

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.



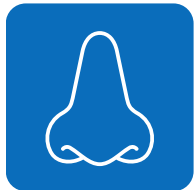
This area has something I can touch! At most of the habitats in the Aquarium, I will not touch the water or animals, but when I see this symbol, it is OK.



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.

Map of The Florida Aquarium



LEVEL 1

Restrooms, shopping, dining and more!

Start Here
Level 2 Attractions

- 1 WETLANDS OF FLORIDA**
Take a hike on Florida's Wetlands Trail and see alligators, otters, free-flying birds and even an invasive python!
- 2 THE LEMUR LOOKOUT**
Discover a treetop view of our amazing Wetlands while also visiting ring-tailed lemurs!
*For wheelchair access to Lemur Lookout, take the Lobby Elevator to Level 2.
- 3 SHORELINES**
Explore the world's coasts and our relationship with the animals that live there including spiny lobsters and garden eels. Touch stingrays at Stingray Beach!
- 4 THE TIDE POOL**
Explore the dynamic world of Pacific tide pools and meet sea stars, anemones, hermit crabs and more! This hands-on experience features wave action and a full day-to-night cycle.
- 5 MORPH'D Presented by PAR**
Immerse yourself in the adaptation stories of curious creatures including paddlefish, anableps and more! Get hands on with interactive exhibits and multimedia experiences.
- 6 CORAL REEFS**
Dive through coral tunnels and caves into the world of sharks, reef fishes and moray eels!
- 7 REEF SECRETS**
Get to know some of the smaller creatures that inhabit the forest-like coral reefs.
- 8 Waves of Wonder**
Enjoy the colors and adaptations of ocean life with amazing jellies, an octopus and our vibrant Heart of the Sea habitat.

Level 1 Attractions

- 9 Bay Spirit II Wild Dolphin Cruise**
Additional Ticket Required
You've enjoyed the sea life inside the Aquarium. Now admire the wildlife outside aboard the Bay Spirit II, our 72-foot catamaran!
- 10 MOON BAY**
Learn about and touch alien-like moon jellies at this immersive touch experience.

Scan for Digital Map

Head upstairs to begin your journey!

LEVEL 2

Galleries, exhibits, restrooms, touch experiences and more!





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 a shirt with The Florida Aquarium logo on them.

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

THE FLORIDA AQUARIUM   **This is the logo I should be looking for.**

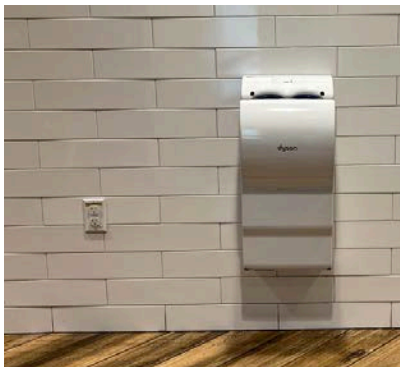




Restrooms

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, we can go back to exploring the Aquarium!

