



A Day at the Aquarium





Welcome, explorer

The Seattle Aquarium is a place to explore the ocean, meet animals and spend time by the water.

The Aquarium can feel exciting, beautiful, busy, loud, calm, surprising or overwhelming—sometimes all at once.

This story can help me know what to expect before my visit.





Arriving to the waterfront

The Aquarium is near Elliott Bay.

I may smell:

- Salt water
- Fish
- Tide pools
- Outdoor air





Arriving to the waterfront

The waterfront can feel:

- Busy
- Loud
- Windy
- Bright
- Crowded
- Exciting

I may hear:

- Music
- Birds
- Cars
- Ferries
- Construction sounds
- People talking

The weather may be:

- Rainy
- Sunny
- Windy
- Cold
- Hot



Arriving to the waterfront

If I arrive by car, I may park in a garage and take an elevator.

There are some elevators at the Aquarium.

There are no escalators.

Some paths near the Aquarium have steep hills or stairs.





Entering the Aquarium

The first building many guests enter is Pier 59. I may meet Aquarium staff wearing **blue shirts**.

The staff are there to help guests feel welcome and safe.

Sometimes there are lines to enter.

Lines are often longer:

- In the summer
- Between 10am and 3pm
- During school breaks





Entering the Aquarium

It is okay if waiting feels hard.

While I wait, I can:

- Use headphones
- Hold a comfort item
- Stim
- Move my body safely
- Look at the water
- Ask questions





Visiting in a way that works for me

Some guests stay all day.

Some guests stay a short time.

Some guests visit only one favorite habitat.

All of these are okay.

I do not have to touch animals.

I do not have to see everything.

I belong here exactly as I am.





Sensory support

The Aquarium has some sensory supports.

These may include:

- Sensory bags
- Headphones

More supports are being added over time.

If I need help, I can ask a staff member wearing a blue shirt.





Exploring different buildings

The Aquarium has three different buildings.
Some buildings connect together.
Some buildings require walking outside.

Moving between buildings may mean:

- Different temperatures
- Bright sunlight
- Wind
- More people
- New sounds

I can take my time moving between spaces.





Sounds I may hear

The Aquarium can be noisy.

I may hear:

- Echoes
- Children yelling in excitement
- Water pumps and filtration sounds
- Hand dryers in bathrooms
- Crowds talking
- Waterfront sounds





Lights and sights

Some Aquarium spaces are darker.
Some are bright.

Going from outdoors to indoors may feel like a sudden change. I may notice:

- Reflections in tanks
- Large videos and projections
- Fast-moving crowds
- Busy signs

I can pause if my eyes or brain need rest.





Ocean Pavilion

The Ocean Pavilion may have:

- Large moving projections
- Crowds
- Echoes
- Warm humid air

I may notice lots of movement and activity.





Smells and temperatures

Some spaces may feel:

- Windy
- Humid
- Wet
- Cold
- Warm

The Ocean Pavilion is usually warm and humid because of the tropical plants and animals.

Outdoor areas may feel cold or windy.





Animals I may see

I may see:

- Fish
- Birds
- Sea stars
- Marine mammals
- Tropical animals

Some animals move slowly.

Some animals move quickly.

Some guests like to stay at one habitat for a long time. Some guests like to move quickly.

Both choices are okay.





It's okay to:

- Stim
- Wear headphones
- Use sunglasses
- Sit on the floor
- Take movement breaks
- Leave and come back
- Use communication devices
- Take extra time
- Skip habitats
- Ask questions
- Need support

There is no “perfect” way to visit the Aquarium.





Taking a break

Signs I may need a break include:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Covering my ears
- Wanting quiet
- Feeling frustrated
- Feeling tired
- Wanting space

When this happens, I can:

- Pause
- Take deep breaths
- Drink water
- Use my sensory tools
- Leave a crowded area
- Sit down
- Go outside
- Ask for help





School groups and crowds

Sometimes school groups visit the Aquarium.

Large groups may:

- Move quickly
- Gather around habitats
- Talk loudly
- Block walkways

This can make spaces feel crowded.

If I need more space, I can:

- Wait a moment
- Move to another area
- Ask my support person for help
- Come back later



Window on Washington Waters

This giant habitat is one of the first places many guests visit.

I may notice:

- Large fish swimming slowly
- Kelp moving with the water
- Deep blue and green colors

Some guests enjoy sitting and watching the fish for a long time.

There may sometimes be diver talks or puppet shows nearby with extra sounds and crowds.

This space can feel:

- Calm
- Immersive
- Crowded





Crashing Waves

This habitat recreates the shoreline of the Salish Sea.

I may notice:

- Moving water
- Splashing sounds
- Ocean smells
- Cool air

Sometimes water spray may reach guests.

This space may feel surprising because the waves move rhythmically.





Life on the Edge (touch pools)

This area may feel:

- Crowded
- Busy
- Wet
- Loud

People may gather closely around the touch pools.

