The Behind the Scenes Tour will be one hour. We will visit areas of the Florida Aquarium that most people do not see.

We will see how the Aquarium staff and volunteers prepare food for the animals, see the largest exhibits from above, and experience feeding time for some of the hungry fish and animals!

We will also visit with one of the animal ambassadors. Which animal do you think it will be?
SENSORY NOTES FOR TEACHERS, PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If you will accompany children or individuals with sensory and/or behavioral challenges, you may want to talk to your Tour Guide. During this tour, there are several possible situations you may wish to consider:

**VISUAL:** Some areas of the tour will involve rapid shifts from dark to light (and vice versa) environments. You may need to prepare some individuals for these sudden changes. Some parts of the tour also involve climbing or descending staircases that are constructed from metal mesh. It is possible to see through this mesh, and may be of concern to individuals who do not like heights. Part of the tour of the commissary (where food for the Aquarium’s animals is prepared daily by staff and volunteers) involves a display of food that is fed to aquatic animals and reptiles, including a freeze-dried rat. Some guests may be sensitive to this.

**AUDITORY:** You may want to be aware that part of the tour involves riding the large service elevator from the ground level to the third level. The final approach of the elevator to the third level produces some vibration and loud noises. Some individuals may need reassurance ahead of time that the elevator is not broken, and everyone is perfectly safe. There is also an area outdoors where guests will hear the blower for the bait ball exhibit. The Tour Guide will turn it off temporarily while he or she describes the bait ball exhibit animals. The blower will be turned on again as the tour departs this area. Some individuals may want to remain at a distance, and approach only while the blower is turned off.

**SMELLS:** Some areas near animal exhibits will involve strong odors. This is perfectly natural, but some individuals who are highly sensitive may wish to avoid certain places, in particular the commissary.

**TOUCH:** There are opportunities to experience various textures by touch throughout the tour. For instance, some guests may want to touch the artificial coral while visiting the roof above the coral reef exhibit. Sometimes there will be indications and rules that instruct guests not to touch. The Tour Guide can let you know ahead of time what is OK to touch and what is not. If any of your group has issues with touch, you may want to ask about the rules and touchable items before the tour begins. At the end of the tour, guests are offered an opportunity to feed fish and other animals that are part of the Wetlands Exhibit. This may involve putting on latex gloves and touching pieces of fish in order to toss them into the water and watch the other fish feed on them.

Some parts of the tour might be boring for some children. You may want to create activity sheets with visual scavenger hunts, like finding things of certain colors, or counting/spotting certain animals, to keep them occupied while adults listen to technical information.
Stickers

When we pay for the Behind The Scenes Tour, we will get a sticker to put on our shirt.

This sticker shows the Tour Guide who can go on the Tour.

We will wear the sticker while we are on the Tour. After the Tour, we can take the sticker off.
Waiting for the tour

We will wait for the Tour Guide on the first floor, next to the stairs
Starting the tour

We will walk through these doors to begin the tour...
First we will visit the classroom. We will learn about who comes to the classroom, and what activities happen there.

Maybe we will see some of the animals that sometimes go on visits to schools and other places.

If they are not in the classroom, maybe they are out on a visit.
Going Behind the Scenes

Next we will walk down this hall, stop and visit the Security Office, then continue through this door. The sign says “Staff Only”, but we can go in the door because we are with the Tour Guide on a special visit.
Volunteers and Green Team

We will see displays that show how people can become volunteers at the Aquarium, and also show many ways that the Aquarium is going “Green”. This means the Aquarium is trying to save energy, recycle more things, grow organic vegetables for the Aquarium’s animals, and participate in clean-up events at the beach.
We will look down this hallway, and listen as the Tour Guide tells us what is there, but going there is not part of the tour. We will turn right and walk down another hallway.

If we look up, we can see lots of big water pipes carrying fresh water and ocean water to the big tanks.
We will walk through an area before we get to the Commissary that may be dark. It is OK. The Commissary has lots of lights on.