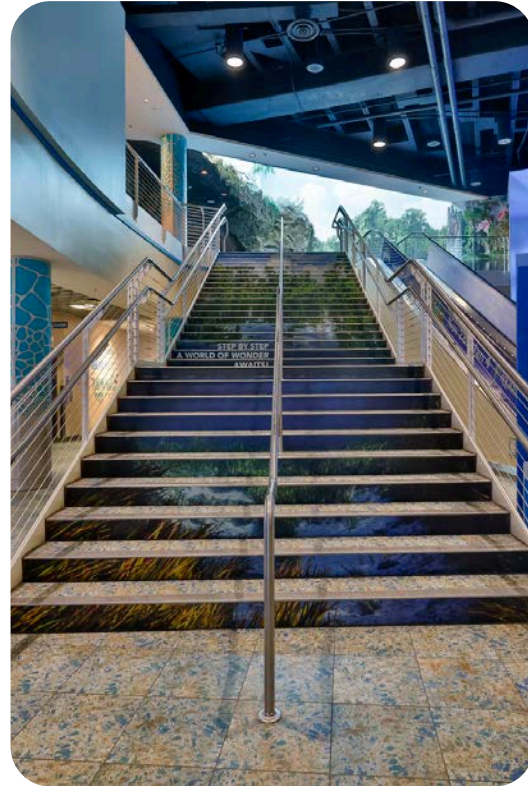


Hand Dryers

Going Up



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

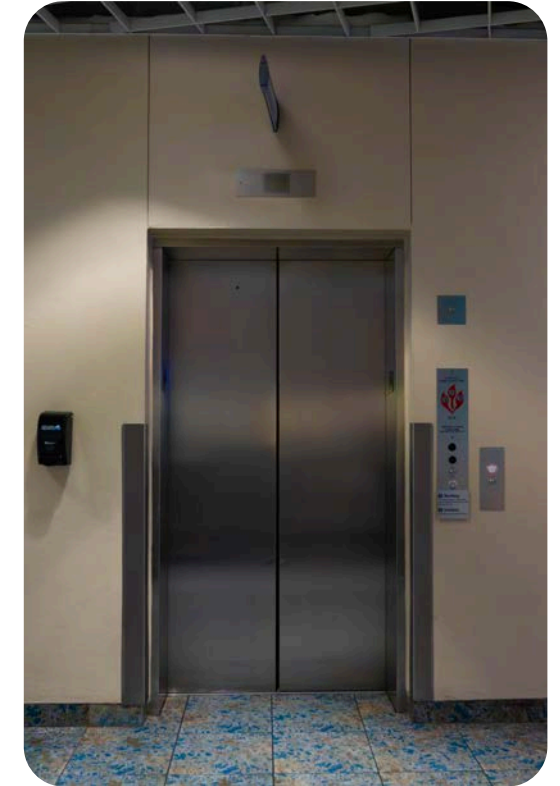


Stairs

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 OK. 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



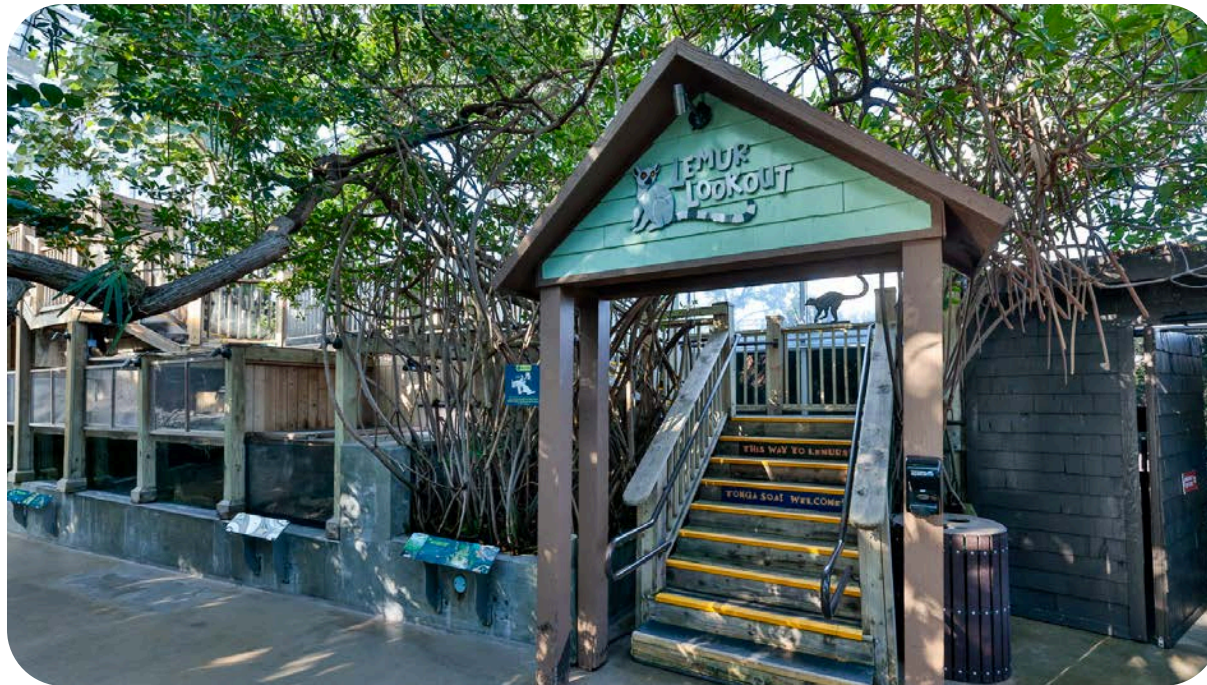
Along the trail I will pass the Ranger Station. The chalkboard will tell me if when there is a Trail Talk. A Trail Talk is an interactive talk where I can learn about topics such as poisonous or venomous animals, skulls, and more! I may take a seat on a bench or stand and listen to the talk.



