MARYLAND ZOO

ZooTrek : Adaptations

Grades 3–5
SELF-GUIDED ZOO TREK: ADAPTATIONS, Gr. 3–5

HOW TO USE THE ZOO TREK

Use the animals and exhibits highlighted in this Zoo Trek to help guide you on your visit through The Maryland Zoo.

1. Find the highlighted species on the Zoo Map to help you plan your route. You do not need to follow the Zoo Trek in a particular order.

2. At the exhibit for each featured species, read through the Zoo Trek information. Take turns reading the questions aloud, and talk about your answers with your classmates. Remember, there may not always be one “right” answer!

3. Many of the animals are well camouflaged! The Viewing Tips can help you find them in the exhibits.

4. Use the Explore Some More hints to learn about other amazing animals!

Keep in mind that every day is different at the Zoo. Some animals may be off exhibit during your visit.

Chaperones, please keep your group together and supervise the students at all times.

START YOUR TREK!
**Bald Eagle**

These birds are big, strong predators—and they’ll eat whatever they can get! Fish are their favorite food. Eagles swoop down to snatch them out of the water with their sharp claws called talons. But other foods are on the menu as well: smaller birds, crustaceans, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals.

**Observe**

Eagles are *raptors*. All raptors share three characteristics:

1) grasping feet with talons
2) a sharp, hooked beak
3) eyes that face forward, almost like a human’s

Look closely to observe these adaptations in the Zoo’s eagle, Vega.

**Think About It**

Compare Vega to her neighbors at *Polar Bear Watch*: the ravens.

*Are the ravens raptors? Why or why not?*

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**Viewing Tip**

Vega prefers a high perch. Look high up in her enclosure to find her.

**Explore Some More**

Be sure to visit the African Aviary and Marsh Aviary to see a wide variety of birds. Look for the three characteristics above to decide if any of these other birds are raptors.
**River Otter**

River otters are great swimmers. Their feet are webbed to help them move through the water easily. *What other animals can you think of that have webbed feet?*

**Observe**

What’s that smell?!

Otters rub a scent from their bodies onto parts of their habitat to mark their territories.

**Think About It**

*Can you think of another animal that uses scent to mark its territory?*

*Hint: You or a friend might have one at home!*

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**Spur-thigh Tortoise**

The tortoise’s shell helps protect it. The animal can pull its head and limbs into its shell if it feels threatened.

**Observe**

Spur-thigh tortoises are from a hot climate. They dig burrows like those in the exhibit to help them stay cool. In cool weather they can help the tortoise stay warm.

**Think About It**

*Do you think the tortoises would be well adapted to live in water? Why or why not?*
ADDRA GAZELLE

Gazelles are a type of animal called an antelope. They are an important prey species for many predators on the savanna.

Observe
Are the gazelle’s eyes on the front of its head or on the sides?

Think About It
*If you needed to be able to see all around you to watch for predators, would it be better to have eyes in the front of your head or on the sides?*

PORCUPINE

The porcupine’s sharp quills help protect it from hungry predators.

Observe
A porcupine’s quills are stiff and sharp, but they are actually made of the same material as your hair.

Think About It
When it feels afraid, a porcupine may lift up its quills and turn its back. *Why do you think it moves that way?*

Scan the QR code for a short video to see a porcupine defend itself.

Addra Gazelle

Viewing Tip
The gazelles share a yard with kudu. The gazelles are the ones that are brown and white.

Explore Some More
Antlers or horns? Antlers fall off and grow back. Deer have antlers. But horns are part of an animal’s skull. *What is another animal at the Zoo that has horns?*

Porcupine

Viewing Tip
Porcupines are nocturnal, which means they are most active at night. Much of the time they can be found sleeping in their burrow.

Explore Some More
The opposite of *nocturnal* is *diurnal.*

Can you find an animal along the Boardwalk that is diurnal? When is a diurnal animal most active?
**AFRICAN ELEPHANT**

Can you eat with your nose? An elephant can! The elephant can use its trunk to eat, drink, breathe, and smell. An elephant can even use its trunk to lift or push heavy objects.

**Observe**
Watch one of the elephants eat, or scan the QR code to get a close look at an elephant eating.

**Think About It**
*How is the tip of an elephant's trunk like a hand?*

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**PANAMANIAN GOLDEN FROG**

A Panamanian golden frog has poison on its skin that help protect it from predators.

**Observe**
*Does the frog’s colors help it blend in or stand out?*

**Think About It**
*How do you think standing out can actually help a Panamanian golden frog survive in its environment?*
**OKAPI**

Believe it or not, okapis actually are not part zebra! An okapi’s color pattern is an adaptation for its natural habitat.

*What kind of habitat do you think it would blend in with best: a forest or a grassland?*

![Okapi image]

**Observe**

In okapis, only the males have horns.

*Are the Zoo’s okapis male or female?*

**Think About It**

An okapi’s tongue is about a foot long!

*How do you think the long tongue helps the okapi survive?*

Watch the okapi closely, or scan the QR code to find out!

**Viewing Tip**

If you don’t see the okapi outside, look inside the Giraffe House.

**Explore Some More**

Check out the other residents of the Giraffe House. Giraffes are the okapi’s closest relative. They look different because they are adapted for different habitats.

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THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE MARYLAND ZOO IN BALTIMORE!