



## Field Trip FAQ

Committed to education and conservation, the Downtown Aquarium houses over 500 species of animals guaranteed to keep your students interested and engaged in learning!

### General Information & Guest Services

**What time is the Downtown Aquarium open?** Sunday – Thursday, 10:00am – 8:30pm and Friday – Saturday, 10:00am – 10:00pm. Hours are subject to change for holidays and special events.

**When is the best time of year for a large group to visit?** Planning your field trip for the fall or winter months will help avoid larger crowds. Our busiest months are April – August.

**What rules will be enforced by the Aquarium Staff?** To ensure a safe, fun visit for all guests, please review the following rules with your students before your field trip. Any group displaying disruptive behavior will be asked to leave (without a refund).

- Pay attention to and follow all instructions by Downtown Aquarium Staff at all times.
- Chaperones must stay with the group at all times, and minors must stay with the chaperones at all times.
- We ask that you please respect all Downtown Aquarium Staff, other guests in your group, other visitors, and of course, the Aquarium's animals.
- We expect students to act in a responsible manner when participating in amusement rides. Oral and written warnings are provided for your safety and must be followed. Line jumping is not permitted. For your convenience, ride rules and safety guidelines are posted at the entrance to every ride.
- No yelling, running, throwing things, or general horseplay.
- Please keep our beautiful exhibits and landscapes clean by not littering.

**What are the ticket options for groups?** We offer a discounted group rate for groups of 10 or more. The best value is the \$11.00 All Day Adventure Pass (regularly \$25.99), which includes unlimited access to the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit, Stingray Reef, and all rides. \*Prices subject to change.

**Do you offer wheelchair rentals?** The Downtown Aquarium does not offer wheelchairs for rental. However, the entire Downtown Aquarium property is wheelchair accessible. (Note: If you are interested in a rental mobility scooter you may contact SunMobility Rentals Houston at (713) 732-2697 or [www.SunMobilityRentalsHouston.com](http://www.SunMobilityRentalsHouston.com))

**Where are the restrooms located?** Several restrooms are available to large groups and are located in the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit entrance, the 1<sup>st</sup> floor Aquarium Restaurant lobby – next to the Stingray Reef, and outside just across the train tracks from the Aquatic Carousel and caricature artists. All restrooms are equipped with infant changing tables, multiple stalls and are handicap accessible.

**How do we stay cool on hot, sunny days?** Come inside to cool off, see amazing animals, and touch the stingrays! Visitors can also splash around in the Dancing Fountains located in the amusement park. Be sure to bring sunscreen, towels, and a swim suit or change of clothes!

**Does the Aquarium have a gift shop?** Yes, the Treasure Chest Gift Shop is located at the end of the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit. You can also access the gift shop from the first floor lobby across from the Stingray Reef Exhibit.

**How does the Aquarium handle a lost child situation?** Downtown Aquarium staff members are trained to handle lost child situations in a safe and efficient manner. If you have lost a child in your group, please find an Aquarium staff member immediately so they can initiate our lost child protocol. Please stay with that staff member so we can easily return the child to his/her group when he/she is found.

## **Registration & Payment**

**How do I register my group?** All field trips and educational programs are booked online through our website and require a deposit.

**How early do I need to register my group?** At least two weeks in advance is preferred, however the earlier, the better! During our busiest months (April – August), we suggest contacting one of our Education Sales Coordinators in advance to check dates.

**What if I need to change details on my registration form after submitting it?** That's ok! We actually encourage that you keep us updated with any changes, such as number of students, arrival time, payment, etc. The more we know, the better we can serve you! The best way to update us, especially during high volume, is to email us at [AquariumHouston@Ldry.com](mailto:AquariumHouston@Ldry.com)

**When do we pay for the field trip?** Full payment will not be required until the day of your group's visit. Please have payment ready at check-in. Tip: If your organization is paying with a check, please submit your check request to your administrators as early as possible to ensure that you have proper payment upon arrival.

