



TICKETS ON SALE NOW FOR ZOOLIGHTS AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO

The classic holiday tradition returns Nov. 24-Jan. 1

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TACOMA, Wash.-- It's only October, but the Zoolights crew at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is already hard at work setting up for the biggest and best holiday event in Pierce County. That's right - it's almost Zoolights time and you can get your [timed online tickets now](#).

The zoo's annual holiday extravaganza returns this year from Nov. 24- Jan. 1. The tradition has dazzled the South Sound community for 36 years, and this year will be no exception.

For the Zoolights crew, the first day of fall signals go-time. They spend every day prepping, rain or shine.

Guests can expect to see their favorite superstar animals illuminated in colorful lights, with a special nod to the zoo's baby muskox, Willow, born in late summer, and the twin polar bear sisters who arrived this past spring.

"Both the muskox and the polar bears have captivated not only Tacoma but the whole country," said Sam Porterfield, who oversees Zoolights. "We wanted to spotlight them as our superstars of the year."

Nearly every display at Zoolights is built in-house by the zoo's talented carpenters, electricians, and maintenance staff.

Of course, Zoolights is a family tradition, so dozens of longtime favorites will be back for encores this year. Porterfield has already mapped out where her team will place each classic figurine.

"Guests will see the polar bears standing majestically atop ice in a dazzling turquoise blue sea, the 100-foot-wide giant Pacific octopus atop the old North Pacific Aquarium, and Mount Rainier rising tall," said Porterfield.

The purple and green Flame Tree, lit with more than 35,000 lights, will celebrate its 35th year.

"Some things don't need to change, and the Flame Tree is one of those," said Porterfield. "It's delightful to hear stories from people who remember the tree from all those years ago."

The Seahawks Tree, lit up in green and blue team colors, has also become a fan favorite. Marvel at this fun fact: the Seahawks Tree is a giant monkey puzzle tree, a rare delight in many areas and threatened in the wild.

Plus, look no further for the perfect holiday card location than the two exquisite, winding tunnels of lights. Whether a selfie or taken by a friend, the lighting is the perfect place for that snap.

By mid-November, most of the hard work of set-up will be done for the Zoolights crew, aside from a few last-minute touches. But their work doesn't end once Zoolights begins.

"We constantly monitor all the lights and ensure they are all working correctly," said Porterfield. "And after Zoolights ends, we work until every last light is carefully put away. That can take up to an entire month."

But Porterfield and the rest of the Zoolights crew agree that seeing the zoo lit up in so many colors is a magical experience.

"We look forward to celebrating Zoolights every year with our community and continuing this wonderful longstanding tradition with family and friends," said Porterfield.

Bonus opportunities

In addition to the lights, there are plenty of other festive opportunities.

- Ride the reindeer, polar bear, or other magical animal on the [vintage holiday carousel](#).
- Feed the goats from 4:30 p.m.- 9:30 p.m. nightly.
- Book a premiere, private experience to groom the goats (decked out in holiday coats!) behind the scenes and give them festive treats. It's the perfect gift for the whole family. Cost (up to 5 people): \$125 members / \$200 non-members. Cost (up to 8 people): \$200 members / \$300 non-members. Zoolights admission is included. [Learn more here](#).

Zoolights Prices:

Guests must buy a timed online ticket ahead of time.

- Mon.-Thurs.: \$14 general admission, \$7 members
- Fri.-Sun.: \$18 general admission, \$9 members
- 2 years old and younger are free
- Parking is free

Zoolights By-the-Numbers

One day: Time to assemble the Narrows Bridges

5 feet: Wingspan of the LED swooping eagles

Six people: To lift the roaring tiger's head

35 years: Age of the Flame Tree

36 years: Years that Zoolights has been celebrated

100 feet: The width of the giant Pacific octopus

24,000 lights: On the LED octopus

35,000 lights: On the Flame Tree

Over 800,000 lights: Total number for Zoolights 2023

Zoolights is open Nov. 24 through Jan. 1. Hours are 4:30 p.m. – 10 p.m. nightly, except for a two-night closure on Dec. 24 and Dec. 25. Both aquariums are closed at night during Zoolights. For more information about Zoolights, [click here](#). Zoolights is presented by BECU.

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