

The Virginia Zoo

Fun for all ages; this sums up the Norfolk Zoo in a nutshell. Almost immediately after entering through the gates you come upon a group of small water fountains set into the concrete that tempts both young and old to splash around a little. There is also a small train station at the rear of the entranceway that will take you on a “train ride”. The train is a small wooden kid friendly train and the token to “climb aboard” is offered at the entrance. We usually do the train ride at the end of our trip so as not to spoil the fun of walking through and visiting the animals up close and at our own pace.

There are several different paths (all well marked) you can take depending on which animals you want to see first. All of the trails meet up somewhere inside so there is no wrong choice. Each station has signs with information on what type of animal you will be seeing. Part of the fun is sometimes trying to find the animal in their natural habitat. Our grandkids like to make a game of trying to spot the animals first.

Most of the exhibits are outside and allow you to feel as if you are hanging out with the animals not just viewing them through glass. There are a few indoor exhibits for the reptiles and insects and I, for one, am glad they remain glassed off. In one area, set up like a farm, animals and exotic birds roam the walkways. In the spring and summer there are baby goats up close and personal to pet and/or feed. Zoo employees and volunteers are always nearby to answer any questions. Photo opportunities are everywhere so be sure and have a camera handy.

There is a small gift shop and concession stand on the premises so you can purchase souvenirs and snacks if you would like. They are set up in small outbuildings on the grounds – no flashy displays to tempt anyone unnecessarily – just options for your convenience and pleasure. And this is what the Norfolk Zoo does for any and all visitors – gives you options to personalize your visit. Whether it is a one-time visit or the first of many, each and every visit is unique and special; just the way it should be.