Lemur Lookout



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



Going Up

To see lemurs, I may use the stairs or the elevator.

Taking the Stairs

I will climb the stairs located near the Ranger's 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.

A View of the Wetlands

When I walk through Lemur Lookout, there will be a platform with a fence where I can see the Wetlands of Florida I just walked through! I may look out to see the trees and birds flying or down to see the fish swimming.

The platform and fence are very strong. No one will fall through or break it when they step on it. If I don't want to stand on the lookout, I may tell the adult I am with that I am ready to move on.



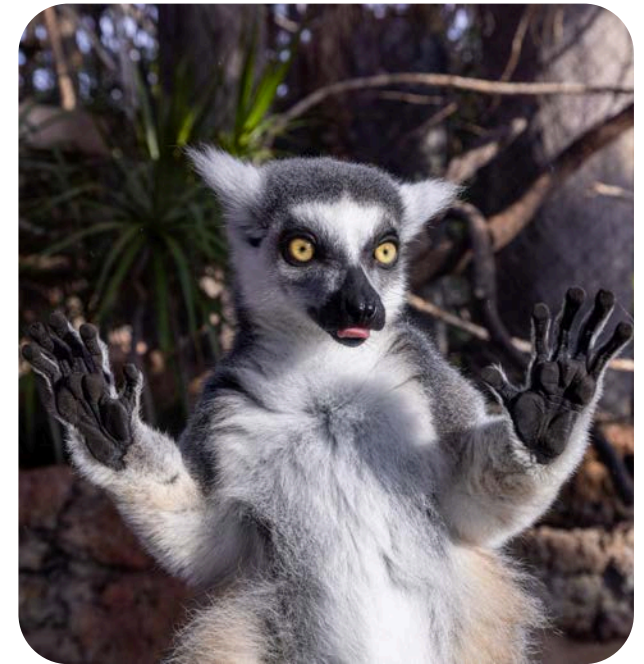
Lemurs

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.



Lemur Lookout



Leaving Lemur Lookout: 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 Lemur Lookout: 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 try 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 Tide Pool

When I leave Stingray Beach, it may look like I am entering a dark space, but there are spaces with light. There are also bright colors, patterns, and textures on the wall.

If I stay at The Tide Pool for a while, I may see the lighting slowly change to become lighter or darker. This is okay. This shows me what The Tide Pool looks like during the day and during the night.

I may hear sounds like running water, a wave crashing, people's voices, and information being shared over a speaker. If I do not like the sounds, I can step away from The Tide Pool with the adult who is accompanying me. I can also cover my ears or ask to wear my headphones.





The Tide Pool



Inside, I will find low, open water filled with animals like sea stars, sea cucumbers, anemones, and sea urchins. I may even be lightly splashed.

At The Tide Pool, I will learn about animals that live in tide pools and may be able to gently touch the animals that are close to the edge of the habitat. I do not have to touch them if I do not want to.

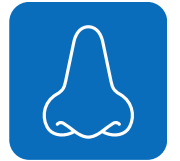


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Aquatic Lounge



The Aquatic Lounge is an art gallery.

