



EARTH SANCTUARY

World Nature Centre

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ACCESS & INCLUSION GUIDE

Practical information for experiencing our Central Australian sanctuary

Our approach

Know the barriers. Measure them. Remove those that reasonably can be removed. Explain what remains clearly. Provide practical assistance and alternative experiences. Keep improving.

Version 2026 | Practical outback access standard



WELCOME & ACCESS PHILOSOPHY

A realistic, visitor-centred standard for a natural 100-acre desert property

Earth Sanctuary is a 100-acre natural bushland and ecotourism property approximately 15 minutes south of Alice Springs. Our landscape is an important part of the experience, but it also means some areas include sand, uneven ground, outdoor surfaces, changing weather and low lighting at night.

Our approach to accessibility is based on honest information, reasonable adjustment and personalised support. We welcome guests with mobility, sensory, cognitive, medical, dietary and other access requirements and encourage visitors to discuss their needs with us before arrival.

Our commitment

We do not promise that every part of a natural outback property is accessible to every person. We commit to removing barriers where reasonably possible, clearly explaining those that remain, and finding practical alternatives so more people can participate.

Access information used throughout this guide

INDEPENDENT ACCESS	Generally usable without staff assistance.
ASSISTED ACCESS	Usable with pre-arranged staff, companion or equipment support.
ALTERNATIVE AVAILABLE	The original activity has a barrier, but an adapted or equivalent option may be offered.
LIMITED ACCESS	Physical or environmental conditions may prevent some guests from participating safely.

Standards and reference framework

This guide is designed around contemporary accessible-tourism practice, including the Australian Government WELCOME Framework, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, applicable Premises Standards / NCC requirements, relevant AS 1428.1 considerations for building work, and WCAG 2.2 AA as a digital-accessibility benchmark. These references guide improvement; this document does not certify regulatory compliance.



1. BEFORE YOU BOOK & ARRIVAL

Before you book

Guests can contact Earth Sanctuary by phone, email or through the booking process to discuss access requirements. Guests are not required to provide a diagnosis. We focus on the practical support that will make participation safer, easier or more enjoyable.

Our preferred question

"Is there anything we can arrange to make your Earth Sanctuary experience safer, easier or more enjoyable?"

We recommend contacting us before visiting if you require:

- wheelchair or mobility support;
- assistance moving across uneven terrain;
- use of the all-terrain wheelchair;
- accessible or alternative astronomy viewing;
- seating requirements;
- assistance because of low vision or hearing;
- quieter or lower-sensory participation;
- support for cognitive or neurodivergent needs;
- assistance-animal arrangements;
- significant food allergy or anaphylaxis management;
- medical or fatigue considerations; or
- support from a companion, carer or support worker.

Getting here and arrival

Earth Sanctuary is located at Lot 4005 Colonel Rose Drive, Connellan, approximately 15 minutes by road from Alice Springs.

A firm/hardened drop-off area is available close to the main arrival area.

Site measurements to publish

Before the next public release, record and publish: drop-off to reception distance; surface type; maximum gradient; number and dimensions of accessible parking bays; and any kerbs, lips or steps on the arrival route.

Vehicle-assisted access

Where terrain makes walking or wheelchair travel difficult, Earth Sanctuary may be able to provide vehicle-assisted access to selected visitor areas. Standard site vehicles are not necessarily wheelchair-accessible vehicles and some guests may need to transfer from their mobility device. Transfer requirements and mobility-aid dimensions should be discussed before arrival.



2. TERRAIN, PATHS & MOBILITY

Natural terrain and pathways

Earth Sanctuary is a natural desert property. Not all pathways are sealed or constructed accessible paths.

Depending on the experience, guests may encounter:

- compacted earth;
- sand;
- gravel;
- uneven natural terrain;
- temporary access matting;
- small changes in level;
- outdoor night-time conditions; and
- distances between visitor areas.

Existing “beach mat” style surfaces should be described as access matting unless their width, gradient, transitions and performance have been formally assessed as an accessible path of travel.

