Houston Zoo

CAMP ZOOFARI

Accessibility & Sensory Guide

Houston Zoo

Revised October 2026

We believe there should be no boundaries to the Camp Zoofari experience.



This guide contains sensory levels and walkthroughs of various Camp Zoofari experiences and activities to identify areas where your camper may need more support. We hope this provides an opportunity to prepare for transitions and expectations before your camper arrives.



The most notable omission from this guide is **heat**, which is inevitably severe most of the summer. We will ensure campers practice heat safety and spend appropriate time indoors but will visit the entire Zoo throughout the week. Camp will not completely avoid being outdoors due to heat.



Our goal is to set up all campers and staff for success. To help us provide the best possible experience, please inform us of all special considerations prior to participation. If your child needs to attend with a support person or caregiver, special arrangements can be made.



Safety of the campers, staff, and animals in our care is the top priority of Camp Zoofari. Furthermore, we do not have one-on-one support in our capacity. If you have any questions about accommodations we can make, please contact us.

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Getting Ready for Camp

Getting Dressed
You can wear any shirt and shorts or pants, just remember it might be very warm outside, so pick something cool and comfortable. You will get a bright orange camp shirt to wear when you get to the Zoo! Every campers wears their orange shirt everyday. You'll wear closed-toes shoes, like sneakers, and socks today.



Things to Bring to Camp
Make sure to bring a backpack! In your backpack, bring your lunch and a water bottle. If you want to bring a disposable camera or binoculars, you can, but remember you'll have to carry it around all day.



Things We Don't Need to Bring
You don't need school supplies, toys, or iPads because there are lots of toys and games at camp! If you have a favorite item you never want to lose, like a stuffed animal, you should leave it at home so it doesn't get lost.



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Checking In and Out

Visuals: 2	Noise: 3	Smells: 0	Crowds: 2	Pace: 4

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

Check-In

When you arrive to Camp Zoofari, you will go with the guides in blue shirts and teens in green shirts. You will go past the music and bubble machine at the gate and go inside to meet your camp group. There will be a lot of people moving around fast, but the Camp Guides and teen helpers know exactly where to go.



Check-Out

When it is time to leave, your Camp Guide will have everyone pack their bags to get ready. Then, the radios will start announcing when adults arrive. When they call your name, a teen in a green shirt will take you down the sidewalk to your car. There will be music and bubbles on the way outside. You will wait with guides until your adult has checked you out of camp.

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Galápagos Islands

Outdoor Exhibits

It is usually calm here since it is outdoors, but this area can be very popular. If an animal is near the viewing area, people may stop to look and crowd around.



Visuals: 1	Noise: 4	Smells: 1	Crowds: 2	Pace: 1

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

Indoor Exhibits

These exhibits are air-conditioned, and all animals are behind glass. There are some lighting and noise effects inside, and there are dark areas. Popular spaces like the Sea Lion Tunnel can have lots of noise and echoing when they're crowded.



Visuals: 2	Noise: 4	Smells: 0	Crowds: 3	Pace: 1

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

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Elephants

Elephants are often smelly and can roar unexpectedly. There are a lot of elephants, so there is plenty to see, and your group will probably spend a lot of time in place.



Visuals: 1	Noise: 2	Smells: 3	Crowds: 1	Pace: 1

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

Pantanal

This exhibit is outdoors and has some areas that look like caves and are shady. There is also a tunnel where you can crawl under the anaconda and other places you can get close to the animals behind glass. Sometimes these places are crowded.



Visuals: 2	Noise: 2	Smells: 1	Crowds: 2	Pace: 3

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

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Seated Activity

Some camp activities are crafts, card games, and play-pretend games for indoors. These are usually a time to cool off and a great time to meet other campers. There will be some rules or instructions for the activities.



Visuals: 0	Noise: 2	Smells: 0	Crowds: 1	Pace: 2

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

Active Games

Some camp activities will have you run, jump, or race in a relay. Some of these games are competitive, but the main goal is to have fun. You can ask: “I don’t like running, can I cheer my team on instead?” Usually, these games are high-energy and campers cheer for each other.



Visuals: 1	Noise: 3	Smells: 0	Crowds: 2	Pace: 5

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

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Snack Times

There will be two snacks during the day, and you can bring your own if you want or need to. Everyone will get the same snacks at every snack time and only get one. The snack rotation is Cheez-Its, Chex Mix, and Pretzels.



Visuals: 0	Noise: 2	Smells: 1	Crowds: 1	Pace: 2

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

Lunch & Auditorium

Lunch is 45 minutes, and everyone eats seated with their group inside one big room. You will be able watch behind-the-scenes Zoo videos or nature documentaries on the big screen.



Visuals: 0	Noise: 4	Smells: 2	Crowds: 4	Pace: 1

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

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Animal Interactions





During camp, you can interact with an animal at least once. You will have the chance to touch or feed one. There are lots of rules during these times, and the animal or their food can be smelly or feel weird. If you want to just watch, you can tell your camp guide.

Visuals: 4	Noise: 1	Smells: 2	Crowds: 1	Pace: 1

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

Behind-the-Scenes



Your camp will have a special behind-the scenes activity. You could go where there are animals or Zoo staff, or both. We will be in places you have not seen before and will go through secret gates and doors. There are lots of rules behind the scenes and there will be other adults with the group besides your camp guide. We can't stop to take breaks here.

Visuals: 3	Noise: 1	Smells: 1	Crowds: 1	Pace: 4

Sensory ratings out of 5; score 5 being the most sensory input

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