



GEORGIA AQUARIUM

Beluga Interactive Program

Thank you! Your registration in the Georgia Aquarium's ***Beluga Interactive Program*** sets in motion a chance to experience the once in a lifetime opportunity to meet and interact with beluga whales. The *Beluga Interactive Program* provides an engaging, educational, and inspirational experience by connecting our guests, in an interactive manner, to some of Georgia Aquarium's most fascinating marine animals to inspire stewardship in conservation, research, and a greater appreciation for the animal world.

Ticket and Check-in Information:

Online Registrants – Online registrants should have received an e-ticket to their email address following your reservation. If you did not receive your e-ticket please respond with your online order number. On the day of your visit proceed to the entrance for your ticket to be scanned by our guest services staff.

Call Center Registrants – If you placed your order through the Call Center, you should come to the main entrance on the day of your visit and present your order number to a guest service agent to receive your ticket for entry and proceed to the entrance for your ticket to be scanned.

Interactive Program participants can enter the Aquarium at any time on the day of the scheduled interactive program. After entering the Aquarium, proceed to the Animal Interactions desk located in the Atrium adjacent to the Ocean Voyager gallery. Guests are required to check in at the Animal Interactions counter 15 minutes prior to the scheduled program (on days the Aquarium opens at 10:00 am, this check in will occur in the Aquarium's main entrance plaza; see an agent upon arrival). As guests arriving late to their program cannot participate, it is recommended they arrive at the Aquarium approximately 1 hour prior to the scheduled time of their program to ensure arrival, parking, and check-in at the Animal Interactions counter prior to the scheduled program time. Please plan accordingly.

General Program Information:

Guests will discover the fascination of the chilly unknown within the Cold Water Quest gallery by participating in the *Beluga Interactive Program*. This inspirational and educational interaction allows guests to have an exclusive, close and hands-on encounter with some of the most charismatic animals that live in the Aquarium's Cold Water Quest gallery; the beluga whales. Guests will don Georgia Aquarium wetsuits, step into the water, and work alongside Aquarium beluga whale trainers, creating emotional connections that will last a lifetime!

Since opening in 2005, the Aquarium's mission has always been to ensure current and future generations are inspired to care about all of the extraordinary animals that inhabit our oceans through the ambassadors they meet at Georgia Aquarium. More than 23 million guests have been introduced to the wonders of beluga whales, whale sharks and hundreds of other aquatic ambassador species. The connections created between humans and marine mammals and species at the Aquarium, inspires guests to more carefully consider their environmental actions and choices.

As a leading facility for aquatic animal conservation and research, Georgia Aquarium explores ways to improve animal care methods, develop innovative and exciting new exhibits, contribute to the understanding of the underwater world, and apply new discoveries to the conservation of aquatic life. Every day, researchers throughout the Aquarium and in the field are learning more about marine life. Proceeds from programs, like the *Beluga Interactive Program*, ensure Georgia Aquarium can continue its research and conservation endeavors into the future.

Animal interactive programs at Georgia Aquarium put the wonder of wildlife at guest's finger tips and deliver an unparalleled lesson in the appreciation of, and the passion to protect nature.

Program Highlights:

- An educational and informative orientation on the biology, conservation, training and care of beluga whales, as well as tips for having a safe and fun experience.
- Engaging learning opportunities where guests will be enlightened to the threats that face the species and conservation efforts to help protect them.
- Change into a Georgia Aquarium trainer wetsuit and feel like one of the team!
- Exclusive behind-the-scenes view of the beluga whale exhibit.
- Participation in an intimate and interactive training session alongside Aquarium beluga whale trainers and beluga whales.
- Guests will receive a souvenir photograph of their encounter and a complimentary towel to commemorate the experience.
- Change room, locker and shower facilities are provided.

Information and Restrictions:

- Participants must be **at least 60 inches tall** and weigh less than or equal to 300 pounds to participate.
- Participants **under 16** years of age **must each** be accompanied by a **participating** adult responsible for the minor(s) (one adult per minor required).
- **Participants under 18 years of age MUST have a program liability waiver SIGNED AND DATED by their PARENT OF CUSTODY or COURT APPOINTED LEGAL GUARDIAN.**
 - Waivers signed by those other than a parent or court appointed legal guardian will not be accepted.
 - **Waivers can be completed at:** <https://www.smartwaiver.com/v/animalinteractive/>
- This program is not recommended for expectant mothers.
- Elements of this program require guests be able to change themselves into a wetsuit, step into animal habitats and stand comfortably on their own in waist deep water. In addition to meeting minimum size requirements, **guests must also possess a minimum level of physical dexterity and understand instructions provided by English speaking staff.**
- Guests with special needs **must call prior** to making a reservation at 404.581.4000.
 - **Reasonable** special needs **accommodations** can be supported on a case by case basis **with prior notification.**
- **Cancellation and Date Change Policy:** The program fee is non-refundable; however, a date may be changed free of charge if the change is made more than 14 days in advance of the original date of your visit. If the change is made less than 14 days prior to the original date of your visit, a \$50 change fee per ticket will be charged. No changes can be made less than 48 hours prior to the date of your original visit, and the guest will be charged the full program cost. **Cancellations and no-shows will not be refunded or rescheduled.** To change your reservation, please contact the Georgia Aquarium Call Center at 404.581.4000.
- Guests are to check in at the Information Desk, located in the center of the Aquarium's Atrium, at least 15 minutes prior to their scheduled program.
- **Guests arriving late will not be permitted to participate in the program and will not qualify for reimbursement.**
- **Personal photography or video recording is not permitted.**
- The beluga whales live in colder climates and thus the water in their exhibit is kept cool. Guests will be provided Georgia Aquarium wetsuits similar to what our training staff wear to ensure that the experience, while cool, is comfortable.
- Guests must change themselves into an Aquarium-provided wetsuit. Appropriate personal swimwear is required to be worn beneath the suit.
- For the safety of the animals, guests will be required to remove all jewelry prior to the animal interaction. Locker facilities are available to secure personal items during the program.
- Due to the nature of caring for animals, Georgia Aquarium reserves the right to modify, cancel and/ or reschedule programs without notice. Reasonable accommodations will be made to reschedule guests as effectively as possible.
- Prices are subject to change without notice.

Animal Interactive Program Guidelines:

In order to ensure a safe and engaging program for all guests, animals, and staff; acknowledgment of and adherence to the following guidelines are required for participation in all interactive programs at Georgia Aquarium Inc., (GAI).

- All participants are required to listen to and follow direction of all employees and agents of GAI while participating in any activity offered by GAI.
- While participating in a program always listen to and wait for specific instructions from animal interactive program and/ or training staff prior to:
 - Approaching and/or entering an animals' exhibit or habitat
 - Approaching or interacting with an animal
 - Touching and/ or feeding an animal
- Guests not following instructions or direction from animal interactive program and/ or training staff in a manner that compromises the safety or quality of the program for the animals, other guests, and/ or GAI staff will be required to leave the program without reimbursement.
- For the safety of the animals, guests participating in the animal interactive program will be required to remove jewelry, watches, and any other loose item such as glasses, sunglasses, hair accessories, etc, prior to entering the animal habitats.
 - *Prescription lenses necessary for vision correction are an exception to this guideline; however we strongly recommend and may require they be secured with a neck strap.
- A locker with a personally selected PIN will be provided to stow personal items during the animal interactive program.
- For the safety of the animals, guests participating in animal interactive programs will be required to wash their hands and/ or sanitize their hands with an approved hand sanitizing product prior to any interaction with animals.
- Guests participating in animal interactive programs requiring a GAI wetsuit must wear personal swimwear beneath the suit. It is advised (but not required) to wear a t-shirt or rash-guard beneath the wetsuit for personal comfort.
- Footwear is required for all guests. Guests participating in programs requiring a wetsuit will be provided suitable footwear.
- The use of personal cameras, video equipment, and cellular phones are not permitted during animal interactive programs.
- Guests believed by GAI staff or agents to be under the influence of alcohol or and/ or a controlled substance, or who conduct themselves in a manner that compromise the safety or quality of the program for the animals, other guests, and/ or GAI staff will be required to leave the program immediately, forfeit the right to participate in any remaining aspects of the interactive program, and will not receive reimbursement.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the purpose of this program/overview of the interactive experience?

To provide an engaging, educational, and inspirational experience by connecting our guests, in an interactive manner, to some of Georgia Aquarium's most fascinating resident marine animals to inspire stewardship in conservation, research, and a greater appreciation for the animal world. The program is an exploration into the behind the scenes of the Cold Water Quest gallery and an in-depth look into Georgia Aquarium's conservation efforts with beluga whales. The two-hour program includes a classroom orientation where participants learn about the biology, care, training, and study of beluga whales and Georgia Aquarium's role in the conservation of this fascinating species

How long is the program and what is included in the experience?

The program lasts for approximately two hours and includes an educational and engaging orientation on the biology, care, training, study, and conservation of beluga whales; an exclusive behind the scenes look at the beluga whale and harbor seal exhibit; an intimate experience working alongside our training staff, wading into the water and interacting with the beluga whales; and presentation of a souvenir photograph and towel.

Is this a swim-with/immersion program?

No, the *Beluga Interactive Program* allows participants to work alongside training staff to interact with the beluga whales. Elements of this program require guests to step into waist-deep water and stand comfortably on their own. In addition to meeting height and weight requirements, guests must also possess a minimum level of physical dexterity. Participants do not swim with the beluga whales. Comfort in and around water, including standing in water is necessary to ensure a safe and engaging experience.

What should I bring with me?

All you will need to bring is a personal swimsuit. Georgia Aquarium will supply all equipment (wetsuit and booties) and a towel. Comfortable changing rooms with showers and lockers are provided. An eco-friendly bag will be provided for you to stow your damp suit and towel following the program.

