

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 “distract packs” available at the Guest Services desk for individuals who have sensory differences to borrow throughout their visit.

To achieve the best possible experience for our guests and our animals, The Florida Aquarium undergoes constant renovations and updates, from small animal moves to larger habitat changes. You may see a sign on a habitat if it is being cleaned or renovated.

701 Channelside Dr. Tampa, FL 33602 • 813-273-4000 • flaquarium.org



Sensory Key



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



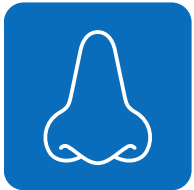
This area has something I can touch! At most of the habitats in the Aquarium, I will not touch the water or animals, but when I see this symbol, it is OK.



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



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



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



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





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.





Ask Questions

Just inside the main entrance is the Guest Services desk. I may go there anytime during my visit if I need help or have any questions.

They can also provide me with a “distract pack” I can use throughout my visit. All I have to do is ask.

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.



**This is the logo
I should be looking for.**

Restrooms

The Aquarium restrooms have toilets that flush automatically. Sometimes, they make loud flushing sounds by themselves. There are also hand dryers in the bathroom that can be noisy when they blow air.

If I don't like loud sounds, I can wear headphones to block out the noise. I'll tell the adult I'm with that I want to wear my headphones, and they can help me put them on. Then, after using the restroom, I can go back to exploring the Aquarium!



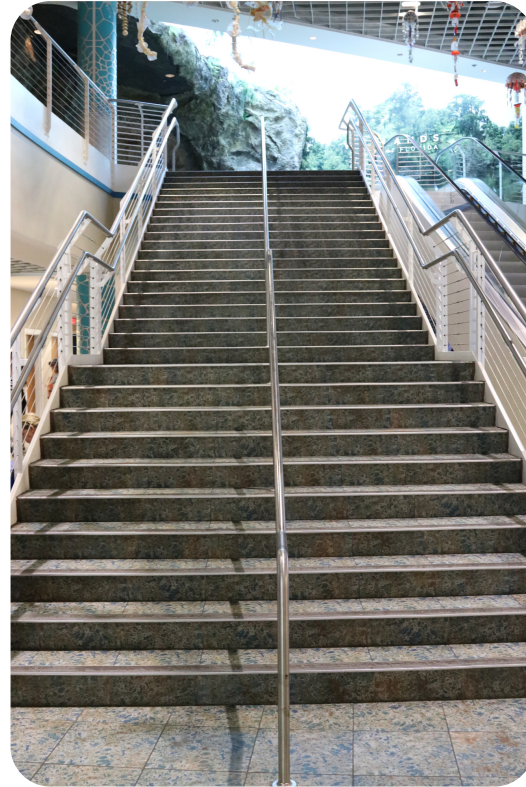
Hand Dryers



Going Up



To go upstairs I may use the escalator, the stairs, or the elevator.



Stairs

If I use the stairs, I will have to walk up them.

Escalator

If I use the escalator, I will step on and stand holding the railing until I reach the top.



Elevator

If I use the elevator, I may have to wait my turn if others are waiting in front of me. The elevator is next to the restroom.

Inside the Aquarium



Habitats

Once I'm inside and past Guest Services, I will be ready to explore the Aquarium's habitats. The habitats are homes to all the animals at the Aquarium. Most of the habitats are on Level 2. To see these habitats, I must go up.

Once I am upstairs, the first habitat I will see is the Wetlands of Florida.



