



# Field Trip Planning Tips

## Prior To Your Visit

- ❖ Read your confirmation email to verify that the contact information and visit date are correct.
- ❖ Contact [reserve@pdza.org](mailto:reserve@pdza.org) to make any changes to your confirmed reservation.
- ❖ Make note of the payment due date stated in your confirmation email. To avoid cancellation of your trip, you must finalize numbers and provide payment by that date. (If needed, additional tickets can be purchased at the front gate on the day of your trip at the same rate.)
- ❖ Payment can be made using one of the following methods:
  - By credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Amex & Discover) over the phone at 253-404-3800
  - By emailing an itemized Purchase Order (PO), including tax and processing fee, to [reserve@pdza.org](mailto:reserve@pdza.org).
  - By mailing a check made out to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.
    - We don't accept personal checks but can accept school/PTA checks. Checks must be received by the payment due date stated in your confirmation letter to avoid cancellation of your trip.

## Visit Planning Resources & Information

- Come for a free teacher planning visit! After your trip has been paid for, bring your trip confirmation email & an up-to-date teacher identification card to the front gate. This is only valid for one time use and is not valid for the day of the field trip.
- Show your students the Zoo Preview powerpoint presentation (available on our [Field Trips](#) page). This virtual tour will help prepare your students for learning when they arrive.
- Have your students visit the [Animals](#) pages before your visit to learn about who lives here at the Zoo.
- Check out the schedule of [Daily Presentations](#) – your chaperones may want to plan around their students seeing a particular presentation during the visit.
- Find a downloadable version of the Zoo Map, and other helpful information on our [Zoo Experience](#) page.
- Find additional educational resources and information on the [Teacher Resources](#) page.

## During Your Visit

### Parking & Entrance (Parking is free)

**Buses:** Buses must park and unload passengers in the upper parking lots. Once your payment is received, additional parking information will be sent you to with your confirmation email. Please share the parking information with all bus drivers who will be transporting your group. Please direct your students and chaperones to use painted crosswalks when walking down to the front gates from the parking lots.

**Entering the Zoo:** Before your group reaches the admissions gates, hand each student a "Student" ticket and each chaperone a "Chaperone" ticket. Each individual will scan their ticket at the turnstile. Tickets are bar coded. When the scanner reads the code, the light (at adult eye level) will turn green. On especially busy school visit days Zoo volunteers may be available to assist students and chaperones with this process. The front gate staff may opt to utilize the group entrance on any given day and if that is the case, zoo staff will direct you to that location.

**Additional Tickets:** If additional tickets are needed for your group, you may purchase them on the day of your visit and receive the field trip rate by letting the front gate staff know you need additional tickets for the specific field trip you are with. \*You will need to mention your specific field trip in order for us to honor the rate.\*

## Chaperone Policies

Chaperone policies apply to ALL school groups Preschool-Grade 12 and are in place to ensure the safety of students, other visitors, and the animals. Chaperones help guide your students' educational experiences at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium!

- Every school group (Pre K – Grade 12) visiting Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium must have at least 1 adult per 5 students, regardless of the students' ages.
  - Teachers can be included to meet this ratio if they are directly supervising assigned students during the visit as a similar non-teacher chaperone would do.
- Chaperones, including teachers, **MUST** stay with their assigned group **AT ALL TIMES**, regardless of students' ages. (This includes while visiting the Gift Shop.)
  - Students are not allowed to "check in" intermittently with teachers and chaperones while at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.
- Please provide each of your chaperones with a copy of the Zoo Code of Conduct so they understand expectations and their responsibilities. (We recommend sharing this document as well, as it contains information which may help them be better prepared for the visit.)
- Chaperones should wear a name tag that identifies them as a chaperone for your school group.

