

A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a dirt path leads towards a wooden fence and a bench. The path is flanked by various desert plants, including yucca and cacti. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains under a clear sky. The image has an orange overlay at the top and bottom with a pattern of stylized leaves.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS AT THE LIVING DESERT



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A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

PLANNING YOUR SCHOOL FIELD TRIP

COMPLETE YOUR BOOKING.

- Complete and submit our [School Field Trips Inquiry Form](#).
- Complete and submit the [School Field Trips Lead Teacher Agreement](#).

CONFIRM YOUR BOOKING.

- In the event that your preferred date and time of arrival are not available, we will reach out to you with alternative options.
- You will know that your booking has been confirmed when you receive an invoice.

ARRANGE FOR AN ADEQUATE NUMBER OF CHAPERONES.

- We require a 1:10 teacher/chaperone to student ratio.
- Chaperones must be at least 21 years old.
- Any additional teachers or chaperones outside of the 1:10 ratio pay regular admission price. These additional adults can either purchase their tickets through The Living Desert's website, or be added to your invoice.
- If the 1:10 ratio is not met on the day of your school field trip, then your group will be unable to enter the Zoo until the ratio is met. No exceptions will be made.

HAVE A COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR YOUR CHAPERONES.

- Ask your chaperones to exchange cell phone numbers with you for easy and timely communication.
- Confirm that all chaperones know the day's schedule, meeting times, and locations.

PLAN YOUR VISIT.

- Preview The Living Desert's Today at the Zoo schedule for times and availability of daily programs including giraffe feeding.
- We are going [cashless](#). We offer convenient Reverse ATMs where funds can be loaded onto a prepaid debit card for a small \$1 fee. These cards can be used at all locations throughout the zoo and anywhere debit cards are accepted. Cash will still be accepted in our gift shop.

MAKE A PLAN FOR LUNCH.

- For information about our lunch package, including pricing and how to book, please contact Nicole Simmons at nsimmons@livingdesert.org.
- If you are bringing your own lunches, please be informed that we have a strict 50-pound weight limit for school lunches. In the event that lunches exceed this weight limit, your school group will be required to lift and/or carry the lunches as necessary.
- Please note that we are only able to offer lunch transportation into the Zoo.
- Your group is responsible for the transportation of lunches out of the Zoo.

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

THE DAY OF YOUR SCHOOL FIELD TRIP

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- Print copies of the Parking Guide (one guide per driver).
- Pack and label your group's lunches to prepare for easy transport. Select a few teachers/chaperones to load the lunches onto our golf cart(s) for transport upon your arrival at the Zoo.
- Ensure that your students are wearing either name tags or uniforms that identify them with your group.

WHILE YOU ARE ENROUTE TO THE LIVING DESERT

- Finalize your field trip participant headcount.
- Call or text the School Field Trips Staff at **(760) 636-3473** when you are 10 minutes away from arriving.

UPON ARRIVING

Drivers should follow the Parking Guide to park in the designated area(s).

If arriving by bus:

- Designate one other chaperone per additional bus as that bus's point of contact, if applicable.
- Upon parking, please have all members of your group remain on the bus(es) except you.

If arriving by personal vehicle:

- Please have all members of your group gather at the bus parking island.

All Lead Teachers should check in with the School Field Trips Staff to:

- Obtain School Field Trips Guidelines and Expectations. These should then be distributed to your vehicle(s)' point of contact(s) to read aloud to the students.
- Submit updated and accurate headcounts. Sign the Final Headcount Confirmation.
- Arrange lunch transportation and storage. Please have selected teachers/chaperones from your group disembark to load the lunches onto our golf cart(s) for transport.
- Receive chaperone stickers and distribute them to chaperones.
- Receive and distribute any pre-paid tickets for add-on experiences like the carousel and giraffe feeding.

Now you're ready to go!

- Disembark all students and chaperones.
- Your group will be escorted to the Zoo's main entrance, where you will be provided entry through the main gates. Payment is required before your group will be able to enter the Zoo.