Wetlands of Florida

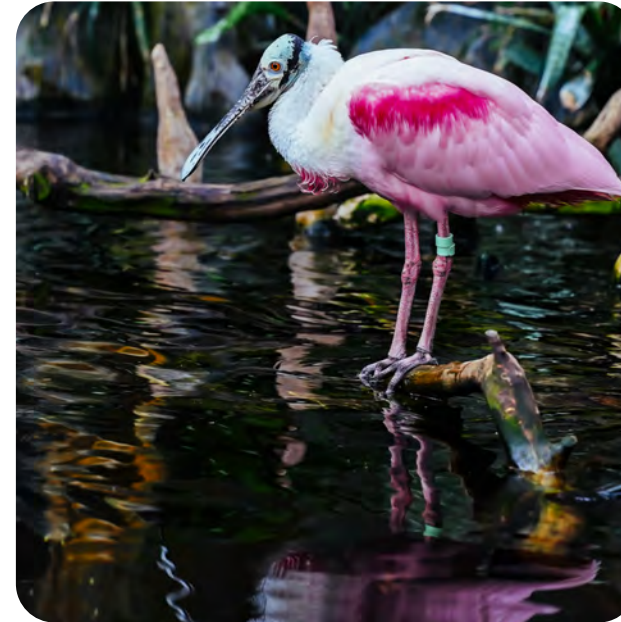
Entering the Wetlands of Florida



It looks like I am entering a dark cave, but there is light right around the corner. I may smell the birds and fish, but that is normal and I may cover my nose if I want.

I may also hear sounds such as running water, people's voices echoing, and birds chirping. I may cover my ears or wear my headphones.

The Wetlands Trail



Throughout the Wetlands, I will see low, open habitats of water. I will try to keep my hands away from the water. This will help keep the animals safe.

The animals will often be moving, swimming, or flying. This is okay. These are normal behaviors for these animals.



Wetlands of Florida

Signs in the Wetlands



As I walk through the Wetlands, I will see signs that show me the rules for the trail. They are important, because they help keep all of the animals and plants safe. I will try to read these signs to be safe and follow the rules.

The floor may be wet due to the open habitats. The birds are able to fly around and the fish may splash water on the ground.

The Ranger Station



Along the trail I will pass the Ranger Station. The chalkboard will tell me when there is a Trail Talk. A Trail Talk is an interactive talk where I can learn about topics such as poisonous or venomous animals, skulls, and more! I may take a seat on a bench or stand and listen to the talk.



Journey to Madagascar



Once I am done visiting the Wetlands of Florida, I might want to see Journey to Madagascar, located on the third floor of the Aquarium.

Going Up

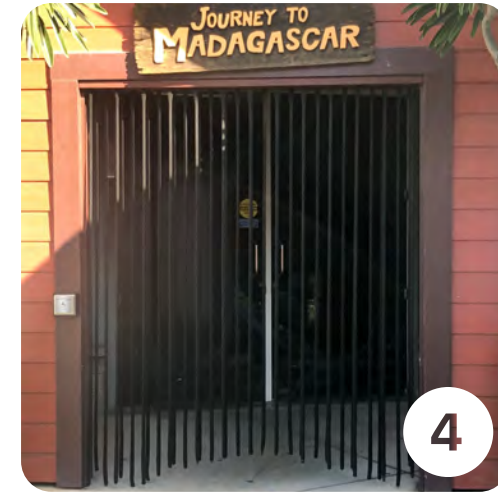
To visit Journey to Madagascar, I may use the stairs or the elevator.

Taking the Stairs

I will climb the stairs located near the Ranger Station. On the stairs there will be places to stop and look around. Other people may want to look around too, but they won't bother me.



Journey to Madagascar



Taking the Elevator

If I need to take the elevator, I will find it on the first or second floor. If I take the elevator, I will see pictures of lemurs on the windows of the doors, and lemur shapes next to me as I walk toward Madagascar. I will also have to pass through vertical rubber strips. They are soft and quiet. They will not hurt or make noise. They keep the birds from flying in or out!

Journey to Madagascar



Entering Madagascar

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

Animals of Madagascar

Some animals spend time in the leaves and branches that are in their habitat. This can make them very difficult to see. I will have to look closely to see them. I may also hear what they sound like over the speaker. This is okay, and I may cover my ears if I want.

Journey to Madagascar



A Window in the Floor

When I walk through Journey to Madagascar, there will be a window in the floor! I may look down through it to see stingrays and other big fish swimming below me.

