



# A VISIT TO

THE FLORIDA  
AQUARIUM ™

## NOTE TO CAREGIVERS:

The Aquarium is high-sensory in most areas. While we have attempted to identify areas of particular concern in this book via the sensory key, please note that in any location, there could be triggering smells, sounds, and sights.

There are a limited number of “sensory backpacks” available at the Guest Services desk for individuals who have sensory differences to borrow.

**To achieve the best possible experience for our guests and our animals, we are constantly working to improve our habitats and maintain the Aquarium. If you see a “Pardon Our Puddles” sign, it means the habitat is being cleaned or renovated.**

The Florida Aquarium undergoes constant renovations and updates from small animal moves to larger habitat changes.

**701 Channelside Dr. Tampa, FL 33602 • 813-273-4000 • [flaquarium.org](http://flaquarium.org)**

Last updated December 2020

# Notes for Caregivers

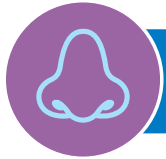




This symbol means this area is very bright or very dark. There may also be flashing lights. If my eyes hurt, I can wear sunglasses.



This symbol means this area has loud sounds or music. I can wear headphones or cover my ears.



This symbol means this area has strong smells. I can cover my nose and breathe through my mouth instead.



This area has something I can touch! At most of the habitats in the Aquarium I will not touch the water or animals, but when I see this symbol, it is **OK**.



This symbol means I can have a snack or drink in this area.



This symbol means this area gets crowded with people, or I may need to wait in line.

## Sensory Key





**GOING TO VISIT:**

I am going to visit The Florida Aquarium! At the Aquarium, I will learn about fish and other animals that live in or around the water. I may be visiting the Aquarium with my family, or on a trip with my school.



# Going to Visit







## ARRIVAL:

From the parking lot, we will follow the signs. I will be sure to stay near the adult I am with, because it is a busy area with lots of traffic! We may need to make a quick stop at the ticket counter.



# Arrival



## NEW SAFETY RULES:

There are new, temporary rules at the Aquarium to keep me safe from the coronavirus. As I walk, I will see signs that remind me of the new rules.

## MASKS:

I will see everyone wearing masks at the Aquarium. I will wear one, too. I will see signs showing me how to wear my mask correctly.

## HAND SANITIZER:

As I walk, I will see hand sanitizer stations in the Aquarium to help keep my hands clean. I will remember to wash my hands and use the sanitizer many times during my visit.





### **SOCIALLY DISTANCED:**

I will stay with my family. It is important to stand, walk, and play 6 feet apart from other people so we don't accidentally spread our germs. One picnic table is about six feet long, so I can imagine there is one picnic table between us!

I will also see signs on the floor telling me where to stand to stay six feet apart.





## LEVEL 1

Main lobby, shopping, dining and The Splash Pad  
Vestibulo principal, tiendas, restaurantes y The Splash Pad



**1 WETLANDS OF FLORIDA**  
Take a hike on Florida's Wetlands Trail and see alligators, otters and free-flying birds. Invasive pythons live here too!

**2 JOURNEY TO MADAGASCAR**  
In this unique and beautiful place, you'll see lemurs, turtles, geckos, and a colorful Indian Ocean reef. \*Use lobby elevator for wheelchair access to Madagascar.

**3 Bays & Beaches**  
Have up-close encounters with spiny lobsters and garden eels, and a touching experience at Stingray Beach.

**4**  
Touch bizarre creatures that have no backbone: anemones, sea cucumbers, sea stars and more!

**5 CORAL REEFS**  
Go deeper into the sea, through coral tunnels and caves, to a vast window into the world of sharks, reef fishes and moray eels.

**6 PIPES & PONIES**  
Explore the world of seahorses and pipefish.

**7 Waves of Wonder**  
Enjoy the amazing colors and adaptations of the ocean, with amazing jellies, an octopus, and featuring the Heart of the Sea exhibit, which showcases the Aquarium's amazing conservation work with sharks, sea turtles and coral.



## LEVEL 2

Galleries and Exhibits  
Galerías y exhibiciones

**8 The SPLASH PAD**  
Explore a rainforest-themed playland with larger-than-life cool creatures! Get drenched with dump buckets and waterworks or burn some energy on net climbs and slides.

