



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SANTA BARBARA ZOO OPEN & FREE TODAY (THURSDAY) 10 A.M. TO 3 P.M., REGULAR HOURS & ADMISSIONS RESUME FRIDAY, DEC. 22; OPEN CHRISTMAS & NEW YEARS**

- Evacuation Orders Lifted; Animals on View; Ash Cleanup Continues
- Guests Should Check Air Quality Warnings, Take Precautions
- Zoo Camp Set for Next Week – December 26 to 29
- Thursday & Friday: Indoor Fun for Kids in Discovery Pavilion
- Regular Hours 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Begin Friday (Dec. 22)
- Donations to Emergency Fund can be Made Online

Santa Barbara, CA, December 21, 2017 – After a five-day closure due to the Thomas Fire, the Santa Barbara Zoo reopens today (Dec. 21) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with free admission, parking, Zoo Train rides, giraffe feeding and more. All evacuation orders have been lifted in Santa Barbara County. Regular Zoo admission hours and admission prices resume on Friday, December 22. Most animals are on view (see below). The popular indoor activities for kids in the Zoo’s Discovery Pavilion, which were held last week, continue on Thursday and Friday only. Zoo Camp will take place next week as scheduled (see below). The Zoo is open Christmas Eve and Day (December 24 and 25), from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; and has full hours on both New Year’s Eve and Day. Details are on the Zoo’s website ([www.sbzoo.org](http://www.sbzoo.org)) and Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/santabarbarazoo](http://www.facebook.com/santabarbarazoo)).

The Zoo’s parking lot, public exhibit areas, and walkways have been cleaned, but ash may continue to fall and is a health concern. Animal exhibit areas are still being cleaned. Guests should use their own judgement about spending time outside, check air quality notices from officials, and wear breathing masks designed for smoke (N95), if necessary.

“I am so proud of our team, which showed such dedication during the Thomas Fire, and is now getting the Zoo ready to reopen,” said Zoo CEO Rich Block. “A zoo is more than animals, it is a hardworking professional staff that keeps those animals cared for and, above all, safe. We drill for

emergencies, and have crisis plans for many scenarios, including fire. Our staff was prepared and ready to act at a moment's notice, and did just that."

Those looking to support the Zoo are encouraged to visit, purchase a membership, or donate to the Emergency Fund online at [www.sbzoo.pivvit.com/zoo-emergency-fund](http://www.sbzoo.pivvit.com/zoo-emergency-fund).

### Activities Indoors and Outside

Special indoor activities will be held in Discovery Pavilion on Thursday and Friday, and are free of charge. They include a bounce house, seasonal arts and crafts, holiday music and movies, and Story Time with Turtle. Ride-on animals and falling "snow" are in the courtyard. Children must be accompanied by an adult; no drop-off is available.

Santa Claus is available for photos and gift requests. The Zoo Train runs every 30 minutes, and the Giraffe Feeding Deck and Climb for Condors rock wall have reopened and are free on Thursday only. The Ridley-Tree House Restaurant and Zoo Gift Shop are open, with standard prices. Check the entry sign for a schedule of other activities held throughout the day.

### Most Animals on View

Outside at the Zoo, most animals are on view in their enclosures at various times throughout the day. The only animals completely off-exhibit on Thursday are titi monkeys and white-handed gibbons. The Zoo's barnyard animals (churro sheep, San Clemente goats, and Guinea hogs) return from evacuation to the Earl Warren Showgrounds on Thursday afternoon.

The Zoo's California condors (highly endangered), Ruppell's griffon vultures, and turkey vulture were evacuated on Saturday, December 16 to the Los Angeles Zoo, and will return when conditions allow. The two reindeer on loan to the Zoo for the holiday season were temporarily evacuated to the Showgrounds and have cut short their stay at the Zoo, returning to Windswept Ranch near Tehachapi, California, on Tuesday, December 19.

Female giant anteater Anara, who gave birth to rare twins on November 21, has access to her outdoor area and may be seen with a young pup clinging to her back. However, in order to free Zoo staff from round-the-clock feedings during the Thomas Fire emergency, the hand-rearing of the second pup is now taking place at the Fresno Zoo. Anara was born and hand-raised there.

### Winter Zoo Camp to Proceed December 26 - 29

The second week of the Zoo's award-winning Zoo Camp, will take place as planned from Tuesday, December 26 to Friday, December 29. Full and half day sessions are available on a daily

basis, and include hands-on science activities, games, crafts, snack and lunch time, up-close animal encounter (feeding opportunity or animal enrichment experience), and a guided Zoo tour. The first week of Zoo Camp was cancelled due to the effects of the Thomas Fire. For more information or to register online, visit [www.sbzoo.org/learn/zoo-camp-day-camp](http://www.sbzoo.org/learn/zoo-camp-day-camp).

### **Thomas Fire: Zoo was in Voluntary Evacuation Zone; Less than 25 of 500 Animals Evacuated**

Driven by high winds, the Thomas Fire moved towards Santa Barbara and the Zoo on Saturday, December 16, causing widespread mandatory evacuations nearby. By mid-morning, the Zoo was placed in a voluntary evacuation zone. The Zoo had already activated its emergency plan, and temporarily placed small mammals and birds in kennels, which were staged in Discovery Pavilion for quick evacuation. Large mammal crates were delivered and assistance offered by Zoo partners including the Los Angeles Zoo, San Diego Zoo, and Safari West, among others. Trucks were rented and donated for use by local businesses.

Less than 25 of the Zoo's more than 500 animals were actually evacuated: four California condors, two Ruppell's griffon vultures, one turkey vulture, five churro sheep, five San Clemente goats, two Guinea hogs, and two reindeer; and the anteater pup was relocated to the Fresno Zoo.

The Santa Barbara Zoo was first closed due to the effects of the Thomas Fire nearly a week earlier, from Sunday, December 10 through Tuesday, December 12. At that time, the Zoo was outside any evacuation zone, but conditions were very smoky. The Zoo reopened with reduced hours, free admission, and indoor activities from Wednesday, December 13 to Friday, December 15. Many animals were kept inside due to poor air conditions and guests were encouraged to enjoy special inside activities in Discovery Pavilion.

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*The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$17 for adults, \$10 for children 2-12, \$13 for seniors 65+, and free for children under 2. Parking is \$7.*

*Visit [www.sbzoo.org](http://www.sbzoo.org).*

*Known as one of the world's most beautiful zoos, the Santa Barbara Zoo is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](http://www.aaz.org) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Asian elephant, California condor, Channel Island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. A private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements.*