



## Georgia Aquarium Overview

### World's Largest Aquarium

Georgia Aquarium is the world's largest aquarium with more than 10 million gallons of water and more aquatic life than any other aquarium. Situated in the heart of downtown Atlanta, Georgia Aquarium is a nonprofit organization dedicated to being a global leader in research and conservation programs that mirror the unique and amazing animals seen within the facility. Since its founding, Georgia Aquarium has been committed to inspiring current and future generations through a focus on respectful display, education and conservation of marine mammals and all aquatic species. Aquarium staff, partners and researchers are impacting the future of our aquatic world by ensuring that guests learn and care about the extraordinary animal ambassadors and in the hopes they become advocates on their behalf. The six distinct galleries within Georgia Aquarium depict different aquatic habitats, ranging from arctic to tropical waters, featuring the largest collection of aquatic animals.

### The Gift

The Aquarium is a \$250+ million gift to the Atlanta community and the people of the state of Georgia from Bernie Marcus, co-founder of The Home Depot, and his wife Billi, through the Marcus Foundation. The Aquarium in total is a \$433+ million facility. The Aquarium opened debt-free to the city of Atlanta November 23, 2005. The Aquarium is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization, overseen by a board of directors.

### Historical Timeline

- **1979** — Bernie Marcus co-founded The Home Depot.
- **Late 1990's** — Bernie Marcus visited the Monterrey Bay Aquarium to celebrate his birthday and was inspired by the kelp forest exhibit and its brightly colored orange Garibaldi damselfish.
- **2000** — Bernie Marcus dreamed of creating a special gift that he and wife, Billi, could give to the city of Atlanta and the World.
- **November 19, 2001** — Bernie Marcus announced his gift of \$250 million dollars to build the Aquarium.
- **November 19, 2001** — Bernie Marcus announced Jeff Swanagan as the institution's first employee and Executive Director. Swanagan served as President and Executive Director until May 2008.
- **December 2001 through June 2002** — Bernie Marcus and Jeff Swanagan traveled the world to observe and make inquiries about the operations of other aquariums in order to expand their own extensive knowledge and experience.

- **June 2002 through April 2003**— Bernie Marcus and Jeff Swanagan began the process of bringing contractors, architects, scientists, and biologists on board to facilitate the construction and development of the aquarium. Coca-Cola generously donated the nine acres on which the Aquarium sits.
- **May 2003** — Bernie Marcus presented Georgia Aquarium to the public at a groundbreaking ceremony, at which the Aquarium mascot, Deepo, a Garibaldi damselfish, was unveiled.
- **June 2003** — Construction on the world’s largest aquarium began.
- **January 2005** — Ocean Voyager, built by The Home Depot, the largest aquatic habitat in the world, was filled with 6.3 million gallons of water.
- **February 2005** — 1.7 million pounds of salt (Instant Ocean) was added to create salt water in Ocean Voyager.
- **June 2005** — Two whale sharks, the largest fish in the world, were introduced into the 6.3 million gallon habitat.
- **June 2005 through October 2005**—Staff began the process of introducing animals from around the world to the Aquarium habitats.
- **November 17th, 2005** — The construction phase of pre-opening is completed on Georgia Aquarium.
- **November 23rd, 2005** — Bernie Marcus’s dream is fulfilled, and the world’s largest aquarium opens to the public! The total cost of this project was more than \$290 million.
- **November 23rd, 2005 through November 23rd, 2006** — 3.6 Million Guests Visited the Aquarium.
- **June 25, 2009** — The 10 millionth guest visited the Aquarium.
- **July 2009** — Construction on Georgia Aquarium’s dolphin expansion began.
- **May 2010** — The first dolphins arrive at Georgia Aquarium.
- **April 2, 2011** —AT&T Dolphin Tales opens to guests.

### Architectural Information

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.

### Guinness World Records Recognition

Georgia Aquarium has been certified as the world’s largest aquarium by the Guinness Book of World Records. It is the world’s largest with respect to gallons of water: 10 million; number of fish: tens of thousands or more than any other aquarium; and square footage: 604,000. The Guinness Book of World Records judges the largest aquarium in the world by a single exhibit. Ocean Voyager, built by The Home Depot, is the world’s largest at 6.3 million gallons, 284 feet long x126 feet wide x30 feet deep in the south end and 20 feet in the north end.

