



EXPLORE THE GEORGIA AQUARIUM

In November 2001, Bernie Marcus announced plans to donate funds to build an aquarium in downtown Atlanta, with a groundbreaking to be held in May 2003. Although the Georgia Aquarium is a 580,000 square-foot facility, from the groundbreaking to the opening, the construction process took only 27 months. The Georgia Aquarium is adjacent to Centennial Olympic Park and the new World of Coca-Cola in downtown Atlanta and sits on 9.5 acres of land, which was donated by the Coca-Cola Company.

The Georgia Aquarium is the world's largest aquarium with more than eight million gallons of water and more aquatic life than any other aquarium. The exterior of the building was designed to look like a giant ship breaking through a wave. As guests enter the huge atrium inside the building, they are led into the facility by a "wall of fish." They then have the choice of entering five galleries. Each gallery is easily identified by an icon and signage at the entrance: Georgia Explorer has a lighthouse; River Scout displays a cascading waterfall; Cold Water Quest has an ice-covered cliff; Ocean Voyager offers a window into the huge habitat; and Tropical Diver has two video screens displaying the perspective of a fish on a reef. After traveling through one gallery, guests return to the main atrium before entering the next gallery.

There are 60 exhibits at the Georgia Aquarium with 12,000 square feet of viewing windows. The acrylic used in the windows weighs a total of 328 tons. The largest exhibit holds 6.3 million gallons of water and measures 284' long x 126' wide x 30' deep at its largest points. It was specially designed to house whale sharks alongside tens of thousands of other animals that typically live along a coral reef and out to the open ocean. Georgia Aquarium boasts a 100-foot long tunnel and the largest aquarium window in the western hemisphere with views into the whale shark habitat. The second largest habitat, 800,000 gallons, was specially designed to simulate the natural habitat of beluga whales.

Heery International, Inc. acted as the program manager; Brasfield and Gorrie, general contractor; Peckham Guyton Albers & Viets, Inc., exhibit design company; and Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback & Associates, Inc., architects.

The Five Galleries

The five distinct galleries within the Georgia Aquarium depict five different habitats, ranging from arctic to tropical. Unlike most aquariums, the Georgia Aquarium does not follow a linear layout, instead allowing guests to decide their own path and the order in which they visit each gallery.

Ocean Voyager – *Journey with Giants*, built by The Home Depot, is the largest single habitat in the world, holding 6.33 million gallons of water and thousands of animals. It measures 284' long x 126' wide x 30' deep at its largest points. Guests are given several views at different angles into the large exhibit, including a 100-foot long tunnel that surrounds guests with water and animals on three sides. The gallery also features the largest aquarium viewing window in the western hemisphere, giving guests an amazing view of four whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, and manta rays, the only ones in the United States. The Georgia Aquarium is the only aquarium to display whale sharks outside of Asia. The Aquarium is also home to the largest collection of giant grouper, potato grouper, humphead wrasse, tarpon, giant trevally, batfish, sawfish, blacktip reef sharks, great hammerhead sharks and wobbegong sharks. No other aquarium in the country has ever attempted the variety and size of fish in this major exhibit.

Cold Water Quest – *The Chilly Unknown*, presented by Georgia-Pacific Corporation, features animals from the icy waters of the polar regions to the temperate seas of California, South Africa and south Australia. Within the gallery, whose entrance is marked by a snow-covered cliff, guests can gaze at charismatic beluga whales, sea otters and a giant pacific octopus. Weedy sea dragons, one of the most intricate animals in the Aquarium, practice the art of disguise in their exhibit. Collectively, the animals in Cold Water Quest give visitors a glimpse of the rich variety of life found in cold ocean waters.

Tropical Diver – *The Coral Kingdom*, presented by AirTran Airways, creatively displays collections as a gallery of living art. Here, time slows down as guests view graceful jellies, curious garden eels and other jewels of the sea. The gallery, whose entrance features an underwater perspective of the habitat, was designed to be peaceful and relaxing, from the fish and tropical coral reefs within to the lighting and music throughout. Deeper into the gallery, guests are mesmerized by an enormous and brightly-lit reef, filled with artificial and live corals. This 164,000-gallon exhibit is the largest living coral reef exhibit in any U.S. aquarium, and it is home to thousands of vibrantly-hued blue, purple, pink, yellow, orange, green and red tropical

fish. This recreation of a pacific barrier reef is completed by an overhead synthesized crashing wave.

River Scout – *Freshwater Mysteries*, presented by Southern Company, gives guests an opportunity to discover a wide diversity of animals found in the rivers of Africa, South America, Asia and even in Georgia. River Scout is the only freshwater gallery in the Aquarium while the other 98 percent of the Aquarium is composed of saltwater. This gallery presents a themed environment of waterfalls, logjams and the only overhead river featured in an aquarium, giving guests an unusual perspective. Guests are greeted by a colorful display of African cichlids before moving on to a variety of electric fishes, found in the rivers of Africa and South America. A pop-up window allows kids to get an up-close look at the razor-sharp teeth of the piranha. Capping off the gallery, guests are amused by the highly sociable Asian small-clawed otters, the smallest of all otters, which climb and swim about with numerous toys. Collectively, the gallery provides a look into the diversity of the freshwater lakes and rivers from around the world.

