

Sensory-Friendly Tip Sheet: ZooLights at Smithsonian's National Zoo

About this event:

- ZooLights is a free holiday event at the Smithsonian's National Zoo, featuring live music performances, winter-themed treats and activities, and a display of over 500,000 lights presented throughout the Zoo.
- This is a Zoo-wide event, occurring every night from November 23 to January 1, with the exception of December 24, 25, and 31. ZooLights is an evening event, running from 5:00-9:00PM each day.
- Please note that all indoor animal houses will be closed during ZooLights. Animals will not be visible.
- ZooLights is most crowded on weekends; in the days leading up to the Christmas holiday; and, in the week between Christmas and New Years'. ZooLights tends to be less crowded earlier in the season, and early in the week (Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays).
 - There are three special events occurring within ZooLights, where higher visitation is expected: BrewLights (Nov. 29), FONZ Member Week (Dec. 2-9), and Military Appreciation Night (Dec. 13).
- All ZooLights attractions are weather permitting, and may not open when temperatures are below 35 degrees.

Access Services at ZooLights:

- Sensory Friendly Kits available to check out free of charge at the Panda Plaza Info Desk. Kits are available on a first come, first served basis.
- Stroller, electric scooter, and wheelchair rentals are available at the Panda Plaza and Lion/Tiger Info Booths.

Visual Stimuli:

- The main attraction at ZooLights are the holiday light displays. Many of these displays are large depictions of animals. Some light displays may twinkle off and on.
- Costumed character "Panda Claws" makes appearances from 5:30-8:30PM on Thursdays through Sundays. Panda Claws is also expected to make appearances each night between Dec. 16 and 30.
- There is a laser light show on the wall of the Elephant Community Center which includes flashing and quick moving lights.
- There is a "Dancing Trees" light show occurring every 15 minutes near the Elephant Community Center and Mane Grill.
- Fire pits for roasting marshmallows may be found near Conservation Pavilion.

Auditory Stimuli:

- The Great Meadow may host holiday music and dance performers.
 - Also at this location is an interactive light display that reacts to music, creating a sound and light show to accompany the performers.
- Live music may be played at the Gingerbread Village on select nights.
- The Conservation Carousel and National Zoo Choo Choo may be running and playing music.
- The event may be loud.

Movement Opportunities:

- The event space may be crowded.
- There is a holiday-themed obstacle course, inflatable slide, and other rides at the Reindeer Games area.
- National Zoo Choo Choo may be operating, providing rides around the Kids' Farm.
- The Conservation Carousel may be open.

Restrooms:

- During the event, restrooms will be open in the Visitor Center, Panda Plaza, Elephant Outpost, and below Conservation Pavilion.
- Family restrooms are located in the Visitor Center, Elephant Outpost, and Conservation Pavilion.

Indoor Spaces Open:

- The Visitor Center, Panda Plaza Gift Shop, Mane Grill, and Great Cats Gift Shop will be open during the event.

Allergy Information:

- Roasted nuts will be sold at this event.