### **Costs and Revenue**

Co-founder of The Home Depot, Bernie Marcus and his wife, Billi, donated \$250 million to build Georgia Aquarium. The remainder of the initial \$290 million cost was donated by presenting sponsors. The Aquarium is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. All revenue above operating cost is reinvested into conservation, education, research, improvements and future expansions. The AT&T Dolphin Tales expansion cost \$110 million to complete. In 2008, Georgia Aquarium made a \$1.5 million contribution for a new marine animal rescue, care and research facility near Marineland outside St. Augustine, FL, named the Dolphin Conservation Field Station. In January 2011, the Aquarium acquired the world's first dolphinarium, now known as Marineland Dolphin Adventure.

### **Visitor Facts**

When opened in 2005, one million guests visited the Aquarium within the first 100 days, and 3.6 million guests visited in the first year.

- 2006            3.6 million
  - 2007            2.6 million
  - 2008            2.2 million
  - 2009            2.2 million
  - 2010            2.1 million
- Guests from 6 continents, all 50 states and 143 countries have visited the Aquarium.
  - There have been Annual Imagination Pass holders from 49 states.

### **Economic Impact Facts**

Within walking distance of the Aquarium, the Hilton Garden Inn, the W Hotel and Twelve Hotel have opened. Visitors to the downtown area have many fine dining choices, with nationally recognized and new restaurants such as Legal Sea Foods, Ruth's Chris Steak House, Peasant Bistro, Max's Pizza, Glenn's Kitchen, STATS, Der Biergarten, Max's Coal Oven Pizzeria, Pittypat's Porch, Rise Sushi Lounge, and Thrive. The World of Coca-Cola opened next to the Aquarium in May 2007. The Center for Human and Civil Rights Museum is slated to open in Pemberton Place next to the Aquarium and the World of Coca-Cola. After the Aquarium opened, CityPASS added Atlanta as the 10th city to offer the combo admission ticket. The Aquarium partners to offer combo tickets with the new World of Coca-Cola, Zoo Atlanta, Six Flags Over Georgia, Stone Mountain Park, Atlanta Braves, Atlanta History Center, Fernbank Science Museum, Atlanta Botanical Gardens, High Museum of Art and CNN.

### **Educational Programs**

Georgia Aquarium is dedicated to promoting an entertaining learning experience which inspires our guests to better understand and appreciate aquatic animals and to promote the conservation of these

animals and their natural habitats. The educational encounters offered to students on field trips at the Aquarium provide an opportunity to view or study animals many would never have the opportunity to otherwise. Georgia Aquarium believes that early exposure to these animals, and the sharing of key information, will motivate them to make positive choices about conservation efforts throughout their lives.

Georgia Aquarium takes an innovative approach to the traditional field trips offered to students. In addition to exploring the main floor of the Aquarium, students are able to view the Aquarium from a different perspective on the Learning Loop. While there, students participate in animal encounters, interactive activities and research applicable to real-world situations. Informal education practices and methods are utilized to enhance student understanding of the content taught in the formal classroom. Students served range from pre-kindergarten to graduate students and come from a variety of settings including public schools, private schools and students educated at home. The Aquarium's goal is to have 100,000 students participate in educational programming each year. Since the Aquarium opened, nearly 400,000 students have experienced educational programs offered at the Aquarium.

#### **4R Program**

The 4R Program was designed to make a positive difference in the health and well-being of aquatic life around the world. Through **R**ehabilitation, **R**esponsibility, **R**escue and **R**esearch, the 4Rs are seen in virtually every Georgia Aquarium exhibit, from beluga whales to loggerhead sea turtles, to the living coral reef and touch pools. Behind the scenes at the Aquarium, the 4R Program plays an active role by funding work through the Correll Center for Aquatic Animal Health, the first ever integration of a PhD residency program with a zoo or aquarium; the state-of-the-art commissary; Aquarium biologists' daily activities; and, even in research as far away as Alaska, Mexico, Brazil, Russia and Taiwan. The program allows the public to be directly involved in making a positive difference in the lives of animals through their financial contributions. The 4R program focuses on one project at a time and is funded in a large part by individual donations.

