

Virginia Zoo

SAFARI CAMP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VIRGINIA ZOO in Norfolk

BEFORE CAMP

HOW DO I REGISTER?

Book online at https://virginiazoo.org/zoo-camps/. If you have a question or need assistance with registering your camper, please call (757) 441-2374 ext. 227 or email the Virginia Zoo's Education Department at vazoo.education@norfolk.gov. Our education staff will be in the office Monday through Friday from 9am-5pm. Due to the high volume of calls, please leave a message and allow at least one business day for your call to be returned.

WHEN DO YOU ANTICIPATE CAMP REGISTRATION TO BECOME AVAILABLE?

Camp registration is generally available 2-3 months in advance of each camp session. We try to have the Summer Safari Camp Sessions available in January. To be notified when registration goes live, join our contact list https://virginiazoo.org/summer-camp-registration/

WHAT IS THE COST?

- Summer Safari Camp pricing will be available on our website.
- Camp weeks that are shorter than the standard 5 days will be priced accordingly and will be noted on our website.

CAN I GET A DISCOUNT?

Discounts are available for Zoo Members! Check out our website for exact pricing. Members will need to log into their account before registering for camp because the discount will be applied automatically at checkout.

WHY IS THE BOOKING SYSTEM ASKING ME TO RENEW MY MEMBERSHIP BEFORE REGISTERING FOR CAMP?

For your discount to be applied to your purchase, your membership must be active during the week that a camp takes place. If your membership will expire before a camp takes place, then you will be prompted to update it during the booking process. Once renewed, your membership will extend to one year past your current expiration date.

DOES THE VIRGINIA ZOO OFFER BEFORE OR AFTER CAMP CARE?

The Virginia Zoo does not offer additional programming/care before or after camp.

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HOW MANY CAMPERS ARE IN EACH CAMP?

We typically have up to 20 campers at a time in each of our Safari Camps. No matter the camp, we will maintain a 10:1 camper to instructor ratio. Throughout the camp day, we typically will also have additional support from volunteers and our supporting camp staff.

HOW STRICT ARE THE AGE DIVISIONS?

Camp curricula are designed specifically for the advertised age group.

- Summer Camp: Grade levels listed for summer camp refer to rising grade levels. Therefore, 1st-2nd grade camps are appropriate for students going into 1st through 2nd grade in the upcoming fall school year.
- Winter and Spring Break Camp: All non-summer camps are designed for the grade level that your child is currently in.
- Kindergarten: Kindergarten campers must be four years old by the first day of camp to abide by Virginia State Law, and these campers may be asked to present a birth certificate at check-in on the first day of camp to verify their age. A copy of the birth certificate is acceptable. Campers in grades 1st-8th do not need to provide a birth certificate.
- If you are concerned about the suitability of a particular camp for your child, please contact us at vazoo.education@norfolk.gov and we will be happy to talk through the curriculum with you.

WHY CAN'T CAMPERS YOUNGER THAN FOUR ATTEND SAFARI CAMP?

We cannot accommodate children younger than four because we are not a licensed daycare facility. Under Virginia State law, children under 4 may not attend week-long camp programs without the facility being licensed.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED TO CANCEL MY CAMP REGISTRATION?

You must cancel more than 3 weeks from the camp start date to receive an 80% refund. Registration fees may not be refunded for cancellations after the 3 weeks allotted. There may be no refund in the rare event that a camper is sent home and not allowed to return for a serious or chronic behavioral problem. The Virginia Zoological Society reserves the right to cancel a session due to insufficient enrollment. In that case, you will receive a full refund. In an effort to maintain the health and safety of our Education Department program participants and staff, please contact the Education Department prior to the start of camp should your camper fall ill. In the event of an illness, the Education Department will work with program participants to find a suitable solution. Should the Virginia Zoo close to the public, all Education Department programs scheduled to occur in that time frame will be cancelled, and all participants will be refunded in full. For all refund and cancellation questions, please contact the Virginia Zoo's Education Department at vazoo.education@norfolk.gov or (757) 441-2374 ext. 227.

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DURING CAMP

WHAT TIME IS CAMP EACH DAY?

- Full day camps for 1st -8th graders run from 9:00 am to 3:45 pm. Camper drop off is from 8:45 am-9:15 am and pick up is from 3:45 pm-4:15 pm.
- Kindergarten Camp runs from 9:00 am to 2:45 pm. Camper drop off is from 8:45 am-9:15 am and pick up is from 2:45 pm-3:15 pm.

WHERE DO I PICK UP AND DROP OFF MY CAMPER?

Check-in is in front of the Zoo, on the right-hand side by our Administration classroom (just past the giraffe statue). Look for staff members wearing staff or camp shirts.

WHAT DO I DO IF WE ARE RUNNING LATE?

Just call us! Our Education Department cell phone number is 757-536-4749. You can call or text that number if you are running late. Our staff will have access to this phone Monday-Friday, from 8:15 am-4:30 pm.

WHAT IF I NEED TO PICK UP A CAMPER EARLY?

