

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you have a minimum number of guests for catered events?

Yes, our minimum guaranteed guest count is 50.

What is the capacity of the zoo and catering facilities?

Banquet room rental capacity is up to 200 dinner style; we recommend 175 or less for events with a dance floor and 150 or less for plated dinners.

When renting the entire zoo, events that exceed 2000 people in attendance will incur additional charges for security, staffing and any associated rentals required to provide services to your guests.

Can we bring in an outside caterer?

Catering at the Zoo is a full service in-house catering facility and we are not able to accommodate outside caterers. However, you may have a bakery of your choice provide specialized cakes or desserts for your event. Our talented catering team will be happy to work with you to customize the menu for your event.

Can dietary restrictions be accommodated for my event?

We are happy to work with you to and try to accommodate any special dietary requests.

Can we have alcohol at our event?

Yes, Catering at the Zoo offers a full service bar option. Please remember that no alcohol may be brought in to the facility and will be subject to confiscation.

What parts of the zoo can we see at our event?

The zoo is open to the public from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 7 days a week. We offer special reduced-price admission for catered events held during zoo hours. In the evening, your guests will have access to any of the areas you have reserved for your event. Don't forget that Catering at the Zoo offers the exclusive opportunity to reserve locations throughout the zoo for the private enjoyment of your guests.

How do I book a catered event at the zoo?

If you're interested in booking an event at the zoo, contact our event team to set up a tour of our facilities and check the availability of your desired date. Your event coordinator will put together a proposal for your approval. We can hold your date for up to 2 weeks. If the proposal is acceptable, we'll draw up a contract and our receipt of the signed contract and deposit will lock in your date. Events must be booked a minimum of 30 days in advance.

How do your deposits work?

In order to reserve your date, we require a \$500 deposit and a signed contract. The deposit will be applied to our final billing. Your deposit is non-refundable as per your contract.

When is my final guest count for my event due?

Your guaranteed head count is due by 10 a.m., 5 business days before your event. Your final invoice will be based on that number.

What is the service charge on my contract?

A 19% service charge is automatically added to food and beverage sales on the contract. The service charge is not a gratuity. The service charge covers all the staffing needs and behind the scenes planning and orchestration for your event. Plated dinners have a 25% service charge to cover the additional labor required to execute your event. You can also expect to pay 8% sales tax unless your organization is tax exempt.

Should I add a gratuity to the payment of my invoice?

Catering at the Zoo does not charge a gratuity to your invoice. If you believe the staff went above and beyond with services and expectations, please feel free to add gratuity to your final payment and we will distribute the gratuity to our staff involved in your event. Gratuity is not necessary or expected, but always appreciated.

Do you have audio visual equipment we can use?

Yes. We have a wireless microphone, podium and HD projector system available for a small rental fee.

Do I need to rent tables, chairs and linens for my event?

No, the quote for your event includes tables, chairs, tablecloths and napkins. We also have a dance floor available at no extra charge.

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Are there restrictions on décor at the zoo?

Specific restrictions include: no open flames - candles must be enclosed in glass, no live animals, no rice, birdseed, flower petals, confetti or glitter, no flammable materials such as sparklers and firecrackers, no straw or hay, no special effects equipment, including but not limited to, smoke, fog, and pyrotechnic machines. Balloons are allowed only in the banquet rooms and may not be taken into the zoo.

Tape, tacks, staples, nails, screws or putty on walls or fixtures are not permitted. However, if you have decorations or banners you may use painter's tape to affix them to walls. No decorations or banners of any kind may be hung on the wallpapered air wall in the banquet room. If you are bringing a free-standing item such as an arch, arbor or pop-up tent, you must provide weights to secure it. If you do not provide weights, we will not allow it to be used due to the potential for damage to the animals and zoo property. Your event team will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

What is the difference between set up styles?

CEREMONY SET UP:

Theater-style seating on either side of a central aisle.

COCKTAIL SET UP:

Bar-height tables for standing guests in addition to round tables with chairs. There is usually seating for about 50% of your guest count.

SEATED – DINNER STYLE:

60" round tables with 8 chairs at each table.

FAMILY STYLE:

Banquet tables (30" wide by 6'-8' long) placed end to end to create one long table, with seating on either side.

CLASSROOM STYLE:

Banquet tables with seating on one side only, all seats face the front of the room.

THEATER STYLE:

Seats only, no tables.

What are your rental times?

After-hours private zoo rentals are available from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. The zoo remains public from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Banquet room rental may start as early as 7:30 a.m. End times do not go past 11 p.m. Rental of the facility does not guarantee access the day before, the entire day of, or the day after rental date as we may have other events booked during those times. Décor and other setup must be arranged with your event coordinator.

Can I request an animal for my event?

Your event coordinator can provide you with a list of our animal ambassadors who are currently available for a meet and mingle at your event. We cannot always honor requests to see a particular animal. Providing a safe and healthy environment for our animals is our highest priority, and if an interaction will stress an animal, we reserve the right to cancel it. However, if there is a particular species you would rather not have at your event, please let us know.

Is there a charge for parking at the zoo?

No – parking is always free.

Is the zoo handicapped accessible?

Yes. The zoo, our banquet room and Courtyard are handicapped accessible. We have 6 wheelchairs available for our guests and designated handicapped parking spots in both our main lot and the employee parking lot.

What if the weather is bad?

If your event is planned in our outdoor spaces, your event coordinator will create a "plan B" just in case the weather does not cooperate.

Does my rental help support the zoo?

Yes. Catering at the Zoo is a subsidiary of Friends of the Zoo, which is a non-profit organization created to support the zoo.