

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

FIELD TRIPS

Frequently Asked Questions

The Maryland Zoo offers FREE admission for Maryland students on a field trip when the group reserves in advance.

Field trips must be booked at least 2 weeks before the desired visit date.



This grant-funded Free Field Trip Program is in effect from September 3, 2019, through June 19, 2020.

ELIGIBILITY

Are students always free at the Zoo?

Students in classes from Maryland schools, pre-schools, home schools, and Head Start programs enter the Zoo for free only if the teacher has a confirmed reservation and has received a *Field Trip Entry Pass*. The free field trip program is in effect on regular school days **during the school year**.

Can siblings come along on a field trip?

Siblings of students in the visiting class may accompany the field trip for a discounted fee of \$11 each if paid for with the full group.

Siblings and other children attending with the field trip are NOT included in the calculation for the allotted number of free chaperones.

RESERVING A FIELD TRIP

How do I reserve a field trip through the Free Field Trip Program?

- 1) Read the Field Trip Program policies at marylandzoo.org/fieldtrippolicy.
- 2) Check the Field Trip Calendar online to see if your preferred date is available: marylandzoo.org/reservefieldtrip.
- 3) Complete the online reservation request form.
- 4) Print out the *Field Trip Entry Pass* that you receive with your field trip confirmation email and bring the form with you on the day of your visit.

Can I visit the Zoo to plan before I bring my students?

Yes! We invite teachers to prepare for their field trips by touring the Zoo in advance. To take advantage of a pre-planning visit, you will need to request a *Planning Visit Entry Pass* in advance. This *Entry Pass* gives free admission for the planning teacher only. Email fieldtrips@marylandzoo.org to inquire.

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PLANNING AHEAD

Chaperones

*How many chaperones **must** I bring?*

The Zoo requires one (1) chaperone for every eight (8) students. A chaperone is an adult—teacher, instructional assistant, parent—on the field trip responsible for overseeing a group of children and for engaging them in learning. This **required** ratio of chaperones are free.

*How many adults can I bring for **free**?*

As part of the Free Field Trip Program, the Zoo admits one (1) adult free for every eight (8) students in a group. In addition, the Zoo accommodates students with special needs by offering free admission for adults in the role of IEP-mandated 1:1 assistant. Zoo Members serving as chaperones may use their membership card to enter the Zoo free of charge.

Determining Field Trip Fees

How do I know if I will owe anything?

The top of your *Entry Pass* gives an estimate of your fees owed based on the numbers you provided in your original reservation request. This estimate is for planning purposes only. The group leader is responsible for completing the *Entry Pass* based on their actual day-of-attendance and for calculating what is owed based on those numbers.

Can I get an invoice for my expenses?

We know that field trip attendance can change up to the last minute, so the Zoo **cannot and does not** invoice for field trip fees. The group leader is responsible for completing the *Entry Pass* based on the group's actual day-of-attendance and for ensuring any fees owed are paid in full at the time the group enters the Zoo.

Are all teachers free?

Teachers are **NOT** automatically free. Most groups, however, choose to allot their free chaperone slots to teachers. To determine the total number of required (free) chaperones, divide the number of students by 8. Round up if you have a decimal point. You will need to distribute this number of free slots across your teachers and parent/guardian chaperones. There is a place on the *Entry Pass* for you to record how many of those free chaperone slots you are allotting to teachers and how many you are allotting to other chaperones.

If a parent plans to arrive separately, can he or she pay separately?

If a parent plans to pay separately, he or she will have to pay the FULL adult admission rate. In order to get the discounted field trip rate, parents/other adults need to pay in one transaction with the full group. It is the group leader's responsibility to collect the money from extra adults.



FIELD TRIP TIP!

The Maryland Zoo is open rain or shine. But a rainy day doesn't have to put a damper on your field trip!

You can still have an enjoyable day if you dress for the weather. Some of the animals are actually more active in the rain! Bring your raincoats and umbrellas and be sure to check out the Zoo's *Rainy Day Guide* at marylandzoo.org/RainyDay for tips on visiting on a wet day.

Please note that field trip fees cannot be refunded due to inclement weather.

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AT THE ZOO

Parking

Where can we park at the Zoo? Is there a fee to park?

Parking at the Zoo is free. Those arriving by car should park in the main parking lot (Lots A and B). Buses can either park or drop off students in parking Lot C. All lots are accessible from the main Zoo entrance.

Entering the Zoo

Where will we enter the Zoo?