**9 4DUCKS THEATER**  
Experience the visual drama of a 3D film with added effects such as bubbles, snow, scent, FX lighting, water mist, seat vibration and wind that captivate the entire family.



Changing Rooms



ATM Machine



Family Restroom



Food



Lockers



Elevator



Restrooms

# Map of The Florida Aquarium



**BAG CHECK:**

A security guard will check any bags we have with us. This is for safety.



# Bag Check



**ASK QUESTIONS :**

Just inside the main entrance is the Guest Services desk.

I can go there anytime during my visit if I need help.

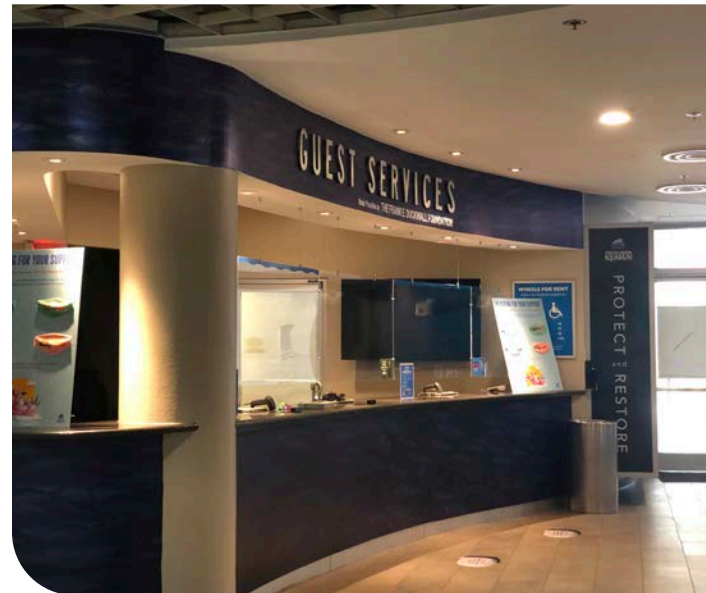
I can go there if I get lost.

**GET HELP:**

People who work at the Aquarium wear blue shirts that have The Florida Aquarium logo on them.

They can answer questions or help me if I need it.

They are at the Guest Services desk and in other areas all around the Aquarium.



# Ask Questions or Get Help





**HABITATS:**

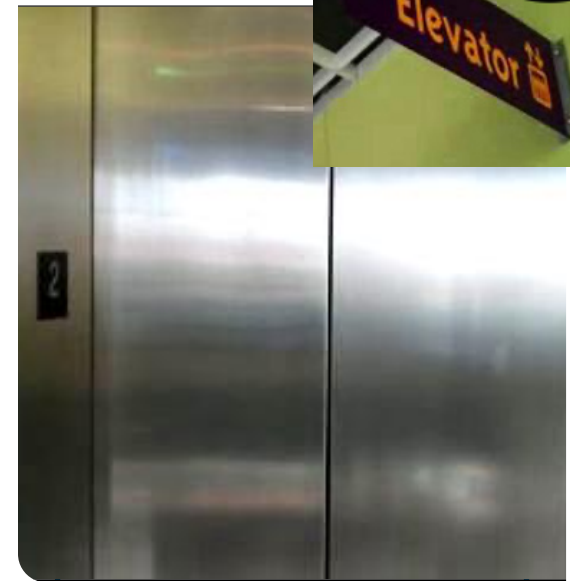
The habitats are homes to the fish and animals at the Aquarium. All of the habitats are on Level 2. To see them, we must go up...



The escalator  
only goes up.  
It does not go down.



We can walk up  
the stairs, or use  
the elevator!



The elevator is next  
to the restroom.



# Going Up to the Habitats





# Wetlands of Florida







## ENTERING THE WETLANDS OF FLORIDA:

It looks like we are entering a dark cave. There is light just ahead, around the curve. We will see a big window with fish in it.



If we look up, we will see more fish and maybe some turtles!



