

Planning Guide

SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium

EXCURSION NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND GROUPS

WELCOME

Welcome to SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium! At the aquarium we foster students' love and care for the ocean with ongoing state-of-the-art exhibit design and place-based learning. Our motto is Amazing Discovery – and you can meet yours right here.

The mission of the SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium is to inspire conservation of the ocean. The aquarium is a place where people of all ages come to explore and discover the wonders of the sea. This guide is designed to help you and your parent helpers prepare for your aquarium visit.

At SEA LIFE Sydney you can see the world's largest collection of Australian aquatic animals. There are over 13,000 animals to see representing 700 different species.

PRE-PLANNING

Talk to your students about your visit to the aquarium before arrival. If most of your students have never visited the aquarium before, be sure to show them an aquarium map and talk to them about some of the animals they will see in the aquarium. Let them visit our website and visit the habitat zones to familiarise themselves with the animals. One main question I get from students is "Do you have whales?". No we do not, so check what is in the aquarium before you visit to manage expectations.

Share your excursion plan with students

Let students know what they should expect on the day of their visit, talk them through the day from departing school to returning to school, with the fun part in between. Put together a timeline of activities for the day to familiarise themselves with events. Let them know how they will arrive, the name and focus of their lesson if they are having one, any activities they will be participating in, when and where they will have lunch, their required behaviour, toilet breaks and anything else you think is important. Let them know if and when they'll be able to go to the aquarium store and if they can purchase anything.

Link educational goals of excursion to your classroom

Students learn more and feel better about excursions when teachers use structured activities before and/or after an aquarium visit to create a context for the experience and link it with classroom work.

The aquarium has a host of curriculum materials, aligned to the NSW and Australian Curriculum, for teachers to utilize in their classrooms. You can find our curriculum materials on our website at:

www.sydneyaquarium.com.au/schools

Our self guided program allows you and your students to explore the aquarium at your own leisure. Take advantage of the special educational talks that will occur throughout your visit. This information can be located just inside the aquarium and announcements will be made when talks are about to begin and will enhance your visit.

Here is a list of current talks at the aquarium. Please note these can be subject to change so please check our website for any changes.

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TIME	10:30AM
LOCATION	Jurassic Seas: Living Fossils Talk
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Dive back in time with our all-new Jurassic Seas zone! Learn more about the ocean's living fossils and what you can do to protect them from disappearing forever.
TIME	11:00AM
LOCATION	Reef Theatre: JAWsome Shark Feed
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Sit back and relax to the best view in the aquarium of the Great Barrier Reef while we feed the animals in our largest tank. If you're interested in feeding the animals yourself check out the Glass Bottom Boat for a hands-on experience!
TIME	11:30 AM
LOCATION	Penguin Expedition: Sub-Antarctic Penguin Feed & Talk
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Watch as our spectacular colony of sub-Antarctic penguins enjoy their breakfast amidst flurries of snow and whistling winds!
TIME	12:30PM
LOCATION	Dugong Island: Dugong Discovery Talk
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Come and play at Dugong Island! Meet Pig and Wuru, our orphaned and rescued dugongs, who have a unique story to tell.
TIME	1:30PM
LOCATION	Jurassic Seas: Living Fossils Talk
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Dive back in time with our all-new Jurassic Seas zone! Learn more about the ocean's living fossils and what you can do to protect them from disappearing forever.
TIME	2:00PM
LOCATION	South Coast Shipwreck: Playful Little Penguin Talk
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Get your happy feet down to the South Coast Shipwreck and watch our cute and cuddly colony of gorgeous Little Penguins splash about!
TIME	3:00PM
LOCATION	Penguin Expedition: Sub-Antarctic Penguin Talk
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	Discover all of the unique traits that these majestic sub-Antarctic birds possess and the conservation efforts to protect them!.

These talks can be found on our website at: www.sydneyaquarium.com.au/plan/feeds-and-talk-times/

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Parent Helpers

Parent helpers are responsible for the behaviour and safety of the students and they shape each student's learning experience during the aquarium visit. It is important you carefully select and prepare them ahead of time. It is helpful to meet with the parent helpers before the day of the excursion. If that is not possible, make sure you provide them with written information and a schedule ahead of time. You can review their parent helper responsibilities and share your expectations of the students before you leave school.

