

SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS



Frequently Asked Questions

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

Field trips must be booked at least 72 hours before the desired visit date.

The information that follows is applicable to school field trips for the 2020-21 school year

ELIGIBILITY

When is the Free Field Trip Program in effect?

At this time, the Field Trip Program is in effect this school year through June 18, 2021. The free field trip program is in effect on regular school days only.

Are students always free at the Zoo?

Students in classes from Maryland schools, preschools, home schools, and Head Start programs are admitted for free only if the teacher has booked in advance and received a separate ticket for every member of the group.

RESERVING A FIELD TRIP

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

- 1) The Zoo is currently using a timed ticketing system. 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 field trip request form.
- 4) Print out all the tickets you are sent with your confirmation. Each individual in your group will need to have their ticket scanned to enter.

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 Ticket* in advance. This *Planning Ticket* gives free admission for the planning teacher **only**.

Email the Zoo's Visitor Services team to inquire: fieldtrips@marylandzoo.org

SCHOOL FIELD TRIP F.A.Q.s

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 on the field trip responsible for overseeing a group of children and for engaging them in learning. This **required** ratio of chaperones are free.

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. In preparing your tickets, the Visitor Services team will be allotting “free chaperone” tickets first to the number of teachers, and any remaining free chaperone slots to other adults. Additional adults beyond that will **not** be assigned a field trip ticket. They will need to buy their own tickets separately through the online timed ticketing system.

Additional Parents/Guardians

Can additional parents/guardians also visit with the group?

Parents/guardians beyond the free chaperones must book their own tickets online through the timed ticketing system. They must also book tickets in advance for any children accompanying them who are not part of the visiting class.

How do I pay for extra adults and extra children? Can I get an invoice?

The Zoo **cannot** invoice for field trip fees. Additional parents/guardians and extra children (not a member of the visiting class) must buy their tickets in advance through the online timed ticketing system. Note that we cannot guarantee capacity will be available for parents/guardians for the entry time that your group is assigned.

If additional parents show up that day, can the Zoo just bill my school?

The Zoo **cannot** invoice or bill for field trip fees. The group leader is responsible for booking the free field trip for the correct number of students and chaperones and for informing families that others who wish to come along on the field trip will need to buy their own tickets separately through the Zoo’s online timed ticketing system. Due to covid-related modifications, tickets cannot be purchased at the Main Gate.



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 rain-coats 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.

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

SCHOOL FIELD TRIP F.A.Q.s

AT THE ZOO

Recent Health Modifications

Are school visitors required to wear masks at the Zoo?

All Zoo visitors age 2 and older must demonstrate they have a proper mask in order to enter the Zoo. Masks are required to be worn at all times. We strongly encourage all groups to maintain distance from other groups.

Are there enough places for visitors to wash their hands?

Hand washing areas and hand-sanitizer dispensers are located throughout the Zoo.

Will any exhibits or attractions be unavailable because of covid?

As health precautions, a number of attractions and exhibits may be closed during your visit, including The Cave, The Tree, and The Bird Nests in the *Maryland Wilderness* area. For a more complete list, please visit the Zoo website: www.marylandzoo.org/visit/new-zoo-ticketing-guidelines/

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 follow signs and the directions of the Zoo's parking attendants. 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?

In most cases, school groups visiting this school year will enter at the Main Gate. 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, walk down from the lot toward the Zoo's Main Gate to enter there.

How will parents driving separately find our group?

Please let parents not arriving on the bus know that they should plan to wait for the group in the area right in front of the Zoo Main Gate. 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.



FIELD TRIP TIP!

How do I decide which parents get the free chaperone slots and which must buy their own tickets?

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

Some groups allot remaining free slots to the first parents who signed up.

Others allot their remaining free chaperone slots to other school staff members coming along on the trip, such as classroom assistants, guidance counselors, or administrators.

SCHOOL FIELD TRIP F.A.Q.s

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. **Note: Due to covid-related modifications, the Shuttle may be unavailable during your visit.**

Accessibility Needs

Are wheelchairs available at the Zoo?

Wheelchairs can be rented from the Zoo's concessions partner at the Wild Things Gift Shop inside 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. Note that there is no storage available for lunches. Food can also be purchased at the Zoo. Keep in mind that lines for food purchases can be long on busy days, and the wait can be very time consuming.

Where can we have lunch?

Small tables are 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!

Be sure to take advantage of the **free resources** developed by the Zoo's Education Department to enhance your visit. Our Behind-the-Scenes-on-Your-Screen tour was developed specifically for field trip visitors. This self-guided tour combines Zoo signage with short online videos to let students take a peek at various Zoo jobs. Check it out on the Zoo website:

www.marylandzoo.org/learn/field-trips/behind-the-scenes-on-your-screen/