



Have a Hippo Encounter at the L.A. Zoo

Kids love to perplex us with the oddest questions. If yours have ever asked you, “What do hippos eat for lunch?” you can show them – with a visit to the Los Angeles Zoo’s Hippo Encounter.

Since February, the zoo has invited small groups of visitors in for up-close noontime visits with Mara the hippo and her baby Rosie, on weekends and holidays. If you think that sounds fun, check it out soon. Spots are opened up just two months at a time and seem to sell out almost immediately. And the opportunity won’t last forever, according to General Curator Beth Schaefer. At some point, baby Rosie will grow too big to fit alongside her mom in the enclosure where the encounters are held.

Groups of up to 15 people ages 4 and up (children must be accompanied by an adult) are admitted to each encounter, and get the chance to stand quite close to Rosie and Mara while keepers talk about the hippos

and their daily routine, then feed them lunch. Visitors get a chance to touch the hippos and grab a selfie. (Zoo staff will be on hand to assist with the photo op. Share on social media by tagging with #hippocounter paired with #lazoo or @lazoo.)

Keepers first started bringing Mara and Rosie into the enclosure and rewarding them with their favorite foods to see if they might enjoy meeting the public. “Mara seemed totally fine with this,” says Schaefer, adding that they initially wondered whether the

mama hippo would try to stand between visitors and baby Rosie. “We didn’t really know what to expect, but they’ve both been amazing.” Hippo Encounter tickets cost \$15 per person, in addition to general zoo admission of \$20 adults, \$15 ages 2-12. Find information about the Hippo Encounter online at www.lazoo.org/visit/showsandactivities. If tickets are not available, check back for updates.



Families can meet baby Rosie and her mom, Mara, during up-close encounters at the zoo.

PHOTO BY JAMIE PHAM

– Christina Elston