

**ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE**

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**John Ball Zoo, an Access Friendly Organization**

John Ball Zoo is committed to ensuring that we are welcoming to all in our community. This is a pledge made by all of our employees. We strive to provide a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment where visitors of all ages and abilities can enjoy getting close to nature.

This guide addresses many of the accommodations John Ball Zoo provides for persons with disabilities and other needs. However, if you have needs or questions outside of the content found in this document, please contact us at the Zoo at (616) 336-4300. You will find that we are able to best serve you if you call at least one week prior to your visit. We always welcome calls, comments, and suggestions from our guests. On the day of your visit, please feel free to discuss any special needs you have at our Guest Services office. Please note that this guide may be modified as we continue to make changes to our operations and facility over time.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Wheelchairs

Q: Do you rent wheelchairs?

A: Wheelchairs are provided free of charge on a first-come, first-serve basis. We do ask that a Driver’s License is left with the attendant. The license will be returned when wheelchair is turned back in.

Q: Can a wheelchair (manual or electric) be reserved ahead of time?

A: No. Wheelchairs are rented on a first-come, first-served basis.

Q. Does your funicular accommodate wheelchairs?

A: Yes. The funicular accommodates wheelchairs. The guest and their attendant may both ride free.

Q. Do you have a map that suggests the best path of travel?

A. The map does not suggest a best path, however, all areas of the Zoo are accessible and staff can answer any questions a guest may have.

Attendants

Q: If a person with a disability requires an attendant, does the attendant get into the Zoo free of charge?

A: Yes. A complimentary pass will be provided for attendants and may be obtained at any of the ticket windows at the entrance to the Zoo.

Mobility/Transportation

Q. How can I see the Zoo with limited mobility?

A. The best choice if you have limited mobility is to use the funicular to reach the top of the Zoo. From that point it is a walk or wheelchair ride downhill through the Zoo.

Special Assistance

Q: Do you provide assistance for guests who are blind?

A: *Beginning in the summer of 2019* - Yes. We request that arrangements be made at least 72 hours in advance of your visit. Please call (616) 336-4300 to make arrangements. This is limited availability and requests are fulfilled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Q: Do you allow service animals?

A: Yes. We welcome guests with disabilities that choose to bring their trained service animal into the Zoo.

Q: Can a staff member assist guests with disabilities in the restroom?

A: No. Zoo employees are neither trained nor permitted to lift a guest or help them inside a restroom. Should it be required, guests needing this assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with someone who can physically help them.

**SPECIFIC DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS**

Blind or Low Vision Guest Assistance

*This program will be available in the summer of 2019*

If you are blind or visually impaired and you would like your personal assistant to guide you that person is considered an attendant and he/she will be admitted to the Zoo for free.

If you would like a sighted staff person to accompany you, an Access Ambassador can be provided for a 1.5 hours. We ask that you make a reservation 72 hours in advance of your visit. The Access Ambassador is a staff member who will accompany you on a walking tour, read informational signs or map information, read menus and pricing signs. These staff members are prepared to provide descriptions of animals and the exhibits. He/she will describe the current activity of the animals and provide you with visual descriptions of the areas you visit.

Please call our Front Desk, Monday through Friday at (616)336-4300 to make arrangements for an Access Ambassador. This service is available for guests who are blind or who have low vision. Please remember that we appreciate as much advance notice as possible, 72 hour minimum helps us to schedule the best experiences for you. This is limited availability and requests are fulfilled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Several exhibits have tactile elements to enhance the experience including: Spider Monkey Island, Grizzly Bear Exhibit, Michigan Turtle Exhibit, Frogs, South America, and Tigers of the Realm Exhibit.

Personal Care Assistants

If a guest with a developmental disability requires a Personal Care Assistant (PCA), the PCA will be admitted at no charge.

Autism Spectrum or Sensory Processing Disorder Guest Assistance

The Zoo is unlike many recreation sites because our treasured collection of plants and animals are living. As such, the Zoo is a place that includes many smells and sounds. These occur intermittently and without notice.

Here are some of the tools and suggestions we have to assist with your visit. Be aware of the changing environment at the Zoo. We suggest bringing items to reduce stress. These could include stress balls, fidgets, sound-limiting head-phones or ear plugs, weighted shoulder or lap pads. The Zoo has partnered with Kulture City, which provides us with sensory bags that you may check out and use during your visit. There is also a map which provides you with more information that will better prepare you for a Zoo visit. To learn more, please visit our Guest Services office upon arrival. Please have a driver’s license available to check items on a first-come, first-served basis.

Summer, holidays, and weekends are busiest at our facility. We suggest coming earlier in the day, later in the day, on weekdays, or during the spring and fall to avoid larger crowds.

Limited Mobility Guest Assistance

John Ball Zoo has many natural hills and valleys, which are inherent barriers to easy mobility access. The Zoo has many accommodations to make our hills and valleys more access friendly. Please pick up a map for the most accessible routes. Please note that the Zoo has many changes in surfaces and guests are advised to use caution when traveling throughout the Zoo.

The Aquarium does not allow strollers in the building. However guests with disabilities may use a personal mobility device, such as a wheelchair or a stroller for a child with disabilities. Gas-powered devices are not allowed.

Please keep in mind that Zoo employees are neither trained nor permitted to lift guests. A

guest requiring such physical assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with an attendant.

Special Access Resources

Accessible parking is available in our parking lot on a first-come, first-serve basis. There are accessible parking spaces available in both lots. Be sure to properly display your placard issued by an appropriate government Motor Vehicle agency.

