No, you can not join the group for lunch during the lunch break, and lunch is a part of some of the camps.

What happens when it rains? Camp is held regardless of the weather. Campers will tour the zoo in the rain, so dress appropriately. Rain coats and hats are recommended. **No umbrellas** are allowed in the camp except for campers enrolled in the overnight programs.

What happens during severe weather? Campers are brought indoors to a secure area until the severe weather has passed, and activities are conducted indoors.

My child is having a birthday while at camp. Can I send treats or toys? No. Due to allergy and safety concerns, no food, treats, or items may be provided to campers except those provided in the camp.

Can I observe my child while in camp? No; for the safety and welfare of all campers, the camp is a camper-only experience. Please feel free to ask your child's teacher any questions about your child's day – they are happy to talk with you!

My child has special needs. Can I attend with my child or can I send along a sibling? The Safari Camp is an experience for all children to enjoy. We want to make sure every child in camp has the best experience possible, and are very happy to help create a great experience for your child. Please contact our Education Registrar 248-541-5717 ext. 3800, education@detroitzoo.org with any concerns. The Education Department will do our best to work with you to make any necessary accommodations.

My child is in a cast, and / or has difficulty walking. Can s/he still come to camp? Absolutely! If you and your child decide that s/he wants to come to the camp, please do! We don't walk too fast through the park, and we can also provide an aide and a wagon so that s/he can get around. We do play a few games that require moving around, but your child will still be able to participate in them. If this condition began after you registered for camp and you wish to try to reschedule your child's camp, please contact our Education Registrar 248-541-5717 , ext 3800, and if a space is available, we will place your camper in a different date or camp. Due to camp scheduling and enrollment, we can not guarantee this will be possible.

What types of snacks do you offer? We offer a variety of crackers, pretzels, cookies and lemonade.

My child is allergic to peanuts / wheat / dairy / etc. What should I do about snacks? We offer **NO** snacks that contain peanut or most other nut products, and we always have a few alternate snacks available for other allergies. Be sure to note these allergies on the emergency contact form for your child, and advise your camper's counselor of any allergies, and we will be sure s/he gets an alternate snack. Please feel free to send a snack that meets the dietary needs of your child along for your child if you like.

My child is allergic to bee stings. Can I provide you with an epinephrine injector? Yes you can. Your child or our staff will carry it with the group throughout the day.

Can I sign up a 4-5 year old child with a 6-9 year old sibling, together? No, campers must enroll in the camp they are the appropriate age for.

How do I get in contact with a Camp Supervisor or my child during the camp if there is an emergency? Contact the zoo at 248-541-5717 and they will relay a message. Include your name, the child's name and camp they are in (weeklong or single day is enough if you don't remember the title of the camp), and a number you can be reached at. A camp supervisor will then contact you if necessary.

Can I photograph my child and his or her new friends while in camp? No, for the protection of your child and all campers, photography, videography, or audio recording is not allowed except by those authorized by the Education Department.

This is my child's first camp away from me. What if s/he's not ready to go? Our camp staff are very experienced in helping campers (and parents ☺) take those first few steps away into the park. We are happy to assist, and will do everything we can to help you and your child have an enjoyable first camp experience. Campers are required to walk into camp on their own, and as such no campers will be forced to participate in the camp. If a camper isn't ready to go to camp that day, our supervisors will work with you on an individual basis to try make arrangements for another attempt if possible. Due to camp scheduling and enrollment, we can not guarantee this will be possible. Refunds are not issued due to non-participation.

My child is afraid of snakes / spiders / butterflies / etc. Will s/he have to get close to them? Not if they don't want to. If a camper is uncomfortable around an animal, our staff will share their experiences to encourage your child to participate, but all activities are "participate by choice." Campers do not come in direct contact with animals (with the exception of some small insects like earthworms for some of the camps).