The Commissary is like a kitchen where the food for all the fish and animals at the Aquarium is prepared. This is not a kitchen that fixes food for people.
Inside the Commissary

We will see the refrigerators and freezers where food is kept. Maybe we will be able to see some people getting food ready to feed the fish and animals.

The Commissary will have a very strong SMELL! People might think it smells strange, but the fish and animals at the Aquarium think it smells delicious!
Our Tour Guide will show us some of the items that are fed to animals from the freezer so we can see them up close. Some people might like to see this very close, and some people might not want to be very close. It is OK.
Next, we will take a big elevator to the third level for the next part of the Tour. Our Tour Guide will open and close all the doors for us. The elevator is very loud when it gets to top level.

There is also some shaking as it slows down. It is OK! The elevator is safe. It is big and strong, because it is used to move many very large sea creatures, and sometimes they have to stay in large containers of water when they are moved.
Going from elevator to outdoors

When we go through the doors on the third level, there will be a big change from dark to light. We may want to let our eyes get ready, especially if it is very sunny outside.
What is outside?

We can look through the window in the doors to see what will be on the other side. It is OK. We will see some very interesting things!
Top of Wetlands

We will see the Wetlands exhibit from the other side of the glass dome!
Keep our feet behind yellow lines

Our Tour Guide will explain that we must keep our toes behind the yellow lines. This rule is to keep us safe.
The Springs Exhibit

We will see the Springs Exhibit from above. Sometimes we may see birds flying around this area. It is OK. The birds will not bother us or hurt us.
Springs exhibit from above & below

This is how the Springs Exhibit looks from above, on our Tour.

This is how the Springs Exhibit looks from below, when we walk through the Aquarium.
Coral Reef from above

The Coral Reef looks very different from above! On the third level, we can see where divers go in to the water, and we can see all the machines that keep water fresh and moving in the big Coral Reef exhibit.
Coral Reef from below

This is how the Coral Reef looks when we visit the Aquarium
We will learn about materials that are used to make the coral reefs we see in the exhibit downstairs, and why the Aquarium does not use real coral.
This blower is part of the equipment for the Bait Ball Exhibit.

The blower is very loud. Our Tour Guide will turn it off when we visit the Bait Ball tank. It will be turned on again as our group walks away.
Bait ball

Tour Guide may lift up flap. It will be dark inside. Look over railing.
Learning about the Bait Ball

We will learn about the fish and other creatures in the Bait Ball tank. This picture is what we will see from above, on the Tour.

A bait ball is many small fish swimming very close together and moving exactly in the same direction at the same time. This is how we will see the Bait Ball tank as visitors in the Aquarium.
Sea water tanks

We will see many large white tanks. This is where ocean water is put when it is taken from the ships that bring water from the Pacific Ocean. The water is cleaned, then used in the tanks and exhibits that have fish and animals that need to be in sea water to live.
Going down to the second level

We will walk down these stairs very carefully.

We can look back up to see where we came from.
Second level hallway

Displays on the wall include a real sea turtle shell, and a real shark jaw!
Fish surgery center

We will walk by a place where fish can have operations if they are sick or hurt and need surgery to get better. We will probably see a toy shark, not a real one, on top of the tank.
Burmese Python

We will see a very big snake. It is behind glass. The snake will not come out.
Our Tour Guide may show us a baby alligator, too. We will learn all about alligators, and maybe we can touch it, if we want to.
Feeding

Maybe we will be able to help feed the fish in the Wetlands exhibit. An Aquarium biologist will show us how to do it, and give us some special gloves to put on for touching the food.
It is exciting to watch the hungry fish in the water as they swim very fast to get some food!
The end of the Tour

When our Behind the Scenes Tour is all done, it will be time to:
___ Visit more of the Aquarium
___ Have lunch
___ Go back to school
___ Go home
Or we will __________________________________________
Goodbye FLORIDA AQUARIUM for this visit.

See you next time for another visit!
Created for THE FLORIDA AQUARIUM by

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