DEAR CHAPERONE

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

Thank you for supervising students on a school field trip to The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens!

Please follow the guidelines on this page to ensure a safe and enjoyable visit.

☐

BEFORE THE TRIP, TALK TO THE LEAD TEACHER ABOUT:

- The educational goals of the trip
- The behavioral expectations for the students
- The communication plan, and the meeting times and locations

☐

CREATE A LIST OF THE STUDENTS IN YOUR GROUP, ALONG WITH A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THEY ARE WEARING, IN CASE SOMEONE GETS LOST. MAKE SURE THE STUDENTS KNOW YOUR NAME.

MY GROUP:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

☐

REVIEW THE FOLLOWING ZOO RULES WITH YOUR GROUP:

- **Stay with your pack.**
 - All students must be supervised at all times by an adult chaperone.
- **Stay on the path.**
 - Participants are to stay on the designated paths/trails and behave respectfully to our animals, gardens, habitats, facilities, staff, volunteers, and other guests. Entrance into ANY animal exhibit including the crossing of any barriers, fencing, or gates is strictly prohibited and is considered unlawful under California Penal Code Section 602.13.
- **Keep it clean.**
 - Please help keep our zoo clean by disposing of waste and recyclables in the labeled bins.
- **Keep it kind.**
 - The Living Desert maintains an anti-bullying policy. Any rude or disrespectful behavior toward staff, volunteers, or other guests will not be tolerated.
- **Reminder**
 - Please note, to maintain safety and capacity guidelines, school field trips will not have access to the splash pad during their visit.

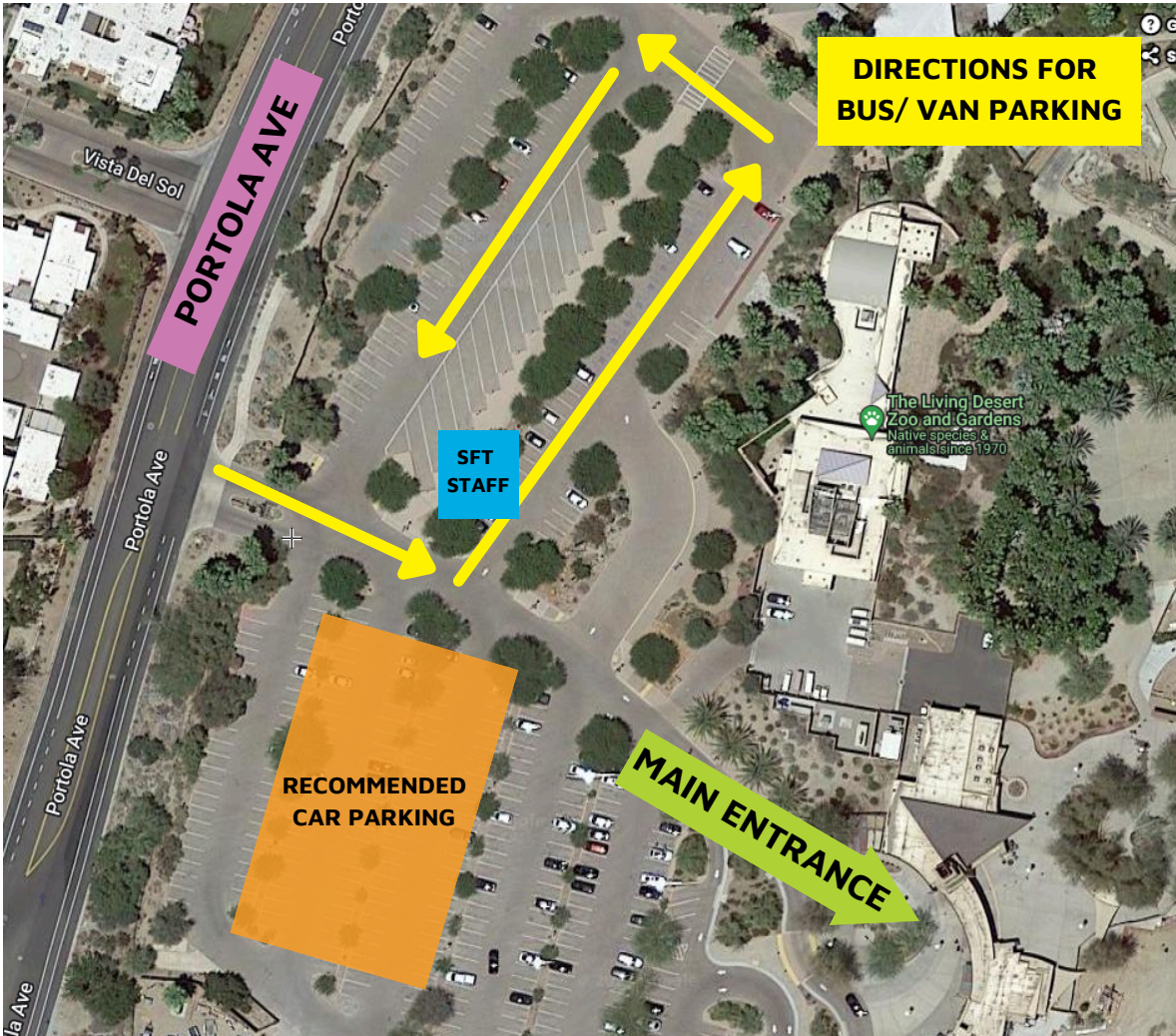
**IF YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE AT ANY TIME DURING YOUR VISIT,
PLEASE CALL OR TEXT THE SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS STAFF AT (760) 636-3473.**