#### **The Correll Center for Aquatic Animal Health**

Georgia Aquarium's state-of-the-art animal health facility and research and conservation activities are part of the programs hosted through the Correll Center for Aquatic Animal Health. Within the Aquarium building, its 10,500 square foot space incorporates a surgical suite, intensive care units, commissary, scrub rooms, life support and maintenance tech rooms, pathology

records room, water quality lab, treatment and quarantine space and diagnostic lab. The Correll Center for Aquatic Animal Health was designed by world class veterinarian professionals. Currently, Georgia Aquarium is the only facility that has opened with a program which is an integration of an aquarium and veterinarian teaching hospital in the specialty fields of wildlife medicine and veterinary pathology. On a more global scale, the Georgia Aquarium Correll Center efforts support, conduct and lead research on environmental and conservation issues. Research is shared with conservation organizations throughout the world, which allows them to better understand and protect many of the species that we study.

### **Volunteer Facts**

Volunteers serve around 11,000 hours per month and volunteered more than 550,000 hours since the Aquarium opened. Presently, there are approximately 1,800 active volunteers at the Aquarium.

### **Life Support Systems**

Each week, 2,800 water quality tests are run on the 60+ exhibits and 15 vet clinic pools in the Aquarium. There are more than 300 pumps at the Aquarium. The Ocean Voyager exhibit, built by The Home Depot, alone has 70 high speed pumps that can circulate all 6.3 million gallons of water in 60 minutes.

### **Oceans Ballroom**

Located just steps from downtown Atlanta, 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-space parking deck, this dynamic destination can comfortably host everything from intimate receptions to large events for up to 5,000 guests, making meeting and event planning easy. Breathtaking views into two of the Aquarium's marquee exhibits allow guests to find themselves face-to-face with exotic fish and animals from every corner of the globe. Flexible in design, yet grand in nature, 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. The Aquarium's exclusive catering partner, Wolfgang Puck Catering, is known for its extraordinary for cuisine and event planning. Award-winning fare, creative flair and impeccable service are only a few of the things that world-famous Wolfgang Puck catering provides guests. AT&T Dolphin Tales gallery includes a soaring, naturally-lit entrance lobby featuring an underwater viewing window of our playful dolphins. AT&T Dolphin Tales lobby is designed for smaller, intimate groups that want to dine amongst the newest residents of the Aquarium.

## Atrium

The Atrium is the central hub of the six exhibit galleries, two gift shops and the Aquarium's Café Aquaria. Café Aquaria has a selection of "Best in Class" concepts featuring local and national favorites. Appealing to a broad range of tastes, Café Aquaria features dining options to suit the entire family including: The Grill, Pizza and Pasta, Buckhead Bread and Desserts. As always, Café Aquaria features an irresistible selection of the Chef's favorite desserts. Imagination Pass Holders receive a 10% discount on all prices listed on the menus. Café Aquaria opens daily when the Aquarium opens and closes one hour prior to the Aquarium's closing. Café Aquaria is operated by Restaurant Associates, the leader in cultural dining across the country. The orange Information Desk and blue Atrium Booth are located in the Atrium to provide guests with assistance, as well as information about the Aquarium and the city of Atlanta.

## Galleries

Georgia Aquarium is the world's largest aquarium with more than 10 million gallons of water and showcases more aquatic life than any other aquarium. As guests enter the facility, they are greeted by the "wall of fish", their first glimpse of the animals inside; they then proceed into a three-story atrium featuring six entry areas, displays of light and color and the entrances to all of the Aquarium's galleries. Each gallery is easily identified by an icon and signage at the entrance: Georgia Explorer presented by SunTrust; Georgia-Pacific Cold Water Quest; Ocean Voyager, built by The Home Depot; Tropical Diver presented by AirTran; and AT&T Dolphin Tales. After traveling through one gallery, guests return to the main atrium before entering the next gallery. Also located within Georgia Aquarium is an exhibit hall which hosts traveling exhibits.