Georgia Explorer – *Discover Our Coast*, presented by SunTrust Bank, is a highly interactive gallery that includes a large children's play area, a simulated shrimp boat and touch pools featuring bonnethead sharks, cownose rays, horseshoe crabs, sea stars and shrimp. In this gallery, whose entrance is marked by a lighthouse, guests can explore the coast of Georgia, discovering Atlantic spadefish and robust redhorse suckers, which were believed to be extinct for more than 100 years before being rediscovered in the Oconee River in 1991. Guests are met by exhibits within the gallery that feature lionfish, loggerhead sea turtles and fishes of Gray's Reef, an underwater area off the Georgia coast designated a National Marine Sanctuary. Throughout the gallery, guests are entertained and educated by the important animals that live along the Georgia coastline.

The Correll Center for Aquatic Animal Health

The Veterinary Services & Conservation Medicine Program, a cooperative endeavor between the Georgia Aquarium and the University of Georgia (UGA), is the largest facility to integrate a veterinarian teaching hospital into an aquarium. The Correll Center for Aquatic Animal Health is a 10,500 square-foot facility that provides a unique opportunity for research that will improve husbandry methods for animals, gain a better understanding of aquatic species and apply new discoveries to the conservation of aquatic life.

The 4D Theater

The 4D Theater is one of the most advanced in the world, employing interactive seats and unique special effects that are built into the theater itself. By creating a set of “4D” effects that are synchronized to the film production, the 4D Theater adds another layer of immersive fun for audiences. Playing in the 4D Theater is *Deepo’s Undersea 3D Wondershow* presented by AT&T. Join Deepo, an orange garibaldi fish and the Aquarium’s mascot, as he takes the audience on an undersea adventure with a variety of entertaining characters, including friendly sharks, singing sea turtles and playful dolphins. The theater holds up to 250 guests per show, with multiple shows per day. Admission to the Theater is \$5.50 for adults and \$4.00 for children (age 3-12).

Behind the Scenes Tours

Behind the Scenes Tours allow guests to see a different angle of the world’s largest aquarium including: special views from the top of the various exhibits, learning how salt water and crashing waves are created, discovering how the massive filtration system works and viewing the husbandry commissary, vet clinic and surgical room. Tour prices range from \$15-\$50 per person on top of admission. Check www.georgiaaquarium.org/visitus/behindthescenetours for our latest tour options.

Oceans Ballroom

Located just steps from downtown Atlanta, the Georgia Aquarium is the ideal venue for receptions, banquets, conferences, weddings and more. With a variety of well-planned event spaces and a 1,600-car parking deck, this dynamic destination can comfortably host everything from intimate receptions to large events for up to 6,000 guests, making meeting and event planning easy. Breathtaking ocean views provide the backdrop in the Aquarium’s sophisticated Oceans Ballroom. With two large aquatic observation windows, guests find themselves face-to-face with exotic fish and animals from every corner of the globe. Flexible in design, yet grand in nature, the Georgia Aquarium is the premier Atlanta meeting facility. The 16,400 square-foot ballroom anchors the Aquarium’s event space and can comfortably seat 1,100 for dinner or accommodate up to 1,500 for a reception. More intimate spaces provide the perfect ambience for private gatherings.

The Learning Loop

The educational experience at the Georgia Aquarium is an innovative approach to the traditional field trip. The Learning Loop gives students their own level of the Georgia Aquarium, and the Georgia Aquarium is the only aquarium in the U.S. to dedicate this type of space solely to the

educational benefit of school-aged students and teachers. As part of the education program, students are engaged by animal encounters, interactive activities and research applicable to real-world situations.

Café Aquaria Food Court

Café Aquaria has a selection of “best in class” food and beverage concepts featuring local and national favorites. Unlike any other Atlanta food court, the menu selection ranges from heart healthy, freshly produced local foods to Wolfgang Puck signature pizzas. The café area includes The Grill, Naples Pizza and Pasta, Buckhead Bread and a wide dessert selection.

Beyond the Reef and Sand Dollar Gift Shops

With giant jellyfish looming overhead, Beyond the Reef and the Sand Dollar offer visitors of all ages the continued experience of being “underwater.” Both shops carry Aquarium apparel, collectibles, toys, books and custom art pieces specially designed for undersea enthusiasts. Children who visit the shops can pose for pictures with a life-like sculpture of Deepo, the Georgia Aquarium mascot. The highly-regarded Paradise Shops operates the retail program for the Georgia Aquarium. In addition, the Paradise Shops played a key role in designing the gift shops, working closely with Aquarium architects and the Aquarium’s executive staff.

For additional information, please contact Public Relations:

Meghann Gibbons
Director
(404) 581-4109
mgibbons@georgiaaquarium.org

Francesca Allegra
Specialist
(404) 581-4319
fallegra@georgiaaquarium.org

Mackenzie Whalen
Coordinator
(404) 581-4230
mwhalen@georgiaaquarium.org

About the Georgia Aquarium

The Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia, is the world’s largest with more than eight million gallons of water and the largest collection of aquatic animals. The mission of the Georgia Aquarium is to be an entertaining, educational and scientific institution featuring exhibits and programs of the highest standards; offering engaging and exciting guest experiences promoting the conservation of aquatic biodiversity throughout the world. The Georgia Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. For additional information, visit www.georgiaaquarium.org.