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

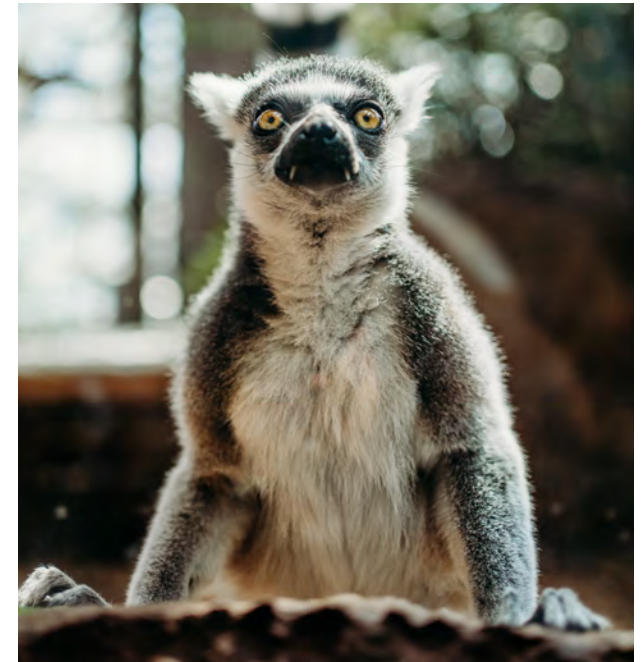
Lemurs



There are many different signs and other types of information about ring-tailed lemurs in this habitat. I may ask the adult I am with to read the signs to me. I may also read them myself.

Smell

Lemurs are beautiful and fun to watch, but they might smell! This is normal, and I may cover my nose. If the smell is too much, I may tell the adult I am with that I am ready to move on.



Journey to Madagascar



Leaving Madagascar: Stairs

When it is time to go down to the first or second level, I will take these stairs near the lemurs. They may creak, but that is normal. This will bring me back to the Wetlands.

Leaving Madagascar: Elevator

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





Shorelines

In this habitat, I will see and learn about many fish and animals that live in the salty water of Florida's bays and shores, like lobsters! In Shorelines, I will hear wave sounds and see images projected onto the walls. It may be a little dark at first, but my eyes will adjust.



TGH Animal Health Care Center



I may have an opportunity to see an animal getting a medical check-up or procedure by the veterinary team. Just like people, animals have to visit the doctor to stay healthy and get medicine they need. A staff member will be outside of the room to tell me what is going on and share additional information about how animals are cared for at the Aquarium.



Stingray Beach



Stingray Beach

At Stingray Beach, I will learn about stingrays and get to touch them. I do not have to touch them if I do not want to.

Touch

If I want to touch the stingrays I will try to read all of the signs and follow the directions. I will try to touch the stingrays with two fingers. This will keep the stingrays safe.

Time Out

Sometimes there is a "Time Out" sign, which means the stingrays are taking a break from being touched. This is okay, and I may be able to come back later.

The Aquatic Lounge



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

The lounge is usually the most quiet area in the Aquarium.

There are seven large video screens, so I may see many colorful pictures that change.

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

MORPH'D

This is the next gallery I will see when I leave the Aquatic Lounge. 