**Ocean Voyager built by The Home Depot:** The world's largest aquatic habitat, features species from the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. 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 which surrounds guests with water and animals on three sides. The gallery 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 four manta rays, the first and only mantas in the United States. Georgia Aquarium is the only aquarium to display whale sharks outside of Asia. Also housed in this habitat are zebra shark, humphead wrasse, spotted wobbegong shark, bowmouth guitarfish, tasseled wobbegong shark, leopard whiptail rays, sand tiger shark and sandbar shark. The exhibit contains approximately 6.3 million gallons of water, more than any other

Aquarium exhibit in the world.

**Tropical Diver presented by AirTran Airways:** Creatively displays collections as a gallery of living art of beautiful Indo-Pacific tropical fish and temperate water invertebrates. The 164,000 gallon reef habitat, the largest in the United States, contains more than 90 species of fish. Approximately 40% of the reef wall is live coral. Corals are continually added and the Aquarium predicts the exhibit will be 100% live in the next 5-10 years. A wave machine, simulating realistic surf conditions, operates above the reef exhibit. It is composed of four metal troughs that receive water from the exhibit's filtration system and dump it into the habitat at about two-minute intervals. Each cycle releases about 6,000 gallons of water.

**Georgia-Pacific Cold Water Quest:** Features animals from the icy waters of the polar regions to the temperate seas of California, South Africa and southern Australia. Georgia-Pacific Cold Water Quest gallery is home to Aquarium mascot a Garibaldi damselfish. The exhibit features four beluga whales, Beethoven, Maris, Qinu and Grayson. Four harbor seals also live within the beluga habitat. The gallery is home to five Southern sea otters: Oz and Gracie, and recently rescued sea otters Brighton, Cruz and Bixby joined in late 2010. A newly renovated penguin habitat is equipped with a state-of-the-art lighting system that mimics the natural light cycle from twilight to moonlight following the natural seasons.

**River Scout, presented by Southern Company:** An entirely freshwater gallery featuring species from river systems in the Americas, Africa and Southeast Asia. This gallery presents a themed environment of waterfalls, logjams and the only overhead river featured in an aquarium, giving guests an unusual perspective. The 45,000 gallon gallery displays colorful display of African cichlids, a variety of electric fishes, a striking emerald tree boa, ghost-white albino American alligators, a pop-up window which 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. Collectively, the gallery provides a look into the diversity of the freshwater lakes and rivers from around the world.

**Georgia Explorer, presented by SunTrust:** Is a highly interactive gallery which 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. This habitat features marine life indigenous to Georgia, from offshore environments all the way to the coast and into the freshwater river systems. Guests are met by exhibits within the gallery that feature poisonous lionfish, an invasive species, 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.

**AT&T Dolphin Tales:** AT&T Dolphin Tales is a new, multi-million dollar exhibit, and the biggest expansion to date for the world's largest aquarium. This gallery and show represents the next level of Georgia Aquarium's commitment to educating the public about marine mammals. The new gallery includes a soaring, naturally-lit entrance lobby featuring a 25-foot-long underwater viewing window through which guests can first glimpse the dolphins. The lobby leads to the AT&T Dolphin Tales theater, a state-of-the-art enclosed facility designed and built as the perfect backdrop for a theatrical performance incorporating not only the talents of the Aquarium's dolphins, but also live human actors, dramatic costuming and amazing effects. This spectacular story is narrated by the StarSpinner, a mysterious seafaring adventurer who leads the way through an interactive journey across the oceans, with guidance from a cast of dolphins and encouragement from the audience. AT&T Dolphin Tales, a first-of-its-kind production, was more than two years in the making. An original score was performed and recorded by a 61-piece orchestra at Sony Studios in Hollywood. Emmy-winning producers and directors, along with a team of talented individuals from TV, film and Broadway, developed the show. Some of the world's most accomplished animal trainers were recruited. Together, they have created a unique experience which sets a new standard for live theatrical entertainment. Through this memorable and educational experience, Georgia Aquarium seeks to educate audiences on the importance of embracing aquatic animals, motivating viewers to care about their fate and inspiring them to make positive environmental choices.

