



Accessibility Tour of the Duke Energy Children's Museum

Access to the Duke Energy Children's Museum

Elevator

From Cincinnati Museum Center's Rotunda, an oversize elevator goes directly to the Children's Museum. It is large enough to hold several wheelchairs or several gurneys, plus companions. The floor levels are marked in Braille on the inside of the elevator doorframe. The elevator's lights dim and change color while it's moving and could frighten someone not prepared for it.

Escalator/Stairs

From Museum Center's Rotunda, a set of stairs and an escalator both lead to a short ramped landing. This landing connects to the final set of stairs and escalator, ending in the Duke Energy Children's Museum lobby on the Lower Level. The ramp has an overlook spot for a peek into the Museum.

From our other Museums

Duke Energy Children's Museum can be reached from the Lower Level of both the Museum of Natural History & Science and the Cincinnati History Museum. The doors into the Children's Museum lobby from these Museums are equipped with a push-plate for automatic opening. However, tickets for the Children's Museum are sold only at the kiosk in the Rotunda at Museum Center.

Visitor Services in the Duke Energy Children's Museum lobby

There is a desk in the lobby where staff—wearing blue denim shirts with the Museum Center logo—can answer questions and provide any help you might need. They can direct you to the following services:

- Accessible restrooms with Braille labels on the door signs
- Accessible drinking fountains
- Wheelchair accessible telephones (our TTY telephone is upstairs in the main lobby)
- Equipment to use for the Talking Signs® system in the Children's Museum. Talking Signs is both a wayfinding aid and a narrative describing the exhibits.
- A tactile model of the entire Children's Museum with a Braille key to exhibits. Touch boxes that provide a tactile experience for the visitor are also available. A staff member in the exhibit areas will be happy to bring these out for you.

Exhibit Areas in the Duke Energy Children's Museum

The following tour takes you on a right-handed loop through the entire Duke Energy Children's Museum. There are Braille labels located throughout the Children's Museum.

Animal Spot

In *Animal Spot*, learn how animals move, what they eat, what they "wear" and what their skeletons look like. Play animal games on accessible tabletops or put together animal puzzles. There are beautiful things to look at in the cases, and a touch area where you can wrap your arms around an elephant skull, feel dinosaur bones and sit on a giant tortoise shell.

South Resource Lab

This is a quiet, enclosed place with books—including Braille, quiet games on tables, activity kits and a comfortable couch. If you and your child want to learn more about the topics in this area, or just need a break, the *Resource Lab* is there for you.

The Woods

The Woods is a lively three-story area of climbing, sliding and crawling through hollow logs and across bridges. You can look at live pond animals, play in a tree house, explore caves and learn to tie knots, or build a spider web. And there's a Treasure Hunt! Just follow the clues. Lighting in the *Woods* is dramatic, with some areas that are a bit dark. This could be overwhelming for some. A gentler space for younger children can be found in the Web-Building corner of the *Woods*. The floor surface of the *Woods'* changes suddenly in places. The spongy feel of a forest floor gives way to the firmer feel of the "creek," then becomes spongy again on the other side. This change can be startling to someone not prepared for it.

The second-story is accessible by a motorized lift just to the right of the waterfall. A staff member will be happy to help you. There are also stairs inside the big cave. Since young explorers can move between levels in many different ways, your child won't always come out where he or she went in! However, there is only one exit from the *Woods*, and that's where you entered.

All of our crawling logs and net tubes are built to carry a lot of weight. Kneepads are available for parents who wish to accompany their child through these spaces. Our nets also stretch and sway a bit under the weight of the crawler. All of these net tubes have smaller netting around them, but may still be frightening for anyone uncomfortable with heights.

For more cautious crawlers, there's a net tube with a solid bottom that's just two feet off the floor. It's in the Web-Building corner. The crawling log, tree-trunk ladder and tree-root crawling tunnel could be difficult for anyone with claustrophobia.

It's best that no one under age three try the climbing maze. It requires the strength and reasoning skills of an older child, and little ones may panic inside it. There's an "escape hatch" that can be opened by a staff member in an emergency.

