

# Event FAQs

In order to save you time when organizing your event with San Francisco Zoo, please scan through the below frequently asked questions as we may have an answer for you already!



## Section 1: Contracting Questions

### Section 2: Facility Rental Questions

### Section 3: Catering Questions

### Section 4: General Planning Questions

### Section 5: Wedding-Specific Questions

## Section 1: Contracting Questions

- **Can I visit the event spaces?** We host site tours within zoo business hours, Monday through Friday, as this is when our Event Sales office is open. Appointments are required for a tour, so please contact your coordinator to set up a time to come visit. On the site tour we'll show you the spaces based on your requirements and answer any questions on catering, animal encounters, and rentals. The next stage would be creating a quote for you.
- **Can I have a quote created for me?** Yes, you would just need to email your event preferences to the event coordinator. This would include, number of guests, preferred event times, preferred venue spaces, food and bar menu choices, requested animal encounters, and any specific rental requests. A quote is a good way to see all the related costs laid out in detail. We will work together to add/remove items until you are happy with everything. It is important to keep in mind that quotes are not set in stone and prices/availability may change through the process.
- **While I decide, can I temporarily hold a date and space?** Yes, we will be happy to place a temporary 14-day hold on your event date and space(s) and during this time nobody else can book. After 14 days, and possibly without notification, we must be fair and accept other events over yours.
- **How can I confirm my event, and what is the deposit?** To confirm your event we require 1.) a signed Rental Agreement, 2.) a Credit Card Authorization, 3.) signed Terms & Conditions, and 4.) the deposit. If more than 3 months until your event, the non-refundable deposit amount is 100% of Facility Rental and 25% of total Catering Food & Beverage. If less than 3 months until your event, the TOTAL "minimum" balance for your event is required. When we receive all 4 items, your event is firmly secured in our event calendar, and until then we reserve the right to accept other offers for the date and space(s) that you are interested in.
- **What is needed to put together a contract?** An initial contract will be based on the agreed upon catering food & beverage minimums, and any other required costs, i.e. facility rentals, taxes, service fees, required rental items, additional security staffing, etc. Enhancements such as animal experiences, upgraded rentals, additional food or bar add-ons, etc. can be added during the coordination process leading up to your event. Items can be increased or added during the coordination process, but items cannot be removed from the contract once it has been signed, so the contract will be based on minimum guaranteed amounts that are agreed upon between you and the coordinator.

## Section 2: Facility Rental Questions

- **Are you flexible with facility rental times?** This is handled on a case by case basis, but for the most part the times are set this way for zoo accessibility reasons, based on zoo hours and availability of areas. Your event must take place EITHER during the day during zoo hours, OR during the evening after the zoo has closed, and we cannot "straddle" event times. If you wish to have access to the facility prior to zoo the daytime hours, then extra security fees apply per hour, and if you wish to add-on hours to the end of your evening rental, then there are additional fees per hour for this as well. 8:00am is the earliest any event may start, and 1:00am is the latest an event may go. Our facility rental times are also taking into account setup and tear-down and the time needed between multiple events, if applicable.
- **Are there regulations on the end-times of bar or entertainment?** Typically last call is 45 minutes prior to event end-time, and the bar is finished serving no later than 30 minutes prior to event end-time. However, midnight is the latest a bar may be open, so if your event goes until 1:00am then the bar will actually end 1 hour prior to event end. In order to make sure guests are able to vacate the facility by the end of the facility rental, we ask that music and other entertainment ends no later than 15 minutes prior to event end-time.
- **Are setup and tear-down included in the facility rental time?** No the facility rental time is referring to when your guests are able enjoy the space for your event. We give ourselves windows of time on either side of your event that are included in the rental price. If you have your own "special touches" and require additional set up time, there may be additional charges and is based on availability, as this may infringe on the ability to sell the facility during another time-slot.
- **What is included in the price of facility rental?** You are paying for a particular venue space and any specified areas connected to it. Also included is an event operations manager for the duration of your event, and any other relevant zoo staff (i.e. a carousel operator if you have rented the carousel area, or an animal keeper for any animal house rentals).

## EVENTS & HOSPITALITY

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## Section 2: Facility Rental Questions (continued)

- **Do you have a wet weather contingency plan for outdoor events?** We will always do our best to accommodate a back up location for your event if rain should be in the forecast, and we will gladly discuss alternative options for you. Depending on the location, we may be able to set up a tent in your outdoor location, and we would be happy to put together a quote for you involving weather backup tenting. If elaborate rentals or tenting is required, we may need to book these at least 1 week prior to your event and is subject to availability of materials.

