



Zoo Camp 2026



Parent & Guardian Packet





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Welcome to Camp at the Chattanooga Zoo!

We are so happy that you and your camper(s) are considering spending camp with us here at the Zoo! The Chattanooga Zoo Education Department is committed to providing a safe and fun environment where children can discover a wild new world. We aim to inspire curiosity, conservation, and a passion for wildlife in every camper who joins us. Campers will go wild as they get up close with ambassador animals, design animal enrichment, engage in hands-on activities, and much more. Camps run Monday-Friday from 8:45am-3:30pm, with specific dates for each camp session listed in this document. Throughout the week, campers will explore the diversity of wildlife from the smallest frogs to the largest cats. They will venture through various habitats, participate in behind the scenes experiences, and learn what it takes to care for animals across the globe. The camp groups are divided by grades, and the lessons and activities are tailored to engage each specific grade level. It is important to register campers for their correct camp group.

We establish and support an engaging, well-supervised learning environment. All of our educators and counselors are certified in First Aid and CPR/AED. The Chattanooga Zoo is a KultureCity Sensory Inclusive certified establishment. To adequately provide the best experience for your camper, we highly encourage you to share any necessary medical or behavioral needs. This information is not shared with other campers or their guardians. For the safety of all campers and staff, parents/ guardians are not permitted to follow or attend camp activities or campers during the camp hours.

Campers are highly encouraged to ask questions, participate in activities, and share their experiences with parents/ guardians. With enough inspiration, we can work together to build a world of change- from our own backyards to far-reaching wild spaces- creating lasting impacts for the incredible wildlife that shares our planet.

Sincerely,

Chattanooga Zoo Education Department Staff

Zoo Camp Contact Information

Email: summercamp@chattzoo.org

Phone (call or text): 423-321-4421



2026 Pricing and Registration Policies

Please check the Chattanooga Zoo website for updates and registration information approximately 6-8 weeks in advance of break camp seasons, and up to 3 months in advance of summer break. All registrations are required to be made the week prior to the starting date of the camp week. Walk up registrations are not available. All payments should be made in full via the online registration system within 2 weeks of program dates, while space is available. Registration fees cover all activities, supplies, and permission into Warner Park swimming pool grounds and field trip excursions during the summer. Changes to registrations made less than 2 weeks prior to the scheduled camp week are subject to Chattanooga Zoo Camp Staff approval.

Fall-Spring Break Camp Rates:
Zoo Member* Rate: \$275.00/week
Non-Member Rate: \$300.00/week

Summer Break Camp Rates:
Zoo Member* Rate: \$300.00/week
Non-Member Rate: \$350.00/week

*Active Zoo members are eligible for discounted prices for youths within the household. Membership must be valid at the time of registration.

Absences and Refund Policies

All Zoo camp sales are considered final at the time of purchase. Cancellations may be requested any time prior to the start of the registered camp week. Cancellations do not guarantee a refund and are subject to refund policies. Partial attendance of camp due to illness, preference, or weather is not cause for a refund. Refunds will not be issued for no-shows. Refunds will not be issued based on dissatisfaction with the camp program. If you believe your case warrants further consideration, please contact summercamp@chattzoo.org before the start of the missed day of camp. Emails sent after-the-fact may not result in a refund being reconsidered. All decisions regarding refunds will be decided with manager discretion on a case-by-case basis. Where able, a camper may be moved to a future week.

Scholarship Opportunities

A limited number of scholarships may be available for families with either low/moderate income, single or foster parents, or those undergoing other outstanding circumstances. If you believe you are deserving of further reduced prices or a full scholarship, please contact summercamp@chattzoo.org for more or use the application link [here](#).

Upcoming Camp Dates

Spring Camp: March 16-20 (2026)
Summer Camp*: June 1 - July 31 (2026) *Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays
Fall Camp: October 12-16 (2026)
Winter Camp: Dates to be determined



Summer-Specific Topics

Junior Zookeepers of the Chattanooga Zoo/ Animal Care 101

Ever wonder what it takes to care for the animals that call the Zoo home? Campers get a first-hand look focusing on animal care across different animal groups! Each week will focus on a different continent featured at the zoo, giving a more in depth look at the animals, their habitats, and their care. Teens get even greater opportunities to interact with Zookeepers as they explore husbandry, feeding, training, enrichment, and more.

Conservation Action 101

The Zoo invites teens to dive deep into the world of environmental stewardship while exploring the beauty of nature and taking action to protect it. Throughout the camp, you'll gain valuable knowledge about local ecosystems, wildlife, and conservation efforts for various animal species in need of our help!