Priority improvement - Accessibility Site Map

Publish a one-page route map showing Arrival → Toilet → Homestead → Dining → Amphitheatre → Astronomy → Space Camp. For each route show distance, surface, gradient, seating/rest points, lighting and assistance available.

Wheelchairs and mobility devices

Firm surfaces and access matting are available within key visitor areas, with staff assistance available where appropriate. Because some sections remain natural terrain, visitors using wheelchairs, walkers or scooters should contact the Sanctuary before arrival to confirm the most suitable route.

All-terrain wheelchair

An all-terrain wheelchair is available on request. Before advertising this as an access solution, Earth Sanctuary should publish the make/model, seat width, maximum user weight, whether independent propulsion is possible, whether attendant assistance is required, transfer requirements, restraint/support configuration, terrain limitations, staff training requirements and booking process.



3. BUILDINGS, DINING & AMENITIES

Homestead

The Homestead includes areas where portable access equipment may be required. Guests requiring step-free entry should contact Earth Sanctuary before arrival so staff can confirm the most appropriate entrance and prepare the area. Portable ramps should not be described as compliant until gradient, width, landings and safe use have been assessed.

Dining and entertainment areas

Firm access matting is available through key dining and entertainment areas, and seating can be rearranged to accommodate wheelchairs and mobility devices.

Where practical, guests may request:

- seating with their family or group;
- chairs with backs and/or arms;
- seating close to an exit or amenities;
- a lower-walking position; and
- table service or other practical assistance.

Service principle

At Earth Sanctuary, many access improvements can be achieved through flexibility, preparation and thoughtful hosting - not only through major infrastructure.

Toilets and amenities

An accessible unisex toilet is located near the arrival area. The term “fully accessible” should not be used unless the facility has been formally assessed. Instead, publish the actual features and dimensions so visitors can judge suitability for themselves.

Measure / feature	Status to publish
Door clear opening	To be measured
Internal circulation space	To be measured
Toilet seat height	To be measured
Grab rails	Yes / No - verify
Basin clearance	To be measured
Baby change	Yes / No - verify
Distance from main visitor area	To be measured

An accessible shower can remain part of future infrastructure planning, but no delivery deadline should be published unless the project is funded, designed and approved.



4. ASTRONOMY, HEARING & VISION ACCESS

Astronomy - access to the night sky

Some telescope and observatory configurations naturally create physical barriers. Where a guest cannot comfortably access the primary telescope or rotating observatory, Earth Sanctuary can provide alternative outdoor telescope viewing and adapted interpretation wherever practicable.

Key principle

If access to one piece of equipment is difficult, access to the astronomy story should not be.

Progressive astronomy-access improvements include:

- seated telescope positions;
- adjustable-height eyepieces where technically possible;
- digital telescope images displayed on a tablet or monitor;
- verbal descriptions for guests with low vision;
- tactile astronomy objects or models;
- laser-guided sky interpretation; and
- seating throughout presentations.

Hearing and communication access

- Staff use clear face-to-face communication.
- Written information can be provided where practical.
- Videos should use captions.
- Presentation scripts or summaries may be supplied in advance where appropriate.
- Quieter seating positions can be arranged.
- Guests may use their own assistive listening technology.
- Auslan interpretation can be investigated with advance notice, subject to interpreter availability and any agreed costs.

Low vision and blind visitors

- verbal orientation on arrival;
- clear description of terrain and changes in level;
- staff or companion-guided movement where requested;
- large-print information;
- accessible electronic copies;
- high-contrast signage where practical;
- verbal and tactile astronomy interpretation; and
- assistance-animal access consistent with applicable requirements.



5. NEURODIVERSITY, DIETARY & MEDICAL ACCESS

Neurodiversity, cognitive and sensory access

Guests can request practical adjustments that reduce uncertainty and sensory load. For school groups, teachers are encouraged to discuss relevant sensory, communication and participation needs during pre-program planning.