## Section 3: Catering Questions

- **May I bring in an outside caterer?** In addition to providing full-service facility management, we are also the zoo's exclusive caterer on-site, and therefore we do not allow the use of outside caterers, and we require a catering food & beverage spend with every facility rental. In addition to offering very high-end menus and incredible flavor profiles by a team of on-site chefs, we are also a direct partner with the zoo, managing all the kitchens and warehouses on-site, which promotes efficiency and logistical accuracy for every event!
- **May I request specific menu items, other than what is listed on the menus?** If you do not see what you were looking for in our catering menus, please let us know what you would like and we'd be happy to check with our executive chef to see if your request is doable. We would then need to look into the costs of your request and let you know the associated menu price.
- **Can I provide my own celebration or wedding cake?** We do not provide cakes in-house, as we are limited on kitchen space. You are welcome to work with an outside bakery vendor, or provide your own cake, and we can arrange delivery times per our vendor policies.
- **Can I bring in my own alcohol?** Only wine or champagne are allowed to be brought in, as our liquor license prohibits us from allowing beer or liquor to be brought in by anyone other than the caterer. If opting for a cash or consumption bar at your event, wine or champagne bottles have a corkage fee of \$15 per bottle. If you are booking a host drink package, then we can simply swap our wine stock for your own wine stock and eliminate the corkage fee. The host drink package price would remain the same, as the removed corkage fee is essentially just taking the place of the cost of wine goods.

## Section 4: General Planning Questions

- **What is the role of the Event Sales Coordinator?** Your event coordinator is here to book the facilities and catering, work through any logistical, menu, rentals, and other details with you, build your contract and facilitate payments, and to put you in contact with the day-of event operations manager. In some cases on an as-needed basis, the sales coordinator may be there on the day of your event to meet with you. While we will do our best to offer guidance wherever we can, your sales coordinator is not intended to act as a wedding planner or help facilitate your ceremony or other wedding details day-of. Your sales coordinator will make sure you are aware of all the zoo-specific guidelines and we will offer recommendations for what works best in our spaces and with our catering.
- **What is the role of the day-of Event Operations Manager?** The day-of event manager's key duties are a.) to oversee the set up and clean up of any rentals or catering stations that you have booked.) to expedite kitchen production and oversee staff for bar and meal service, c.) to be the primary contact to you and for delivery of any booked vendors, and d.) to be responsible for the safety of guests, staff and Zoo property. The event manager is not responsible for setting up your outside vendor's products nor is the event manager responsible for setting up personal decorations unless this service has been previously arranged.
- **Do I need to purchase zoo admission tickets for my event?** If your event is to take place within zoo grounds (past the Gatehouse after Entry Village), and your event is during normal zoo hours, then yes you must purchase admission tickets for your guests to get into the zoo for your event, at a discounted rate of \$5 per person (usually \$17). For safety, walking around the zoo is not permitted after the zoo closes, except in the pre-scheduled event locations, and therefore admission tickets do not need to be purchased for any evening events. Also, if your event is taking place "outside" zoo grounds (i.e. Great Hall or Education Classrooms) purchasing tickets is not required, but if you want your guests to have access to enjoy the zoo, then you can purchase tickets for them. We can add the admission tickets onto your event contract to make it simple for you, and then you can pick them up to distribute to your guests.
- **How do my guests get their admission tickets?** Once we receive your final guest count, we will mail you wristbands for you to distribute to your guests ahead of time. This means your guests can skip the ticket lines! Alternatively, we can set up a check-in or registration table in the Entry Village where you can distribute the wristbands to your guests upon arrival. This table must be manned by you or someone in your group, and includes a fee of \$25 for the table and linen. This is a more personal option and can also be an easy way to hand out parking passes, ride tickets, name tags, or other information and to 'welcome' your guests.
- **Where shall I instruct my guests to arrive?** Unless alternative arrangements have been made with your sales coordinator, the zoo has one entrance for both general zoo visitors and event guests, and this is located in the zoo parking lot, whether your guests are parking in the parking lot or in the free spaces along Sloat Blvd. The Zoo parking lot has two entrances: one off of the Great Highway and one off of Sloat Blvd. at 47th Ave. Please instruct your guests to refrain from following GPS to "1 Zoo Rd." because this will bring them to the back staff/delivery entrance as opposed to the guest entrance of the zoo.
- **How does parking at the zoo work?** When pre-arranged with your event coordinator, parking in the zoo parking lot is \$8.00 per space during zoo hours and is first-come/first-served. These parking permits are available only on the day of your event, so they will need to be given to you on the day of your event, if you have pre-purchased them for your guests through your event contract. Guests can also purchase their own parking passes as they exit the zoo, however on weekends the normal parking price goes up to \$10.00 per space. Parking tickets are redeemed upon EXITING the lot. This means that if you are just dropping someone off, you will want to do so from outside the parking lot to avoid paying the parking fee. Alternatively, just outside the zoo's entrance on Sloat Blvd., there are about 400 free parking spaces. For evening events (after 5:30pm) zoo parking is free. If some guests are not driving, the L-Taraval Muni is direct from downtown to the zoo.

