



# COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity No. 1105621

## ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE



# WELCOME

**Welcome and thank you for considering a visit to Colchester Zoo.**  
We pride ourselves on welcoming all guests and making your visit as enjoyable as we can.

The purpose of this guide is to help you plan for your visit – it is our attempt to give you information that our ‘expert by experience’ panel tell us will be useful in helping visitors decide whether Colchester Zoo is right for them before they visit.

If you have any specific questions regarding accessibility if after using the guide, please do contact us via the email or telephone numbers below and our colleagues will do their best to answer your enquiry.

[customerengagement@colchesterzoo.org](mailto:customerengagement@colchesterzoo.org)

## General Information

Guest Services  
01206 331292 ext. 227 / 228 / 230

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# HOW TO GET HERE

## BY CAR:

- Set your Sat Nav for CO3 0SL
- Colchester Zoo is located just south of Colchester, on Maldon Road in Stanway. Take the A1124 exit (Junction 26) off the main A12 following the brown elephant signs and using the new Stanway Western Bypass.

**From the M25:** About 40 minutes from Junction 28 of the M25 to reach the A12

**From Southend:** About 1 hour's journey, 40 miles using A127 and A130 to reach the A12

**From Hertfordshire:** About 1 hour's journey – 50 miles using A414 or A120 to reach the A12

**From Stansted Airport:** About 50 mins journey, 30 miles using A120 to reach the A12. For car hire from Stansted Airport [www.budget-stansted.com](http://www.budget-stansted.com)

## BY BIKE:

There are cycle racks provided at the top of the car parks, close to the Zoo entrance.

## BY TRAIN:

Colchester North Station can be reached from Liverpool Street services from London within an hour or is easily reached along the Lowestoft or Norwich networks to Ipswich and then on to Colchester. Colchester Zoo is then just 10 minutes by taxi from Colchester North Station or can be reached by bus.

## BY BUS:

All bus services to Colchester Bus Station regularly connect with the number 75 for Maldon or Tiptree and Colchester Zoo.



# ARRIVAL AND PARKING

## PARKING

Accessible parking spaces are available near to the Zoo's main entrance. These spaces are designated for holders of Blue Badges with level access to the main entrance building.

## ADMISSION, CHARGES & PERSONAL ASSISTANTS

We will provide a complimentary ticket for a personal assistant to be admitted with a full paying adult / child / senior guest if the need for assistance can be verified by a Blue Badge, Personal Independence Payment docs, ACCESS card, Brain Injury Identity Card, NHS App, etc. Please have these available when you arrive at the Zoo.

**PLEASE NOTE: Diagnosis letters from private practitioners should be on practice headed paper and include the qualification of the practitioner making the diagnosis.**

The Zoo main entrance, Guest Services Office and Experiences Reception all have level access and lowered ticket desks with onward access into the Zoo main grounds.

Our Guest Services Office has a portable hearing loop system and colleagues are trained to be autism friendly – if you need assistance, please make a member of the team aware.

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Any guest with a disability will be required to purchase the relevant adult, child or senior Zoo Pass.

If you require assistance during your visits to Colchester Zoo, you will be asked to show verification of disability when your Zoo Pass is processed, allowing you to have an assistant visit with you FREE of charge each time you wish to visit with your valid Zoo Pass.

# WHEELCHAIR & MOBILITY SCOOTER HIRE

We have a limited number of manual wheelchairs and Mobility Scooters available to hire. These can be found inside the zoo grounds by the main entrance.

**Prebooking is essential – Please contact [enquiries@colchesterzoo.org](mailto:enquiries@colchesterzoo.org)**

|                   | Hire charge | Returnable deposit |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Manual wheelchair | £5.00       | £20.00             |
| Mobility scooter  | £25.00      | £30.00             |

## QUEUES

**Welcoming over 1 million guests each year, queues and crowds are inevitable at busy periods, especially at our very popular restaurants, retail outlets and guest services office.**

If you require assistance, please let a team member know and they will explain how they may be able to assist you. This usually consists of giving you the option of waiting in the area, away from the queues, but within sight of the team, until the majority of the queue has moved on, before then calling you forward for a more relaxed experience.

Of course, it is your responsibility to make team members aware of this in good time. It is highly unlikely that you will be moved to the front of the queue ahead of other guests.