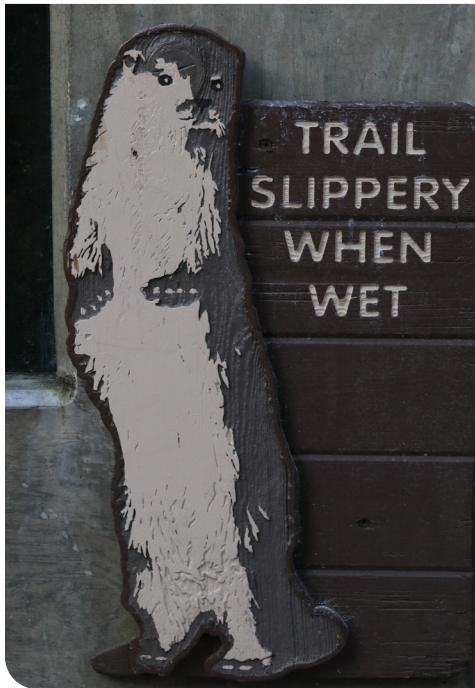
**PICTURES:**

When I walk into the Wetlands of Florida, there will be a person waiting to take my picture! The picture can create a memory of our fun day. If I do not want my picture taken, I can politely say "no, thank you".



**SIGNS:**

As we walk, we will see signs that show us the rules for the trail. There is also a sign for the shows and activities the Aquarium has planned!





**WETLANDS TRAIL:**

Throughout the Wetlands, we will see low, open habitats of water. They are the homes for many animals and fish.

I will be very careful to keep my hands away from the water.

I will not feed or touch the animals.

I will not put my hands in the water or throw things in the water.

I do not want to scare the animals or make them sick!







**ALLIGATORS**



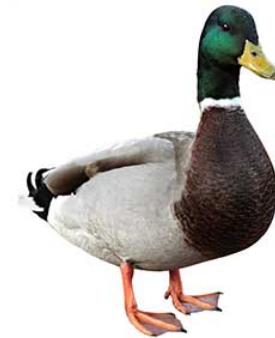
**DIFFERENT KIND OF PLANTS,  
LIKE TREES**



**RIVER OTTERS**



**DIFFERENT KINDS OF SNAKES**



**DIFFERENT KINDS OF  
BIRDS, LIKE DUCKS**

**We May See**



**REMEMBER:**

- We can see the alligators, snakes, fish, and otters through the glass, but they cannot get out of their habitats. The birds are free to fly around, but they will not bother us. I do not need to be scared.
- Different areas of the Wetlands Trail can get crowded or smell funny. I can tell the adult I am with when I am ready to leave.
- I will not try to touch or feed the animals.
- Sometimes staff will bring out a live animal or biofact (fur, bone, skull) to show me. I do not need to be scared.

# Things to Remember





# Journey to Madagascar





## JOURNEY TO MADAGASCAR:

Once we are done visiting the Wetlands of Florida, we might want to see Journey to Madagascar.

Journey to Madagascar is on the third floor of the Aquarium.

We can get there by climbing these stairs near the rat snake habitat.

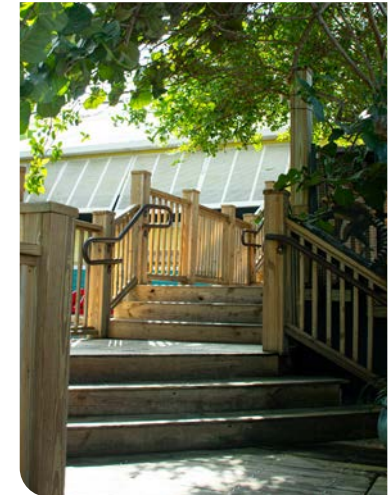


# Journey to Madagascar



**GOING UP THE STAIRS:**

To visit Journey to Madagascar, we have to climb the stairs. On the stairs, there will be places to stop and look around. Other people may want to look around too. As we walk up the stairs, we will probably see birds and some gopher tortoises.



# Going Up the Stairs



## TAKING THE ELEVATOR:

If we need to take the elevator, we will find the elevator on the first or second floor.



1. Go to the 3rd floor.



2. Go out the doors.



3. Follow the path and the signs.



4. Go through the vertical rubber strips. They are soft and quiet. They will not hurt or make noise. They keep birds from flying in or out!