The caves are both somewhat dark, and have some narrow passages, but are both wheelchair accessible. The big cave has one passage filled with stretchy tree roots that could be scary. The waterfall cave has a "skylight" directly beneath the falling water. The sound or sight of water hitting this surface could be startling or frightening.

In the *Woods*, you might hear the call of birds, frogs and crickets. Inside the cave, there's the steady drip of water. At the waterfall, you might hear gurgling water, or the splash of a turtle sliding into the pond. Touch the walls and you'll feel rough rocks, or fossils buried in a cliff surface. Feel the spiral pattern of a giant spider web, or the sticks, leaves and twigs of a bird's nest. You might see the pattern of light through leaves, or the movement of live fish and turtles in the pond.

Water Works

There's water all around and lots of activity in this area. Build a boat and sail it down the stream, build a bridge, cause a cloudburst, team up to fill buckets and turn waterwheels, or just dip, pour and splash.

Waterproof aprons are available for protection, and there are hot-air dryers too. The entire area is wheelchair accessible, and the padded floor resists skidding when wet. A "Splash Zone" is marked to warn anyone who might be uncomfortable getting wet.

There's the continuous sound of a blower making "wind" for sailboats in this area, and the sudden sound of a bell being rung by waterpower.

Sensory experience

You might hear water splashing, pouring, dumping and dripping in this area, plus voices of children trying things out with water. Dip your hand in the stream and feel the current, or hold it under the rain cloud to feel the drops. Feel the small wooden buildings of the village on the riverbank. You might see waterwheels turning, buckets tipping or the bright colors of plastic shapes bobbing by on the water.

Little Sprouts Farm

This area is especially for infants and toddlers under the age of 4 and their caregivers. Children with developmental disabilities for whom this exhibit is appropriate are welcome also, regardless of age. These children also need to be with a caregiver.

To preserve the gentle quality of *Little Sprouts Farm*, this exhibit is not available for group visits. Many other areas in the Children's Museum are appropriate to this age, especially *Kids' Town*, *Water Works* and *Kids at Work*. Special arrangements can also be made for a child who is developmentally disabled and visiting with a group. Please call 287-7076 (TTY access through Ohio Relay Service at 1-800-750-0750) at least 24 hours in advance.

On the Farm, you can dress up in costumes, write a story, do a rubbing, roll balls down ramps, put on a puppet show, count carrots at a Farmers Market or pick apples in an orchard. In the infants area, little ones can roll on soft "hills," make faces in mirrors, or try to match radishes, potatoes and carrots to their holes.

Sensory experience

You might hear music being made by toddlers, or giggling babies, or pegs being pounded. Feel the shapes of apples, carrots, radishes, or fish in the fishing pond. You might see bright colors all around—a barn, a silo and a tractor to climb on. In the quiet back corner of *Little Sprouts Farm* is the Parent Resource Center. In this glass-enclosed room, you can soothe an overwhelmed or tired child, feed or nurse, read aloud, or just take a time-out. There's helpful information for parents here too, including pamphlets that you can take home.

Restrooms/Water

Accessible restrooms, including our Family Restroom, which has an oversized changing table with steps, and accessible water fountains, are all located in the center rear of the Children's Museum, near the *Energy Zone* exhibit. The restrooms have Braille labeling on their door signs.

Visible Announcements

At both corners of the restroom area are visible announcement boards. Any announcement on the loudspeaker will appear on these boards also.

Children Just Like Me

This area is filled with life-size photos of kids from all over the world with their families and friends. Everywhere you look there are smiling faces! Games played in Vietnam, modeling with clay in Africa, ballet lessons in Russia, hide-and-seek in Australia, snorkeling in Mexico and dressing up in a sari in India are a lot like things that kids in America do every day.

Explore inside a Vietnamese bamboo dwelling, or a Mongolian family's tent. Move through hopscotch patterns from different parts of the world. Enter your "vital statistics" in a computer to see how you compare to other kids who've been there before you.

Sensory experience

You might hear the hollow sound of tabla drums or the ringing notes of a steel drum being played. Touch bamboo, thatch or the soft silk of a sari. You might see the different styles of clothing or how each child writes his or her name in their own language.