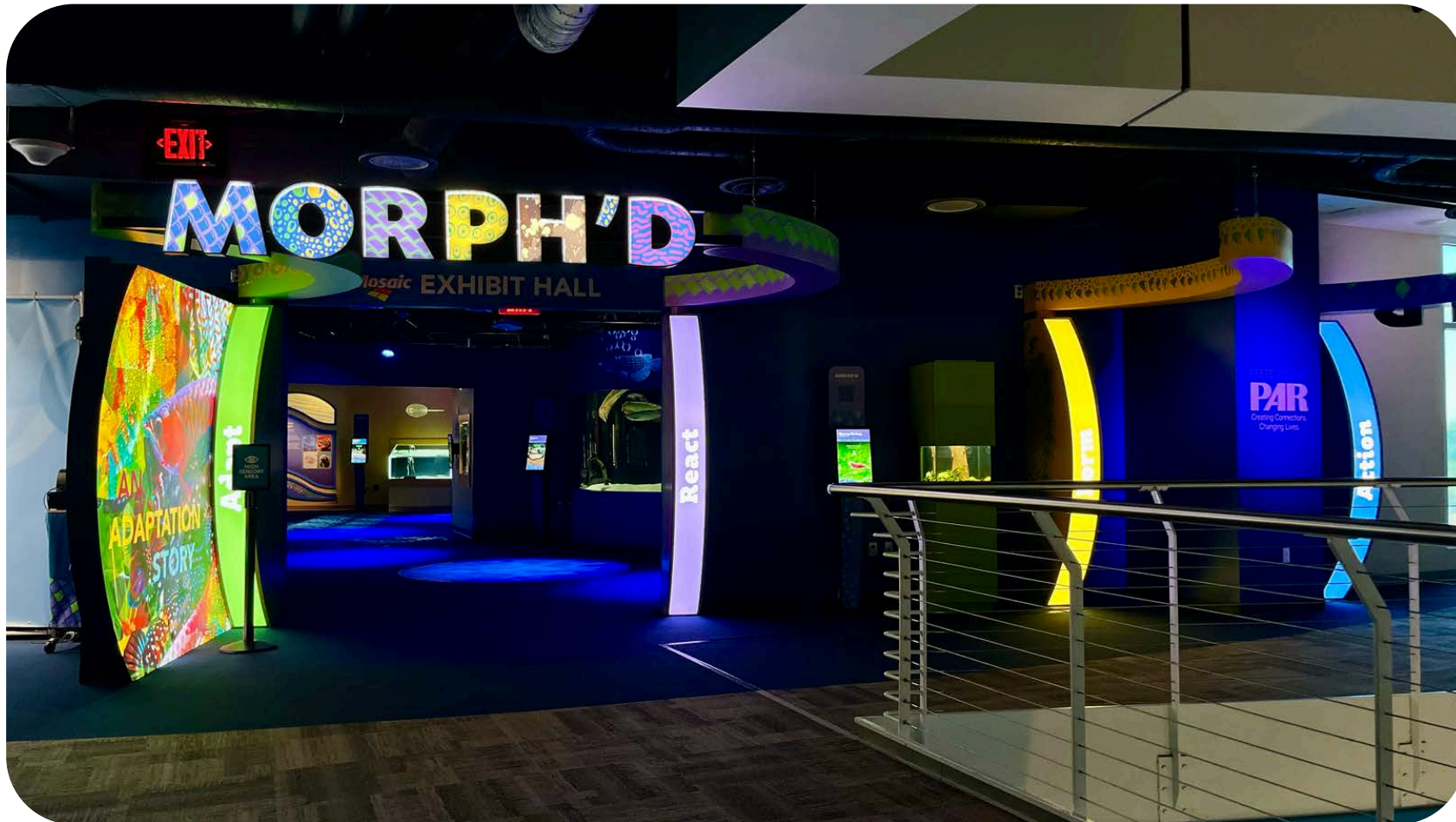
The lounge is usually the most quiet area in the Aquarium.

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

There is a foodcart where I may also smell and see food next to a face painting station. I can ask the adult I'm with to stop before choosing where to explore next!

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 our hands to ourselves to make sure the animals stay safe. The animals will often be moving, swimming, or hopping. This is OK. 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 you might 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. Sometimes, one of the games may not be working the way I think it is supposed to work. That is okay. I can come back another time. 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, be ready for the pieces to pop out of their spots when the timer reaches zero!



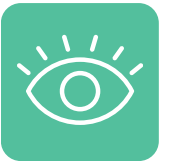
It's Electric: I can discover how paddlefish find food by feeling different vibrations when I press the buttons. This game will not hurt or shock you; it is just vibration.



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!



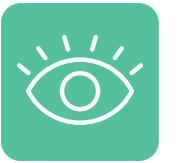
Spot the Species: Many animals can hide in their habitat, and I can touch the screen to find them.



Leaving MORPH'D

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 Café Seventy One on the first floor.



Undersea Explorer Virtual Reality



After leaving MORPH'D, I will see eight seats that have lights and movements that are part of the Undersea Explorer Virtual Reality add-on experience. This is a special experience where I can wear a headset and feel like I am underwater. I may get it to try it if the trusted adult I am with decides this is a good idea.

When it's my turn, I will sit down and wear a headset. It may feel different, and that's okay. I might see ocean animals like fish, whales, or sharks. They are not real—they are part of a video.

The seat may move gently, and I may hear sounds around me. If I feel uncomfortable, I can tell a trusted adult, take off the headset, or ask for a break.