# Taking the Elevator to Journey to Madagascar







## ENTERING MADAGASCAR:

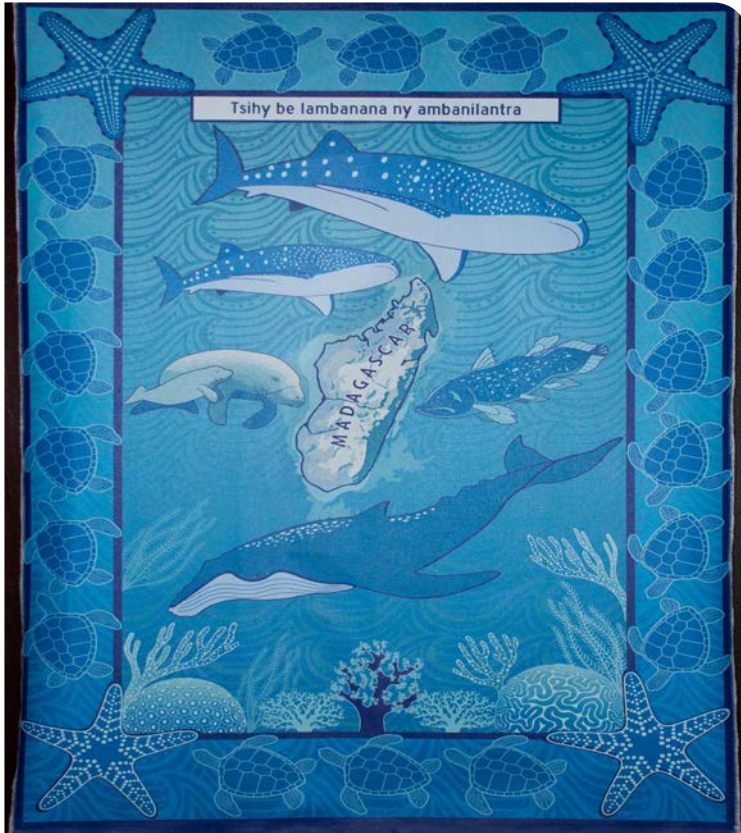
When we walk in to the Journey to Madagascar, we may notice it is warmer than the other areas, and we may go from sunlit areas into dark areas.





## REEFS OF MADAGASCAR:

We will see a large saltwater aquarium with lots of colorful fish from the ocean waters near Madagascar.



# Reefs of Madagascar



### CREATURES OF MADAGASCAR:

Several habitats in Journey to Madagascar include information boards and hanging metal information cards. Some creatures are very difficult to see. Sometimes they might be hiding where we can't see them at all. Maybe we will see them next time!





### A WINDOW IN THE FLOOR:

When we walk through Journey to Madagascar, there will be a window in the floor!

We can look down through it to see stingrays and other big fish swimming below us.

The window is very strong. No one will fall through or break it when they step on it. The fish cannot break through it either.

Everyone will be safe if I walk over it, but I can go around it instead, if I want.



Space to  
walk around

## A Window in the Floor





## LEMURS:

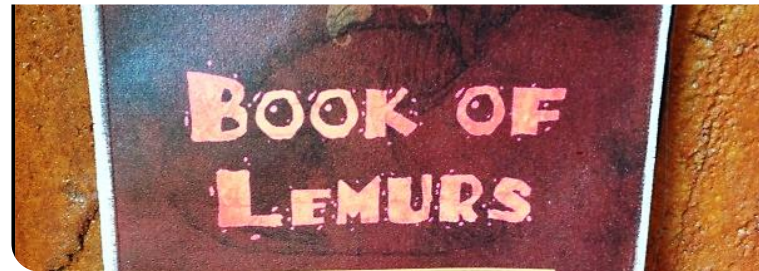
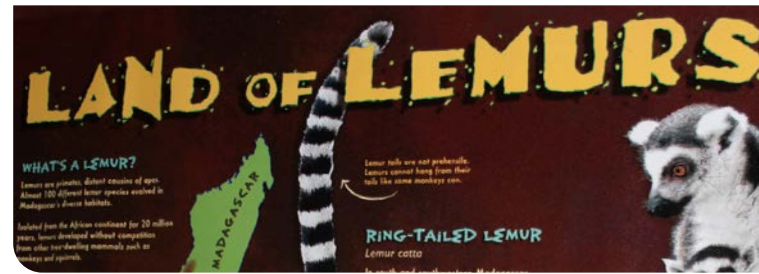
There are many different signs and other types of information about lemurs in this habitat.