- a simple “What to Expect” pre-visit guide;
- advance schedules;
- smaller or quieter seating locations where available;
- permission to enter or leave activities as needed;
- reduced-sensory participation;
- additional processing time;
- clear, literal instructions;
- support-person participation; and
- flexibility around group activities.

Allergies, dietary requirements and medical needs

Earth Sanctuary treats dietary and allergy management as part of access and inclusion. Visitors and schools provide requirements in advance so staff can prepare practical support before arrival.

For group catering, staff-facing visual instructions distinguish:

RED - Anaphylaxis

ORANGE - Allergy / Intolerance

GREEN - Preference

This turns pre-arrival information into a clear operational system for kitchen and service staff and reduces reliance on memory or verbal handover.

Guests are encouraged to discuss any functional or medical consideration that may affect participation. Earth Sanctuary staff can assist with reasonable planning; guests remain responsible for bringing required personal medications, mobility devices and medical equipment unless otherwise agreed.



6. OUTBACK CONDITIONS & NIGHT-TIME ACCESS

Heat, weather and environmental conditions

Accessibility in Central Australia must account for the environment itself - heat, cold, wind, dust, distance and uneven ground can affect people very differently.

Earth Sanctuary experiences occur outdoors in an arid environment. Visitors should receive practical pre-arrival information about:

- expected temperature;
- sun protection;
- hydration;
- warm clothing for night astronomy;
- footwear;
- walking distances;
- seating and rest opportunities; and
- dust or respiratory sensitivities.

Guests who experience fatigue, heat sensitivity or reduced mobility should be encouraged to discuss shorter routes, additional seating or vehicle support.

Night-time accessibility and dark-sky conservation

Earth Sanctuary intentionally limits unnecessary artificial lighting to protect the dark-sky experience and nocturnal environment. This means some areas may be darker than visitors are accustomed to.

Accessibility and conservation should be managed together through:

- staff-guided movement;
- targeted pathway lighting where required for safety;
- portable low-level lights;
- advance warnings about low-light sections;
- seating near astronomy areas; and
- alternative access routes where possible.

Outback access principle

The goal is not to remove the desert from the experience. It is to give visitors the information, support and alternatives needed to experience it safely and with dignity.



7. CAMPING, ASSISTANCE ANIMALS & EMERGENCY PLANNING

Camping and overnight experiences

At least one dome tent has hardened flooring suitable for wheelchair positioning. Before publishing detailed access claims for camping and Sunset to Sunrise, Earth Sanctuary should measure and publish the entrance width, threshold, platform dimensions, bed height, circulation beside the bed, route to the toilet, distance to the toilet, surface and lighting.

For Sunset to Sunrise and other overnight experiences, the guide should also explain:

- transfer requirements;
- bedding heights;
- distance to toilets;
- night-time terrain;
- temperature conditions;
- vehicle assistance;
- charging availability for mobility equipment, if available; and
- whether a support person can stay nearby.

Assistance animals

Earth Sanctuary welcomes recognised assistance animals in accordance with applicable requirements. Because the Sanctuary is a natural bushland environment, guests travelling with an assistance animal should contact us before arrival so staff can discuss wildlife, terrain, water, toileting and overnight arrangements.

Staff training should include how to interact appropriately with assistance animals and their handlers.

Emergency planning

Accessibility does not stop when something goes wrong. During pre-arrival planning, guests should be able to advise Earth Sanctuary of functional assistance they may require during an emergency or evacuation.

Internal emergency planning should nominate:

- accessible assembly points;
- responsibility for assisting guests;
- how mobility devices are handled;
- communication methods for guests with hearing or vision needs;
- medical escalation procedures; and
- assistance-animal management.

Earth Sanctuary should not publish claims such as “fully accessible evacuation” unless the process has been specifically tested and verified.



