

AUDHD ACCESSIBILITY IN MUSEUMS: A SENSORY GUIDE FOR LEMAY - AMERICA'S CAR MUSEUM

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Background/Problem

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are often characterized by sensory processing issues. Museums can be overwhelming sensory spaces for AuDHD individuals. Few museums have accommodations in place for AuDHD visitors.

Sensory guides are a type of pre-visit material that have been proven to improve museum experiences of AuDHD visitors. Sensory guides allow AuDHD visitors and their caretakers to prepare for their visit and curate their visit according to their individual sensory needs, whether they be sensory-seeking or sensory-avoiding.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to create a sensory guide for AuDHD visitors and their caretakers to use before/during their museum visit.

The desired impact is to improve overall museum experiences for AuDHD visitors.

Deliverable

The deliverable for the project is a 11 page sensory guide that describes the light, sound, smell, and touch levels of all galleries in the museum on a scale of low to high.



SENSORY GUIDE
This guide was created as a part of a University of Washington Museology Master's Thesis on AuDHD accessibility in museums. The purpose of this guide is to help AuDHD visitors and their caretakers plan their visits and decide the best route to enjoy the museum based upon their individual sensory needs. Part of this project involved surveying museum visitors and incorporating AuDHD community voices in the creation of this guide.

- Things to Note:**
- There is a cafe inside the museum on the mezzanine floor. Their full menu is available on the museum's website.
 - When certain foods are cooking in the cafe, the smell carries throughout the museum, and is especially strong on the ramps between floors.
 - Food and drink are allowed in the cafe area, the lobby, and the store. Only water is allowed in the galleries.
 - There are shin-level barriers around the cars to indicate they cannot be touched. However, the height makes them easy to climb over, even for children.
 - All of the floors throughout the museum are sloped. They are also made of concrete with a reflective coating that amplifies the effects of bright lights in the space.
 - The best route for viewing the museum is to go down the ramps on the right and back up the ramps on the left.

Sensory Ratings	Sound	Light	Smell	Touch
High	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
Medium	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡
Low	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢

Level Four		Level Four				
Location	Sound	Light	Smell	Touch	Notes	
Main Entrance	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	Lighting is dependent upon weather. Can be loud if events are happening outside	
ACM Store	🟡	🟡	🟢	🔴	Music playing in store	
Showcase Gallery	🟡	🔴	🟡	🟢	Special Exhibit Gallery: Levels may vary depending on what is on exhibit. Sound echoes. Food smell from cafe	
View Deck	🟡	🔴	🟢	🟢	Lighting is dependent upon weather. Easily accessible stairs may be a concern for elders	
British Invasion	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢		
Custom Coachworks	🟡	🟡	🟢	🟢	Narrow, gets crowded easily	

Process

Nov.-Dec. 2024: Create a draft guide using light and decibel meters

Jan.-Feb. 2025: Survey museum visitors asking them to rate the level of light, sound, smell, and touchable objects on each floor

Mar.-April 2025: Finalize guide draft

May 2025: Conduct informal user-testing on the design and usability of the guide, then implement final changes

Next Steps

A second, resized version of the guide needs to be created so that it can be printed and made available at the front desk. The version featured here is the pdf version that will be available on the museum's website.

References

- Fortuna, J. K., Chamberlain, E., Filice, L., Kurt, M., Porter, T., Twichell, S., & Ogren, S. (2024). Exploring the Usefulness of Pre-Visit Materials for Children with Autism at a Public Museum. *Translational Science in Occupation*, 1(1), 1-15.
- Houston Museum of Natural Science. (2023). *HMNS Sensory Guide*. https://www.hmns.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Accessibility_Sensory_Guide.pdf