## BOOK OF LEMURS:

We can look at this book to learn more about lemurs!

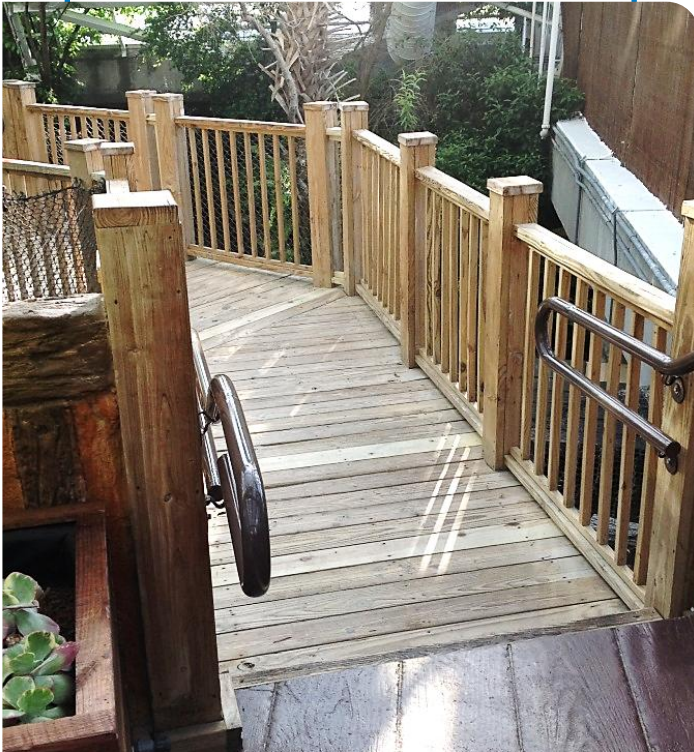
## SMELL:

Lemurs are beautiful and fun to watch, but they might smell!



**LEAVING MADAGASCAR:**

When it is time to go down to the first or second level, we will take these stairs near the lemurs.

**LEAVING MADAGASCAR:**

If we will be going down in the elevator, we will look for this door and go to the walkway that leads to the elevator.



# Leaving Journey to Madagascar







### **BAYS AND BEACHES:**

In this habitat, we will see and learn about many fish and animals that live in the salty water of Florida's bays and shores, like lobsters! We will hear wave sounds here, and it may be a little dark at first.



