



AAZK National Conference: Guide for First-Time Delegates

This guide contains useful insights to help you get the most out of your first AAZK National Conference; before, during and after. It is designed as a companion to information communicated by the Conference Host Chapter via the conference website and in Whova, the conference app.

QUICK TIPS

- Register early!
 - AAZK National Conference registration opens annually on March 1st.
- The Conference App is your friend!
 - It is a great resource and primary communication tool for all delegates before, during and after the conference. You can find conference schedules, updates, and connect with other delegates in the App.
- Network!
 - Bring business cards. Don't have a business card? Make use of social media, email, QR codes, and the conference app to share contact info.
- Conference Badges are key.
 - Make sure to wear your conference badge for the duration of the conference, including Zoo Day, pre trip and post trip.
 - *Be Safe - If you are going out to a non-conference function, please remove your name badge.*
 - Return your badge holders at the end of the conference, so they may be reused next year.
- Take advantage of the conference breaks to refresh your mind, network, and relax.
- Avoid Burnout - You are encouraged to attend all aspects of the conference but remember, you don't have to attend everything.
- Dress in layers. Conference rooms are usually cold.
- Follow ALL public health safety guidelines.
- Follow all AAZK communications and platforms as important details are shared pre/post conference.
- **HAVE FUN!**

GO GREEN

- Use a mobile device or laptop to take notes during sessions instead of paper. You can even take notes in the Whova app directly under the session and download them later.
 - Consider digital business cards or QR code to share your contact information with delegates.
 - This is an available feature with the conference app.
 - Bring your own water bottle, coffee mug, straws, bags, etc.
 - Save itineraries, receipts, etc. on your mobile device instead of printing out on paper.
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BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Registration

- Register early if possible.
 - Each conference host will set a date where fees increase, usually 4-6 weeks prior to start.
 - Professional Certificate Courses and Limited Topical Workshops fill up quickly.
- Check the Conference website and social media for links for roommate information.
- Download the Conference App (information found on the Conference website).
- Please note workshops and presentations may be scheduled to run concurrently so plan accordingly.
- Open Topical Workshops have unlimited attendance and do not require pre-registration.
- Limited Topical Workshops could have a maximum number of participants (up to 60 participants.)
 - *Some Limited Topical Workshops may have two parts. Delegates wishing to participate in those workshops will need to register for BOTH parts.*
- Pre and Post Conference trips may be offered and are an excellent way to see other institutions, meet people before the conference, and extend your conference experience. Space is limited.
 - *Specific information will be available on the conference website.*
- First-Time Delegate Webinar
 - A virtual First-Time Delegate webinar will take place approximately two weeks prior to the start of the conference. This webinar will provide you with an overview of the conference and what to expect before arriving at the conference location.

Travel

- Book a hotel room as early as possible.
 - Please note there may be a deadline for booking a room at a reduced rate.
 - Need a roommate? The conference app community boards are great for advertising for or finding a roommate.
 - Consider airport travel; usually there are suggested shuttles and/or cab companies.
 - *Use social media or the Conference App to look for people to share a ride.*
 - Visit the hotel website in advance to see what amenities may be available.
 - Check the conference website for potential discounts on travel arrangements.
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DURING THE CONFERENCE

Daily Program

- The Conference program, with the daily schedule, can be found on the Host Chapter website and in the Conference App.
 - It will provide times for presentations, courses, events, and workshops during the week so that you can personalize your schedule when you register.
- First-time Delegate Welcome Gathering will be right before the Icebreaker.
 - This informal gathering provides you with an overview of the conference while giving you an opportunity to meet the AAZK National Board of Directors, Conference hosts and other first time delegates before heading to the Icebreaker.
- Be prepared for long days. Papers and Workshops are scheduled during the day but there is a plethora of additional programming in the evenings.
- Evening Programming may include, but is not limited to: Icebreaker, Conservation Rally, Q & AAZK, Poster Session, Awards Ceremony, Silent Auction, Banquet, Hospitality Suite, and other social gatherings.
 - It is highly recommended that you attend as much of the evening programming as possible.

Networking

- Practice an “elevator” introduction for all the new people you will be meeting. Networking is very important.
 - *The idea behind an elevator intro is that you are prepared to share what you desire in a very quick amount of time; an elevator length ride.*
- Your conference name badge is also a great conversation starter.
- If you want to connect with a speaker, contact them on the Conference App or email them prior to the conference, if possible.
- Buddy System - a completely voluntary option for first time delegates to be paired with a seasoned AAZK National Conference delegate. For more information, email arc@azk.org
- The Icebreaker event is a great opportunity to connect with other delegates.
- Bring business cards (paper or electronic versions) to exchange and be prepared to add contacts on social media.
- Exhibitor Hall - Check out vendors, visit with Conservation Organizations, support Chapters and local businesses by purchasing products - open each day of conference, except for Zoo Day.
- Stop by the AAZK Committees and Programs table in the Exhibitor Hall during breaks to network with committee members and discover how you can get more involved with AAZK.
- There may be special “themes” for events. Participation is highly encouraged.

Zoo Day

- Tours may be set up by the Host Facility and will vary year to year in format.
- Cell phone chargers, an external battery backup, and extra camera batteries may be beneficial to have on zoo day.

Attire

- *No matter the regional climate, the Hotel conference rooms are usually always chilly. Bring layers (sweatshirt, vest, or jacket).*
- Most delegates dress comfortably, in casual attire, but presenters will often dress in business attire for their presentation. (Follow institutional guidelines for attire when representing your institution.)
- Most delegates dress up for the final banquet.
- Theme days/nights are possible. Make sure to refer to the conference website, app and communications for possible themed attire events.
- A Conference shirt is usually available as part of Registration and many delegates will wear this on Zoo Day.
- Consider your choice of footwear for Zoo Day. Closed toed shoes may be required for some behind the scenes tours.

Meals

- The meal during the final banquet will be provided, but the Conference hosts are not responsible for providing any other meals during the week.
 - Conference hosts will advertise what meals/snacks/beverages will be provided prior to the conference.
- The Conference App chat groups are a great resource for finding local and affordable places to eat, as well as finding a friend to dine with.
- Due to evening programming, the dinner break is usually limited to one hour.

POST CONFERENCE

- Conference proceedings may be accessed on AAZK.org in the weeks following the conference. All AAZK members will be able to view the proceedings after logging into the Members section of AAZK.org
- Stay connected with all those amazing people you had the opportunity to meet.
- Make sure to download any notes from Whova.
- Visit www.AAZK.org for more information on AAZK operations and resources and learn how you can get more involved.
- Post conference surveys will be sent to the email you used to register for the conference. Your feedback will help AAZK create a more enhanced conference experience in the future.
- Share photos! Make sure to check if the conference has an official [#azk2025](https://twitter.com/azk2025).

2025 AAZK NATIONAL CONFERENCE HOST

HOST AAZK Chapter Contact Information for Conference

Email: aazkphoenix2025@gmail.com

Conference website: <https://www.aazkphoenix2025.com/>

AAZK Director Professional Development & Conference Management

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Stay Connected with AAZK via Social Media



@AAZKinc

Stay Connected with AAZK via monthly publications

- **Keeper N.O.T.E.S.** - emailed to AAZK Members the last Thursday of each month
- **Animal Keepers' Forum (AKF)** - monthly publication mailed to AAZK members.

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