Helpers will be responsible for the behaviour of the students, please communicate the following to your parent helpers prior to your visit.

Behaviour Required

Stay with your group. Students and parent helpers must stay with their group at all times inside the aquarium.

Be courteous and respectful of other visitors. Talk quietly and walk through the aquarium; running, yelling and climbing are not permitted.

Be respectful of the aquarium exhibits and building. Use notebooks or clipboards to write against, instead of walls, windows or exhibit labels. Climbing on exhibits or railings is not permitted.

Help care for the animals. At touch pool areas, touch the animals gently when invited and do not move sea stars. Do not disturb exhibit animals by tapping on the windows.

Keep food, drinks and gum outside the aquarium. School groups are not allowed to eat or drink beverages inside the aquarium.

If permitted, shop for souvenirs in the aquarium store and stay with parent helpers.

Parent Helper Information

- Remind the parent helper that they must stay with their group at all times.
- Let them know what learning activities you have planned for the students and explain their role in those activities. Encourage parent helpers to ask open-ended questions to their group while exploring exhibits. Read signage on the exhibits to provide student with information about what they are seeing.
- Review behaviour requirements of the students. Provide them with suggestions and procedures for managing small student groups and individual students.
- Explain the schedule for the day and how you will communicate with one another once you have arrived at the aquarium, best is by mobile phone or text.
- Provide each parent helper with a list of students for whom they are responsible and introduce the students to the parent helper.
- Be sure your parent helpers know the times and places to meet for lunch and to leave for home.

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- Let the parent helpers know whether or not your students will be allowed to visit the aquarium store or whether you will just be passing through.
- Parent Helpers should travel with your group from school and back to school after the excursion. If parent helpers are meeting you on arrival at the aquarium, they must wait until you have arrived to enter the aquarium. Remember everyone must enter as a group in order to receive the school prices.

Parent Helpers requirements:

- Preschool (4+) 1:3
- K-2 students 1:6
- Year 3-12 students 1:8
- Vacation care students 1:8

All of our school visitors, from preschool through Year 12 must stay with their parent helper or teacher at all times while inside the aquarium. This policy is for the protection of your students and the safety and comfort of all visitors.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Before your visit

1. Check you have written confirmation and that all details relating to any lessons, dates and times are correct. Make sure you have your Booking Number. If you do not have these your booking is not complete.
2. If you did not receive a confirmation or to make any corrections, call 1800 195 650 (9am – 5pm, 7 days a week).
3. Confirm your transportation arrangements with your bus company or train connections.
4. Check where the arrival bays are for buses if arriving by bus, there are no bus parking bays at Darling Harbour. There is a bus layover in Lime Street but this is only for tourist buses. It does not accept privately owned school buses or government buses.
5. Discuss behaviour expectations with your students.
6. Prepare your Parent Helpers.
7. Assign student groups in groups of ten to your parent helpers with a name badge that identifies them and their group e.g. Penguins, Sharks, Turtles and so on.
8. Collect any educational materials and writing materials to use with students during your Aquarium visit, see the schools section of our website:
www.sydneyaquarium.com.au/schools/planning-your-excursion/

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Calculate your arrival time

Note the check in time on your confirmation. Staff is scheduled according to your assigned arrival time. Groups arriving more than 15 minutes early may be asked to wait or may have to leave and return at the scheduled arrival time. Please do not insist on early entry.

Groups more than 10 minutes late may be subject to program cancellation as this will have a knock on affect to other groups.

Complimentary Teacher Pre-Planning Visit

You may request a complimentary teacher planning visit to familiarise yourself with the aquarium. Check out the new exhibits and plan the educational activities your students will do while they are visiting the aquarium and to complete a risk assessment.

If you wish to visit the aquarium regularly with family members it is recommended you purchase a Merlin Annual Pass for regular visits. One visit per year is valid for approval for teachers. Complimentary Teacher Visits are not for multiple use.

NSW Sydney Metro Teachers within 2 hours of Darling Harbour are welcome to visit on weekends and weekdays during school terms.

NSW Regional Teachers are welcome during school holidays.

Public Holidays are not available for complimentary teacher visit requests.

