

Planning Guide

SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium

EXCURSION NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND GROUPS

WELCOME

Welcome to SEA LIFE Melbourne 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 Discoveries" - and you can have yours right here!

The mission of the SEA LIFE Melbourne 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 Planning Guide is designed to help you and your parent helpers prepare for your aquarium visit.

Before your visit

Talk to your students about your visit to the aquarium before arrival. If most of your students have never visited the aquarium before, talk to them about some of the animals they will see in the aquarium and prepare them for this excursion.

Activity

As a class, visit our website and visit the habitat zones

<https://www.visitsealife.com/melbourne/whats-inside/exhibits/>

or familiarise themselves with the animals:

<https://www.visitsealife.com/melbourne/whats-inside/animals/>

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.

SOCIAL SCRIPTS

We have social scripts available for guided and self-guided groups.

Kindergarten Guided Script

<https://www.visitsealife.com/melbourne/media/ov1evyfw/social-script-for-kinder-guided-groups-slma.pdf>

Primary/Secondary Guided Script

<https://www.visitsealife.com/melbourne/media/hovhejs1/social-script-for-guided-schools-groups-slma.pdf>

Self-Guided Primary/Secondary Script

<https://www.visitsealife.com/melbourne/media/ngfnd05d/social-script-for-self-guided-groups-slma.pdf>

BEHAVIOUR

Parent helpers and teachers are responsible for the behaviour and safety of all of their students.. You can review the parent helper responsibilities and share your expectations of the students before you leave school.

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. Students are not permitted to explore the aquarium unsupervised. This policy is for the protection of your students and the safety and comfort of all visitors.

Please communicate the following to your parent helpers and students prior to your visit.

Behaviour required

Stay with your group. Students and parent helpers and teachers must stay with the group at all times inside the aquarium to ensure the safety of students. Students are not permitted to explore the aquarium unsupervised.

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 window or exhibit labels. Climbing on exhibits or railings is not permitted.

Help care for the animals. At touch pool areas, touch any animals gently when invited and do not move them around the exhibit. Do not put hands in any open water exhibits except the Rockpools. Do not disturb exhibit animals by tapping on the windows.

Keep food outside the aquarium. School groups are not allowed to eat inside the aquarium.

PARENT HELPER INFORMATION SELF GUIDED GROUPS

- 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 students 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.
- Provide each 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 to meet and leave for home.
- 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.

TEACHER TO STUDENT RATIOS

- Teachers are offered complimentary entry on the following teacher-to-student ratios:
Preschool 1adult to 3studnts
Primary, Secondary and Tertiary: 1adult to 10 students.
Students with additional needs 1adult to 1student. Integration aide/carer 1 adult to 1 student.
During school holidays 1adult to 6 students.

Arrival Procedures

BEFORE YOU VISIT

- Check you have an emailed Confirmation/cost estimate and that all details relating to any program, dates and times are correct. Make sure you have your Booking Confirmation .If you do not have this email your booking is not complete.
- If you did not receive a confirmation or to make any corrections, contact the education office education@melbourneaquarium.com.au
- Confirm your transportation arrangements with your bus company or train connections.
- Check where the arrival bays are for buses if arriving by bus. There are two drop-off bus parks in Aquarium Drive and another four bus parks on Flinders Street, just before the turn to Aquarium Drive.
- Discuss behaviour expectations with your students.
- Prepare your Parent Helpers.
- Assign student groups in groups of the ratio to your parent helpers with a name badge that identifies them and their group e.g. Penguins, Sharks, Turtles and so on.

CALCULATE YOUR ARRIVAL TIME

Note the check in time on your confirmation. For Guided groups staff are scheduled according to your assigned arrival time. Any groups arriving more than 15 minutes early will be asked to wait 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 (fees apply) as this will have a knock-on affect to other groups this may also result in a shortened tour if Guided.

COMPLIMENTARY TEACHER PRE-PLANNING VISIT

You may request a complimentary teacher planning visit to familiarise yourself with the aquarium.

This is for you to check out any new exhibits, plan the educational activities your students will complete while they are visiting the aquarium and to complete a risk assessment.

You will need to pre-book your visit with our education team at least one week prior to your planned visit day. Please send your request to education@melbourneaquarium.com.au

Please show your VIT card at admissions for entry once you have had your pre-visit confirmed by our Education Manager. One visit per year can be requested.

If you wish to visit the aquarium regularly with family members for leisure purposes, it is recommended you purchase a Merlin Annual Pass.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Bus If arriving by bus, there are drop off zones on Aquarium Drive and on Flinders Street just before Aquarium Drive.

