

# 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.

#### 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. We have social scripts available for guided and self guided groups. Contact the Education Department to request a copy to share with your students. 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 VIC and Australian Curriculum, for teachers to utilize in their classrooms. You can find our curriculum materials on our website at:

[www.melbourneaquarium.com.au/schools/](http://www.melbourneaquarium.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.

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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<b>TIME</b>	<b>11:00AM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Croc Talk: Croc Lair</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>11:30 AM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Meet the Keeper (Penguin feed): Penguin Playground</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>11:30AM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Bay of Rays Talk, Bay of Rays</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>12:00PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Let's Talk Ocean Predators, Shipwreck Explorer</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>12:30PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Rocky Reef Talk: Rockpools</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>1:00PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Let's Talk Ocean Predators, Shipwreck Explorer</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>1:30AM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Coral Talk, Coral Atoll</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>2:00PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Let's Talk Ocean Predators, Shipwreck Explorer</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>3:00PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Let's Talk Ocean Predators, Shipwreck Explorer</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>3:30PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>A Penguin's World, Penguin Playground</b>
<b>TIME</b>	<b>4:00PM</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Croc Talk, Croc Lair</b>

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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.

Parent helper 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 outside the aquarium. School groups are not allowed to eat 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 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.
- 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.

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- 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

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Teachers are offered complimentary entry on the following teacher-to-student ratios:

Preschool 1:3

Primary, secondary and tertiary: 1:10

Students with additional needs 1:1

Integration aide/carer 1:1

Vacation care students 1:10

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.

## 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 the education office [education@melbourneaquarium.com.au](mailto:education@melbourneaquarium.com.au) or call 03 9067 8340
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 two drop-off bus parks in Aquarium Drive and another four bus parks on Flinders Street, just before the turn to Aquarium Drive.
5. Discuss behaviour expectations with your students.
6. Prepare your Parent Helpers.
7. 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.
8. Collect any educational materials and writing materials to use with students during your aquarium visit, see the Education section of our website: [www.melbourneaquarium.com.au/schools/](http://www.melbourneaquarium.com.au/schools/)

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#### Calculate your arrival time

Note the check in time on your confirmation. Staff are 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. On the day of your trip, please call 03 9067 8340 if you cannot make your assigned arrival time.

#### 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.

Please show your VIT card to reception for entry.

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.

#### Arrival Information

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

**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:** Self guided groups need to check in with an aquarium staff member at the admissions 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, there is no need for students to queue.

**Guided:** Guided groups will be met at the student 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 park or another appropriate location before entering the building. Bins are available for your rubbish.

**Toilets:** All restrooms are located inside the aquarium, access to bathrooms will be available after your group has entered. Guided groups will be directed to a bathroom by their educator, 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. 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.

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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 Melbourne Aquarium name badge or uniform for assistance. If a student gets 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.

If a student gets injured, ask anyone wearing an aquarium name badge to call for assistance and an aquarium officer will report to 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. Please be prepared to follow all instructions from aquarium representatives while organising your group. You are expected to line up together by school name. 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**

Suitable student items are available for purchase from our aquarium store. 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. If visiting the store, students must be fully supervised with a maximum of ten students in the aquarium store at a time.

##### **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 in the aquarium, on any benches or on any deck areas or floor spaces. This includes the cafe tables and chairs.

###### **Lunch Seated Options**

There is a park adjacent to the Aquarium – Enterprize Park once the student have exited the attraction. This is a public park and other members of the general public also use this area. It can comfortably sit up to 400 students on the grass. 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.

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.

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#### EXCURSION PLANNING TIMELINE

##### Six weeks before your trip

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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!

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- 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!

#### DEPARTING THE 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 park.

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 there is anything not covered in the planning document please let the Education Team know.**  
[education@melbourneaquarium.com.au](mailto:education@melbourneaquarium.com.au)