What should I do if I am going to be late dropping my child off? If you are going to be just a few minutes late (5-10), you don't need to contact the zoo. There is normally a staff member or supervisor at the site for about ten minutes after the check in time, just in case. If you arrive to the check site late and there are no Safari staff members there, look for a park safety officer nearby, or proceed to the main entrance of the zoo, and ask to speak to someone in the Guest Relations office. They will help you contact the staff, who will come up to the front and pick up your child from you. Don't try to find your child's group in the park. **Do not leave your child with anyone except a member of the Safari Staff – your child must be checked in by a Safari Staff member only.** Children whose parents are consistently late dropping off will not be allowed to continue participation in camp.

What will happen to my child if I am late for pick up? If you are going to be just a few minutes late (5-10), you don't need to contact the zoo. We realize traffic can be a challenge, and we'll be there with your child when you arrive. If you are more than 10 minutes late, our staff will try to contact you to make sure everything is okay. Our camp supervisors will wait with your child until you arrive; **your child will not be left alone at any time.** After 15 minutes, your child and a staff member may move to our Late Owl Pick Up location if they have not been able to contact you. If you arrive late at the check site and your child and the staff are not there, look for a park safety officer nearby, or proceed to the main entrance of the zoo, and ask to speak to someone in the Guest Relations office. They will help you contact the staff, who will bring your child to you. Children whose parents are consistently late picking up will not be allowed to continue participation in camp.

How often does the group take bathroom/water breaks? We stop at every water fountain and every restroom as we pass by. We will take a restroom or water break whenever requested, and our staff are very aware of when our campers need a restroom break but aren't asking.

What happens if my child gets sick during camp? Depending on the severity of your child's condition, we may call you to come pick up your child. If necessary, our Park Safety officers will assess your child's condition and seek treatment as deemed necessary. We want camp to be a safe, fun, and enjoyable experience for all campers. If possible, we will try to arrange for a day your child can make up the missed camp. Due to camp scheduling and enrollment, we can not guarantee this will be possible. Refunds are not issued due to illness. Children who vomit during or before the camp are not allowed to continue to participate and are required to be picked up by a parent or someone on their contact list.

What should I do if I registered my child with a friend and we both received our registration materials and they are not in the same camp as we asked? We may not have been able to meet your initial request at the time of enrollment processing. For all registration issues, call our Education Registrar at 248-541-5717 , ext. 3800. If an opening exists, she will be happy to adjust your schedule. Due to camp scheduling and enrollment, we can not guarantee this will be possible.

What should I do if I registered my child with a friend and when we arrive to camp they are not in the same group as we asked? Speak to a camp supervisor. If we can do a little re-arranging, which we usually can, we will be happy to place your kids together. Please note that we will only place campers together that are the appropriate age for the camps, we will not place younger/older siblings or friends in a camp they are not the appropriate age for.

What should I have with me when I bring my child to camp on the first day? Your parking pass on your dash, camper's confirmation form & emergency contact information, Simulator Ride waiver (if applicable) and a photo ID. Don't forget a sack lunch if they are staying for lunch, and the appropriate clothing for the weather.

What if I forget a form? No problem, we have extras for you to fill out, and we can confirm your registration at the check site.

How early can I check my child in for the regular camp programs? Children can be dropped off **no more than 15 minutes before the start of a camp**. Staff are not available prior to these times, and in the mornings, the entry gates may not be open before 8:45 am. If you wish to drop your child off earlier, you must enroll them in Early Bird Drop Off.

Is it okay if my child carries a water bottle or a back pack? Yes, but keep in mind they will have to carry everything they bring with them. (Sack lunches are taken in the morning.) Water is readily available at all the water fountains. Remember not to send toys, stuffed animals, radios, or other items not appropriate for the camp.

Will campers will get behind-the-scenes experiences or get to touch the animals? There are a few camps for older kids that include behind the scenes tours and visits with zookeepers. Normally, these experiences are not included in the camps, due to safety and welfare issues for campers and the animals.

What If I have a question I didn't see here?

Please contact

Education Registrar at 248-541-5717 ext. 3800

education@detroitzoo.org

See you this summer!