If you need to pick up your camper early, please let us know ahead of time. Ideally it is best to remind your camper's counselors during morning check-in. Please call us at 757-536-4749 before you arrive so we can make sure that your camper is ready when you get here. If you are in a hurry, then we recommend calling us 15-minutes before you arrive, as our campers may be busy exploring the Zoo. You will check-out your camper where we always conduct camp check-in and check-out.

WHAT SHOULD MY CAMPER BRING?

- Lunch and Snacks: Campers will need to bring their own lunch and snacks. We have snack time and lunch built into the schedule. Lunches and snacks will stay inside our classroom, but we recommend packing food in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack if items need to stay cool.
- Campers will not have access to a fridge or microwave and will not have the opportunity to purchase food/drinks form the Zoo restaurant.
- Some of our campers have severe nut allergies, so please help us keep our camps nut free by leaving peanut/nut items out of your camper's lunch/snack. Thank you!
- If your child has an allergy you are concerned about, please note this in your camp reservation or notify our staff as soon as possible.
- Water Bottle: Campers should bring a water bottle with them to camp. We refill these throughout the day and suggest bringing at least one refillable water bottle. Water is a MUST and we take plenty of water breaks!

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WHAT CLOTHES SHOULD MY CAMPER WEAR?

Dress for the weather. We have both indoor and outdoor activities (rain or shine). Close-toed shoes are required due to our interactions with animals. Please note that Crocs are not considered closed-toed shoes. We recommend that our younger campers pack an additional change of clothes, just in case. Hats and sunglasses are highly recommended. You may want a light jacket in case your camper gets cold indoors!

ARE CAMERAS ALLOWED IN CAMP?

Your camper is welcome to bring a camera to document their camp experience. Cameras must be able to turn the flash off during animal encounters as flashes may startle or scare our animals. Please note, Polaroids have become popular for campers but are discouraged due to the nature of the flash not being able to be turned off.

WILL THERE BE PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS AVAILABLE OF CAMPERS?

We do not have the ability for participants to view or receive professional camp photos at this time.

CAN MY CAMPER BRING A PHONE OR OTHER TECHNOLOGY WITH THEM TO CAMP?

Campers are highly encouraged to leave cell phones (unless using it to take pictures of camp) and video game devices at home or in their bags during the camp day. Please note that the Virginia Zoo is not responsible for broken or lost items. If technology becomes distracting, we may ask that your camper leave the device at home for the remainder of the week.

WHAT IF MY CAMPER REQUIRES MEDICATION THROUGHOUT THE CAMP DAY?

If your camper requires medication, please let us know and include a list of the medication and dosage in their belongings. We suggest taping it to the inside of their lunch box, but any method is fine. It is up to the camper to self-administrate their own medicine during the day. If you have any concerns, please contact us so we can help set up a plan that works best for your camper!

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED TO COMPLETE A PHOTO RELEASE FORM?

Either digitally during registration or on the first day of camp, we will provide you with a photo release form to sign for your camper. This waiver gives permission for the Virginia Zoo to take photos of your camper that may potentially be used in marketing materials. If you do not wish to sign this form, then please let us know at camp check-in and we will note this on our camp rosters. Your camper's photo waiver only needs to be completed once for any sessions they attend during the current calendar year.

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WHAT SHOULD MY CAMPER EXPECT TO DO?

If you have never been to Safari Camp, expect lots of FUN!! Safari Camp is a ton of fun and learning packed into a very full week. We will be alternating between indoor and outdoor activities to ensure campers stay comfortable, despite the outdoor weather. Below are the highlights that you can expect to hear about:

- STEM Challenges – We make learning fun with these awesome challenges.
- Daily Animal Encounters – Where they will meet some of our education program animal ambassadors up close! (Daily)
- Games – We'll play games throughout the day, both inside and out!
- Hikes – Trek through one of the trails of the Zoo! (Daily)
- Behind the scenes experiences – We'll go behind-the-scenes with one of our Zookeepers to see their animals up close and learn directly from the experts!
- Train Ride – Whenever possible we will include a train ride with each camp. Please note that the train's availability can be impacted by mechanical issues and inclement weather. (Once)
- Additional activities and learning experiences! (Throughout the week)

WHEN WILL MY CAMPER GET THEIR CAMP T-SHIRT?

Your camper will receive their camp t-shirt as they leave on Thursday. Campers are encouraged (but not required) to wear their camp shirt on Friday! If you have a shirt from a previous camp, your camper is welcome, but not required, to wear it any time during the week.

WHAT DO I DO IF THEIR SHIRT DOESN'T FIT?

Camp shirts can be switched by our staff at check-in on Friday morning. Campers should not come to camp with their camp shirt on if they would like to switch sizes. If possible, please send us an email or text about the size change so we can have the shirt easily accessible during check-in on Friday morning.

After registration, you should receive a confirmation email with extra details and reminders for your camp day. If you have any additional questions, please contact us at vazoo.education@norfolk.gov or at (757) 441-2374 ext. 227.



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