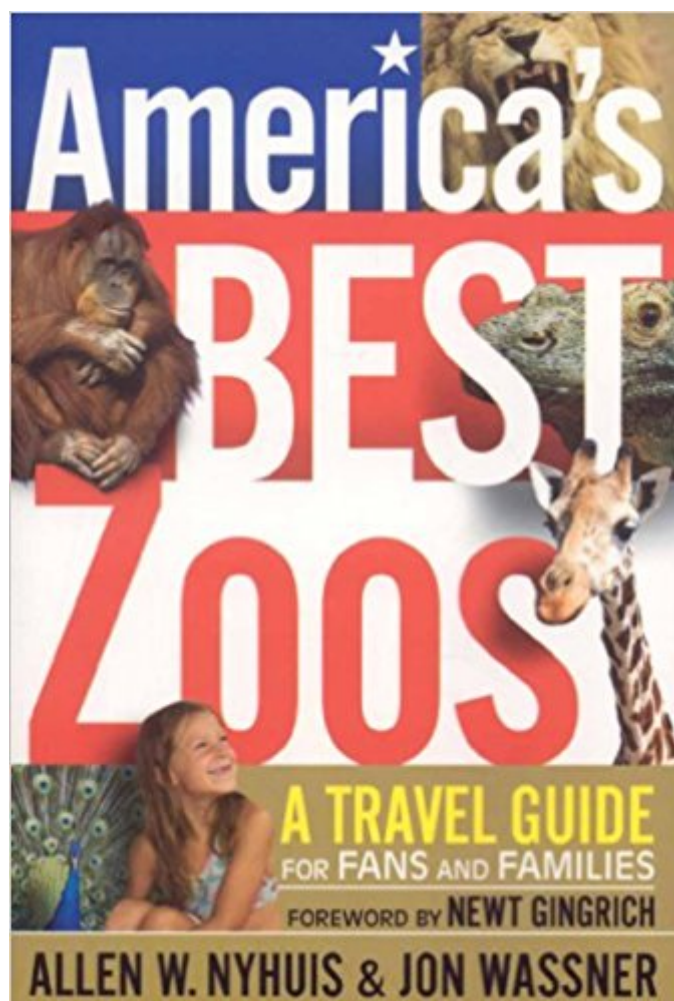


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# America's Best Zoos: A Travel Guide For Fans & Families



## Synopsis

Animals are hot! Animal Planet rules TV ratings. The Lion King reigns on Broadway. March of the Penguins was boffo. Polar bear cub Knut is an international celebrity. Zoos are educational, cheaper than amusement parks, fun for the whole family, and attract more visitors than spectator sports. America's Best Zoos is a comprehensive guide to a true family entertainment bargain. Arranged geographically for touring convenience, it gives detailed descriptions of top zoos across the country.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

GreenDaily.com ...written in clear, engaging prose... I especially appreciated their efforts to showcase the unique aspect of each zoo. (GreenDaily.)

It's a common misconception that all zoos are alike. This erroneous belief keeps many people from adding zoos to their travel itineraries. People ask, "We already have a good zoo in our hometown, so why should we want to see some other zoo?" The fact is, though, that each zoo is different, and some are unique. The tropical foliage at the Jacksonville Zoo is quite different from the evergreens of Portland's Oregon Zoo. An African savanna exhibit in the desert at the Phoenix Zoo is not at all similar to the savanna at the urban Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. Some zoo exhibits, such as the Bronx Zoo's Congo Gorilla Forest or the Lied Jungle in Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, are unparalleled. Koalas, okapis, giant otters, and even moose are displayed at very few zoos, and there are still fewer than half a dozen U.S. zoos where you can go to see a giant panda. Thus, visiting a new zoo is almost guaranteed to be a very different experience than a visit to your local

zoo. Together, we have visited all sixty of the "Best" zoos featured in this book, many of them more than once. We have visited these zoos as tourists, often with family members (including children) accompanying us, and we have been careful to notice what would interest the typical visitor. Our hope is that this book will inspire you to visit more zoos around our nation, and that it will make your experience of these zoos even more rewarding.

