

Kids' Trek opens April 2 at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park

Slide! Climb! Crawl! Balance! Bounce! Splash! Investigate! Explore!

One-of-a-kind playground is an adventureland of fun and nature-themed play

Fun 🌿 Kids learn while they play 🌿 ADA accessible 🌿 Environmentally friendly construction 🌿 Free with admission



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**Northwest Trek
Wildlife Park**

METRO PARKS TACOMA

It's a playing place. A laughing place. An "I can't wait to come back!" place.

Kids' Trek, a one-of-a-kind outdoor playground built to help kids exercise their minds and bodies while connecting more closely with nature, opens April 2 at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

The \$1.9 million, half-acre playground has been decades in the "dreaming of" and planning stages, about a year in the construction phase, and it promises years of high-energy fun that's full of imagination and investigation of the natural world for toddlers to tweens.

And, in keeping with the wildlife park's leadership in conservation, the construction of Kids' Trek employed a number of sustainable building and landscaping practices. A "green roof" of growing plants adorns the top of a pump house for the stream system. More than 600 sword ferns were carefully dug up to make way for the playground, cared for while it was built and then replanted as part of the new landscape.

"Kids' Trek is in a wonderful setting that provides children with a rare combination of the chance to see native Northwest animals in their natural environment during one part of the day and play their hearts out during another," said Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Park Commissioners President Erik Hanberg.



“There’s a lot of fun learning along the way, too,” he added. “Kids’ Trek fits in beautifully with Metro Parks’ mission to create healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow.”

Every visit to Kids’ Trek is free with paid admission or membership to Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

www.nwtrek.org/kidstrek

So, what’s all the buzz about?

Imagine sliding down a solid granite-like slab, getting back up and sliding down again.

Think about crawling through a net into a simulated 20-foot-tall tree trunk, then clambering down two more nets to get to the bottom.

Or, how about exploring a simulated beaver lodge into which a burbling stream disappears, then posing with the statue of the flat-tailed inhabitant?

The nature-themed Kids’ Trek, one of the largest outdoor playgrounds in Washington, is unlike any play area in the Puget Sound region, and is designed to stimulate imaginations,

encourage exploration and immerse kids in the world around them in a fun way.

Kids’ Trek is a half-acre of sliding, climbing, crawling, exploring fun.

The playground includes an ADA accessible path and is designed for kids of varied skills and abilities.

So what’s so cool about it?

Kids’ Trek one-of-a-kind features include:

- **Hollowed-out tree trunk climber:** A 20-foot-high simulated tree trunk with nets inside for kids to climb on
- **Series of scrambling nets:** Three wide rope nets on which kids can crawl and climb up, down and side to side

- **Tunnel slide:** A slide through a dark tunnel with a surprise 30-degree bend
- **Jiggly bridge:** A little swaying bridge to walk over, high above the main floor of the playground
- **Eagles nest:** A large, round series of taut ropes that form an area in which kids practice their balancing skills
- **Log cabins:** Kid-sized log cabins in a special Toddler Zone
- **Root wad cave:** A private space to sit or think or talk with a friend under piles of huge tree roots
- **Animal tracking:** Kids can follow animal tracks embedded in cement to learn more about predator and prey
- **Sand and shovels:** A toddler “construction area,” complete with a weeping rock so young builders can have wet sand for sculpting
- **Bubbling stream:** A signature feature that burbles over rocks into a cascading waterfall, disappears in the beaver lodge and then reappears at a spot where two whimsical otter statues play
- **Beaver lodge:** Visitors will swear real beavers built this structure of branches and twigs, complete with a realistic beaver statue standing watch. It’s the perfect picture stop – and a great space to learn more about nature’s amazing construction engineers



Scattered around the play area are more than 60 benches milled from lumber derived from trees that needed removal from the wildlife park’s 435-acre Free-Roaming area because they were downed by nature, hazardous or dying. The benches provide perfect spots for parents to watch the play from the sidelines – or for weary children to take a brief break from play.

A picnic shelter, also built mostly of treecycled lumber, sits ready for parties or other special events. Kids will love celebrating their birthdays at an awesome playground. Rental information is available at www.nwtrek.org/birthdays.



Watching over it all is a mama cougar and cub in one spot and a mountain goat perched high atop a rocky crag in another - both providing perfect photo ops.



“We are confident that Kids’ Trek fulfills the vision of Northwest Trek founders Doc and Connie Hellyer as a place that helps kids have a deeper appreciation for plants and animals,” said Northwest Trek Foundation President Doug Olmstead.

“And, perhaps best of all, it’s constructed in a way that makes learning fun,” he added. “It’s going to spark the interest, imagination and creative-learning instincts of every child who walks through the giant log entry sign.”

About three-quarters of the funding for Kids’ Trek came from the Northwest Trek Foundation, grants, and donations from companies and individuals. Money set aside in a Metro Parks Tacoma voter-approved bond issue also helped pay for the play area.

It’s the largest single project at Northwest Trek since the wildlife park opened in 1975.

“Kids’ Trek incorporates many of the things that people relish about Northwest Trek,” Education Curator Jessica Moore said. “We wanted to ensure that Kids’ Trek mirrors the lessons of the broader wildlife park in microcosm – in a space that’s built especially for children.”

Every visit to the playground is free with paid admission or membership to Northwest Trek.

The wildlife park, located just 35 miles from Tacoma, is only about an hour’s drive from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

For more information about the wildlife park, go to www.nwtrek.org. For more information about Kids’ Trek, go to www.nwtrek.org/kidstrek or www.discoverkidstrek.org.

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Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.

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Here’s the link to a gallery of downloadable photos: <https://pdza.smugmug.com/NWTrek/NWT-Media/Kidstrek/>

Password: kidstrek

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