# ASSISTANCE DOGS

**At Colchester Zoo we understand how important your assistance dog is in supporting you during your visit.**

We have a specific Assistance Dogs Accessibility Map: setting out our Code of Conduct for assistance dog owners, ensuring that all our visitors and our permanent animals have a safe and stress-free time.



**Download our full Assistance Dog Guide**

No dogs are allowed on any part of the Zoo site including our car park – with the exception of guide and assistance dogs under specific conditions.

If you have a assistance dog we understand how important your assistance dog is in supporting you during your visit. We have a specific policy that helps us to ensure that all our visitors and our permanent animals have a safe and stress-free time.

Issues of biosecurity – we do ask for confirmation of an assistance dogs inoculation record and free from rabies status . As owners of Assistance dogs that we know you care. We assume that you will understand and respect the reasons for these requests in the light of best animal welfare arrangements. Whilst we can mitigate against many things we can't mitigate against spread of disease if it was to enter the zoo animal collection.

Regrettably we do not allow Therapy / Emotional support dogs into our zoo. Currently, emotional support animals do not have legal recognition in the way that assistance dogs do in the UK.



**Colchester Zoological Society does not allow dogs to be left in cars, even with ventilation and water, anyone found leaving dogs in their car will be refused entry to the Zoo.**

# ATTENDING SPECIFIC EVENTS

**Colchester Zoo has a busy calendar of special events held throughout the year. We want everyone at Colchester Zoo to have a great time and to achieve this we ask that you follow our policies and practices for accessibility.**

We understand that for some guests, particularly people on the autistic spectrum, their family and friends waiting in line may be more difficult than for others. We will respond to reasonable requests from guests who have specific needs and are unable to wait patiently in line.

We would expect that the majority of guest with specific needs will have the benefit of holding a 'complimentary assistant' or '+ annual pass' – please have this ready show this to the queue manager at the event as verification of your need.

We cannot do the impossible and make a busy event quiet however we will listen to how you think we can best support you and if possible, we will try to make reasonable adjustment for you.

These may include –

- Asking you to wait near the event so we can call you forward when a space is available.
- Asking you to wait until the main queue has passed so you have a less rushed experience.
- It is unlikely that you will be moved to the front of the queue as this may result in your experience feeling rushed as we have pressure to move others into the event.

**Please cooperate with the requests of staff but also be kind and understanding of other's needs who are also having to wait patiently.**

# LAYOUT OF THE ZOO

Home to over 155 species and set in 60 acres of parkland and lakes, Colchester Zoo's terrain is naturally hilly, some with a steep gradient.

Majority of pathways can be accessed by wheelchairs however we have included photographs in this guide so you are able to make some judgements about whether you will be able to manage these comfortably.



# ANIMAL EXHIBITS

The below habitats are all **ACCESSIBLE**, unless additional information is provided:

- **IGUANA FOREST** – Access via automatic door
- **DISCOVERY CENTRE** – Colleagues assisted bug handling
- **RAINFOREST WALKTHROUGH**  
Entrance via button-controlled doors – button at low level
- **WORLDS APART**  
Accessible via button-controlled doors at low level
- **HEART OF THE AMAZON** – Has very steep incline
- **PLAYA PATAGONIA** – Has a level outdoor viewing platform and an underwater viewing tunnel
- **RAJANG'S FOREST** – Ground floor area is flat, however to access outside area and raised viewing area has a long and quite steep ramp
- **INCA TRAIL** – Has steep incline
- **BEARS OF THE RISING SUN**  
Lower viewing area accessible – please note there is a slight incline to the upper viewing area near the top of the Zoo
- **FEATHERS OF THE FOREST** – Accessible with tight corners
- **LION ROCK** – Viewing tunnel has slight incline and high level viewing platform that is accessed via spiral staircase
- **AUSTRALIAN RAINBOWS** – Can be very loud, ear defenders may be necessary.  
Opportunity to feed the lorikeets – charge for feed
- **KOI NIWA** – Short steep slope to access this area
- **WALKING GIANTS** – Fully accessible, access via button controlled doors- button at low level
- **COLENZO VILLAGE** – A chance to meet and feed free roaming domestic animals, charge for feed  
– access via latch gates and cattle grid
- **EDGE OF AFRICA** – including cheetah, hyena, mandrill, warthog – this area is on a slope so some of the viewing areas –mandrill have viewing platforms that are raised.