PARKING GUIDE

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

Thank you for reserving your school field trip experience at The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens! To help make your arrival a smooth and safe process, please refer to the parking directions below:



ADDRESS

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens
47900 Portola Avenue
Palm Desert, CA 92260

PARKING DIRECTIONS FOR BUSES:

- Enter the parking lot from Portola Avenue.
- Take the second left aisleway.
- Drive to the far north side of the parking lot.
- Turn left into the bus parking lane and park in the designated area(s).



GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

Please read the following guidelines aloud to your students and be sure to follow the rules throughout your visit to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

STAY WITH YOUR PACK



Students must stay with their designated chaperone throughout the entirety of their visit.

STAY ON THE PATHS



Please stay on the designated paths/trails for your safety and the safety of our gardens and wildlife.

KEEP IT CLEAN



Please help keep our Zoo clean by disposing of waste and recyclables in the labeled bins.

KEEP IT KIND



Please behave kindly and respectfully to our animals, gardens, habitats, staff, volunteers, and other guests.

HAVE FUN



To have the Best Day Ever, be sure to check out one of our scheduled Keeper Connections!

**IF YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE AT ANY TIME DURING YOUR VISIT,
PLEASE CALL OR TEXT THE SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS STAFF AT (760) 636-3473.**



LUNCH PACKAGE

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

PRICE: \$10 per lunch

BOX 1:

- Peanut butter and jelly Uncrustable sandwich
- Seasonal fruit
- Juice

BOX 2:

- 1/2 Turkey and cheese sandwich
- Cookie
- Juice

HOW TO BOOK:

Contact Nicole Simmons at nsimmons@livingdesert.org

Please communicate any allergies to Nicole upon booking.

HOW TO PICK UP YOUR LUNCHES:

Any pre-ordered lunches must be picked up at 12pm across from the Churro Stop, near the Discovery Center.

Any adjustments to the number of pre-ordered lunch packages for your group must be made no later than two weeks prior to your scheduled school field trip.

We are unable to offer any refunds for our pre-booked lunch packages.



FAQs

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

SCHOOL FIELD TRIP PRICING

What is your chaperone to student ratio?