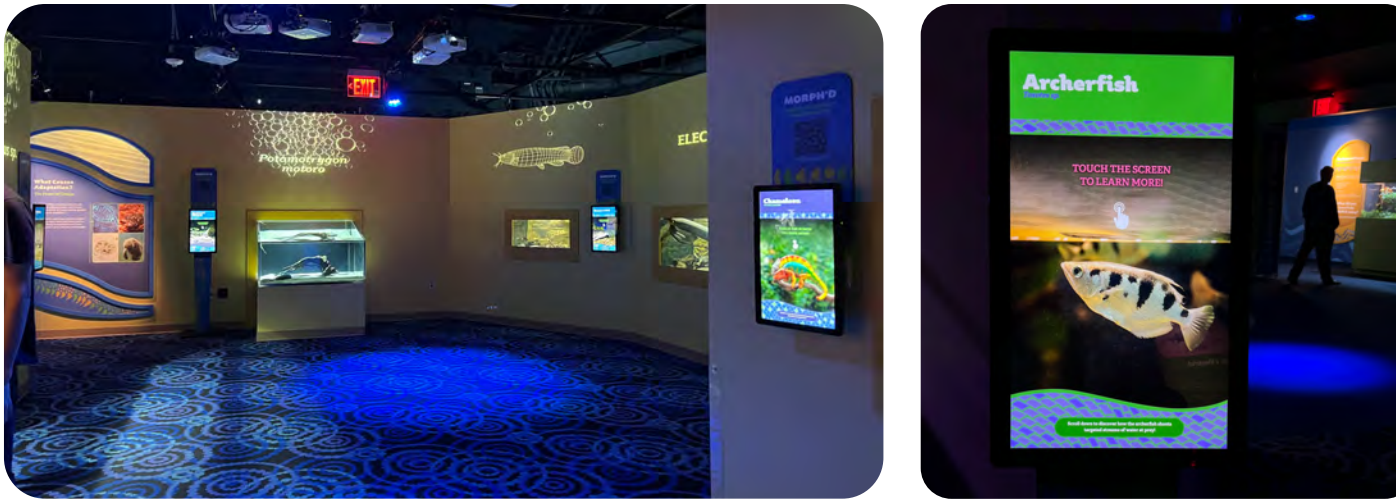
Entering MORPH'D



It looks like I am entering a dark space, but there is light right around the corner. There are also bright colors on the walls and floors. I may also hear sounds like running water, people's voices echoing, and habitat information being shared over the speaker. If these sounds are too much, I can cover my ears or wear my headphones.

Inside MORPH'D, I'll find low, open habitats of water. I need to keep my hands to myself to make sure the animals stay safe. The animals will often be moving, swimming, or hopping. This is okay. These are normal behaviors for these animals.

Exploring MORPH'D



As I explore MORPH'D, I may go from bright areas to darker ones, and I may hear new voices and sounds. Some creatures like to hide in the rocks and structures in their habitats, so I'll need to look closely to see them. I may hear what these animals sound like over the speaker, and it's okay to cover my ears or wear my headphones.

I can touch the signs next to the habitats to learn more about the animal. The words above the habitats often change, showing names, bubbles, or images of the animals.

Exploring MORPH'D



During my visit to MORPH'D, I can choose to play games if I want. I may need to wait my turn to play these games, but it's also okay if I don't play any games. I can watch someone else play too. Here are some of the games I can try:



See the World Through Four Eyes:
At the four-eyed fish habitat, I can use a periscope to experience how some fish hunt for food.



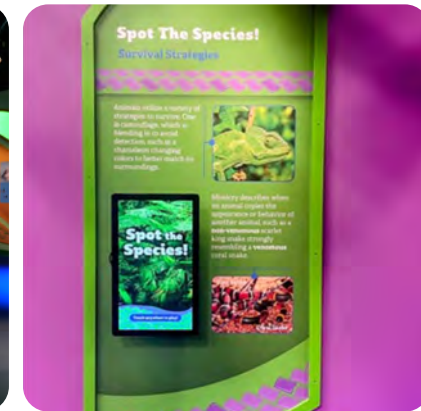
Match That Habitat:
I can help match animals to their homes. I can play this game with or without a timer. If I use the timer, I will be ready for the pieces to pop out of their spots when the timer reaches zero!



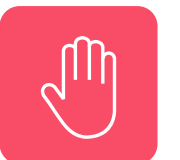
It's Electric: I can discover how paddlefish find food by feeling different vibrations when I press the buttons. This game will not hurt or shock me; it is just vibration.



Survival Styles Photo Booth: I can take photos at the photo booth and customize them with amazing adaptations. I can ask the adult I'm with to email these 'new looks' so I can see them at home!



Spot the Species:
Many animals can hide in their habitat, and I can touch the screen to find them.



Leaving MORPH'D

When it is time to leave MORPH'D, I will pass by a gift shop. If the gift shop is open, I can ask the adult I'm with to stop and look before choosing where to explore next!

I may also smell the food cooking in Cafe Ray on the first floor.



Coral Reefs



The Coral Reefs are a place to see fishes, sharks, and other marine animals that live in coral reef habitats.