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

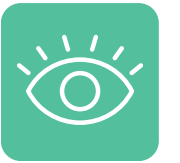
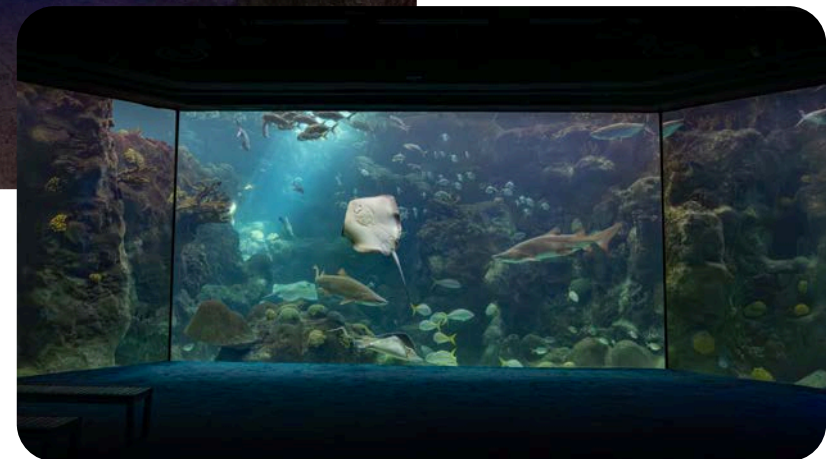
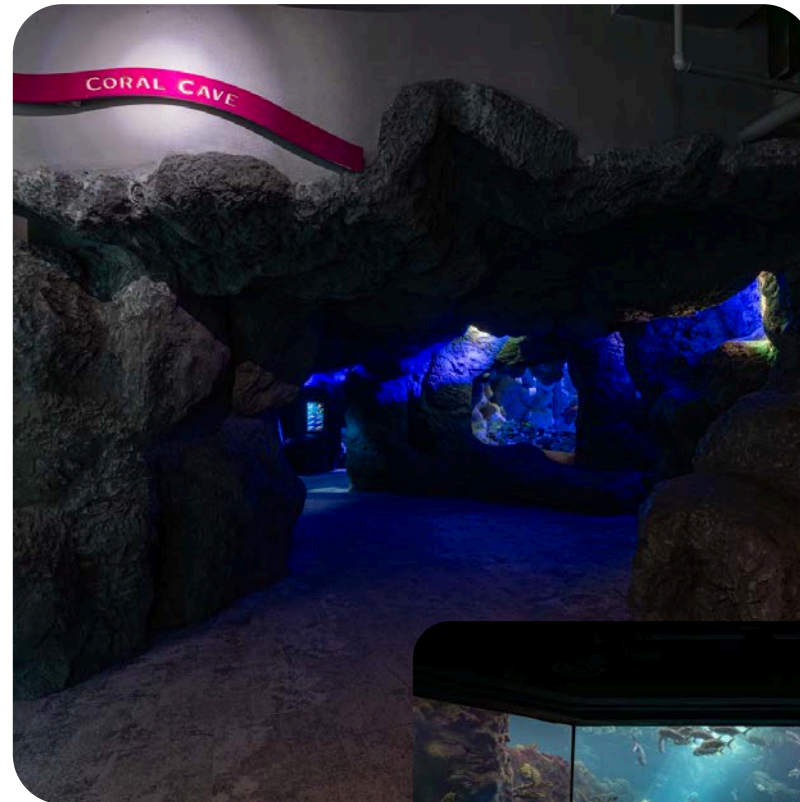
Coral Cave

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.