Celebration Room

This area is reserved for pre-scheduled activities and classes.

Kids at Work

In this area, kids are busy building things! There are wooden blocks, Lego's, Duplo blocks, big flat shapes with Velcro connectors and blocks for building arches. You can design a whole city or operate a giant crane.

The sudden noise of building projects being dismantled in this area could startle someone not prepared for it. Even though the crane area is fenced in, the large movements of the crane arm and its bucket could take someone by surprise.

Sensory experience

You might see photos of people who do construction work, or photos of some of Cincinnati's familiar buildings as they were being built (including Union Terminal). You might hear voices of people working together to build the large arch, with its keystone over six feet in the air. Touch the wooden blocks and feel their smooth shapes, or feel the bumps on the Building Bench.

North Resource Lab

This area is similar to the *South Resource Lab* with activity kits, quiet games and books (including Braille) that let you learn more about the topics in this area of the Children's Museum. Or you can just take a break here.

Kids' Town

This is the child-size town where kids can shop in a grocery store, fix food in a diner, play house in a kitchen or bedroom full of dolls, give a pet its check-up at the vet clinic, or try out the tools in the fix-it shop. If you need a break, you can take a seat in the town square, with its real clock.

Sensory experience

Feel the soft fur of stuffed animals in the vet clinic, or the shapes of the fruits, vegetables and breads in the grocery store. In the playhouse, you might see cooking pots, pans, cookie-cutter shapes or dolls of many different races. You might hear pounding coming from the fix-it shop, the clatter of dishes in the diner, or the clunk of a gas hose as someone gets a fill-up.

Patricia A. Corbett Children's Theatre

At scheduled times in this theater, plays for, by or about children are presented by various acting groups from the Cincinnati area. The theatre is wheelchair accessible. Signed performances are offered at scheduled times each month. Check the members' publication, *Mosaic*, for times, or check the Monthly Activities Guide at the information desk in Museum Center's Rotunda. Information about signed performances is also available at 287-7000 X7227 (TTY access through Ohio Relay Service at 1-800-750-0750).

Virtual Ventures

You can be part of the action at this large-screen virtual reality experience. Choose your adventure and get yourself "scanned." Then you're off! There's lots of motion on the screen, as well as loud sounds on some adventures, so the experience could be overwhelming for some.

Sensory experience

You might see images constantly changing on the large screen, or recognize yourself in the picture racing a car, bouncing balls or playing soccer. You might hear shouts and laughter as the players try to keep up with the action.

Energy Zone

The *Energy Zone* lives up to its name! Bright-colored plastic balls bounce and fly everywhere! It takes all kinds of energy to move balls from here to there, so this exhibit is full of machines and gadgets that lift, shoot and blow plastic balls. Eventually, the balls end up in the Big Bucket. When it's full, it dumps the load and there's a shower of plastic balls.

If you're prepared for the sudden dump of balls from the Big Bucket, it can be fun to be under it. For an unsuspecting person, it could be startling or frightening. One clue that the dump is coming is the flashing blue light and ringing bell.

A nylon-net cage surrounds this area to keep the balls in. There are flap entrances at two corners. The netting forms the "walls" of this room, so don't try to lean against it or you could take a tumble. Also, a cane can easily become tangled in this netting. Plastic balls scattered around on the floor could be a problem for anyone with impaired mobility.

One machine makes a loud continuous sound as it blows air. The Ball Popper also makes a sudden sound when a ball shoots out the end. The target-pole at the Ball Popper swings around on a roller foot, so you could fall if you try to lean on it or hold on for support.

Sensory experience

In the *Energy Zone*, you might see the bright plastic balls—yellow, green, purple, red. Or you might hear shouts and laughter as the Big Bucket dumps its load! Feel the smooth shapes of the balls, or be under the Big Bucket when it dumps and feel the shower of balls.

Our thanks to the consultants of the Inclusion Network for helping us to make Cincinnati Museum Center a more welcoming and accessible place for all.

This guide is also available in Braille and on audiocassette at the information desk in Museum Center's Rotunda.

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