Train 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 Flinders St or Southern Cross station.

Self-Guided Groups

Self-guided groups need to check in with an aquarium staff member at the admissions desk at the main entrance on Flinders St. Please keep your students and parent helpers in a group away from the queue lines at the check in desk while you check in, there is no need for students to queue.

Guided Groups

Monday, Thursday and Friday

- Guided groups will be met at the Schools entrance located on King Street by the Education team. Please have the total number of students, adults and any aides/carers ready before arriving to check in.
- **Eating:** It is highly recommended students eat snacks or lunch in the parks nearby or another appropriate location before entering the building. There is no where for students to eat when we are open to the public.

Tuesday and Wednesday (Schools only Days)

- Guided groups on Schools only days will be met at the Main Entrance on Flinders St for their allocated session.
- **Eating:** Guided tours booked in for the three hour schools only session may eat in the building after their guided tour. Please ensure you allow space for other school groups to access exhibits by sitting in small groups or a few metres from the exhibit glass. Please ensure all rubbish is taken with you or placed in available rubbish and recycling bins.

TOILETS

All restrooms are located inside the aquarium and access to bathrooms will be available after your group has entered.

- Guided groups will be directed to a bathroom by their educator upon arrival.
- Self-guided groups can utilise the toilets near the first exhibit Bay of Rays. There are 4 female cubicles and 2 male cubicles and an accessible toilet.

Please note: These are public toilets - do not allow children to enter the bathrooms unaccompanied at any time. Aquarium educators are not responsible for supervising toilet use for guided groups and will wait outside to start the program.

During Your Visit

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Assistance: Students should know they can ask for help from any SEA LIFE staff member.

Lost Students: Remind students that if they get lost, remain in place so teachers can retrace their steps and find the lost student. It is encouraged to count students before moving to the next section all together.

First Aid: If a student gets injured, ask any aquarium staff member for assistance. Teachers are responsible for communicating with their school officials in the event of a student injury.

Emergency 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. Please be prepared to follow all instructions from aquarium representatives while organising your group to evacuate. Account for all members of your group and confirm with aquarium staff.

Teachers are responsible for communicating with their school officials if an emergency significantly impacts excursion timelines.

AQUARIUM SHOP

School only Days (Tuesday and Wednesday)

The retail store can be opened for your students on School Only Days. Requests must be in advance and arranged with the Education Team prior to visit. Please email our Education Department to arrange: education@melbourneaquarium.com.au. All payments are CARD only or pre purchase by arrangement.

Self-Guided Groups

Suitable student items are available for purchase from our aquarium store. As of January 2021 all transactions are now CARD ONLY. If visiting the store, students must be fully supervised with a maximum of ten students in the aquarium store at a time.

Guided Groups

Classroom teachers may pre-order a bulk purchase of educational items for their students prior to their visit; these items will be available for collection on departure. Please email our Education Department to arrange. education@melbourneaquarium.com.au

BAG and LUNCH STORAGE

During booking, the Education team will provide information regarding access to bag storage for Guided Groups.

There is no storage for Self-Guided groups so it is advised the lunches be carried in a group basket with a label. Aquarium staff can store these baskets/crates if required.

Students are also welcome to carry their bags during their visit.

For security reasons please do not leave your bags unattended in the building at any time.

LUNCH PLANS

Carrying lunches and lunch packs

Monday, Wednesday and Friday

School groups are not allowed to eat in the aquarium, on any benches or on any deck areas or floor spaces. This includes the cafe tables and chairs.

Lunch packs are available for pre-order take away (Monday Thursday Friday) (minimum 10 orders) for an additional cost. Please email the education team for more information at education@melbourneaquarium.com.au

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Lunch Seated Options

There is a park adjacent to the Aquarium - Enterprize Park – and one opposite the Aquarium Batman Park once the students have exited the attraction. These are public parks and other members of the general public also use these areas.

Bins are provided for rubbish. 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.

Please note the river is unfenced and students should be monitored close to the river edge.

Wet Weather

In case of rain or bad weather, there are sheltered areas around the front of the aquarium which can be used for lunch and snack breaks. There are no bins in this area-please take all rubbish with you.

Departing SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium

When you and your students depart the aquarium you should do so in good time to eat, count your students and meet your connecting travel home. It is encouraged for all students to use the bathrooms before leaving the aquarium as there are no bathrooms in the parks.

If there is anything not covered in the planning document, please let the Education Team know.
education@melbourneaquarium.com.au