Summer Camp Schedule at a glance:

Dates	Rising 1st-5th Grade	Rising 6-8th Grade	Rising 9-12th Grade
Week 1: June 1-5	Jr. Zookeeper*of Hoofed Animals	Animal Care 101	
Week 2: June 8-12	Jr. Zookeeper of Primates		Animal Care 101
Week 3*: June 15-18	Jr. Zookeeper of Reptiles & Amphibians		
Week 4: June 22-26	Jr. Zookeeper of Carnivores		
Week 5: July 6-10	Jr. Zookeeper of Hoofed Animals		
Week 6: July 13-17	Jr. Zookeeper of Primates	Conservation Action 101	
Week 7: July 20-24	Jr. Zookeeper of Reptiles & Amphibians		Conservation Action 101
Week 8: July 27- 31	Jr. Zookeeper of Carnivores		

**Weeks with an asterisk are shortened due to federal holidays. In recognition of Juneteenth, there will not be camp on June 19th.*



What to Expect at Camp

Activities & Schedule

Each day, we will follow a schedule of activities that include a daily lesson, field games, crafts, and animal meet and greets. We may also have opportunities to go behind the scenes, participate in special animal encounters/ feedings, and ride the train or carousel (weather permitting). There will be 1 off grounds field trip (transportation via bus) and 1 trip to the Warner Park Pool & Splashpad each week for the summer camp programs.

Lunch & Snacks

Due to rising food costs and increasing needs for individual dietary needs, lunch and snacks are not provided by the Zoo. Please remember to pack your camper a low-waste, allergen-friendly lunch and snack if possible. The Chattanooga Zoo is *not* an allergen free environment due to the animal habitats and their diets. Some camp groups may be in classrooms that are also animal areas. Please advise the Zoo Camp Staff of any severe food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Dress Code

Please send campers in comfortable, weather appropriate clothing each day. Closed toe shoes are mandatory for all campers. Campers should dress in clothing they can easily manipulate without the assistance of others (zippers, ties, buttons, etc). Due to the hands-on nature of the camp program, your camper may get wet or dirty! We highly encourage you to send your camper with an extra change of clothes each day (i.e. shirt, pants, undergarments, socks). We do provide bathroom breaks and access throughout the day, but your camper should be confident in using the restroom on their own.

What to Bring to Camp

Personal Items

Make sure the following things are packed in a day bag, labeled by name, and ready to go for camp! Please keep in mind that the Chattanooga Zoo is not responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen items.

- Reusable water bottle: Campers spend a good part of the day outdoors! We have a limited supply of bottles to borrow for day use.
- Sunscreen: Staff will have sunscreen breaks throughout the day, with a limited zoo supply. If you are concerned about your camper's ability to apply their own sunscreen, please pack spray-on sunscreen for staff to use.
- Please leave all toys, games, money, large jewelry, makeup, electronic devices, and cards at home. (Exceptions can be made for sensory items when notified in advance, and we do have some that we can provide to campers if needed.) Any items not permitted at camp or that become a distraction, will be confiscated and returned to the caregivers at the end of the day.



Included in Registration

One Zoo Camp shirt is included in your registration and will be provided at check-in. Campers are required to wear their shirts for field trips. Zoo water bottles will be available at check-in Monday morning for \$2 (exact change), cash only.

Morning Drop-Off

Check-In Policies

- Check-in will occur at the back of the Zoo (near the rehab trailer). Enter at the Warner Park entrance off of McCallie Ave. and then take a right at the stop sign. On the morning of the first day of camp, you can park and walk your camper(s) up to the open gate. The rest of the week will run as a drive-through, car line drop-off.
- Staff will be available for check-in from 8:45 - 9:15 am each morning.
- You will sign your initials on the sign in/out sheet to check your camper(s) in.
- You will verify all information on camper forms and make any necessary changes. This is the best time to remind of any allergies or medications being brought with the camper.
- *For the Summer Camp Season:* You will receive a pickup card to place in your car window designating your camper. Additional pickup cards available by request.
- If you are going to be late checking in, please call or email ahead so that we can be prepared for your arrival.

Afternoon Pick-Up

Check-Out Policies

- Camper pick-up will occur from 3:00 – 3:30pm in the same location, at the back of the Zoo, as drop-off. This will be a drive through, car line pick up.
- *For the Summer Camp Season:* Anyone without the camper's pickup card will be required to show ID and be listed as a parent or other authorized adult. Zoo Staff will bring your camper(s) out to you. Do not need to exit your vehicle. Please do not enter the Zoo for camper pick-up.
- You will sign your initials on the sign in/ out sheet to check your camper(s) out.
- If you are going to be late picking up, or your camper needs to be picked up early, please call or text ahead.

Extended Care Offerings

- *After Care* can be added to your Summer Camp registration for an additional cost of \$15 per day
- Allows you to pick up your camper(s) promptly between 3:30-5:00 pm
- Pick up will take place at the back gate by the Rehab building
- Please contact the Camp Phone via text or call upon arrival



Communication

Please ensure we have the correct caregiver email address and phone number notated in your registration in Active, so the Zoo team can reach you in the case of an emergency and to help ensure your orientation to camps is smooth. Logistics emails are sent the week before programming.

Camper Expectations

Zoo Camp is going to be an exhilarating and hands on experience that will give your camper a lifetime of fun memories! In order to ensure that each camper has a safe and good experience, we want all of our camp families to understand that the physical and emotional safety of our campers, staff, and animals is the primary concern. Please review the following rules and expectations of Zoo Camp with your camper. If a camper is found in violation of these rules, the camper may, at the discretion of the staff, face consequences up to and including dismissal from camp with no partial or full refund.

