

Grant's Farm

10501 Gravois Road

St. Louis, MO 63123

(314) 843-1700

<http://www.grantsfarm.com>

Rating of Accessibility (out of 5 stars)

Overall Rating: 4 stars

- Accessible by Metro's bus routes: 3 stars
- Availability of docent-led guides upon request: 0 stars
- On-site docents and staff: 4 stars
- Ease of visibility of featured attractions: 4 stars
- Tactile and auditory components: 4.5 stars

This evaluation was last updated on May 6, 2012 by Stephen Kissel, Blind Community Enrichment Associate for the St. Louis Lighthouse for the Blind, with the assistance of Mr. Steve Bogard, Supervisor of Guest Operations at Grant's Farm.

Like the St. Louis Zoo, Grant's Farm is an outdoor facility that showcases a small variety of animal wildlife as well as Anheuser-Busch products and memorabilia. Due to the spacious grounds, lack of Braille signage, and lack of large-print maps, it is not the most accessible facility for a blind or visually impaired individual to visit unaccompanied. However, since the facility is geared more towards a younger generation of visitors, it is very unlikely that a blind or visually impaired person would be visiting Grant's Farm on their own. This is not to say that a blind or visually impaired visitor cannot enjoy themselves at Grant's Farm, for many of the animal attractions are either very interactive or of a very close proximity to the visitor. Nevertheless, sighted assistance remains necessary to take full advantage of the features and attractions.

Grant's Farm is not close to any of Metro's bus stops. As a result, individuals wishing to reach the facility via public transportation would be well advised to take advantage of Metro's Call-A-Ride service, local cab companies, or other sighted drivers. Yet, guest drop-offs are prohibited; all vehicles entering the parking lot must pay. Therefore, it is probably advisable to visit Grant's Farm as part of a group or with a sighted companion. Admission to the park is free, but parking is not.

The grounds do present a few significant navigational obstacles, but most of these can easily be overcome through soliciting the proper sighted assistance. Only three out of four restrooms are identified with Braille signage (the restroom by the General Store being the one without). No further utilization of Braille signage is found on the grounds, so soliciting sighted assistance is crucial in correctly locating even the most basic of amenities. Upon arrival, all visitors receive a map and a list of the day's scheduled shows. Low-vision individuals who may need to reference this material (such as an individual in a parental position) will wish to bring a small magnifying device or pocket scanner. Otherwise, sighted assistance will need to be solicited. Show times can also be obtained by visiting the Grant's Farm website. Totally blind individuals will find navigating the grounds very straightforward if given clear verbal directions. Extra assistance, however, may be needed within the more spacious areas such as the outdoor eating facilities.

After first entering the park, one of the first noticeable attractions is the tram tour. This is an excellent way to explore the sights and wide variety of wildlife at Grant's Farm. The tram tour guides are very informative, and the animals can frequently be seen roaming extremely close to the tram, making them easy for a visually impaired visitor to spot.

The tram ride concludes at the tier garden, a very centrally-located position within Grant's Farm. From this point, the visitor can access various hands-on and interactive activities such as riding a carousel, feeding and petting small animals in a petting zoo, getting one's picture taken with one of the world-famous Budweiser Clydesdales, and exploring the facility's collection of various Anheuser-Busch carriages (which may not be touched). There are always staff members on duty at these key points of interest, providing adequate supervision for the youth, and making it very easy to solicit sighted assistance when necessary. There are several more animals not included in the petting zoo which may be petted if the animal chooses to wander close enough to the railing of their enclosure (which they often do). During times when the park is less crowded, it is common to find staff walking around with snakes and other animals for the public to examine on an up close and personal level. A plethora of birds inhabit Grant's Farm, and even if the person cannot see them, they can frequently be heard throughout the park, adding a pleasant auditory aspect to the atmosphere.

The facility also offers two thirty minute shows at regular intervals throughout the day: the small animal show and the elephant show. These are great opportunities for kids to see some of the many inhabitants of Grant's Farm showing off their unique talents. Often, especially in the Small Animal Show, the "hosts" look for kids to participate in certain tricks, stunts, or activities, adding another potential layer of participation and public interaction. Requesting a front-row seat by an on-duty staff member at the amphitheater will enable a visually impaired individual to receive the best possible view of the animals, although binoculars or monoculars are helpful if the individual has to sit further back. The seating rows are fairly spacious, but as a courtesy to other sighted visitors, guide dog users are advised to procure an aisle seat to maximize the easy flow of pedestrian traffic across the aisles.

There are multiple locations around the grounds where the individual may purchase snacks and drinks. Meals are also served at the brat haus, an outdoor picnic area which offers a variety of barbecue items, drinks, German music, and complimentary alcoholic beverages for people who are twenty-one years or older. No Braille or large print menus are available, but the staff is very friendly and willing to help a sight-impaired individual place an order in a timely manner.

The wide variety of animals which may be seen at Grant's Farm often overshadows its historic background. Even though the grounds are now the ancestral home of the Busch family, this place was also once the home of our eighteenth President, Ulysses S. Grant, after whom the park is named. His cabin still sits on the grounds, about a mile from its original location. Once a year, the house is open to the public during their annual Civil War reenactment. It is a unique opportunity that should not be overlooked when deciding to visit. General information about animals, shows, special events, and directions can be found on the Grant's Farm website. Despite the lack of headings, the site is relatively easy to navigate with screen reading and screen enlarging software.

For any further questions concerning your visit, please contact:

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