

## SHARK DIVING at the Florida Aquarium

Written by Editor

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Okay, queue the theme music from Jaws. Because when you get in the water with a handful of sharks, larger than you, that is what you hear.

The Dive with the Sharks guest program at The Florida Aquarium is a perfect way to get up close and personal with some very big sharks. It is a controlled environment with excellent visibility and you are guaranteed to see some amazing sharks (plus a few other cool marine animals to boot)!

Certified SCUBA divers 15 and older can Dive with the Sharks every day at The Florida Aquarium. The 90-minute-long program includes a safety briefing, an educational presentation in the shark classroom and 30 minutes hanging out with sand tiger sharks as long as your car! The largest comes in at about 10 feet!

Divers experience the shark dive with certified NAUI dive professionals. Don't worry about

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lugging your equipment for this dive, Zeagle Systems scuba equipment is provided! When I'm travelling, being able to jump in with sharks without having to worry about gear is a major plus.



Photo Courtesy The Florida Aquarium

While the sharks are definitely the main attraction of this adventure, they aren't the only residents of the Aquarium's Coral Reef exhibit (their largest) with 500,000-gallons displaying more than 100 species of fish! Some of the fan favorites include moray eels (some of them more than 6 feet long), a green sea turtle named Flip, a goliath grouper, tarpon and barracuda.

The first thing you see as you approach the tank from topside is a big yellow cage. As intimidating as that sounds, it really is more for the shark's safety than the divers. The sharks stay clear of the cage so divers can enter the exhibit easily and safely.

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After a few minutes gathering yourself (and your courage) in the cage, the dive masters escort you out of the cage and nose-to-nose with these amazing animals! You don't get to dive freely wherever you want, but the dive master does escort you to three different spots in the exhibit to give you a few difference angles and experiences while in the water with all of these great fish. It even includes a few minutes to hunt for shark's teeth (the sand tigers can go through 30,000 in their lifetime!).

The price tag on this adventure is \$175, but it is well worth the money. The package allows you to spend the day at The Florida Aquarium (\$20 value) and includes a souvenir baseball cap and photo of you in the exhibit with the sharks. But even without the awesome extras, just getting within inches of a shark is worth it. An experience to remember! ☐