# **Bays and Beaches**

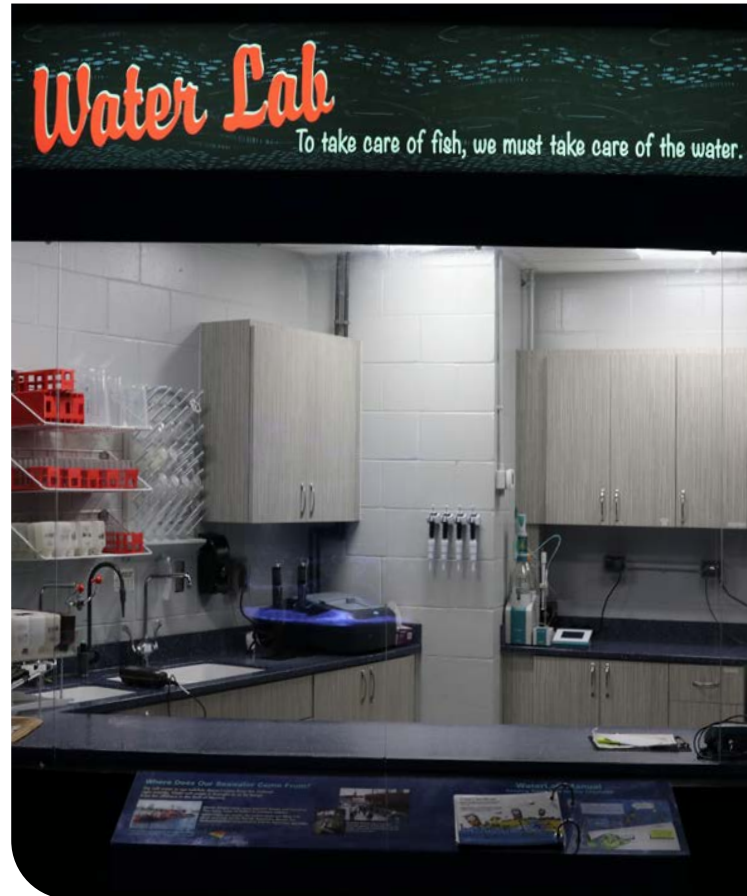


**WATER LAB:**

The Water Lab in the Bays and Beaches Gallery shows people at work.

They are the biologists who take care of the fish, animals, and plants at the Aquarium.

Sometimes, the Water Lab is closed. If it is open, I can watch the biologists quietly through the window.





## STINGRAY BEACH:

At Stingray Beach, we will learn about stingrays and beach habitats.

## TOUCH:

If it is time to touch stingrays, I will read the signs and follow instructions. This is a place in the Aquarium where it is OK to touch the animals! I do not have to touch them if I don't want to.

## TIME OUT:

Sometimes the stingrays need to rest. We will not touch them if we see the "Time Out" sign. Maybe we can come back and try again later.







### **NO BONE ZONE:**

No Bone Zone is a special habitat we can find after visiting the stingrays.

All of the animals in it live without any bones in their bodies!

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT TOUCHING THE ANIMALS:**

- I will touch the animals with two fingers only.
- I will touch only the animals on the top shelf of the habitat.
- I will not pick up or move any of the animals.
- The water may be very cold.
- I do not have to touch if I do not want to.



# No Bone Zone



**THE CIBC AQUATIC LOUNGE:**

The CIBC Aquatic Lounge is an art gallery with 3-5 smaller habitats.

It is a good place to stop and go to the bathroom, or take a break if I need some quiet time.



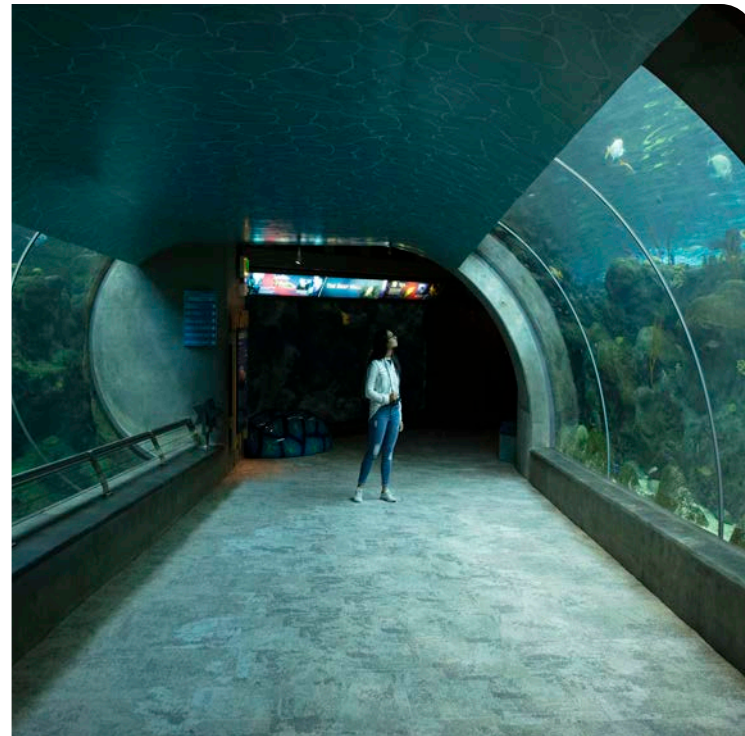
# The CIBC Aquatic Lounge





## CORAL REEFS:

The Coral Reefs are a place to see up-close all the fish, sharks, and other sea creatures that live in coral reefs and deeper water. The gallery winds down a path that feels like a tunnel. It may be dark at first, and I will hear soft music or underwater sounds.