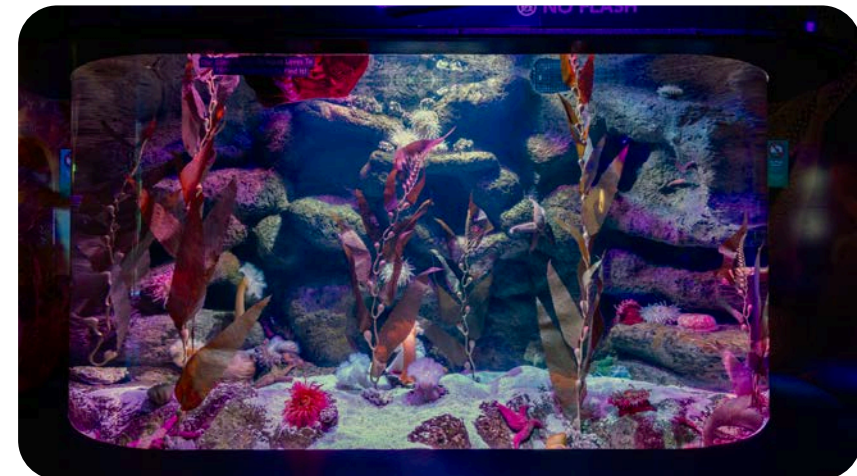
Waves of Wonder & Heart of the Sea

Next, I will enter the Waves of Wonder Gallery. This area is kept darker, but I will still be able to see many animals. Some habitats are small, and some are larger. I may see some special lights that look like moving water and soft music or underwater sounds. This helps me to feel like I am looking into the ocean.

I will see a tall habitat that goes from floor to ceiling with fish swimming around. I will even see through it and may notice people moving on the other side.

No Flash Photography

If I see a sign above or near a habitat that says, “NO FLASH,” I will make sure the flash is off if I want to take a picture. I will also try to be extra quiet in this space. This will help keep the animals safe.



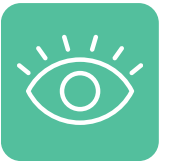
Waves of Wonder & Heart of the Sea



Next, I will see a large habitat called Heart of the Sea. It is full of many fish, and a big sea turtle. If I want to get close to the window, I may need to wait until there is space for me.

Around the corner, there is a large round window where I can view this habitat. I may see people sitting next to the window, and that is okay.

I may even want to sit here, too, and I may need to wait my turn, or I can come back another time.



Waves of Wonder & Heart of the Sea



I may see videos on the wall that show animals and their habitats. These videos help me to see where some of these animals live, and they can also show me what some animals look like close-up.

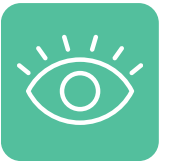
Heart of the Sea has many shapes and textures on the wall, and it is okay if I want to touch some of these shapes.





Waves of Wonder & Heart of the Sea

As I near the exit of the Heart of the Sea, the hallway may look dark but there is light around the corner. I will see a video screen ahead, and know the exit is close. It will be brighter there, with more lights and round windows letting in sunlight.





The Lobby

Leaving Heart of the Sea

Leaving Heart of the Sea will take me back to the first floor lobby.

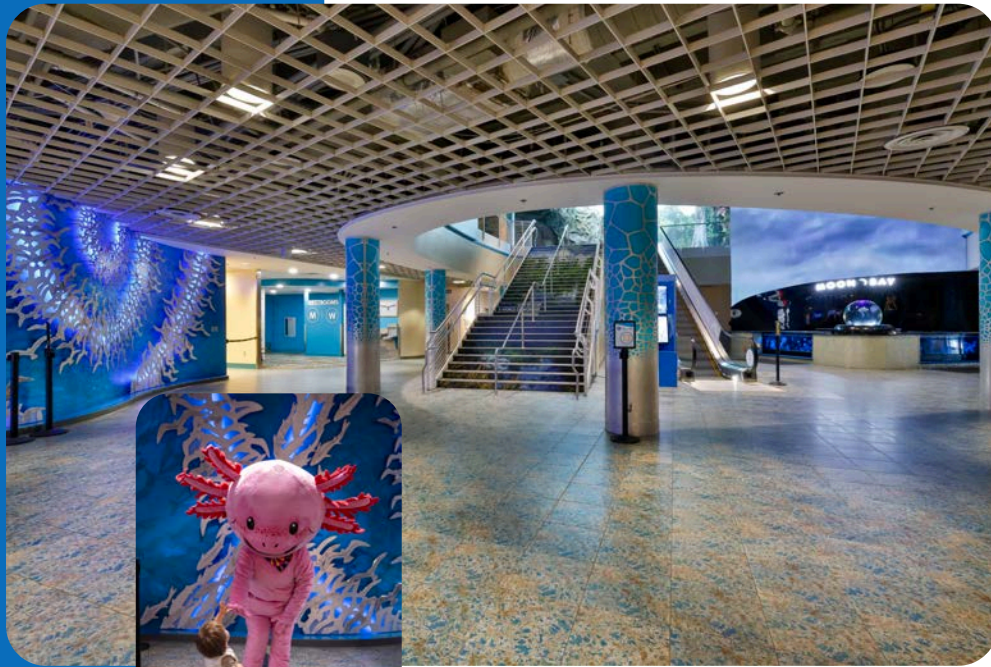


The Lobby

The lobby is the big space I 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 Café Seventy One
- Visit the Aquarium gift shop
- Take a picture with characters dressed in costume
- Head outside to the Wild Dolphin Cruise