Please email the Education Manager – Christine.Kilpatrick@merlinentertainments.com.au one week prior to your requested date. There is an approval process that you will need to go through.

Arrival Information

If arriving by bus, there is a drop off bus zone on Wheat Road outside the large aquarium sign. Your students may alight here and assemble before approaching the admissions desk. Buses are not permitted to park here for more than 30 mins to drop off and pick up.

If you arrive by train, gather your students and parent helpers in an orderly group and make your way on foot to the aquarium. The closest train stations are Wynyard or Town Hall.

When you arrive at the aquarium, the first thing you'll do is check in with an aquarium staff member at the check in desk.

Please keep your students and parent helpers in a group away from the queue lines at the check in desk while you check in with an aquarium staff member, there is no need for students to queue. Your students may be seated on the wooden logs facing the harbour opposite the check in desk where they may enjoy a snack before entering the aquarium. Bins are available for your rubbish.

Restrooms are located at the entrance to the aquarium across from the SEA LIFE Entrance. There are 4 female cubicles and 4 male cubicles. Please send students to the toilets with teachers or parent helpers.

Please adhere to the following teacher/parent helper ratio to students.

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DURING YOUR VISIT

Emergency Procedures

Students should know they can ask for help at the Information Desk or can ask anyone wearing a SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium name badge or uniform for assistance. If a student gets lost, go back to the Main Entrance. On arrival show your students where they should go if they get lost.

If a student gets injured, ask anyone wearing an aquarium name badge to call for assistance and an aquarium officer will report the location of the injured person. Teachers are responsible for communicating with their school officials in the event of a student injury. In the rare event of an emergency requiring the evacuation of the aquarium, all students, teachers and parent helpers should exit the building at the closest available exit and follow the instructions of the staff.

Aquarium Shop

Suitable student items are available for purchase from our aquarium store for child friendly prices. Students may use their own money to purchase these or any items they may be interested in. Please remember that students must be accompanied by a parent helper while shopping. All purchases must be assisted by parent helpers for primary students.

Lunch Plans

Carrying lunches

Please let students know they will need to carry their lunch in a backpack or bag whilst inside the aquarium. Securely storing lunches when you arrive is not available. School groups are not allowed to eat or drink in the aquarium, on any benches or on any deck areas or any floor spaces.

Lunch Seated Options

There is a small lawn area to the north of the SEA LIFE entrance about 5 mins walk once the student have exited the attraction. This is owned by Darling Harbour Precinct and cannot be reserved. Other members of the general public also use this area. It can comfortably sit up to 50 students on the grass. Bins are provided for rubbish.

In case of rain or bad weather, there are sheltered areas around Darling Harbour, consult the Darling Harbour Precinct website to locate these areas.

Please keep it clean

After lunch, inspire your students to care for our planet by reminding them to clean up after themselves. Feeding birds and wildlife is discouraged as this can be harmful to animals. Students can use the bins to discard any leftover food or packaging.

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EXCURSION PLANNING TIMELINE

Six weeks before your trip

- Look for your confirmation and booking number in your email inbox
- Confirm your transportation
- Duplicate and distribute maps and parking information for the bus driver
- If coming with other teachers, meet to determine the schedule and learning activities for the day.

Two weeks before your trip

- Confirm your parent helpers
- Conduct pre-visit activities
- If participating in a guided program, contact the education team with any desired focus or necessary additional information.

One week before your trip

- Make your lunch plans and communicate this accordingly
- Collect permission slips from your students
- Gather your paperwork
- Review the behaviour contract with your group
- Assign student into groups.

The Day has arrived!

- Depart and arrive on time
- Make sure students have name tags and lunches
- Review your plans, expectations, and schedule
- Review emergency procedures
- Have the best day!

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DEPARTING THE AQUARIUM

When you and your students depart the aquarium you should do in good time to eat, use the bathroom, count your students and meet your connecting travel home.

Once you depart the aquarium into Darling Harbour via the aquarium store move away from the building to organise yourselves.

There are many areas for collection via transport so make sure you know exactly where this is.

Please remember to complete your feedback survey that will be sent to you at the end of the month of your visit. Feedback for us is vital in making sure we meet your requirements. It is recommended that you rebook for the following year or future dates just after your visit to ensure you have the date and time you require.

If you have further questions please contact the Education Team.

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