

Something New At An Old Icon: Buttonwood Park Zoo



by
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Summer is in full effect and with my list of fun time activities growing smaller and smaller, my son and I begin to acknowledge the bleak notion that we may, in fact, lose our minds. A mind is a terrible thing to waste, let alone two! So, in order to quell the stuck-at-home blues, I suggest to him we take a trip to the Buttonwood Park Zoo, and away we go!

A little fun fact about the BPZ, it happens to be the oldest, continually operating zoo in Massachusetts. Pretty neat, huh? Owned and operated by the City of New Bedford, and supported by the nonprofit Buttonwood Park Zoological society, its' primary theme, *From the Berkshires to the Sea*, focuses on the land and water based wildlife found mainly around North

America; with the exception of the Asian elephants, of course!

With nearly 200 species to care for, the BPZ staff has placed a special emphasis on creating natural habitats for the animals, comparable to those found in the wild. The charismatic River Otters, the majestic Harbor Seals, and the sleepy Black Bears are just a few of the many animals you'll encounter on your journey. And once you cross the adorable covered bridge and head into the Buttonwood Farm, you'll mingle with the goats, smile at the horses, and speculate what that gang of chickens is really up to. We bet it's no good!



The Zoo's *Wildlife Education Center* and *Zookeeper Staff* offer a full range of programs for children of all ages! *Animal Encounters* allows people the opportunity to chat with the zoo keepers and experience the bears, elephants, or seals in a more up-close and personal setting. *Zoo Nights* gives visitors a fresh and unique perspective on the animals they only ever see during the day, who, like some people, are less active in the summer heat. The animals are definitely more alert, and as a bonus, you get to roam the zoo at night! It's super fun! I know, because my son and I have done it! For groups of 20+ people there's *Flashlight Adventures*, *Critter Camp-ins*, and *Twilight Tours*; all excellent ways to experience the zoo in nontraditional ways!

If, by chance, your family should find themselves at the zoo on a Monday, my son and I would most definitely recommend catching one of the Toe Jam Puppet Band's famous shows. Located by the elephants, weather permitting, or inside the cafeteria building, admission is just \$5 additional dollars for all the singing and dancing you can muster! And be sure to say "hi" to Tom and Vinny for us before heading out to catch a ride on the zoo train, or hopping aboard the Wildlife Carousel!



When you've finally hit that point where your feet begin to ache and your attention starts to wane, stop into the Bear's Den Café and take a load off. Reflect on your joyful experience and be thankful for it. You'll be refreshed and ready to return another time; or perhaps even make one last trip around the zoo before you leave to bid the animal's farewell.

For those of you who worry that a trip to the zoo might not be in your budget, head on over to one of New Bedford's libraries and reserve a pass for your family. The pass includes a one day admission for up to four people, free of charge! And while you're there, be sure to pick up a few zoological themed books (to get your little ones even more excited), and [Dig Into](#)

Reading

So when boredom hits your household and you fear your children may usurp, thwart their revolution with a visit to the Buttonwood Park Zoo! It's a wonderful way to fill the day with fun, education, and the great outdoors; all while being surrounded by beautiful animals, passionate people, and the ones you love.

For more information and updates on the zoo, be sure to give their [Facebook](#) a 'like,' and stay in the loop! Also, check out New Bedford Guide's Buttonwood Park Zoo photo gallery for 100 photos of the zoo!

Summer Hours are March – September: 9:00am – 5:00pm, daily (with the last admission at 4:15pm)

New Bedford Resident Admission (Must show proof of New Bedford Residency)

Adult: \$6

Senior/Student: \$4.50

Child (Ages 3-12): \$3

Child Under Age 3: FREE

Parking: Free

Non-Resident Admission

Adult: \$8

Senior/Student: \$6

Child (Ages 3-12): \$4

Child Under Age 3: FREE

The Zoo accepts MasterCard and Visa at the front gate for ticket purchases and MasterCard, Visa and Discover at the Café and Gift Shop.

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