



Field Trips

Groups of 10 or more including schools, churches, day cares, organizations, scouts, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

What time is the Downtown Aquarium open? *Sunday – Thursday, 10:00am – 9:00pm and Friday – Saturday, 10:00am – 10:30pm. 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 variety of discounted group rates for groups of 10 or more. The best value is the \$10.00 All Day Adventure Pass (regularly \$19.99), which includes unlimited access to the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit, Stingray Reef, and all rides. For more ticket options, please see the Group Registration Form on our website. *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.*

Where are the restrooms located? *Several restrooms are available to large groups and are located in the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit entrance, the 1st 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 and stalls and are handicapped accessible.*

How do we stay cool on hot, sunny days? *Visitors can cool off in our air conditioned exhibits or relax in our “Cool Zone” located outside next to the Lighthouse Dive ride. 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. Popular souvenirs for students range from \$5.00 - \$30.00 + tax.*

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 alert the rest of our team. Please stay with that staff member so we can easily return the child to his/her group when he/she is found.*

Registration and Payment

How do I register my group? *The Downtown Aquarium requires advance registration for all groups. The Group Registration Form can be downloaded from our website or received upon request by emailing AquariumHouston@Ldry.com Please submit your completed form by email, fax, or mail as soon as possible or at least two weeks in advance.*

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. We have a limit of 1,000 students/chaperones per day.*

Is my group's registration guaranteed? *Your registration is not guaranteed until you receive an email confirmation from the Education Sales Department. If you do not receive a confirmation within three days after submitting your form(s), please email us at AquariumHouston@Ldry.com*

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*

When do we pay for the field trip? *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 a check in advance to be applied to your total balance. 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. Although not preferred, we will also 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 to request an invoice. During high volume, please allow 1 – 2 business days for requests to be processed.*

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 along with your registration form. 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.*

How can I get a FREE upgrade on my Aquarium Adventure Exhibit ticket to an All Day Adventure Pass?

1. *Schedule your visit on one of our "Discount Days" – Monday through Friday in September, October, November, January, or February.*
2. *Purchase an Aquarium Adventure Exhibit ticket (\$6.00 per person).*
3. *Upgrade your experience with one of our exciting classroom programs (\$5.00 per person).*
4. *Receive an automatic ticket upgrade to an All Day Adventure Pass at no extra charge bringing your total per person to \$11.00 (that's a \$4.00 savings!).*

What discounts are offered for Title 1 schools? *HISD Title 1 schools will receive FREE admission to the Aquarium Adventure Exhibit and Stingray Reef Monday – Friday in September, October, November, January, and February. All other Title 1 schools outside of HISD will receive a \$7.00 All Day Adventure Pass (\$10 value).*

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 adult chaperones for special needs groups will visit for free on the day of your field trip.*

Arrival and Check In

What time can we arrive? *You may arrive any time during normal operating hours. Upon request, we will open early for groups at 9:30am. To best serve you, please indicate your arrival time on your registration form and try to arrive as close to that time as possible.*

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? *Buses and vans may park in one of three areas: the main parking lot underneath I-45, the dirt lot across Preston Street, or in front of the Aquarium along the curb on Bagby Street. Please do not block any driveways or roads.*

How much does parking cost? *School/church/organization buses and vans do not pay for parking (including parking in the main lot). However, additional personal vehicles for chaperones and parents will pay the flat parking fee. For current parking prices, please visit our website:*

<http://www.aquariumrestaurants.com/downtownaquariumhouston/know-before-you-go.asp>

Where do we check in? *A group representative should check in at the front exhibit ticket booth at the far left window. All other chaperones and students should wait in the plaza, next to the Marlin Fountain to avoid line congestion at the ticket booth. This is in respect to other groups checking as well as regular Aquarium visitors.*

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 2-4 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.*

What if we have chaperones/parents that need to purchase tickets? *If additional adults need to purchase tickets on the day of your field trip, please ask them to arrive on time, or even a little early to do so. This way your trip can start as soon as the students are checked in!*

Please note: You will receive 1 free adult per 5 students. For example, if you are paying for 50 students, you will receive 10 free tickets for chaperones. If you are paying for 52 students, you will still receive 10 free tickets for chaperones. If you are paying for 55 students, you will receive 11 free tickets for chaperones.

How much are tickets for chaperones/parents? *As long as they check in with the group (as opposed to arriving later in the morning/afternoon), additional adults will receive the discounted group rate that the students are paying. These tickets do not have to be paid for by your organization, however it 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 taxes.*

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.*

Meal Options

Are snacks and drinks available for purchase? *On high volume days, the food kiosk in the amusement park will be open to sell snacks and drinks (including water). Drink vending machines are located outside in front of the*

main Aquarium building, next to the ATM. Water is also available from the water fountains located outside next to the restrooms.

What are the lunch options for my group? You have one of four options for lunch.