- **ELEPHANT KINGDOM** – outdoor viewing on level, some obstruction due to hedging barriers, indoor viewing accessible via slight incline
- **KINGDOM OF THE WILD**  
African animals, including giraffe, zebra, rhino.  
Outdoor viewing on level access, indoor viewing accessed via steeply sloped ramp with indoor viewing of pygmy hippo accessed via multi-layer ramp with steep inclines
- **VULTURE VALLEY** – Accessible
- **AARDVARK BURROW** – Slight incline in viewing tunnel
- **OTTER CREEK** – Accessible
- **GELADA PLATEAU** – Accessible
- **FLAMINGOS (NEXT TO GELADA PLATEAU)** – Accessible
- **TIGER TAIGA** – Viewing tunnel has slight incline to outdoor
- **NATURE AREA** – series of board walks that are level and accessed via the Tiger Taiga viewing tunnel
- **CALL OF THE WILD and WORLD OF WINGS** – steep slope
- **KOMODO DRAGONS** – slight slope
- **RIVERS EDGE** – Button controlled doors
- **CHIMPANZEE LOOKOUT** – High level viewing platform that is accessed via stairs. There is also a short slight slope in two areas. Indoor facility and lower viewing area all accessible
- **USSURI FALLS** – At the base of a steep slope not suitable for wheelchairs
- **MEDELLIN MONKEYS** – Very steep slope not suitable for wheelchairs.  
Viewing area is accessible via alternative route on lower pathway

## TOILETS

We have 14 Toilet blocks on site and all have an accessible toilet facility. This includes a small block in our car park, which is accessible prior to the Zoo opening.

Located centrally in the Zoo, we have a Changing Places facility, which is accessed by a Radar Key.

## PLAY AREAS

Our Remi Brown Playground is accessible and located in the Edge of Africa section of the Zoo.



## LOST MADAGASCAR EXPRESS ROAD TRAIN

Open at 10.30am, the Lost Madagascar Express will take visitors across countries and continents to spot many exciting species along the way, before disembarking at the Lost Madagascar Lemur Walkthrough, where the adventure will really begin.

The train is fitted with a wheelchair accessible carriage and we also have a printed guide of our Lost Madagascar Train commentary.

**Please speak to the Train Driver regarding any accessibility needs.**



## DINING AT THE ZOO

**We have a great range of catering facilities around the zoo. Some of these close seasonally so it will be worthwhile checking the Zoo website before your visit.**

Our catering facilities do not have audible or large print menus, however the colleagues will be pleased to assist you in making a selection from the menu if you let them know you need some support with this, along with collecting food and taking it to the table, etc.

**Please make colleagues aware of any allergies when ordering food.**

## GIFT SHOP

**Our Outpost gift store forms our exit and is fully accessible and offers a wide selection of gifts and souvenirs.**

With fitted loop systems and colleagues that are trained to be autism friendly, we look forward to welcoming you.

This is also a very busy environment with many stimulating items and sounds. If you would prefer to leave the Zoo by an alternative exit, please speak to a colleague who will be pleased to assist you.



# BOOK AN ANIMAL EXPERIENCE!

We want everyone to have the opportunity to take part in these fantastic experiences and will do all we can to make that possible, offering the unique opportunity to get closer to our animals and learn more about them from our Animal Care Team!

Prior to your planned experience we will attempt to contact you a couple of days before to ensure we have all the correct relevant information to pass to our animal care colleagues so they can plan for the best experience we can offer.

However, we do need your understanding that in some situations and depending upon the specific needs of the guest, the species of animal and the accessibility of their exhibit this is occasionally just not possible.



If you, or someone you support has specific needs and their need for assistance can be verified, then please email to discuss what may be possible for each experience:

**Experiences Reception**  
Experiences@colchesterzoo.org

## AUTISM FRIENDLY



The zoo is an exciting place full of noise, information, customers & different levels of lighting. However, we understand that these can present some difficulties for guests who have Autism and their families or personal assistants.

**We do our best to understand these issues and have a number of Autism Friendly trained colleagues who will do their best to assist you.**

### ENTRANCE BUILDING

A very busy, noisy and congested environment. It is also a very brightly lit which can be overwhelming. We recommend pre-booking your tickets for speedy admission.