**Can we pay early for the field trip?** You are welcome to submit the rest of your payment as early as you like. However, we encourage payment on the day of the field trip to avoid over or under payment.

**What forms of payment do you accept?** Major credit cards, business checks, and cash. With prior approval by the management team at the Aquarium, we can occasionally accept a purchase order as proof that a check request has been submitted to your organization's administration. You will receive a receipt at the time of payment.

**How do I get an invoice?** Simply contact one of our Education Sales Coordinators at (713) 315-5112 or [AquariumHouston@Ldry.com](mailto:AquariumHouston@Ldry.com). They can email you a copy of your invoice.

**What if my group does not have payment on the day of the field trip?** Please contact one of our Education Sales Coordinators as soon as possible to discuss options, which will vary depending on the group's payment method and ticket selections.

## **Discounts**

**We are tax exempt, what do we do?** If you are tax exempt in Texas, please submit a signed copy of a Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate. We need this form when you check in on the day of your visit at the latest, especially for groups dining in the Aquarium Restaurant. You can also email us a copy at [AquariumHouston@Ldry.com](mailto:AquariumHouston@Ldry.com).

**What discounts are offered for Title 1 schools?** Title 1 schools receive an additional \$3.00 discount on our All Day Adventure Pass for a total of \$8.00 per student. You may be required to provide documentation of your school's Title 1 status in order to receive this discount.

**What discounts are offered for special needs groups?** We understand that special needs groups often require more than the usual amount of chaperones, therefore all teachers for special needs students will visit for free on the day of your field trip.

## **Arrival & Check In**

**What time can we arrive?** Field trip check-in is anytime between 10:00am and 4:00pm.

Please note: If your group has selected a program, tour, or restaurant reservation, please arrive on time! Groups arriving late are not guaranteed their selections and are subject to cancellation.

**Where do we unload?** Buses and vans may pull into the valet driveway to unload students in the front plaza. The valet driveway is for unloading only. Please unload students quickly and then park all vehicles in an approved area.

**Where do we park?** We have a parking lot located directly behind our building. This lot **does not** accept cash. You can pay by text from your parking receipt, scan a QR code in the lot or pay at the kiosk near the building.

**How much does parking cost?** Self-Parking is \$15. Please visit our website for additional parking information.

**Where do we check in?** An Educator will greet you upon arrival and guide you to the check in booth. One group representative should check in the entire group.

**What do we need to check in with?** Please have name of group, updated exact numbers of children and adults, payment, and signed tax exempt form (if applicable).

**Can we get a refund for unused tickets?** All ticket sales are final after the group representative(s) have been handed your group's wristbands. So be sure to have exact numbers of children and adults when checking in.

**We are bringing a pre-written check for the invoiced amount. What if we end up needing fewer tickets on the day of our visit?** At check in, we will verify the actual number of students and adults. If your pre-written check exceeds this amount, our Education Sales Coordinators will submit a refund request which will be mailed as a check to your school/organization. Please allow 2-6 weeks for this process to be completed.

**We are bringing a pre-written check for the invoiced amount. What if we end up needing more tickets on the day of our visit?** At check in, we will verify the actual number of students and adults. If your pre-written check does not cover this amount, our Education Sales Coordinators will update the invoice and bill your school/organization for the remaining balance. We ask that you are prompt with your payments.

**How much are tickets for additional chaperones/parents that are not paying with the school?** Additional adults will receive a discounted rate of \$14. These tickets are only available online through a secure link sent to your school prior to the date of your visit. Chaperones can and are encouraged to be paid for by your organization, particularly if your organization is receiving a special discounted rate. This is encouraged in order to expedite the check in process so that the students have more time to enjoy their visit. Please note: Any adult purchasing their own ticket will be charged \$14.00 plus taxes and must do so through the secure link provided to the school/organization. Full price online tickets are not eligible for refunds.

