



Alice Springs Desert Park

PARK INFORMATION AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SCHOOL AND OTHER STUDENT GROUPS

The Alice Springs Desert Park is one of the world's leading environmental and cultural display and interpretation facilities. It provides the ideal introduction to the Australian deserts and opens visitors' eyes to the many stories and secrets of the plants, animals, people and landscapes of this vast and beautiful area of Australia.

During a visit to the Park, your group can expect to have many close-up and intimate experiences with unique plants and fascinating animals. They will also have the opportunity to join Guide presentations where they can learn about life in the desert from professional and well-trained local Guides.

A visit to the Desert Park will give students

- an understanding that the country through which they are travelling is alive, exciting and dynamic
- an awareness of the complexity of the habitats they encounter
- cross-cultural awareness and appreciation
- an appreciation that the desert is enjoyable to visit and worth protecting

A Park visit is a shared experience and the Park is enjoyed by approximately 100,000 visitors per year. So we ask your group to follow this simple code of conduct which will assist with their safety and enjoyment and will help us to ensure the ongoing quality of the Park experience for everyone.

Supervisors

Supervisors are admitted to the Park free of charge up to a ratio of 1 supervisor to 5 students. Supervisors must have no other duties whilst on Park other than supervision of the students, otherwise they will be considered accompanying adults and be charged adult entry rates. School and university groups must have an adult supervisor to student ratio of no less than 1:10.

Students remain the responsibility of their supervisors at all times. Where possible, we suggest you divide large groups into smaller groups of six to ten students per supervisor. This way you can avoid congestion around exhibits and make supervision more effective. Supervision from the Café whilst students are exploring the Park is not adequate.

If you do not have adequate numbers of adult supervisors to accompany your students, please notify us at least 14 days prior to your visit and we will arrange for members of our staff to accompany your students to ensure proper supervision. Our fee for this service is \$220 per staff member for up to 4 hours supervision and \$50 per hour (or part thereof) after that.

Please be aware that your discounted group rate is dependent on the behaviour of your group. Students should be reminded of what is expected of them prior to the visit, and a staff member will be available to reinforce this message as you enter. The Park reserves the right to invoice your group at full rates should your group fail to behave appropriately on Park and to refuse discounted group rates for your school for future visits should that be deemed appropriate.

On arrival at the Park, all supervisors will be given a Supervisor's Badge with your group's name on it. This must be worn by your supervisors while they are on Park and will enable our staff to easily identify a supervisor should one of your students need first-aid or other assistance.

Please Stay on the Paths

While the Park is designed to provide a 'mini-wilderness experience', it is a controlled area and as such there are restrictions on where visitors can go. Paths are provided to guide movements and to protect the surrounding vegetation from being trampled.

Several of our animal enclosures are walk-through exhibits. While this allows very close encounters with animals large and small, please be aware that areas off the paths may be critical feeding, breeding or retreat areas for the animals and so students must stay on the pathways.

Please Avoid Excessive Noise in the Nocturnal House and other Animal Enclosures

Good wildlife observation, whether at the Park or in the wild, requires the viewer to minimise disturbance of the animals. Excessive noise can disturb animals, particularly in walk-through exhibits like the Nocturnal House and the large aviaries. Normal talking levels do not cause problems but above that level some animals may become distressed and disappear from view. Excessive noise also makes it difficult for other visitors to observe animals.

Please Take Care Walking Around the Park

Many of the paths in the Park are narrow and winding and, not surprisingly, it's dark and visibility is low in the Nocturnal House. Crashing into other visitors in the Nocturnal House or other locations can cause unnecessary distress or even severe injuries.

But our request to slow down and be careful is more than just a regulatory issue. Much that the desert, and any natural environment, has to offer is subtle and easily over-looked. Learning to walk slowly, look carefully and listen to the sounds of nature are the critical first steps in developing an understanding of the natural world.

We do understand that young people sometimes need to 'let off steam' and the Park picnic area is a relatively safe area for students to vent some of the excess energy after a long bus trip. You may wish to plan your visit so that you have lunch or a break in the picnic area before coming into the Park.

Please Stay Seated Throughout the Nature Theatre Presentations

With free-flying birds on display in the Nature Theatre, it is essential that all visitors remain seated throughout the entire presentation. Failure to do so exposes your students and supervisors or our birds to the risk of injury.

If you arrive late, you will be asked to wait by one of our Guides until a suitable moment in the presentation at which time a Guide will escort you to your seat.

If your group has a fixed departure time which may require an early departure from the Nature Theatre, please inform us in advance of your visit and our Guides will ensure that your group is seated conveniently to leave at an appropriate time and will escort your group from the Nature Theatre at that time.

If you have a non-English speaking group and wish to translate for them during the presentation, please notify one of the Guides at the Nature Theatre so that they can arrange for you group to sit close together. This will enable you to translate for them without disturbing other visitors in the Theatre.

Photography

Please DO take photographs in all areas of the Park, including the Nocturnal House.

We would love your students to take home great photographic memories of the Park and yet many people feel that they should not use flashes in the Nocturnal House. Our experience is that the animals are not disturbed at all by the quick flash light of a camera and so please feel free to take photographs in the Nocturnal House. To avoid glare reflecting from the glass, the camera lens should be held hard against the glass or pictures should be shot at an angle to the glass. Remember some automatic focus cameras may have difficulty focusing in those conditions

Video camera lights which stay on longer than flash lights do disturb animals in the Nocturnal House. They will often cause the animals to run for cover and be difficult to see and so we ask your students not to use video lights in the Nocturnal House.

Territory Parks and Wildlife Legislation

The Desert Park is covered by the same legislation as the NT National Parks. Under those Acts, By-laws and Regulations, littering and interfering with plants or animals or other natural features is prohibited. Members of the public are also required, under that legislation, to obey the reasonable directions of a member of staff.