



SHARKS, RAYS AND A NEW SEA TURTLE CALLED BRUNO

Both aquariums to open July 1 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium – with a brand-new green sea turtle as well.

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TACOMA, Wash. – It's time for sharks! And green sea turtles, eagle rays and jellies too. The Pacific Seas Aquarium and South Pacific Aquarium are reopening July 1 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium with new protocols to keep guests safe and healthy.

Oh, and guests will get to meet Bruno the green sea turtle, too.

"Our aquarium animals, from sea turtles to jellies, are among the experiences our guests love the most," said Alan Varsik, director of Metro Parks' Zoological & Environmental Education Division. "So we're delighted to open both the Pacific Seas Aquarium and the South Pacific Aquarium to keep connecting people with our ocean, while keeping everyone safe."

The Pacific Seas Aquarium showcases marine animals from around the Pacific Ocean. In the massive Baja Bay habitat, 23-year-old green sea turtle Bruno recently joined green sea turtle siblings Sunny and Azul. Hammerhead sharks, eagle rays and warm-water fish glide serenely, recreating the feel of Baja California. In the Northwest Waters habitat, Puget Sound species like ratfish and rockfish swim around enormous pink plumose anemones. Nearby are Puget Sound king crabs and favorite fish like Buddy the California sheephead.



The South Pacific Aquarium is home to massive warm water sharks: nurse sharks, black-tip reef shark, sandbar and sand tiger sharks cruise around the deep blue Outer Reef habitat alongside a silvery school of crevalle jack. A myriad of tropical fish dart around the Lagoon and mesmerizing Blue Hole. There's even a shy moray eel called Gordon.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium reopened to the public June 18, following Washington Governor Jay Inslee's Phase 2 guidelines for Safe Start operations. Timed online tickets, limited capacity, a one-way path, face coverings, social distancing guidelines and extra sanitary measures all help reduce congestion and contact.

While both aquariums were approved by the governor for reopening along with the rest of the Zoo during Phase 2, staff have taken extra time to prepare all the safety measures, Varsik explained.

Both aquariums will follow the Zoo-wide measures, plus a few extra:

Guests will follow one-way paths through each aquarium.

Stingray Cove, the Tidal Touch Zone, the Home Sweet Ocean Home play area and all interactive digital stations are closed. In the South Pacific Aquarium, the tropical lagoon is viewable only from the upper deck.

Guests are encouraged to follow marks on the floor for social distancing.

Stanchions and signs will discourage touching of exhibit windows and other surfaces. Extra hand sanitizing stations will be in place. Restrooms with no-touch entry are open in the Pacific Seas Aquarium.

Doors in the South Pacific Aquarium (an older building) will be propped open to increase airflow. Doors in the newer Pacific Seas Aquarium will continue to operate with motion sensors.

Strollers and wheelchairs are allowed in both aquariums (no outside stroller parking). One family at a time is allowed in the South Pacific Aquarium elevator leading down to the Outer Reef. The Pacific Seas Aquarium is fully ADA-accessible. Aquarium staff dives, talks and feeds will happen at unscheduled times to prevent congestion. There are no Eye-to-Eye Shark Dives at this time.

The inside Dayroom in the Asian Forest Sanctuary habitat will also open as a one-way through experience. Guests may also choose to bypass all indoor areas.

Here are the other ways the Zoo experience has changed:

TICKETS & ENTRY

- **Everyone needs a timed online ticket for entry, including members** (though not infants under 3 years). Tickets are NOT available at the Zoo's front gate.
- Visitor capacity will be limited to 25% at any one time.
- The Zoo will be **open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily**, with last entry at 4 p.m.
- Timed online tickets are \$18 for adults (13+), \$14 for children (3-12) and free for members and infants under 3. No discounts are currently available.
- Visitors must use the Mildred Street entrance, as the main Pearl Street entrance to Point Defiance Park is currently closed to vehicles. Staff will check timed tickets and direct visitors to the Zoo parking lot.
- Tickets can be scanned at a no-touch front gate from a phone or printed copy. Tickets are available at pdza.org.

ZOO EXPERIENCE

- Once inside, guests can walk around the Zoo in a one-way route that minimizes congestion.
- The Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater, goat feeding and grooming, Budgie Buddies, underwater viewing at Rocky Shores, the playground, indoor gift shop, carousel and café are all temporarily closed. All other exhibits remain open.
- Food, gifts and water may be purchased at outdoor kiosks. No outside food is allowed except for dietary restrictions. Only credit/debit cards will be accepted for in-zoo purchases, no cash.
- Keeper Chats and Animal Encounters happen at unscheduled times daily, to avoid congestion.
- Guests are encouraged to bring water bottles. Refilling stations are open, but drinking fountains are closed.
- Strollers, wheelchairs and other rentals are unavailable; guests should plan to bring their own if needed.
- Most programs, camps, weddings and private events are temporarily canceled, as are public events through summer.

OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

Point Defiance Zoo has implemented organizational and facility changes to follow state and CDC guidelines to keep everyone safe and healthy. These include:

- Wearing of face coverings by all staff members and visitors
- Increased sanitation procedures
- No-touch front gate and restroom entry
- Plexiglass partitions and no cash transactions

- Internal protocols for offices and animal care areas

For more information, go to www.pdza.org/open.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources. A member of the [Metro Parks Tacoma](#) family, the zoo creates a legacy of sustainability for future generations through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities; it also embodies Metro Parks' mission of creating healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow. The zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). [The Zoo Society](#), a 501(c)(3) organization, is an instrumental partner in the conservation, animal-welfare and education initiatives.

Media Contact

Whitney DalBalcon, whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org, 253-278-6343

Nancy Johnson, nancyj@tacomaparks.com, 253-226-4530