- The Living Desert requires a 1:10 teacher/chaperone to student ratio.

Do teachers receive free admission?

- No, teachers are considered chaperones, are included in your teacher/chaperone to student ratio, and do not receive free admission.

What happens if I don't have enough chaperones?

- If the 1:10 ratio is not met on the day of your school field trip, then your group will be unable to enter the Zoo until the ratio is met. No exceptions will be made.

What happens if I have too many chaperones?

- Any additional teachers or chaperones outside of the 1:10 ratio can either purchase their full-priced admission ticket through The Living Desert's website, or be added to your invoice. Adults not included in your group's invoice can enter through the Zoo's regular guest entrance using their self-purchased tickets.

My students have special needs and require a higher teacher/chaperone to student ratio.

- Nurses, medical staff, and 1-1 aides are eligible for complimentary admission when attending with a school group. School Field Trips Staff **must** be made aware of any medical staff receiving complimentary admission **at least 1 week prior to the date of your school field trip**; otherwise, these adults may be considered regularly-priced additional adults outside of the ratio on your invoice. Adjustments to your invoice for medical staff receiving complimentary admission cannot be made day-of.

Can adults use their membership for entry?

- Any adults counted towards the mandatory 1:10 teacher/chaperone to student ratio cannot use their memberships for entry. Adults outside of the 1:10 ratio may use membership for entry.

Can students use their membership for entry?

- No, all students attending a school field trip must be counted toward our school field trip admissions total and must use a school field trip ticket.

Our headcount might change, is there a deadline for submitting final headcount?

- You will submit your signed Final Headcount Confirmation the morning of your school field trip, before entering the Zoo. Changes to your group's headcount can be made until the Final Headcount Confirmation is signed. **However, we are unable to issue partial refunds for a decrease in headcount.**

FAQs

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

BOOKING YOUR SCHOOL FIELD TRIP

When does booking for school field trips open?

- Booking for the 2024-2025 school year opens on August 12th, 2024.

How big/small can my group be?

- A minimum number of 10 students and a 1:10 teacher/chaperone to student ratio are required to book at the School Field Trip price.

How old do chaperones need to be?

- Chaperones must be at least 21 years old.

What is required to complete my school field trip booking?

- To book your school field trip, complete and submit [the School Field Trip Inquiry Form](#) and [the Lead Teacher Agreement](#) at least three (3) weeks prior to your desired field trip date.

How will I know that my booking has been confirmed?

- You will know that your booking has been confirmed when you receive an invoice.

I need to reschedule my school field trip. Who do I contact?

- Please contact Guest Services at (760) 346-5694 for rescheduling or cancellations.

What is your rescheduling/cancellation policy?

- Please review our updated cancellation policy before booking:

Change requested for school field trip	Refund or fee
Cancellation made more than 30 days prior	100% refund
Cancellation between 30 and 7 days	50% refund
Reschedule between 30 and 7 days	\$75 administration fee**
Less than 7 days' notice or no show	No refund

**contingent on remaining times and dates to reschedule being available

- When a 50% refund and/or a \$75 administration fee applies, schools who have prepaid will have their refund issued minus the percentage or fee. For schools who haven't prepaid, a charge will be applied to their account and must be paid before a future field trip can be booked by that school.

FAQs

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

PLANNING YOUR SCHOOL FIELD TRIP

How can I book a tour?

- For the 2024-25 school year, school field trips will be a self-guided experience.

Can I schedule a behind-the-scenes encounter?

- We're unable to offer behind-the-scenes encounters for school field trips at this time. However, we are excited to offer a free educational presentation in the Tennity Wildlife Amphitheater for school field trips only, daily at 11:00am.

Are there any other unique experiences for my school group during our visit?

- Preview The Living Desert's [Today at the Zoo](#) schedule for times and availability of daily programs including giraffe feeding. Add-on experiences (the carousel and giraffe feeding) require special tickets.