# Coral Reefs



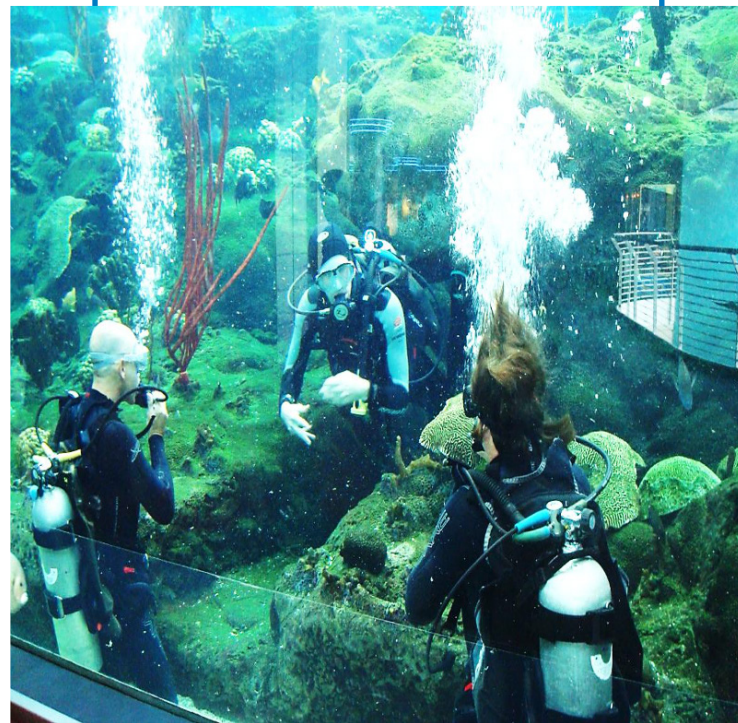


**ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNEL:**

Before the entrance to the tunnel, we can take our picture in front of the Megalodon shark jaw. I will not touch the teeth or climb over the rope.

**THE TUNNEL:**

We may see divers in the Coral Reef. They may be there to clean and take care of the water so the fish and animals stay healthy. The divers can see me and may wave.



**CORAL CAVE:**

The Coral Cave is one of the darkest parts of the Aquarium.

Behind it is a habitat that looks like the bottom of the ocean.

We can see all the sharks, fish, and other creatures that live there.





**PIPES & PONIES:**

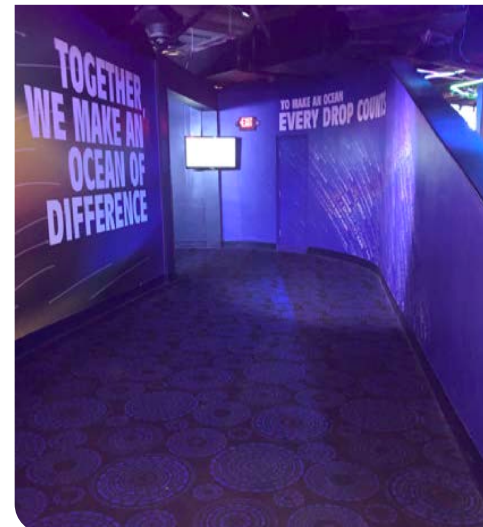
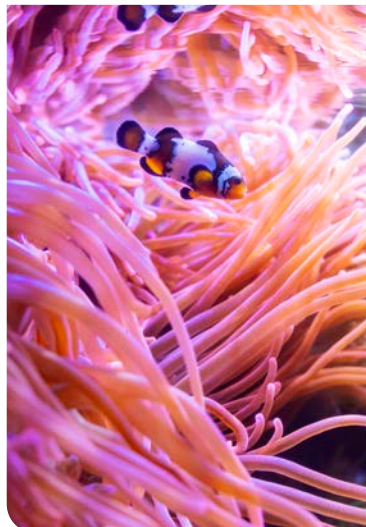
The creatures in Pipes & Ponies are very delicate. They are sensitive to light and noise. That means things bother them.

**NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY:**

If we take pictures here, we will make sure the flash is off. We will also try to be extra quiet in this space.