**Can we be refunded if it rains?** Our indoor exhibits will not be affected by rain. However, rides are subject to closure due to inclement weather, including high winds and lightning, for your safety. Refunds and rain checks will not be issued due to inclement weather.

## **Student Lunches**

**Can students bring their own food/drink?** Students are permitted to bring their own packed lunches from home. Commercial food and drink (fast food, take-out, pizza delivery, etc.) are not permitted.

**Where can we store our sack lunches?** Downtown Aquarium does not have a space to store student lunches. Many schools keep lunches on the buses, tote them in rolling coolers, or have the students keep track of them themselves.

**Where can we eat sack lunches?** There are several outdoor picnic areas throughout the property, most with umbrellas and shade. We suggest picking a place ahead of time, and communicating that to the chaperones. Also, we appreciate if you remind your students to pick up after themselves. Please note: Groups are only permitted to eat in the restaurant if they have a group reservation and are order meals from the restaurant. Students with sack lunches must use outdoor picnic areas.

**Where can we eat if it is raining?** The largest picnic area is largely covered by the I-45 overpass. Tables here are limited, but there is plenty of space and it is sheltered from bad weather. Some groups elect to eat on their buses if space is limited and/or it rains.

## **Education Programs & Tours**

**What activities are included with our ticket purchase?** It includes our All-Day Adventure Pass which give you unlimited access to all of the rides on property include our Shark Voyage Train ride. You also have unlimited access to the main aquarium exhibits and touching of the stingrays (stingray food not included). Education Programs are not included but can be booked when making your online registration to visit.

**Will we have a tour guide?** Exhibit guides are not included, however there will be Educators staffed throughout the Exhibits and Stingray Reef to assist and answer questions.

**Are the classroom programs educational?** Yes! Our programs are designed with hands-on activities, TEKS-aligned content, live animal appearances and/or interactive labs, and a conservation message. We guarantee that your students will learn something new and exciting!

**Do chaperones/parents pay for the classroom programs too?** Yes, any person attending the classroom program will be required to pay the program fee.

**How many people can attend a classroom program?** Our classroom can safely accommodate up to 30 people (including students and adults) per program. Groups with more than 30 people will be divided into smaller groups and will attend the programs on a rotating schedule.

**Do the programs have live animals?** Many of our classroom programs do include live animal appearances by our Animal Ambassadors. We ask that chaperones help to keep students quiet and still during all animal appearances. There will always be time for questions at the end of the program. Please note: Guests will not be permitted to touch the animals.

**What time will our programs/tours start?** Programs/tours will typically start right after you complete the check-in process, especially for groups of 30 people or less. You will receive a schedule of programs/tours prior to your visit.

**Where do we meet for our classroom program and tours?** After receiving your program/tour schedule, groups will meet for their program/tours at the Marlin Fountain – located outside in front of the main Aquarium building. Please do not attempt to meet at the classroom space. The Educators are trained to greet you at the Marlin Fountain and then guide you to the classroom. This helps transition between groups and avoids congestion inside the classroom.

**Where do we meet if it is raining?** If it is raining, your group can meet inside the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit entrance. To avoid congestion, please line your group up in the queue while you wait for the Educator(s) to pick you up.

**What do we do if the Educator(s) do not pick us up for our program/tour at the scheduled time?** If the Educators are not able to greet you at the scheduled time, they are likely finishing up with the previous group or are already on their way. Please do not leave the designated meeting location to look for the Educators! If they are going to be more than 10 minutes late, an Aquarium staff member will let you know.

**Does the Aquarium offer pre/post-lesson materials for classroom programs?** Yes! After registering for a classroom program, our Education Department will email pre/post-lesson materials to the group's main contact. Materials will arrive no later than two weeks prior to your visit. If you need these materials sooner than that, we will be happy to accommodate. Simply contact us at [AquariumHouston@Ldry.com](mailto:AquariumHouston@Ldry.com)

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact an Education Sales Coordinator at (713) 315-5112 or [AquariumHouston@Ldry.com](mailto:AquariumHouston@Ldry.com)