Zoo Camp Rules:

- Stay with your assigned camp counselor(s) and always listen to their instructions.
- Be on your best behavior. Be respectful to other people and their spaces.
- Be respectful to the animals and their spaces.
- Use of personal items will be limited and/ or not permitted during the camp day. This includes all electronics, toys (including stuffed animals), games, and makeup.
- HAVE FUN!

Supervision

All Zoo staff and volunteers are screened as a part of the hiring process. Class sizes average at 15 students per teaching group. In addition to assigned counselors, other trained full-time Education staff are present throughout camp programming. All staff members are trained in CPR and First Aid, and participate in a training program prior to the beginning of the camp season.

Behavior Action Plan

Zoo Camp staff are experienced in working with children and are thoroughly trained in behavior management. While we understand that challenges may arise, we take all behavioral issues seriously. Disruptive, unsafe, or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated and will be addressed promptly according to our Behavior Management Plan.

- First Occurrence will result in a correction of behavior from staff, and reminder of the Zoo Camp rules. May result in sitting out from activity, call home to parent/guardian, and/ or conversation with parent/guardian at pick up.
- Second Occurrence will result in a conversation between Zoo staff and parent/guardian, which could end with suspension or expulsion from the camp program. Any days missed will not be refunded.



Kicking, biting, hitting, or bullying of any kind is inexcusable and grounds for immediate dismissal. If a camper's behavior is endangering the safety of other people, the animals, or themselves; or is continually disrupting camp activities, a camper may be sent home and/or asked not to return to camp. Refunds will not be issued for missed camp in these cases.

Health & Safety

Illness Policies & Prevention

- If your camper is sick or exhibiting contagious symptoms, do not send them to camp.
- Animals can get sick too! Campers may be required to wear masks, gloves, and/or other PPE when in certain areas or around certain animals.
- The Chattanooga Zoo follows safety guidelines issued by the State Department of Health, American Camp Association, and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums to ensure best practices for safety.
- All allergies and medical or other conditions should be disclosed during the registration process and followed up by email at summercamp@chattzoo.org or in-person during drop-off, up to the caregiver's discretion.
- If you might need a caregiver, interpreter, or other assistant to be present during programming, please notify the Zoo team in advance so they are aware or may help arrange accommodations.
- Please be aware that the Zoo cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment, due to natural conditions or animal needs. All campers are recommended to be aware of their own allergies so that staff may be able to assist or respond appropriately.
- If your child needs any medication while at the Zoo, a labeled single dose with instructions should be turned over or notified to camp adults during check-in. While Zoo staff may carry the items and/or remind campers to take their medications, it is up to the camper to self-administer.

Injuries or Illness at Camp

- Necessary staff are First Aid certified and will handle minor injuries during camp.
- We will notify the registered parent/guardian to arrange an early pick-up for any sick campers.
- If a serious injury or illness occurs, emergency services will be contacted first, if necessary. We will then notify the primary parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, we will then reach out to the other listed contacts.
- In the event of a life-threatening emergency, rescue medications or devices may be used by Zoo personnel following Zoo emergency procedures until emergency services arrive.
- In the event of a potential outbreak of illness at camp, all individuals from the group in question will be notified. Where able, families and Zoo staff may reference recommended next steps from CDC guidelines for infected or exposed individuals depending on the case.



Volunteer Interest

Should your youth (aged 8 to 17) prefer volunteering during select times of the year (March-September), find more information at <https://www.chattzoo.org/volunteer/youth>. Teens (aged 14-18) can also specifically apply to join the summer teen volunteering program or the Zoo camp Counselor-in-Training program. Please be advised that teens are expected to guide campers through their activities and daily schedule and support the adult educators with the group. Being a CIT is not the same as being a registered, paid camp program participant.

Camp ZooAbility

During the summer camp season, Therapeutic Recreation (via the Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors Department) offers and runs Camp ZooAbility. The program is designed specifically for individuals with cognitive and/or physical disabilities. Serving children from pre-K through 8th grade, the program provides a safe and engaging environment where participants can enjoy a variety of enriching activities. Daily schedules include swimming, crafts, music, and animal enrichment; fostering creativity, physical activity, and connection to nature. Eligibility criteria may vary depending on the specific program, ensuring tailored and sometimes individual support for each participant. To be considered for this program, families must first enter Therapeutic Recreation's lottery. More information can be found on their website.

This camp program does take place at the Chattanooga Zoo during select weeks during the summer, but is not part of the Chattanooga Zoo Camp offerings.

Let's Go to Camp!

We Can't Wait for Our Adventure

We are so excited to spend time with your campers! By registering online and sending them to camp, you agree to all information provided in this packet or in your online registration materials. If you have any questions regarding the information provided here, please contact us.

Zoo Camp Contact Information

Email: summercamp@chattzoo.org

Phone (call or text): 423-321-4421

Thank you again!
Chattanooga Zoo Education Department Staff