

# Zoo Exploration Guide

We've created this guide to help you facilitate an educational tour at the Saint Louis Zoo. We have provided a brief insider description about a few of our animal habitats along with a few questions to help prompt a group discussion.

## Providing the Proper Habitat

All animal habitats provide four basic things: food, water, shelter, and space. At the Zoo we provide habitats to over 500 different species/types of animals! We also have to provide for the needs of keepers such as accessing the space for cleaning. How do we do all of this?

## Food

The Zoo must do its best to make animal diets that are similar to an animal's wild diet using food they can buy (usually locally or as close to local as possible). The animal's Zoo diet must provide all the nutrition (vitamins, minerals, protein, fiber, etc.) they need. Food must be given to the animal in a way that is safe for the animal and the keeper. Some food that is given to an animal could be considered a snack or treat and this food is provided in a way that helps bring out natural behaviors. We call this enrichment. Some examples of food enrichment could be food offered in a tube or Kong toy, fruit or fish frozen in a block of ice, or vegetables or hard boiled eggs hidden throughout their habitat.

## Water

Some animals require large amounts of water, while other animals only need a small amount of water. No matter what, they all need clean water. For animals that either utilize a lot of water or spend most of their time in water we need to be sure we filter water often so the animals living in water have clean homes. That means lots of filters!

## Shelter

Animals need a place to hide or rest and we call this shelter. Our animals at the Zoo range in size from an ant to an elephant so our shelters must be different sizes. Some of the shelters we provide allow visitors to see the animal, while others allow the animal to hide from visitors.

## Space

All animals need space to move around. Some animals, like a snake, only need a little bit of space, while other animals, like a polar bear, need lots of space. At the Zoo, several of our animal habitats offer an animal space to move around where visitors can see them, but they also have another space where visitors can't see them. This "off-viewing" space is where animals move so the keepers can clean their homes, provide food, or do health checks.

## At the Zoo...

While you explore the Zoo take a few minutes to look at these aspects within each animal habitat. You will notice that each habitat provides these features in different ways.

## At Home or School...

Planning animal habitats is a great example of critical thinking. Pick your favorite animal and research what habitat requirements it has. Draw an exhibit or create one out of recyclable materials like a shoe box, paper towel tubes and bottle caps. Remember to include not only food, water, shelter and space but ways for keepers to access the space and an off-viewing space for the animal.

For more information about our animals and our animal care visit our website: [stlzoo.org](http://stlzoo.org)



**Saint Louis Zoo**  
Animals Always®

## 1. Primate House or Fragile Forest



Primates naturally forage for food throughout the day. They eat things like leaves, fruits, seeds, and even insects. Here at the Zoo we provide primates biscuits and a variety of other food items.

- What food items do you see in their Zoo habitat?
- How do they get their food?
- Do you see an example of enrichment?

## 3. Bird House



All birds need shelters to lay their eggs. Nests can be woven plant material in trees, holes in trees, a shallow hole in the dirt or rocks, or a burrow.

- Can you see a nesting area?
- Is the nest area something that people built or the bird built?
- Do you think keepers can go in with the birds?
- If so, are there shelters for the bird when the keeper is in the habitat?



## 2. Sea Lion Sound



Sea lions and seals live in salty ocean water, swimming and playfully exploring their ocean homes. They also come to shore and rest on rocky beaches. This Zoo habitat holds – gallons of salt water! Thankfully we have a filtration system under the show pool to clean and filter all this water.

- Can you see any drains or filters in the pool?
- Do you see places for the sea lions and seals to get out of the water and rest?
- Do you see any enrichment in the water?

## 4. Polar Bear Point



Polar bears need frozen water in their Arctic habitat. They hunt their favorite food (seals) on sea ice.

- Do you see areas for the polar bear to explore water?
- Do you see doors leading to the off-viewing space?
- Do you see any enrichment?
- Do you see different spaces for the polar bear to explore?