**WAVES OF WONDER:**

Next, we will see Waves of Wonder. This area is kept darker for the health of the animals. I will see lots of small habitats. I will need to look closely to find all of the hidden animals.



# Pipes & Ponies and Waves of Wonder





## LEAVING HEART OF THE SEA

in Waves of Wonder will take us back to the 1st Floor.

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# Leaving Heart of the Sea in Waves of Wonder





### CHARACTER ENCOUNTERS:

The Aquarium has several characters dressed in costume - like this turtle and penguin! I can say "hi" or ask them to take a picture with me!



## Character Encounters



## MOON BAY:

At Moon Bay, we will learn about jellies.

I will get in line and wait my turn to touch a moon jelly. If I do not want to touch I can just look at the sphere in the middle or look at the jellies in the lower tank. Both sides of the sphere are the same and there are times when only one side can be touched.

If it is time to touch a jelly, we will read the signs and follow instructions. This is a place in the Aquarium where it is OK to touch the animals! I do not have to touch them if I don't want to. The jellies will not hurt me.

Sometimes the jellies need to rest. We will not touch them if we see the line closed or the "On Break" sign. Maybe we can come back and try again later.





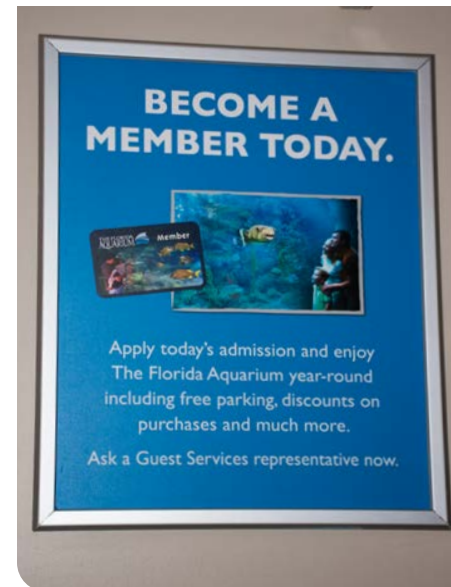


## THE LOBBY:

The lobby is the big space we walk through on our way into and out of the galleries. In it, there are other things to do. The adult I am with will help me decide.

## WE CAN:

- Visit Moon Bay touch habitat
- Get something to eat in the café
- Visit the Aquarium gift shop
- Head outside to The Splash Pad
- Pick up the pictures we took around the exit



# The Lobby



## THE SPLASH PAD:

The Splash Pad is an outdoor area of The Florida Aquarium.

I can play in some of the fountains and the playground equipment.

We may not go to The Splash Pad if we run out of time, the weather is bad, or maintenance is being performed.



This is the entrance to The Splash Pad. It is in the lobby.



# The Splash Pad



## FOUNTAINS:

There are lots of fountains spraying water in The Splash Pad. Some of them are OK to play in, but others are not OK, because they are not safe. At The Splash Pad, it is very important to follow the rules. One of the biggest rules is NO RUNNING.



These fountains are  
**OK** to play in.



This fountain is  
**NOT OK** to play in.



**OUTDOOR PLAY AREA:**

There are restrooms where we can change into our bathing suits, if we brought them. There is also a dry playground area where I can play if I do not feel like getting wet.



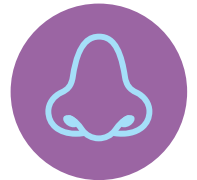
# Outdoor play area



### 4 DUCKS THEATER:

The 4Ducks Theater is located by Splash Pad. The adult I am with will decide if the movie is a good idea. It is a 4D movie experience that has several stimulants. A few of these stimulants include loud noises, flashing lights, and water spray.

While viewing the movie I will need to wear special glasses. The movies play for about 15 minutes and change throughout the year.



## 4 Ducks Theater



## TIME TO GO!

After our visit is all done, it will be time to go.

Goodbye, Aquarium! Thank you for a wonderful visit.  
See you next time!



# Time To Go!





# A Big Thanks From The Florida Aquarium

See you next time!

**CREATED FOR THE FLORIDA AQUARIUM BY**

The University of South Florida Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

1-800-333-4530 • 813-974-2532 • <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>

