

THE RESERVE
AT
RANCHO MISSION VIEJO



Dear Reserve Patron:

The Reserve lists minimum ages for most of our events. Daytime events are usually open to children aged 8 & up. Special and volunteer events are often only open to older children aged 12 & up. Events with “FAMILY” in the title are open to children aged 6 & up.

As we wish we could accommodate all ages at our events, we would like to explain our rationale for instituting minimum ages for our programs. Every *Reserve* staffer is a parent who works closely with children on a day-to-day basis, and is also acutely aware of the need to get today’s kids away from electronic consoles, out of the house and into the vanishing natural spaces left around us. We’re familiar with Richard Louv’s provocative book *Last Child in the Woods*, and understand the importance of early contact with Nature. But alas, our facility is not the best for outings with pre-schoolers, toddlers, and younger children.

Reserve interpretive programs last up to three hours. Patrons are generally not free to come and go as they please, but instead must often be escorted in and out through a locked gate. As any parent knows, three hours can be a VERY long time for a child not in the mood for planned activities. Whereas older children are more capable of handling programs which include introductory lectures and minimal physical activity, younger children are still very much focused on their own needs. When those needs are not being met, unhappiness results.

We realize that patrons with younger children may also wish to visit natural places like *The Reserve*. Rather than attending a formal program, parents, relatives, and friends are better off, in many cases, taking youngsters to a local city, county, state or federal park or other local nature facility with *open access*. Younger children don’t require interpretation. Instead, they need to explore nature at their own pace, rolling in the grass, digging in the dirt, looking at bugs, and just enjoying sunshine and blue skies—or rain!

Places calling themselves “parks” tend to work much harder at providing facilities to accommodate people. *The Reserve at Rancho Mission Viejo*, on the other hand, is not a park. It is a wildlands habitat reserve—a place set aside primarily for animals and wildlife. Our people-oriented facilities are limited *by design*. We welcome all participants capable of enjoying the interpretive programs in which *The Reserve* specializes.

Many thanks for your understanding.

Sincerely,

Heidi A. Keller
Manager of Public Programs

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