## Eating Lunch At Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

Be prepared for an outdoor dining experience. You may either pack your own lunches or purchase meals at the zoo concession stands and café. (Please note: You may encounter long lines and wait times for purchased food.) We have large, unsecured lockers behind the Gift Shop to store the group's sack lunches, available on a first come, first served basis. *Please help us keep our exhibit areas open for viewing by not having your group eat at, or in close proximity to, the animal exhibits.*

Seating options are available on a first come, first served basis, and include:

- Unless otherwise marked, you and your group are welcome to eat lunch in any lawn area.
- The Pacific Rim Plaza (between Gift Shop and Plaza Café)
- The Red Wolf Picnic Area (Unless this area is reserved for a catered event.)
- Outside any restaurant/concessions areas: Plaza Café (open year-round) or Pearl Street Seaside Grill (open seasonally)
- Wild Wonders Outdoor Amphitheater (Please do not eat in the first 5 rows during the presentation/show.)

### **We encourage visitors to pack a ZERO-WASTE LUNCH. Here's how!**

- Include items – like bananas & apples – that come in their own natural wrappers.
- Bring a reusable, refillable water bottle instead of disposable drink packages.
- Avoid throw-away bags, plastic wrap, Styrofoam, and single-use napkins & cups. Utilize reusable containers and utensils.

## BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS AT THE ZOO

Please make sure all students and chaperones know the appropriate behavior that is expected while visiting Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. These expectations will help ensure the safety and enjoyment of your students, chaperones, other zoo guests, and the animals.

- Students **MUST** stay with chaperones **AT ALL TIMES**. Students are not allowed to leave their assigned chaperones while at the zoo.
  - If students need to use the restroom, please make sure a peer goes with the student. Ensure that both return to the chaperone and the group outside the restroom.

- Shouting at animals and tapping or banging on exhibit windows or openings is disruptive and is not permitted. It is the responsibility of the chaperones to stop students from engaging in these behaviors.
- Observe animals with eyes and ears only - do not touch any animals. If they are in an area that allows contact, follow all instructions provided by zoo staff and listed on signage in that area.
- Do not feed the animals, including the free-ranging wildlife (such as birds & squirrels). The animals in our care have special diets to keep them healthy and human food can cause illness. (Feeding animals may also cause harm or illness to humans.)
  - In designated areas where feeding is allowed (Contact Junction & Budgie Buddies), please follow all instructions provided by Zoo staff and signage in the area. (Please be aware that sometimes the animals in those areas need a break from feeding so they don't eat too much and get sick.)
- Respect other zoo visitors: Walking and speaking softly ensures all guests will enjoy their visit.
- For the safety of yourself and our animals, stay on the visitor paths and on the public side of all guardrails and do not run.
- All visitors must remain clothed and shoes must be worn at all times while on zoo grounds.
- Make sure all trash makes it into the appropriate trash container.
- Leave certain things at home: Skateboards, scooters, bicycles, shoes with wheels, frisbees, balls, costumes, etc.
- Smoking is not permitted on zoo grounds.

## **Disruptive Behavior Policy**

- Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium reserves the right to address individuals or groups who are behaving inappropriately or otherwise disrupting/compromising the experience of other guests. As well as not following the code of conduct for Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium or Metro Parks Tacoma.
- Actions taken to stop the behavior may range from providing a warning, to expulsion from the zoo, to arrest by the City of Tacoma Police Department.
- Anyone engaging in behavior that is harmful to visitors, staff, or animals, or is destructive to zoo property will be immediately expelled from the zoo. The zoo will prosecute such behavior to the full extent of the law.
- In the case of a minor, an adult from that youth's group will be identified and made responsible for escorting the minor off grounds and chaperoning them. Individual behavior may result in the eviction of the entire group from zoo grounds. Individual schools and other groups can be held liable for damages or injury resulting from disruptive behavior. Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium also reserves the right to prohibit groups from repeat visitation for an indefinite period.
- For groups (school, youth, churches, etc.) receiving discounted admission rates, failure to follow the code of conduct may result in the loss of discounted rates for that visit and/or privilege to visit the zoo for an indefinite period of time. In the case of losing the discounted rate, Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium will bill the organization for the difference between the discounted rate and full rate. A copy of the zoo incident report or police report may be sent with the invoice.