I had a post about the first edition of the book on , describing how we use it to find more zoos than the law allows, and one of the authors warned me there was a second edition. Well, I purchased it within an hour after finding out. It came today, and I've spent most of today reading about the zoos I've attended to see how updated it was and to see if it was still accurate. In both cases, it is outstanding. I've read it most of the day. One of my favorite moments at any zoo was a trip to the Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek in their Africa portion. It's a vast area with field in one area and trees. When we went, it started thundering and we were able to watch a ton of animals run from one end of the exhibit (the grassy area) to the "protection of the trees." Where else beyond the wild do you get to see that? And while reading the book, it was as if the authors saw the same experience and understood how valuable an exhibit that is. I wish some of the smaller zoos got a little bit more than the one or two paragraphs they get, but I get it - you have to cut it at some point. And the descriptions of those zoos remain pretty solid. We've been to many of the "Best of the rest" and will testify that some of the golden gem zoos of the US exist in this category. One issue I do have that I don't understand why they were deleted was the final list of "other" zoos which we visited as well. They only included the names and maybe a phone number or address in the initial book, but that was enough for us to seek them out and add them to our "zoo collection." And almost every one of these zoos, albeit most are so small you can go through them in a couple of hours, have something about them that's, simply, downright cool. I'd love to see in future editions, see a list of these zoos (maybe with just a website) be included again. I'm sure we are not the only ones that used those lists to find those zoos you may not exist even in your own state. Now that I have my critical portion of the post completed, I'd like to mention a huge plus to the book - the map at the start of each regional chapter. It's great seeing a visual of how close/far these zoos are to each other. We vacation in Kentucky a lot, usually go to the Louisville or Cincy zoo one day and then finish our travels the next day down south in Kentucky. And occasionally while in those areas, we've spent a day driving to Knoxville and Nashville to see these zoos. Now, we didn't need this book to do this, but I can see there will be other places we haven't explored where seeing the visual today has my mind thinking. How about a three-day weekend trip from for three of the Indiana zoos? Yeah, I think

that can be done reasonably easily as I can see from the map in the Great Lakes area - stuff like that. It's a simple thing, but really adds a great dimension to the book. I wish I can give the book 4.5 stars. I hate being one of those people that always give five stars to everything I grade, because I feel eventually your ratings lack purpose if you say everything is perfect. However, this book is worth more than four stars as well. If I could've given it 4.5 stars (the reason giving it that is the loss of a half due to that small list of zoos being eliminate), I would. If this was a scale of 1 to 10, this would be a nine. Anyone ever wanting to make a living spending their vacations checking out the US zoos NEED THIS BOOK. Even if you see this post when the book is 10 years old, it will still have value to you, as the old one did for us. Great stuff.

This is the third book I have bought over the years that rates and describes zoos, and it is the best of the three-also the only one that is current. There are sixty zoos that the authors have featured as America's best zoos. They are grouped into seven regions-Eastern, Southern, South Central, Great Lakes Area, North Central, Southwestern and Western, and West Coast Zoos. From five to thirteen zoos were selected from each region. There are several pages of information on each featured zoo. At the beginning of each zoo's review is the pertinent information. This includes: the zoo's name, address, phone number, web address, hours, admission and parking fees, any additional fees (such as rides), and directions to the zoo. It also includes: Don't Miss-which lists the zoo's best exhibits, and also may include rides, shows, and even a restaurant that is a special experience. For Kids-a list of what the zoo offers with extra kid appeal. Authors' Tips-tidbits for getting the best zoo experience. Edutainment-a listing of shows, talks, etc. Several pages of interesting, informative description of the zoo follows the condensed information at the beginning. This is also well organized and easy to follow. Featured Exhibits is first. The authors describe in detail the best of what the zoo has to offer. This is followed by shorter descriptions of Other Exhibits, and For the Kids. Lastly, they include In Progress-projects that the zoo was working on or planning at press time-many of which are now complete. At the end of each region is Best of the Rest. This section gives the name, address, phone number, web address, and a paragraph of description of several more zoos-thirty seven in all. The authors have done a terrific job. It is easy to find all the important stuff, because they have grouped it all together at the beginning of each zoo's section. And the descriptions are great. They clearly tell what you can expect to find, and the personality of each zoo. Other information that I found particularly helpful was the chapter of lesser-known animals and where to see them that was at the beginning of the book. This chapter also includes a list of favorite zoo animals and the best zoos to see them. Appendixes include a comprehensive list of The top ten

U.S. Zoo exhibits in 20 categories. Categories include Children's Zoos, Rides, and Shows-as well as types of animals. There are also lists of each author's 25 favorite zoo exhibits.

This is an excellent book! I went and visited 30 AZA facilities this summer, the majority of which were in this book. Although at this point a bit dated (zoos are evolving and improving all the time) it's pretty accurate on what one will see at a particular zoo. If I have criticisms, they are that some zoos that didn't make it into the book were in my opinion better than ones in there (for example I thought that Potter Park Zoo in Lansing, Michigan and Brandywine Zoo in Wilmington, Delaware were both better zoos than Oglebay Good Zoo in Wheeling, West Virginia, of which the former two weren't in the book and the later was), and I would also include some of the better aquariums (such as the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia and the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey, California) and wild animal parks (such as The Wilds in Cumberland, Ohio and Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas). Granted that would be an enormous endeavor to include AZA facilities like those, but would make for a richer book for the best of the AZA facilities as a whole. Speaking of a huge endeavor, if down the road the authors would do another edition (or others to carry on this legacy) that would be a book that I'd preorder! Overall a great read and a useful book to plan trips around!

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