Where should my group meet on the day of our school field trip?

- All groups will meet at the bus parking island. Please refer to our Parking Guide for more descriptive information.

What should my students wear/bring?

- Name tags or uniforms are required for your students to identify themselves with your educational organization. We recommend that students wear close-toed shoes and bring refillable water bottles. Because we are a desert zoo, we often experience extreme weather. We recommend checking the weather forecast for the day of your scheduled school field trip and encouraging students to dress appropriately. For extreme heat, we recommend hats and sunscreen; for cooler weather, jackets or sweatshirts.

How expensive is the gift shop?

- Our sales associates recommend that students who would like to shop in the gift shop bring a minimum of \$20. Please note that visiting the gift shop is not required.

Can my students bring cash to spend inside the park?

- The Living Desert is going cashless and will **no longer accept cash for food and beverage and add-on purchases. Cash will still be accepted** in our gift shop. We offer convenient Reverse ATMs where funds can be loaded onto a prepaid debit card for a small \$1 fee. These cards can be used at all food and beverage locations throughout the zoo and anywhere debit cards are accepted.

When will we be able to go inside the park?

- School Field Trips staff will escort you into the park as a group. **Your entire group must be accounted for before entering.**

Is there transportation within the park?

- No, there is no transportation within the park.

Can my group use the Oasis Splash Pad?

- To maintain safety and capacity guidelines, **school field trips will not have access to the splash pad** during their visit.

FAQs

FOR SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

ADD-ON EXPERIENCES

How can I purchase add-on experiences like the carousel and/or giraffe feeding?

- Add-on experiences require special tickets. If your school is paying for your group's add-on experiences, please let either Guest Services or School Field Trips staff to know to include these tickets in your invoice. Please note that **The Living Desert is going cashless**. We offer convenient Reverse ATMs where funds can be loaded onto a prepaid debit card for a small \$1 fee. These cards can be used at all locations throughout the zoo and anywhere debit cards are accepted.

If my group purchased an add-on experience and has a change in headcount, will we receive a refund?

- No, **we are unable issue partial refunds for any decrease in headcount.**

EATING LUNCH AT THE ZOO

Can we bring food/lunches into the Zoo?

- Yes, your group is welcome to bring in their own food.

Do we have to carry our own lunches?

- Lunch transportation and storage are available for school field trips. Lunches must be packed and labelled prior to transportation to the Zoo. Please be informed that we have a strict 50-pound weight limit for school lunches. In the event that lunches exceed this weight limit, your school will be required to lift and/or carry the lunches as necessary. We are only able to provide transportation into the Zoo. **Your group is responsible for transporting any remaining lunches, crates, coolers, or boxes out of the Zoo.**

Where are our lunches stored/ Where can we eat lunch?

- Both cooled lunch storage and the covered picnic area designated for school field trips are located next to the Discovery Center behind the Churro Stop. Lunches are stored in the large red lockers behind the Churro Stop, on the right-hand side. A large magnet matching your chaperone stickers will be on the door of the locker that contains your group's lunches.

Do I have to reserve a time slot for lunch?

- No, you do not have to make lunch reservations. You are welcome to eat lunch whenever you would like at any of the Zoo's picnic tables.

If we choose to have lunch in a spot away from lunch storage, can someone transport our lunches to where we want to have lunch?

- No, school groups are responsible for their own lunch transportation if they wish to have lunch elsewhere.

Can staff members in golf carts help us carry our lunches back to the buses?

- No, school groups are responsible for transporting any remaining lunches, crates, coolers, or boxes out of the Zoo. Schools are welcome to leave lunches in the designated storage area until the end of their trip.

Can we buy lunch at the Zoo?

- Yes, this year we are offering pre-booked lunch packages for school field trips. For information including pricing and how to book, please contact Nicole Simmons at nsimmons@livingdesert.org. Additionally, school field trip participants can purchase snacks and lunches at our concessions with chaperone supervision during their visit.