8. STAFF CAPABILITY & DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Access & Inclusion Staff Standard

Accessibility is a service capability as much as a physical-design issue. Earth Sanctuary should maintain a measurable annual induction for core visitor-facing staff covering:

1. Respectful disability communication
2. Ask before assisting
3. Mobility aids and wheelchair etiquette
4. Assistance animals
5. Neurodiversity and hidden disability awareness
6. Hearing and vision communication
7. Allergy and anaphylaxis procedures
8. Emergency assistance
9. Accessible customer service
10. Earth Sanctuary's actual site limitations and alternatives

Recommended KPI

100% of core visitor-facing staff complete annual access and inclusion induction. Nominate an Accessibility Champion from the management team.

Digital accessibility

Earth Sanctuary should work toward WCAG 2.2 Level AA alignment for key customer-facing web content. Until testing is complete, the guide should describe this as a target rather than a certified level of compliance.

Priorities include:

- publish the Accessibility Guide as HTML, not PDF only;
- meaningful alternative text on images;
- captioned videos;
- keyboard navigation;
- sufficient colour contrast;
- clear heading structure;
- accessible booking forms;
- no essential information embedded only within images;
- downloadable large-print version; and
- an accessible contact alternative if online booking creates difficulty.



9. INFORMATION BEFORE ARRIVAL & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Access Information Pack

One of the most valuable improvements Earth Sanctuary can make is to publish accurate information before a guest arrives. A dedicated Access Information Pack should be linked directly from the booking page and include:

The pack should include a site map, photographs, pathway surfaces and distances, toilet dimensions, steps/ramps, seating, low-light conditions, astronomy and camping access, temperature advice, assistance available and contact details.

For a natural outback property, good information can remove uncertainty even where a physical barrier cannot immediately be removed.

Earth Sanctuary Access & Inclusion Action Plan

Commitment	Practical KPI
Access enquiries acknowledged	Within 2 business days
Visitor-facing staff inclusion induction	100% annually
Accessibility Guide reviewed	Every 12 months
Website access information reviewed	Every 6 months
Dietary / access needs captured before group programs	Target 100%
Accessible facilities inspected	Quarterly
Guest access feedback reviewed	After each reported issue
Accessibility site map	Publish during 2026-27
Qualified accessibility assessment	For future major capital works

Immediate wording corrections

Avoid / current wording	Preferred wording / action
"Vehicles access all areas"	Vehicle-assisted access is available to selected areas where safe and practical.
"Fully accessible unisex toilet"	Publish actual dimensions/features unless formally audited.
"Hardened accessible paths"	Distinguish constructed paths, firm surfaces and temporary access matting.
"Auslan interpreters can be arranged"	Can be investigated with notice, subject to availability and any agreed cost.
Accessible shower "planned within 24 months"	Remove deadline unless the project is funded, designed and approved.



10. CONTACT, FEEDBACK & FINAL STANDARD

Contact us in advance

We strongly encourage guests with specific access needs to contact Earth Sanctuary before visiting. Advance information allows us to prepare routes, seating, equipment, dietary arrangements or alternative experiences where practical.

Phone	(08) 8953 6161
Website	www.earth-sanctuary.com.au
Email	hello@earth-sanctuary.com.au
Address	Lot 4005 Colonel Rose Drive, Alice Springs NT 0871

Feedback and continuous improvement

Guest feedback helps identify barriers that may not be obvious to staff. Access-related feedback should be reviewed after each reported issue and considered during annual guide review, facility planning and staff training.

The standard Earth Sanctuary should aspire to

Accessible outback ecotourism does not mean pretending the desert is an urban environment. It means knowing the barriers, measuring them, explaining them honestly, removing what can reasonably be removed, offering practical alternatives, training staff well and asking each guest what works for them.

Reference framework

- Australian Government / Austrade - WELCOME Framework for accessible tourism
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010 and applicable NCC requirements
- AS 1428.1 - Design for access and mobility (where applicable to building works)
- WCAG 2.2 Level AA - digital accessibility benchmark

Note: This guide provides practical visitor information and an internal improvement standard. It does not constitute certification that every facility or route complies with building, access or disability standards. Formal compliance claims should be supported by assessment from a suitably qualified professional.