### ZOO EXIT & OUTPOST GIFT SHOP

This is a very busy environment with many stimulating items and sounds. If you would prefer to leave the Zoo by an alternative exit, please speak to a colleague who will be pleased to assist you or refer to the map here.

### ALTERNATIVE ENTRANCE AND EXIT

(via our animal experiences reception)

This area is usually less busy than the main entrance and exit. Please seek staff assistance.

### JUNGLE TUMBLE INDOOR PLAY AREA

This is always busy and noisy with children playing and screaming with excitement. There are also accessible toilets.

**PLEASE NOTE: Booking is essential and a health & safety requirement that socks are worn at all times in this play area.**

### DINOSAUR REALM

A noisy environment with moving figures, coloured lighting and immersive smoke machines. Ear defenders are recommended.

### AUSTRALIAN RAINBOWS LORIKEET WALKTHROUGH

An immersive experience of free-flying birds.

**PLEASE NOTE: These birds are extremely loud and inquisitive.**

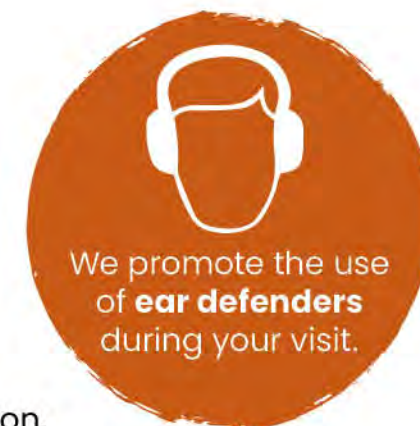
### FACE PAINTING STATION

A popular facility with occasional queues.

Please speak with a Zoo Host or Jungle Tumble Play Area Manager if special requirements are needed.

### QUIET SPACES

Please refer to the earlier Accessible Map for locations marked by a purple square with a volume symbol. The effectiveness of these areas is dependent on the level of trade on the day of your visit.



# QUICK REFERENCE

Please refer to further information within this guide.

## QUEUES

Some areas of the zoo require you to wait in queues that can be quite lengthy and noisy at busy periods – **we have a system and team members in place to help with this if you request this.**

## NATURAL HEDGING

Hedging is used around some areas and can obstruct views from wheelchairs.

## INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION BOARDS

These are situated near animal exhibits and carry facts and information about the species. **If you need these to be explained please locate a member of our Zoo Team and they will do their best to assist you with this.**

## ACCESSIBLE TOILETS

We have accessible toilets located around the Zoo. Please see the Accessible Map within this guide for the locations.

## CHANGING PLACES FACILITY

This facility is available Near Meerkat Hangout and is accessible via Radar Key.

## LOST MADAGASCAR EXPRESS ROAD TRAIN

The Lost Madagascar Express Road Train has an accessible carriage. We also have a printed guide of our train commentary – please ask the Train Driver for assistance.

## SHOPS

All of our shops are accessible – please refer to ‘Shopping at the Zoo’ section of this guide.

## ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

We have a daily programme of animal talks from the Animal Care Team, delivered via a loudspeaker. However, if you have accessibility issues, **please do let a member of the zoo team know and we will try to assist you.** We also have Audio Encounters to support some of our animal encounters.

Access Audio Encounters via the QR code below:



The majority of our team have disability awareness training via an ongoing professional development programme.



## AUTISM FRIENDLY

We are training colleagues and zoo hosts are trained to be Autism Aware. Please also refer to visual stories where these are available for more information. You may wish to consider bringing ear defenders or fidget toys, etc. with you on your visit if you find these helpful.



## HEARING

We have a portable hearing loop in the Main Entrance building and at Guest Services. The Outpost gift shop has fitted units within fixed till points.



## VISUAL

Whilst we welcome all guests to Colchester Zoo, it is not an easy place to visit for guests who are blind or have severe visual impairment. We recommend that you are accompanied by an assistant dog or sighted guide. There are accessible parking bays near the Zoo's Main Entrance.



## LEVEL ACCESS

Level access may change due to special events – **please check the zoo website for any updated information.**

## GLASS DOORS AND ENCLOSURES

We have many glass doors – the majority of which are marked with transfers. We have many glass enclosures fronts – the majority of these are not marked and many do not have any obvious barrier in front them.

