African Penguin Backstage Encounter

Guests are currently required to wear a mask during the African Penguin Backstage Encounter.

Updated 11/2020
Sensory Key

There are lots of things to see here. It might be bright or hurt my eyes in places where I see this. I can wear sunglasses or cover my eyes.

There are lots of things to hear here. It might be loud in places where I see this. I can wear headphones or cover my ears if it gets too loud.

When I see this there will be things I can taste here. I do not have to put anything in my mouth if I do not want to.

There might be a strong smell in places where I see this. I can hold my nose or cover my nose with something that smells good.

There are lots of things to touch here. There might be things that I feel uncomfortable touching when I see this. I do not have to touch anything that I do not want to.
ZooTampa’s Modified Operation Plan during a Pandemic.

- The park, shops, and restaurants are operating at limited capacity.
- Reservations/Pre-purchased tickets are not required, but are recommended and the only way to guarantee entry.
- Touchless transactions will be available and encouraged.
- Always maintain 6 feet distance between groups.
- Masks are NOT required to outdoor areas of the Zoo except to participate in Signature Encounters and Giraffe Meet and Greet.
- Masks are required at any indoor location on Safari Expedition.
- Handwashing and sanitation stations have been increased throughout the Zoo. Please wash hands frequently using soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Temperature checks are conducted at the entrance. Anyone with a temperature over 100.4°F will not be permitted entry.
- If you are feeling sick, please return home and seek medical care.
- Rides are sanitized between use and are operating at limited capacity.
- Some attractions may be closed.
Modified Operation Plan Signage

You will notice circle signs that say “Please stay 6 feet apart”, they signs are to help ZooTampa ensure we have lots of space between people.
We are going to the African Penguin Encounter. The Penguin habitat is near Safari Africa. We can get there by following the map and signs.
Before we can go into the penguin habitat, we will need to check in with an employee at the habitat gate. The employee will ask for our name and check us off on their list, then ask us to sign in.
While we wait for the tour to begin, we can put our face masks on. Face masks help keep the people and animals safe.
When it is time to begin, an employee will let us in the gate and we will follow the sidewalk back to the habitat entrance.
We will meet up with the animal care staff at the habitat entrance. The animal care employee will ask us to walk across a shallow black footbath with a little sanitizing solution in it. The solution will help keep the penguins healthy.
Before meeting the penguins, I will wash my hands. There is a handwashing station inside the habitat.
When we are done washing our hands we can sit on the black benches. When everyone is done washing their hands the animal care employee will go over the rules.

Once the rules are done, the animal care employee will go see which penguins want to come out. We might see one penguin or we might see several, but the penguins get to choose who will come out today.
While the penguins are out I need to sit on my bench and wait for a penguin to come to me.
The penguins are free to walk around. If a penguin makes me nervous, I can always ask the animal care employee to move the penguin away from me. The penguins might walk around my feet or hop onto a rock to get closer. That’s okay, the penguin just wants to see me better!
While the penguins are out the animal care employee will talk about them. I will use my listening ears to learn about the animals. If I have questions, I can raise my hand after the talk and ask my questions.
If I would like, I CAN gently touch the penguins on their backs when they are near me.

The animal care employee will be nearby to answer any questions I have.
Sometimes the penguins are out of my reach. I will NOT touch these penguins. That’s okay. I can touch the other penguins if they come up to me.
I keep my hands *away* from the penguin's face.

Touching the penguin’s face is against the rules.
At the end of our tour the animal care employee will ask the penguins to go back inside. The penguins might take a few minutes to go through the door. That’s okay, we will wait calmly on our bench until all the penguins are inside.
After I am finished meeting the penguins, I will exit the habitat and wash my hands. There is a handwashing station inside the habitat.
We will then follow the sidewalk to the exit and continue our visit at ZooTampa at Lowry Park.
ZooTampa at Lowry Park has teamed up with the Center For Autism & Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida to provide support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism and related disabilities. Please utilize the resources provided to properly plan for your visit to ZooTampa at Lowry Park.

We also recognize the support of Autism Shifts, The Learning Academy, Autism Speaks and the Diversity Action Coalition and applaud their efforts to promote inclusive experiences.”