



SHARKS, RAYS AND SEA TURTLES

Both aquariums at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium to reopen March 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 2, 2021

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 March 5 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium with protocols to keep guests safe and healthy.



“Getting up close to sea turtles, sharks and other aquarium animals is an exhilarating experience for our guests,” said Alan Varsik, director of Metro Parks’ Zoological & Environmental Education Division. “So we’re excited to reopen the Pacific Seas Aquarium and the South Pacific Aquarium to connect 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 joined green sea turtle siblings Sunny and Azul last year. 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, blacktip reef shark, sandbar and sand tiger sharks cruise around the deep blue Outer Reef habitat alongside a silvery school of crevalle jack. Tropical fish dart around the Lagoon and mesmerizing Blue Hole. There’s even a shy moray eel.

While both aquariums were approved by the governor for reopening under Phase 2, staff have taken extra time to prepare all the safety measures, Varsik explained. Limited capacity and one-way paths, required face coverings, social distancing guidelines and extra sanitary measures all help reduce congestion and contact.

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, 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 aquarium floors 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.
- 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.

Here are the other ways the Zoo experience has changed:

TICKETS & ENTRY

- **Everyone needs a timed online ticket for entry, including members** (though not children under 3 years).
- Visitor capacity will be limited to 25% at any one time.
- The Zoo will be **open 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Thurs-Mon**, with the last entry at 3 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.
- Tickets can be scanned at a no-touch front gate from a phone or printed copy. Tickets are available at pdza.org.

ZOO EXPERIENCE

- **Face coverings are required for everyone ages 5 and over throughout the zoo visit.** Children ages 2, 3 and 4 are encouraged, but not required, to wear face coverings.
- Once inside, guests can walk around the zoo in a one-way route that minimizes congestion.
- The Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater, goat feeding, Budgie Buddies, playground, carousel and other high-touch experiences remain closed.
- Only credit/debit cards will be accepted for in-zoo purchases, no cash.
- Keeper Chats and Animal Encounters will happen at unscheduled times to avoid congestion.
- Guests are encouraged to bring reusable water bottles. Refilling stations are open, but drinking fountains are closed.
- Guest can reserve their space in the popular Eye-to-Eye shark dive program in the South Pacific Aquarium for an additional fee and with advance registration.



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

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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.

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