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

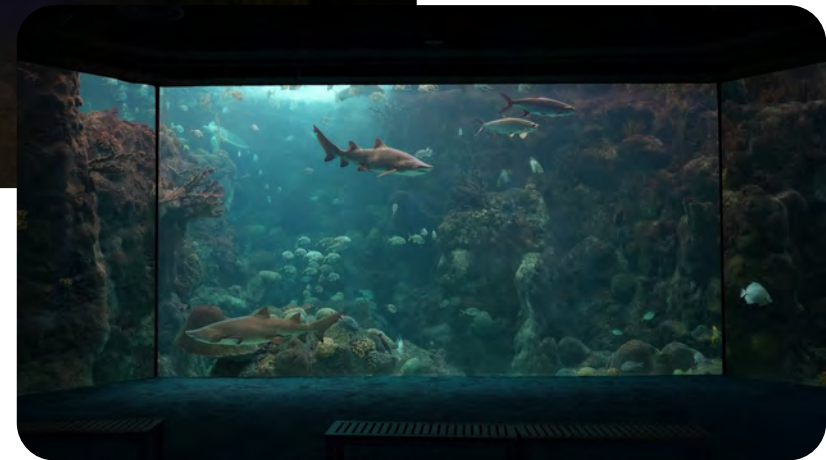
Coral Cave

The Coral Cave is one of the darkest parts of the Aquarium. The animals I will see here like living in the dark. This is okay, and I will stay close to the adult I came with.

Viewing Window

After I get through the dark tunnel, I will end up in an open room with a huge viewing window!

The window for viewing is very large, and the glass is also very thick. I am safe when I am in front of this large viewing window.





Reef Secrets

Reef Secrets

I will see a lot of small habitats in Reef Secrets. I will need to look closely to find all of the hidden animals. Some of these animals are delicate and sensitive to light and noise.

No Flash Photography

If I take pictures here, I will make sure the flash is off. I will also try to be extra quiet in this space. This will help keep the animals safe.





Waves of WonderTM



Waves of Wonder



Next, I will enter Waves of Wonder. This area is kept darker for the health of the animals. I will see lots of small habitats and a bigger habitat with a sea turtle, stingrays, and other animals. I will need to look closely to find all of the hidden animals.



No Flash Photography

If I take pictures here, I will make sure the flash is off. I will also try to be extra quiet in this space. This will help keep the animals safe.





The Lobby



Leaving Waves of Wonder


Leaving Waves of Wonder will take me back to the first floor lobby.



The Lobby

The lobby is the big space I walk through on my 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 Café Ray
- Visit the Aquarium gift shop
- Take a picture with characters dressed in costume
- Head outside to The Splash Pad and Wild Dolphin Cruise 

Moon Bay



Moon Bay

At Moon Bay, I will learn about moon jellies and get to touch them. I do not have to touch them if I do not want to.

Touch

If I want to touch a moon jelly, I may have to get in line and wait my turn if others are waiting in front of me to touch a moon jelly.

When it is time my turn, I will read the signs and follow instructions. I will try to touch the jellies with two fingers. This will keep the jellies safe.

If I do not want to touch the moon jellies, I can look at them in the sphere in the middle or look at the jellies lower in the habitat.

The Splash Pad & Outdoor Play Area



I may go to The Splash Pad and outdoor play area if the adult I am with says it is okay. I may not get to go if we do not have time, the weather is bad, or if The Splash Pad and outdoor play area are closed. That is okay. I may try again the next time I visit the Aquarium.

The Splash Pad

The Splash Pad is an outdoor area of The Florida Aquarium. I may play in some of the fountains. If I want to wear a swimsuit, there are bathrooms I may change in. Sometimes, the water is turned off, such as when it is cold outside, and that is okay.

The Outdoor Play Area

I may also play on the playground equipment. This is a good option if I want to stay dry.

African Penguins

The African Penguins habitat is located outside next to The Splash Pad and outdoor play area. At this habitat, I will learn about African Penguins!

I may have to wait my turn if others are waiting in front of me to see the penguins.

I will enter through the right side and exit through the left side.

The penguins may be standing, walking, or swimming, and that is okay. These are all normal penguin behaviors.





Wild Dolphin Cruise

The Wild Dolphin Cruise is an add-on experience to my Aquarium visit.

If the adult I am with decides the Wild Dolphin Cruise is a good idea, I will get to go on a catamaran ship called the Bay Spirit II.

While on the Bay Spirit II, I will look for animals in the bay, including dolphins!



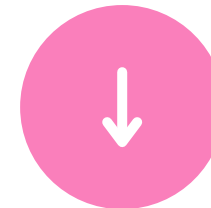
Time to Go!



After my visit is all done, it will be time to leave.

The adult I am with will say when it is time to leave.

I will look for the EXIT signs that are on the left side of the Guest Services desk. Goodbye, Aquarium! Thank you for a wonderful visit. See you next time!



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



Contact CARD



1-800-333-4530
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<http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>

Contact The Florida Aquarium



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