- **Option 1: Picnic Lunch** - \$6.00 + tax per person; includes a sandwich, chips, fruit, cookie, and drink. See registration form for sandwich options. The Education Department will deliver your picnic lunches to your group at a designated time and location (typically decided at check-in). Lunch orders are due at least 48 hours in advance; any less and we may not be able to accommodate.
- **Option 2: Aquarium Restaurant Kids Meal** - \$6.99 + tax per person + 15% gratuity after tax; includes up to three meal selections for the group (personal cheese pizza, chicken tenders, mini cheeseburgers, and mac and cheese) and one drink selection (Sprite, water, or fruit punch) for the group. Lunch orders are due at least 48 hours in advance; any less and we may not be able to accommodate. Reservation time will be decided by Aquarium Restaurant management and depends on group size and the other reservations for that day. **Total number of dining guests is limited to 40 people per hour. Not available on Saturday or Sunday.**
- **Option 3: Three Course Luncheon** - \$10.00 + tax per person + 15% gratuity after tax; includes dinner salad, grilled chicken and pasta marinara, ice cream, and one drink selection (Sprite, water, or fruit punch) for the group. Final count for this option is due at least 48 hours in advance; any less and we may not be able to accommodate. Reservation time will be decided by Aquarium Restaurant management and depends on group size and the other reservations for that day. **Total number of dining guests is limited to 40 people per hour. Not available on Saturday or Sunday.**
- **Option 4:** Students are permitted to bring their own packed lunches from home.

What if my group exceeds the maximum for restaurant reservations? Accommodations can be made for larger groups by contacting one of our Education Sales Coordinators. To serve larger groups within one hour, you may be asked to select only one menu item for all students which can be prepared and ready to go as soon as you check in for lunch.

What if we need to change our lunch orders after submitting them? With at least 48 hours' notice, we will accept meal order updates. The best way to update us, especially during high volume, is to email us at AquariumHouston@Ldry.com. If it is less than 48 hours until your visit, we will likely not be able to accommodate.

What if a student has special dietary needs? Please indicate all allergies and special needs when submitting your registration form. We will certainly accommodate.

What meal options are available for adults/chaperones? Adults may be included in any of the above lunch options. Adults may pre-order adult meals off the main restaurant menu for Option 2 only. Lunch orders are due at least 48 hours in advance; this will help us serve both student and adult meals at the same time. To view the menu, visit

<http://www.aquariumrestaurants.com/downtownAquariumHouston/pdf/menus/DinnerMenu.pdf>

How much do adult meals cost? If adults are ordering from one of the above meal options, they receive the student rate. If adults are ordering from the main restaurant menu, they pay regular menu item prices.

Please note: Per restaurant management, there is a seven ticket maximum per group. However, it is highly preferred that all adults are on one ticket or as few as possible to expedite the bill paying process – which could take up to 45 minutes with more than seven tickets.

What time will our restaurant reservation be? *Restaurant reservations are scheduled at the discretion of restaurant management. Most large group reservations will begin at 11:00am, when the restaurant opens. If you have a preferred lunch time, please let one of our Education Sales Coordinators know ASAP so we can do our best to accommodate.*

When will I find out my restaurant reservation time? *Your reservation will be confirmed at check-in on the day of your field trip.*

Where do we meet for our restaurant reservation? *Please meet at the 2nd floor host stand. We ask that your entire group is on time for your reservation. If you are late, your reservation is subject to cancellation.*

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 the group has purchased Kids Meals or the Three-Course Luncheon, with which they will receive restaurant reservation. 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.*

Classroom Programs and Tours

What activities are included with our ticket purchase? *Each morning, we will post a schedule of daily events that are free with an Aquarium Adventure Exhibit ticket or All Day Adventure Pass purchase. Events may include fish feedings, animal appearances, tiger enrichment, conservation chats, SCUBA diver shows, and animal shows.*

Will we have a tour guide? *Guided exhibit tours are available for purchase at \$4.00 per person.*

I selected a program/tour on my registration form. Is it guaranteed? *Groups with programs/tours MUST submit their registration form at least two weeks in advance. Your registration is not guaranteed until you receive a confirmation from the Education Sales Department.*

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 \$5.00 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.*

Please note: As of January 1, 2016, the Downtown Aquarium will begin to enforce the maximum number of people that can participate in classroom programs/tours in a day. These limits are based on safety, space, materials, and our 110% Guest Service commitment to our visitors. Accommodations are as follows:

- Lab programs (Squidy Anatomy, Being an Aquarist, and Fishy Anatomy) – 240 people per day (6 groups of 30 in our classroom and 4 groups of 15 in our behind-the-scenes area).
- All other classroom programs – 180 people per day (6 groups of 30).
- Guided exhibit tours – 120 people per day (6 groups of 20).
- Behind-the-scenes tours – 90 people per day (6 groups of 15).
- Diver shows – 180 people per day (6 groups of 30).

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*

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