Electronic-assist doors are located at the entrances to all indoor animal viewing areas - Living Shores Aquarium, Natural Treasures building, Frogs and Friends building, and Chimpanzee indoor viewing area. They are also located at the entrance doors to the restrooms in Africa and Red’s Hobby Farm.

All restrooms are equipped with an accessible stall.

Electric Scooter Rentals

Electric scooters are available for rent just inside the main entrance to the Zoo. Weight restrictions apply. Rentals require a picture ID. Electric Scooters may be used by one person at a time. Rental Prices are subject to change; please call for pricing or check the Zoo’s website.

Non-Powered Mobility Devices

We also accommodate the use of certain nontraditional wheelchairs (e.g. steerable knee walkers). We reserve the right to inspect devices to determine whether they are safe enough to use in our facility. We advise guests using mobility devices to consult the Zoo’s map and follow signs to determine which areas are accessible.

Please note, all personal property is the responsibility of the owner. The Aquarium does not routinely allow strollers, but exceptions are made for strollers that are serving as wheelchairs.

Electronic Personal Mobility Assistance Devices (EPAMDs)

The Zoo accommodates the use of some Electronic Personal Mobility Assistance Devices (EPAMDs), which are vehicles that are not wheelchairs, but rather are electric devices designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility limitations.

In the interest of maintaining a safe and pedestrian friendly environment while at the same time ensuring that everyone has a positive experience at the Zoo, it is prohibited to operate a mobility device at a speed significantly greater than the flow of the surrounding pedestrian traffic.

Acceptable EPAMDs

Permitted mobility devices include the following:

* Electric EPAMDs and other single-seat electric scooters with three or more wheels that cannot exceed more than 5 miles per hour. EPAMDs may be used by one person at a time.
* Segways® with a steering handle are permitted but must operate only in “turtle” mode.
* EPAMDs greater than 36 inches in width are not recommended as some doorways are constructed at the standard width of 36 inches. .

Prohibited OPDMDs include the following:

* Any device that has or should have a registered license plate
* Any device that has only one wheel
* Any device that has two tandem wheels (e.g. two-wheeled electric or motorized scooters)
* Any device that has been structurally or mechanically altered
* Any gas powered vehicle
* All Hoverboards or any Segways without a steering handle
* Any golf carts or similar type vehicle

Notwithstanding the above list, for safety reasons we reserve the right to inspect any mobility device to determine if it is safe to operate at the Zoo. We consider various factors, included but not limited to the following: the type, size, weight, dimensions, stability, and speed of the device. Bicycles, trikes and razor scooters are not permitted.

**SERVICES**

Admission

All guest with disabilities must have a valid form of admission to the Zoo. If a person with a disability requires a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) to experience the Zoo, a complimentary pass will be provided for the PCA and it may be obtained at any of the ticket windows at the entrance to the Zoo. This also applies for special programs and tours at John Ball Zoo that are designed for non-disabled individuals.

Drinking Fountains

Drinking fountains are located throughout the facility. Please check the Zoo map. Complimentary cups of water may also be requested at any food stand or restaurant.

First Aid

If at any time you need immediate assistance, please ask any Zoo employee. If you have special needs, please visit our Guest Services office.

Large Print Maps

Large print maps are not currently available but are planned for summer 2019.

Bi-lingual Maps

Bi-lingual maps are not currently available but are planned for summer 2019.

Restrooms

All the public restrooms in the Zoo are accessible. Gender neutral/family restrooms are located at the entrance of the Zoo, in the Forest Realm, and in our Monkey Island Café. Zoo employees are neither trained nor permitted to lift a guest or help them inside a restroom. Should it be required, guests needing this assistance should plan to visit the Zoo with someone who can physically help them. Electronic-assist doors are located at the entrances to the restrooms in Africa and Red’s Hobby Farm.

Service Animals

We welcome guests with disabilities who choose to bring their trained service animal into the Zoo. Emotional support animals as well as companion, comfort or pets are not allowed entry into the Zoo. Service animal trainers may not bring in-training animals under 12 months of age into the Zoo. Service animals are defined as dogs and miniature horses. Service animals must remain on a leash or a harness, be under control of its handler at all times. Leash cannot exceed 6 feet in length. If a service animal’s behavior is inappropriate, the handler may be asked to remove your service animal from the specific areas or the premises.

Service animals are restricted where there is direct contact with Zoo animals or limited in certain areas due to the sensitivity of the Zoo’s animals. Please visit a team member at the Guest Services office to check-in your service animal.

Dining and Shopping

All merchandise locations are accessible. Wheelchair accessible dining tables are located in the area surrounding the Monkey Island Cafe and the Tiger Paws Snack Shop.

Best Times to Visit

To avoid large crowds, visit John Ball Zoo during non-peak times. Typically, fall and winter tend to be less congested and summer and holidays bring the greatest crowds. Weekdays, and non-holidays and early morning times are generally less crowded.

Guest Services Office

Upon arrival, feel free to stop in and visit the Zoo’s Guest Services office, located at the Zoo’s entry. The staff will advise you of accommodation tools the Zoo has in place that might be beneficial. The Zoo is a living organization with the task of caring for a variety of animals and plants and as such changes in exhibits may occur. The Zoo can provide tips and updates on its daily calendar of events that might help you plan your day. Our team is here to help. The John Ball Zoo is committed to becoming a full inclusive organization welcoming ALL members of our community.

Contact us for accessibility questions or general Zoo comments, questions, and suggestions.

616-336-4300 and at info@jbzoo.org