I do not have to touch animals if I do not want to.

I can ask for an animal to be brought to me separately. I can watch from farther away.





Ring of Life

The Ring of Life is a tall circular habitat filled with moon jellies.

The jellies drift slowly through the water.

This space may feel:

- Calm
- Glowing
- Mesmerizing
- Quiet compared to nearby space

Many guests enjoy stopping here to rest and watch.





Giant Pacific octopus

I may see a giant Pacific octopus resting, moving, hiding or changing color.

Sometimes the octopus is easy to see.

Sometimes it is hidden.

This area may feel:

- Quiet
- Darker
- Calm
- Focused

Guests often spend a long time looking carefully.





Caring Cove

This is a play space for younger guests.

Children may:

- Play pretend
- Dress up
- Read books
- Explore soft play areas

This space may feel:

- Energetic
- Busy
- Playful

There are also benches for resting.





Marine mammals

This area includes:

- Sea otters
- River otters
- Harbor seals
- Fur seals

Guests often become very excited here.

Some guests enjoy watching the animals swim and play for a long time.





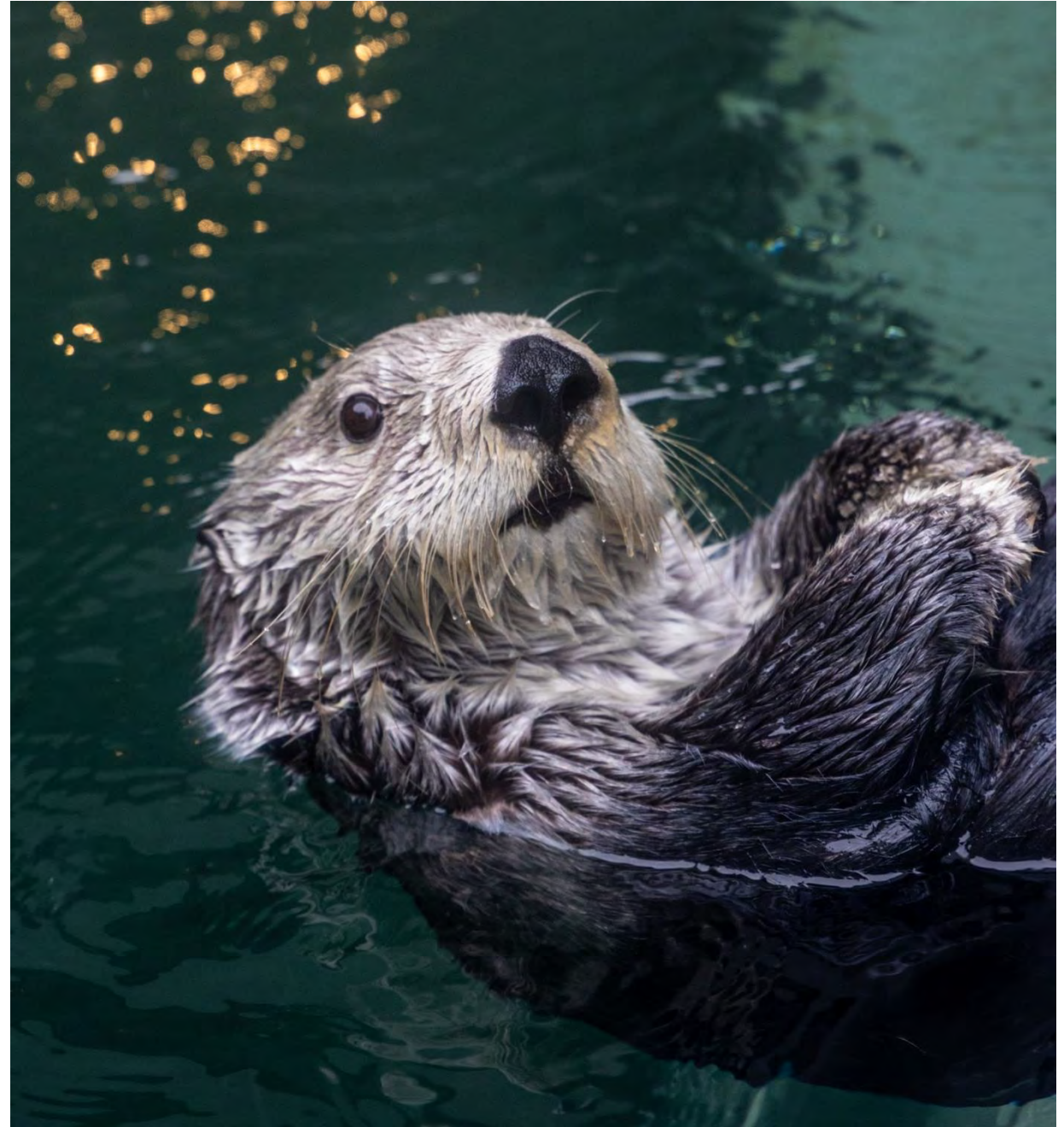
Marine mammals

I may hear:

