



Chattanooga Zoo WILD Encounter

Instructions & Additional Information

Thank you for your interest in our WILD Encounters program at the Chattanooga Zoo. When you are deciding to book an encounter we want you to be as informed as possible, so below is what you can expect from our encounters:

When you arrive at the Zoo on the day of your encounter, you will check in at the ticket booth, pay admission to the Zoo and be directed to the location of your encounter. Around 5-10 minutes before your scheduled encounter time, a zookeeper and an education team member will meet you at the specified start location of your encounter. They will go over appropriate rules to be followed in order to provide you and the animal with the safest and most positive encounter for both you and the animal. The zookeeper will be directing and narrating the encounter and the education staff member will borrow a photo-taking device (camera/phone) to take photos of the encounter for you. This allows your hands to be free to participate in the encounter. You will then enter the exhibit and follow the zookeeper's directions about what is appropriate for you to be able to do in each encounter. Some encounters allow you to touch the animal and some encounters will allow you feed the animal. None of our encounters will allow you to hold the animal. Animals participate in encounters by choice, meaning we will not force them to participate if they do not want to. Usually, encounters offer special treats to persuade animals to participate. During the encounter, the zookeeper will provide you with lots of information about the animal and answer any questions you may have to the best of her/his ability. Each encounter will be approximately 30 minutes long. If you are late to your encounter, we will not extend the encounter for the lost time. After the encounter is over, we will step out of the exhibit, sanitize our hands and feet, and wish you a great rest of your day here at the zoo.

The above is a general overview of what will happen for every encounter. Below is specific information that will happen in each encounter:

Two-Toed Sloth Encounter

- You will need to wear shoe covers (which we will provide) when entering the exhibit to ensure that any germs you bring with you do not contaminate the sloth exhibit and vice versa.
- You will have the opportunity to feed the sloth from a wooden skewer, to ensure that you have no chance of getting accidentally nicked by her teeth.
- During the encounter, the zookeeper will test and see how our sloth, Olive, feels about being touched. If no stress signs are observed, they will show you specifically how to touch her and when it is okay.
- You will be in close proximity with the sloth throughout the entire encounter allowing you an up-close view and awesome experience.

Red Panda Encounter

- You will be brought into the keeper area of the Asia building to wash your hands and receive instructions from the Zookeeper. There will also be a place for you to securely leave any bags or purses.
- You will step into the exhibit after receiving instructions and stand in a designated area to wait for the Red Panda to come down and participate.
- We do operate on what we call "Panda time" which is as fast or as slow as he wishes to participate.
- When he comes to participate, you will get the opportunity to feed him grapes out of your hand.
- During the encounter, the zookeeper will test and see if he is okay with being touched. If he is the zookeeper will show you how and when to touch.
- After the grapes have been fed, we will also provide you with some bamboo to feed him so that you can see the different ways red pandas eat.

Fennec Fox Encounter

- You will be brought into the back up area of the Deserts building in the zoo where you will wash your hands and sanitize your shoes with a foot bath, will only wash the very bottoms of your shoes.
- When instructions are given, you will step out onto the public exhibit area and take a seat on a designated stump.
- You will be provided with live worms to feed out of your hand which they will take gently if they choose to eat them.
- If the zookeeper deems it possible there will be an opportunity to touch. Touching may not be possible if signs of stress are observed.
- The foxes will be curious of you and will likely smell you and possibly step onto your leg to investigate. They will not climb into your lap.

Meerkat Encounter

- You will step into a back up area of the meerkat exhibit, wash your hands, and clean the bottom of your shoes with a provided mat.
- You will step into the exhibit, which is a completely sand bottom and sit on a couple of logs designated by the zookeeper.
- You will be provided with some live worms to feed the meerkats and shown the appropriate way to do so.
- The meerkats do not like to be touched, so we will not be touching them at all during the encounter.
- They are very active and curious animals, so they will be moving around a lot and eating the worms quickly. They may also come and investigate your shoes or pants, but will not climb on you.
- Once the worms are all gone, it is common for some of the meerkats to go take a nap in their log.

Capybara/ Spider Monkey Encounter

- The zookeeper will meet you at the exhibit and provide you with hand sanitizer.
- You will then step into the Capybara exhibit and make your way to the protective barrier separating the Capybara and Spider Monkey exhibit. We will not be going in with the spider monkeys, but will be interacting with them through a mesh barrier.

- You will then get the opportunity to hand feed some lettuce to our group while the zookeeper provides you with information about them.
- The Capybaras will step over to you and you will get to hand feed them some lettuce.
- If the zookeeper deems it possible there will be an opportunity to touch. Touching may not be possible if signs of stress are observed.
- Once the lettuce is all gone the Capybaras will make their way back to the other side of the habitat and you will slowly follow the zookeeper out.

Cotton-Top Tamarin Encounter

- You will be entering a behind the scenes area of the tamarin building where you will wash your hands and securing leave any bags or purses.
- As tamarins are primates, they are able to catch germs and diseases from us, so you will be required to wear gloves and a mask.
- There will be a stool in front of you where you will place your hand and the zookeeper will place some worms or other treats into it. Your hand will stay on the stool and the monkeys will have the option to come to you and get food as they feel comfortable, which may take only a few minutes.
- They are very active and will be jumping around the entire time and walking on ropes which go right over your head.
- They do not like to be touched, so you will not be touching them, but they will touch you when they eat/grab food out of your hand.
- They also may use your head or shoulder to jump onto and off of at their leisure.

For additional information, please email us at info@chattzoo.org.