What are the age requirements?

While there isn't a minimum age, **all participants must be at least 60 inches tall**. Each guest under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a participating adult (one adult per minor required), and all minor guests (under the age of 18) **MUST** have a liability waiver **SIGNED BY A PARENT OF CUSTODY OR COURT APPOINTED LEGAL GUARDIAN**. The liability waiver can be completed in advance by clicking: <https://www.smartwaiver.com/v/animalinteractive/>

Can you accommodate my size?

We can accommodate guests at least 60 inches tall and up to 300 pounds. Guests **MUST** be able to change themselves into a wetsuit, and navigate the animal habitat spaces (including going up and down stairs into waist deep water) with minimal assistance.

Are guests welcome to watch?

The entire *Beluga Interactive Program*, including the animal experience occurs behind the scenes and is not viewable by the public (including non-participating family and friends of Interaction participants). Only participants in the interactive program will be permitted in the interactive areas.

How do I get to the Aquarium?

For directions to the Aquarium and information on parking, please refer to the *Hours, Directions & Parking* section of our website (<http://www.georgiaaquarium.org/experience/visit/hours-directions-parking>).

Where do I go when I arrive?

Please check in at the Animal Interactions desk, located adjacent to the Tropical Diver gallery in the Aquarium's Atrium, **15 minutes prior to your scheduled program**. On days the Aquarium opens at 10:00 am (winter hours), check in with Guest Service staff located in the Aquarium's entrance plaza and they will facilitate your entrance to the Aquarium and direct you to the Animal Interactions desk to begin your program.

What happens if I am late or cannot make it?

At Georgia Aquarium, we recognize that vacation plans can change. A date may be changed if it is made more than 48 hours in advance. There will be a change fee of \$50. **Program no-shows or cancellations made with less than 48 hours advance notice will not be refunded or rescheduled.** To change your reservation, please contact the Georgia Aquarium Call Center at 404.581.4000.

Guests must check in at the Animal Interaction Program desk **15 minutes prior to** the start of their program. Guests arriving late will not be permitted to participate in the program and will not be refunded or rescheduled. **We encourage guests to arrive at the aquarium with plenty of time to park, enter, and check into the program. Please plan accordingly.**

Will there be a trainer with me?

There will be a Georgia Aquarium staff member with you for the duration of the program. A beluga whale trainer will guide you through the animal interactive aspects of the program. An animal interactive program specialist will facilitate all other aspects of the program including the check in and orientation process.

What's the water temperature?

The beluga whales live in colder climates and thus the water in their exhibit is kept cool. Guests will be provided Georgia Aquarium wetsuits similar to what our training staff wear to ensure that the experience, while cool, is comfortable.

Can we feed the animals?

Guests will have the opportunity to have an intimate, up-close experience with the beluga whales. There are a variety of activities that can take place at the discretion of the training staff while interacting with and even touching the whale. Participating in training techniques and feeding may be part of the experience if it is appropriate to do so based upon the behavior of the animals being interacted with and behavior of the participants involved in the program. Animal trainers will tailor each program to ensure a safe and engaging experience for both our animals and our guests. As a result, each program may be a little different.

Can I buy out a time slot to experience the encounter alone?

Yes. There are eight slots per program.

Can I bring my own wetsuit?

All necessary equipment and a wetsuit will be provided. All you need to bring is your personal swimwear (bathing suit).

Can I bring a photographer or person with me to film?

No. A souvenir photo will be provided to participating guests and guests may have the opportunity to purchase additional images if available. Photos and video taken during the *Beluga Interactive Program* are the property of Georgia Aquarium. We reserve the right to use any photos and video for promotional purposes. For the safety of the animals and quality of the program, photos and video may only be taken by Georgia Aquarium designates.

Will tickets be available for walk-up guests?

Yes. Walk-up tickets can be purchased if available, but must be purchased at least thirty minutes before the scheduled *Beluga Interactive Program*. Tickets for the first session at 10:00 a.m. may be purchased if walk-up tickets are available, however advance purchase is highly recommended.

Are you able to participate in a *Beluga Interaction* with special needs?

Georgia Aquarium makes every effort to accommodate guests with special needs. Please be aware that to participate in this program, guests **MUST** be able to change themselves into a wetsuit, navigate the animal habitat spaces (including going up and down stairs into waist deep water) with minimal assistance, and must be able to understand and take direction in English from staff members. To ensure the best experience, please contact the Call Center at 404.581.4000 to make a reservation, and be sure to let the reservists know you have special needs. Someone from the program will contact you prior to your visit to review your options.

Should you have special needs but not provide notice, it may NOT be possible to accommodate your program and you could be required to reschedule.

Animal Interactive Program Liability Waiver and Program Guidelines

All program participants must complete a liability waiver and acknowledge Georgia Aquarium's Animal Interactive Program Guidelines prior to their interaction. Minors must have the waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian and completed at time of check-in. To complete a waiver in advance please visit:

<https://www.smartwaiver.com/v/animalinteractive/>