- Laughing
- Splashing
- Animal talks
- Excited voices

Outdoor viewing areas may feel:

- Windy
- Bright
- Cold in winter





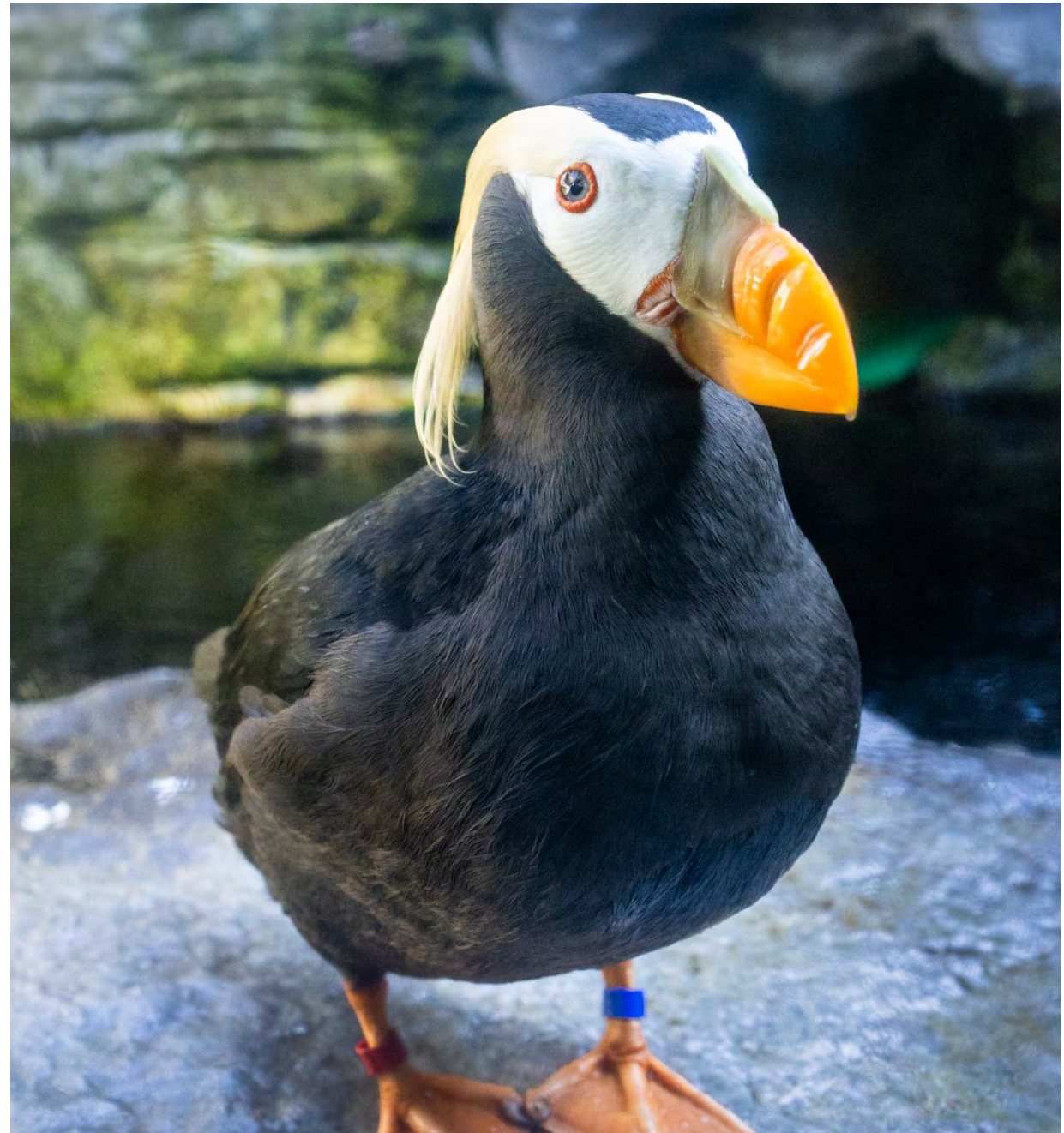
Birds & Shores

This open-air habitat recreates Pacific Northwest shorelines.

I may see:

- Puffins
- Murres
- Auklets
- Rocky cliffs
- Birds diving underwater

Birds may move quickly or make sudden sounds.





Underwater Dome

The Dome can feel:

- Echoey
- Enclosed
- Crowded

People react loudly when animals swim overhead.

I can leave whenever I need.





Leaving the Aquarium

When my visit is over, I may feel:

- Happy
- Tired
- Calm
- Excited
- Overstimulated
- Proud

All feelings are okay.

I can rest after my visit.

I can come back another day!





**Thank you for
being part of
our community!**