## Section 4: General Planning Questions (continued)

- **When guests arrive at the zoo, how do they know where to go to find the event?** As a standard, we will have personalized A-frame chalkboard signage to greet guests and show directional arrows for where to find the event space.
- **What are normal zoo hours?** From late March through early November (peak season) the zoo is open from 10:00am-5:00pm. The rest of the year (off-season) the zoo is open from 10:00am-4:00pm. Events may take place either before zoo hours or after the zoo has closed, but may not straddle day and evening time frames. During daytime events when admission tickets are purchased (at the discounted event guest rate) guests are welcome to enjoy the zoo along with the general public until the zoo is closed.
- **Are the event spaces wheelchair accessible?** Yes, every event space in the zoo is wheelchair accessible. There are wheelchairs available to rent for \$15 each and can be picked up in Entry Village near the gift shop. This can be added to your event contract and wheelchairs would be set aside for you if requested. For evening events, we can also provide golf carts for transporting some of your guests to the event spaces as needed. Please speak with your sales coordinator for information on renting golf carts. Both wheelchair and golf cart rentals are subject to availability and should be coordinated with as much notice as possible.
- **Can I use my own DJ or audio visual (AV) equipment?** Yes, you are welcome to coordinate your own vendors for these services. Your sales coordinator will just need to be involved in setting up delivery times and setup windows, as these may be limited depending on facility rental times. All vendors will need to adhere to our vendor policies.
- **What types of animals can come to my event and can I make a request?** The 'Animal Experiences' document explains the animal entertainment options we offer. The list of available animals is always changing and therefore not advertised, so please ask your sales coordinator for details. Please be aware that due to animal welfare and the mood of animals on event day, certain animals and availability is never guaranteed, however the zookeepers always do their best to accommodate specific requests.
- **Is there any furniture included in my facility rental?** Due to limited event storage space throughout the zoo, most of our tables and chairs must be rented. In the Lemur Room, most commonly used for intimate meetings or birthday parties, we include the rectangular tables and chairs that come with the space.
- **Can I provide my own decorations?** You are welcome to provide your own decorations, however you will need to coordinate having someone in your party to set them up. Also we must take into consideration that there are limited setup time frames depending on where your event is to take place. If providing your own decorations or other 'special touches' please make sure to get the items approved through your coordinator (see next bullet point) and plan set up times with your sales coordinator.
- **What are the rules for decorations and attaching them?** Mini tea light candles are allowed as long as their candle-holder height is higher than the flame. Balloons, confetti, or fireworks are all prohibited for animal and environmental welfare reasons, however bubbles or REAL flower petals are ok. Decorations being put up indoors, as long as there is no lasting damage to walls, you may attach them. Electrical tape or sticky-tack is recommended, but no nails or tacks of any sort will be allowed.

## Section 5: Wedding-Specific Questions

- **Can I host ONLY my ceremony at the zoo?** As we are the exclusive caterer on-site, we do require catering to be booked with each facility rental. Therefore, we do not host ceremonies without also hosting a reception of some kind.
- **How do wedding photos work?** During zoo open hours you are welcome to walk throughout the zoo to take your photos. There will still be general zoo public in the zoo at this time, but guests tend to congratulate you in passing, and treat you like zoo celebrities! Plus it's always nice to get your photos out of the way before the wedding happens when you are looking your freshest, and then you can enjoy the company of your guests during your event. If you would like to take photos after zoo hours, then we will need to assign a zoo staff to chaperone you through the zoo, which incurs a \$100 per hour staffing fee.
- **Is there an area that can be used as a bridal suite?** When you have booked the Great Hall as your reception facility, there is a Conference Room that we can book for you at the rate of \$300 for the evening. This space is also used for zoo staff meetings throughout the day, so availability is limited so let your coordinator know as soon as possible if you are interested in the bridal suite.