Moon Bay



Moon Bay

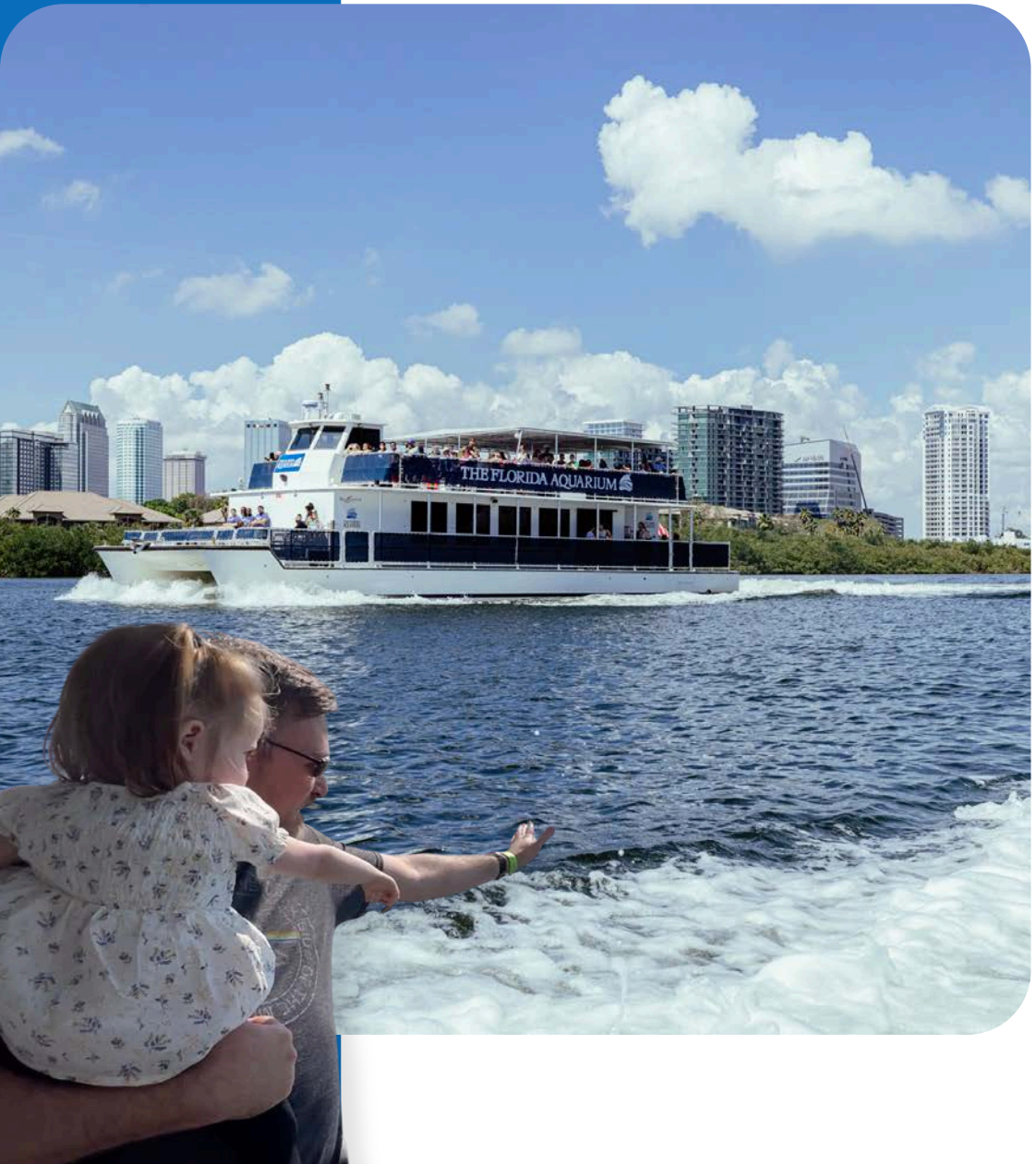
At Moon Bay, I will learn about moon jellies and get to touch them. I do not have to touch them if I do not want to.

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.



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
1-813-974-2532



<http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>

Contact The Florida Aquarium



1-813-273-4000



<http://flaquarium.org>