

Philadelphia Zoo Itinerary

Adaptations

PHILADELPHIA ZOO

3400 West Girard Avenue ■ Philadelphia, PA 19104-1196
philadelphiazoo.org

Welcome to the Philadelphia Zoo! This itinerary is meant to be a suggested route for you to follow while you are visiting the Zoo with your school group. It will highlight when there is a bathroom or food nearby so you can take advantage of any of our amenities and plan ahead for stops. Each itinerary begins at North Gate, the main entrance to the Zoo, and is designed to take about 3 hours to complete.

As soon as you enter the Zoo, you should pick up a map. It will help you navigate as well as give you information about the daily happenings at the Zoo.

→From North Gate, head through the turnstiles.

Bathroom stop: Immediately after the turnstiles, head to your right.

→Continue going straight, past the first building (we will come back to it later).

Food stop: Impala Plaza is open seasonally and sells soft pretzels and coffee, as well as other snacks.

→Stay straight until you reach the Reptiles and Amphibians House, which will come up on your left.

Stop 1: Reptiles and Amphibians House

Highlights: Look for our Nile crocodiles at the end of the building farthest from where you entered. These crocs can grow as long as 20 feet and weigh over 2,000 pounds. Their eyes and nostrils are located on top of their head so they can stay almost completely submerged under water while being able to see and breathe.

Bathroom stop: There are two bathrooms in KidZooU, across from the Reptile House – one is outside, just behind the pigeon coop; the other is inside the Education Center in the hallway connecting both galleries.

→After leaving the Reptiles and Amphibians House, make a left and head straight down the path. When you see a statue of a lion appear on your right, make a left to head into PECO Primate Reserve.

Stop 2: PECO Primate Reserve

Highlights: As soon as you enter the building, look to your left to see a black curtain. Beyond this curtain is the aye-aye, a rare lemur species that is completely nocturnal. Aye-ayes have extraordinary adaptations that help them find bugs in tree bark. They have a single, elongated finger that they use to tap on bark and listen for burrowing insects with their very large ears. When they find one, they chew through the bark with their sharp teeth and use their finger to fish out the insects.

→Exit PECO Primate Reserve through the back doors and turn right to head towards the Main Path.

Bathroom stop: On your way from PECO to the Main Path, you will find a bathroom on your left.

→Once at the Main Path, head to your left and across the path. Make a right to enter Big Cat Falls.

Stop 3: Big Cat Falls

Highlights: Tigers are the largest cats in the world. We have three Amur tigers here – Wiz, Dmitri, and Changbai. When in their yard, you may find them relaxing in the sun, swimming, or playing in the snow. They love to sharpen their claws on tree trunks. Notice the white spots on the backs of their ears – tigers use these to recognize one another. Their long tails are for balance - they help them climb trees and rocks.

→Exit Big Cat Falls after the Tiger habitat and make a right back onto the Main Path.

Food stop: Tiger Terrace will be on your left. This eatery is open year-round. While indoor seating is available, it can get crowded.

→Head straight on the Main Path until you see Bird Lake on your left. Turn left and follow the path that goes around the lake until you reach McNeil Avian Center.

Stop 4: McNeil Avian Center

Highlights: Here, students can see Micronesian kingfishers and Guam rails. These birds went extinct in the wild in the early 1980s. At the time, there were fewer than 30 of each species left. The Philadelphia Zoo brought all of them back to the United States to enter a breeding program, and they are slowly rebuilding.

Bathroom stop: There are bathrooms inside McNeil Avian Center.

→Exit McNeil Avian Center and make a left. Make your next left and head to the bottom of this path. At the intersection, make a left to enter African Plains.

Stop 5: African Plains

Highlights: Giraffes are truly unique creatures. They are the tallest animal on land, reaching over 17 feet tall. They also have one of the longest tongues – 18 inches! They can actually clean their ears with their tongues. They also have a special system of blood vessels in their neck that makes sure they don't get dizzy every time they bend down to take a drink.

→ Continue straight ahead until you see a large pool on your left. Stop by to visit our polar bears.

Stop 6: Bear Country

Highlights: Polar bears are built to survive in cold weather. They have two layers of thick fur, plus 6 inches of blubber (fat) under their skin. They also have an incredible sense of smell – they can smell a seal in the water through 2 feet of ice!

→Continue on the Main Path from the polar bear exhibit.

Bathroom stop: Turn left at the bear statue and they are immediately to your left in the rock wall.

→Stay left at the fork to head up the hill. You will see a small white house on your left, and the Small Mammal House just beyond that.

Stop 7: Small Mammal House

Highlights: Sloths are among the least active animals on the planet. They spend nearly their entire lives hanging upside down on a tree branch, slowly moving through and grazing on leaves. They move so slowly, they often have colonies of algae living in their fur.

→Exit the Small Mammal House through the doors near the Nocturnal Wing. Head to your left, then make a right at the next intersection. The Rare Animal Conservation Center will be just up ahead to your left.

Stop 8: Rare Animal Conservation Center

Highlights: One of Africa's smallest mammals, the naked mole rat, can be found here. This rodent lives in colonies of up to 80 members in a complex network of rooms and runnels that they create. Each mole rat has a role in their colony – some are 'workers,' some are 'soldiers,' and they have a female leader who is the queen. They can run backwards just as quickly as they can forwards. When backing up, they rely on small hairs on their tails to tell them where they are going. This remarkable rodent can live for almost 30 years.

→Exit the Rare Animal Conservation Center through the doors near the fruit bats and you will find yourselves back at the entrance to the Zoo. Take another bathroom break or stop by the ZooShop before meeting your bus on 34th St.