

The Children's Nature Retreat

The Backcountry's Newest Endeavor to Create a Place for Children to Connect with Animals and Nature

By Sharon Penny

Just a few months ago, an amazing place opened in the backcountry offering children throughout San Diego county an up-close and personal experience with animals and nature.

The goal of the Children's Nature Retreat, which is located south of Descanso on Japatul Spur Road, is to give all children access to animals, nature and the environment.

"Our children, especially city children, are losing touch with nature in our increasingly digital-dependent and urbanized world. We believe that the experience at the Children's Nature Retreat will have a profound and positive impact on children, often reducing stress levels while offering a sense of connection to the earth."

I had the opportunity to take my two grandnieces there recently, toddlers who live in El Cajon. Even though very young, they found tremendous joy in not only seeing the animals, but in being able to help feed them. Despite having relatives in Descanso, they have had very little experience with goats, horses and piggies. But beyond the standard ranch animals, the Children's Nature Retreat takes in more exotic animals in need of a caring environment. The girls delighted in feeding zebras and camels.



The Children's Nature Retreat works directly with local schools and organizations in the county to serve underprivileged children and children in need to offer free field trips. This is made possible by generous donations from Hands United for Children, a nonprofit organization. They also specialize in class visits for other school children, from Pre-K through 8th grade at special prices.

Admission is available for the general public seven days a week, and at various price points and packages. They suggest calling in advance as they limit the retreat to a daily capacity of no more than 100 guests per day.

Fall hours are from 10 am to 4 pm, with later hours in late spring through summer. They are located at 5178 Japatul Spur in Alpine, just eight miles south of Descanso.

If you'd like to help sponsor a deserving child or even an entire classroom on a one-day field trip, email them at:

info.childrensnatureretreat.com.

<http://childrensnatureretreat.com>

