

# adventures

## The Monterey Zoo

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There's something timeless about visiting a zoo. The thrill of seeing animals I'd only read about in books is stitched into my early childhood memories. As an adult, I'm conflicted at the idea of wild animals living in confined spaces for human viewing. Nevertheless, when I heard about the Monterey Zoo, I decided to check it out.

Located on 51 acres in a mostly agricultural valley between Monterey and Salinas, the Monterey Zoo was accredited by the Zoological Association of America in 2020. It is modest in size and easy to navigate, with clearly marked maps and signage.

We visited on a Sunday afternoon, and while it wasn't crowded, the parking lot was full and quite a few families were enjoying a beautiful February day. Young children squealed in delight as they raced from one enclosure to the next, pressing their hands against the viewing windows. We overheard one young child explaining to her parents that no two zebra's stripes are alike, just like human fingerprints. (She was obviously paying attention in science class.)

The Monterey Zoo is home to more than 100 exotic animals, including several cat species, bears, zebras, rhinos, primates, reptiles, birds, and more. It took us about two hours, at a leisurely pace, to view all the exhibits. My personal favorites were the enormous, 5000-pound white rhinos and the primates.

You can move from one habitat to the next in minutes, but that proximity is a double-edged sword. Some of the enclosures felt small. The signage explains the zoo's conservation efforts and rescue stories, but it's hard to watch a large cat pace along the perimeter of its habitat. It's important to



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note that most of the animals are not taken from the wild, but are born in captivity or come from situations where they cannot survive independently.

The Monterey Zoo is open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is \$37.75 for visitors aged 15 and up, \$27.50 for children aged two to 14. Children under two are free. The zoo is located at 400 River Road in Salinas.

If you want to turn your visit into a staycation, there is an onsite bed-and-breakfast at the zoo. We didn't try it, but more information is at [www.visionquestranch.com](http://www.visionquestranch.com).

If you or your children enjoy seeing animals up close, the Monterey Zoo is worth a visit. It's just over an hour's drive from Summit and Highway 17, and if you take the faster coastal route, it's a lovely drive. Find out more at [www.montereyzoo.org](http://www.montereyzoo.org).