#### **4D Theater and Deepo's Undersea 3D Wondershow**

Visitors 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. Deepo and his aquatic friends tell the story of how



important it is to conserve the sea and warn us that what we do above water affects them underwater. Visitors will see things from a different perspective as they explore the wonders of life undersea. The theater holds up to 250 guests per show, with multiple shows per day. 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*.

### **Georgia Aquarium Conservation Field Station**

Located in Marineland, Florida, Georgia Aquarium Conservation Field Station (GACFS) was established in 2008 as part of Georgia Aquarium’s ongoing research and conservation efforts through our 4R Program. The field station is dedicated to furthering our understanding of dolphins, marine mammals and aquatic species found along our coast through the 4Rs: **R**escue, **R**esearch, **R**ehabilitation and **R**esponsibility. The state-of-the-art facility is fully equipped to respond to medical emergencies, perform field studies and help with the rehabilitation and release of animals that need immediate care. Animals deemed releasable by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will be released in the oceans after rehabilitation. Animals deemed by NMFS to be unfit for release will be provided a home for life at Marineland or another location selected by NMFS.

**Marineland Dolphin Adventure** In January 2011, Georgia Aquarium announced that the historic Florida attraction Marineland, home to the Dolphin Conservation Center and adjacent to the Georgia Aquarium Conservation Field Station, is now part of the Georgia Aquarium family.

Rebranded as Marineland Dolphin Adventure, is located along the Atlantic coast just south of St. Augustine, Florida. Opened in 1938 as Marine Studios, the facility was designed and built for filming underwater sequences for motion pictures. Later, it became a theme park known as Marineland of Florida, and enjoyed great popularity in the 1950’s and 1960’s, becoming internationally known for its dolphin shows and exhibits showcasing various forms of marine life. It was one of the first such attractions in the state of Florida and was named to the National Register of Historic Places. More recently, an updated and modernized Georgia Aquarium Conservation Center at Marineland has become a center for the study and conservation of marine mammals - with an emphasis on dolphins - and is one of the few facilities in the U.S. where humans can closely observe and interact with dolphins in an intimate environment.

The acquisition of Marineland is part of an overall long-term strategy on behalf of Georgia Aquarium to expand the positive benefits of its programs throughout the Southeastern U.S. In 2008, Georgia Aquarium opened the Georgia Aquarium Conservation Field Station (GACFS) at Marineland, a joint venture with Marineland's Dolphin Conservation Center, immediately adjacent to the historic Marineland property. Among other initiatives, GACFS is dedicated to rescuing animals stranded along the northwest coast of Florida.

Georgia Aquarium and Marineland share a long history of working closely together for the benefit of marine mammals, and the Aquarium and its team members have a deep and abiding appreciation for Marineland and the significance of its heritage as one of Florida's original coastal attractions.

### **Fun Facts about the Georgia Aquarium**

- The Aquarium's filtration system contains more than 70 miles of pipe, enough to more than encircle the city of Atlanta on the I-285 loop.
- The heating and air conditioning system has 4300 tons of cooling capacity, enough to cool over 1400 average-sized homes. Plumbing systems include 290 plumbing fixtures, 200 floor drains and 53 roof drains.
- The Georgia Aquarium's habitats hold the equivalent water volume to more than 100 million cans of Coke.
- The drains are connected by 1.5 miles of underground pipe and 5.5 miles of aboveground pipe.
- Approximately 230 newly constructed average-sized American homes can fit inside the Georgia Aquarium.
- In the Aquarium's life support systems, there are 506 pumps using over 5,500 horsepower to move more than 300,000 gallons of water every minute. The water is moved through 187 sand filters, 91 protein skimmers and 76 towers.

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### **About Georgia Aquarium**

Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia, is the world's largest with more than 10 million gallons of water and the largest collection of aquatic animals. The mission of 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. 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](http://www.georgiaaquarium.org).