During the busiest season (April, May, June), school groups typically enter through Eagle Gate, an area to the left of the Zoo's Main Gate. At other times, school groups will enter at the Main Gate. When you exit your buses, be sure to follow the directions of the Zoo's Visitor Services staff. If there is no staff in the bus parking lot when you arrive, you should walk down from the lot toward the Zoo's Main Gate to enter there.

How will parents driving separately find our group?

Parents not arriving on the bus should plan to wait in the area right in front of the Zoo Main Gate. On the busiest days (April, May and June), there is typically a Zoo volunteer to help parents know when buses have arrived. Please let these parents know to expect to wait in that area until their school is called. At that time, they will be directed to where they can meet up with the class as they enter the Zoo.

We strongly recommend that you give parents the cell phone number of the group leader. Once the group is inside the Zoo, Zoo staff cannot help unite a parent with the group.

Payment for Field Trip Fees

How do I pay for extra adults and extra children?

Extra adults in the group beyond the 8:1 free-chaperone ratio and extra children (those not in the visiting class) can receive a discounted admission rate of \$11 each **ONLY IF** you pay for them in one transaction at the Gate on the day of your visit. Payments can be made using cash, check, or credit card. **Credit cards are strongly preferred.** Checks should be made payable to **The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore.**

Can I get a refund if I overpaid?

Refunds for overpayments will not be issued and cannot be used to pay for future visits. Overpayments will be processed as a donation to the Zoo.

If I owe more than I thought, can the Zoo just bill my school?

The Zoo cannot bill for unpaid fees. Payments are due **in full** at the time of the visit. Group leaders are responsible for ensuring any fees owed are paid at the time the group enters the Zoo.

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FIELD TRIP TIP!

How do I decide which parents should pay and which get the free slots?

How you allot your free chaperone slots is up to you. Almost all groups allot free slots first to teachers.

Some groups allot any remaining free slots to the first parents who signed up. Many groups divide their total Extra Adult fees across **all** their parents/guardians coming on the field trip so that each pays a small amount.

And some teachers choose to simply require parents to purchase regular (full-price) tickets at the Main Gate.

Regardless of your preferred way to allot your free slots, the group **must** pay in one transaction to get discounted field trip rates.

MARYLAND ZOO

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Zoo Shuttle

What is the difference between the train and the Zoo Shuttle?

The Zoo's train, the Jones Falls Zephyr, is a ride that winds through a portion of Zoo grounds. There is a cost to ride the train. The Zoo's Shuttle (free) carries guests from the Zoo's Main Gate to the center of the Zoo.

Can school groups ride the Shuttle?

School groups are strongly **discouraged** from riding the Shuttle into the Zoo due to large crowds, which leads to very long wait times. School groups will be directed to enter the center of the Zoo via the walking path. On their way out of the Zoo, school groups may choose to use the Zoo Shuttle or the walking path.

Accessibility Needs

Are wheelchairs available at the Zoo?

The Zoo's concessions partner rents wheelchairs for use during a visit. Wheelchairs can be rented at the Wild Things Gift Shop near the Zoo's Main Gate.

Is there a private space that nursing mothers or someone with a feeding tube can use?

If a member of your group requires a private space for nursing or to use a feeding tube, ask a staff member to radio a Visitor Services Manager. The manager will assist you in finding an appropriate location.

Lunch

What do we do with our lunches at the Zoo?

Many school groups bring their lunches to the Zoo. Please note that there is no storage available for lunches on Zoo grounds. Food can also be purchased at the Zoo. Keep in mind that in the spring, lines for food purchases can be very long and the wait can be very time consuming.

Where can we have lunch?

There are a number of places your group can have lunch on Zoo grounds. During spring, picnic tables are available on Celebration Hill (near the Main Gate). Small tables are also available in Zoo Central (the main concessions area), and at the Oasis, a smaller concessions area at the back of the Zoo. All seating is first-come, first-served. Some groups choose to picnic on benches throughout the Zoo or on grassy spots such as the hill next to *Polar Bear Watch*. Most groups opt to have lunch in smaller chaperone groups rather than as one large class or school to make it easier to find seating.



FIELD TRIP TIP!

Add an educational program to your visit! Enrich your students' field trip experience with a ZOOlab. To learn more, visit marylandzoo.org/Classes.

And be sure to take advantage of the **free resources** developed by the Zoo's Education Department.

You can choose from a number of free resources to help your class meet curriculum standards while enriching your visit to the Zoo. Also available are social narratives to help students needing extra support know what to expect from their Zoo trip. Visit marylandzoo.org/LearningResources.