



Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

Thank you for choosing The Buffalo Zoo Summer Camp for your camper this summer! The following information goes over what to expect at Zoo camp this summer to help prepare you and your camper for a great summer full of exploring, creating and learning.

Zoo Camp is exciting, fun, and full of new experiences but can sometimes be loud and stimulating for campers. In order to make sure all campers will have the best experience at camp, we have included the following in the camp design:

- Training for staff to recognize and calm a camper who has become anxious or overstimulated.
- Staff who can take campers to calming locations
- Sensory toys
- Noise reduction headphones
- Weighted stuffed animals
- Basic communication boards for emotions and needs
- The following pre-camp information with what to expect at camp each day.

Please provide us with the tools necessary to give your child the best possible experience at Zoo Camp by giving additional information about special considerations you may have listed on camp registration. This may include additional information on

- Allergies
- Medical Conditions
- Accessibility concerns
- Behavioral, psychological, or emotional conditions
- Other special considerations

The information you provide will be shared with Zoo Camp counselors unless you request otherwise. Details will not be shared with other Zoo Camp participants without your permission.

Sharing extra information, such as the following, with us can be immensely helpful and make the camp experience positive for everyone involved.

- Signs to watch for
- Common Triggers
- Methods for preventing or helping with situations that may arise
- Relevant details of any Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or Behavior Plans used with your child at school.

At any point, your camper can let a counselor know if they need a break from the activity or need tools to aid their participation.

In the following pages we've included written descriptions to help you and your camper(s) prepare for their wonderful experience in Summer Zoo Camp. Note – the activities listed (active games, tours, lesson, art time) may not happen in the order listed.

Thank you so much for choosing Buffalo Zoo camp and we look forward to a great summer!

*Rachael Bajdas*

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### **Daily Camp Activities**

- **Lesson Time:** This is when campers learn more about our topic for the day and get to see animal items including skulls, feathers, and furs. This is primarily a sitting activity where campers are encouraged to participate as they would in a school classroom setting – sitting in one spot and respecting the teachers who are giving the lesson, as well as raising their hands to contribute information or ask questions about the topic being discussed. (30 minutes)
- **Exhibit Tour:** Led by one of our expert volunteer educators, campers visit various exhibits and learn about how the animals relate to the daily theme. Campers are expected to stay with their camp group. Listening and participation in the form of questions is strongly encouraged. (30 minutes)
- **Active Games:** Each day there will be active games relating to biological themes. Examples include bat and moth where students play a modified tag game in order to learn about how echolocation works. Campers are encouraged to take breaks if they need, and games will be modified to group ability and weather. (30 minutes)
- **Snack Time:** Each day we encourage campers to bring a nut-free snack to be eaten before lunch. (15 minutes)
- **Morning and Afternoon Free Time:** Free time can mean any number of various activities – active/running games on a Zoo lawn, touring to exhibits not included on the regular camp schedule that week, revisiting favorite exhibits, participating in events that are part of the public visitor schedule. Counselors often ask groups which activity they would prefer to do during this time. (1 hour)
- **Craft:** We provide creative art time at Zoo Camp every day. Campers are given supplies and assistance to make whatever piece of art they would like. We encourage creativity and allow campers to personalize their art as they see fit. While in art time, campers must be patient and respectful of others and the materials provided. (45 minutes)
- **STEAM Activities:** Each day at camp includes at least one activity based on the combination of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math themes. Some examples include cleaning up a simulated oil spill, navigating an orienteering course, or engineering a wildlife bridge from popsicle sticks and paper cups. (1 hour depending on activity)
- **Ambassador Animal Visit:** Each day at camp, campers will get an up-close meet with two off-exhibit animals from the education department. Students must remain seated and calm and are encouraged to ask questions. Many days, campers will have an opportunity to touch one of these animals if they are comfortable. (30 minutes)

## **What will Zoo camp look like?**

-A camp counselor will sign the camper in and introduce them to the counselor they will have for the week and will wait for the other campers in their class to arrive.

-Once all the campers in their class have arrived the camp counselors will lead them to their Zoo classroom where the campers can leave their stuff and start the first activity, getting to know each other!

-During the day, campers will make new friends, see animals and play active games outside.

-Our expert docent helper will give a tour of the Zoo and talk to the campers about the zoo animals.

-The campers are given time to sit and enjoy a snack.

-During lesson time, campers will learn about animals and where they live. The docents presenting the lesson may also show furs and bones of animals.

-The campers will eat lunch in our Children's Resource Center (CRC) with their group and docent helper.

-Campers have time to create their own artwork and crafts.

-A docent will present an ambassador animal that the campers can see up close, learn about and even pet a few, if the camper is comfortable.

-When we are in the Zoo, there may be a lot of other guests and it may be busy or loud. Campers can let their counselor know if a situation is too loud or if they are feeling stressed and the counselor and camper can go to a more relaxed and quieter area.

-At the end of the camp day, the camp counselors will lead the campers back to the front of the zoo where they will wait to be picked up.

**We are so excited to meet you and start camp!!!**