



Guidelines for Visitors

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Aquarius undersea laboratory (habitat) and all of the exciting work we are doing. This document provides guidance related to your visit. Visitors need to discuss specific requirements with Aquarius Reef Base (ARB) staff prior to their visit as operational and mission requirements will dictate visiting arrangements. We thank you in advance for your flexibility.

We will do our best to get you a visit inside Aquarius if requested. Please note that visits during missions must be cleared by ARB staff and the project leader. The capacity of the habitat is limited to eight (8) persons, including saturated aquanauts. Thus, during missions it may not be possible to put more than two visitors in the habitat on any one dive. If your trip is scheduled when there isn't a saturation mission in progress, we can accommodate up to six visitors inside Aquarius at any one time (reserving two slots for staff escort divers). Visits may also be shared with other parties.

ARB Shore Facility

The Aquarius shore facility is located at 85932 Overseas Highway in Islamorada, Florida. Limited parking is available at the shore base and car-pooling is strongly encouraged. Closed-toe shoes are required at all times on the docks, in the workshops and in the yard areas (except the parking lots) at the shore facility.

Diving

Visitors who wish to dive with Aquarius Reef Base can do so under the auspices of the guest diver program. Visitors will typically undertake one dive, including a swim around the habitat and, if previously arranged, a visit inside the habitat. Guest divers are limited to no more than two days of diving and must be escorted by an approved ARB working diver. All non-science related diving at ARB is covered by OSHA's Commercial Diving Regulations and strict adherence to instructions and requirements is necessary and specific training may be provided related to commercial diving requirements.

Guest divers are required to possess and present a certification card from a recognized diving agency (PADI, NAUI, ADICI, military, etc.), fill out a liability waiver and a participant information form and be covered by a major medical insurance policy or a worker compensation policy. Divers should bring their own personal diving gear (e.g., mask, fins, swimsuit, thermal protection, buoyancy compensator and regulator). Buoyancy compensators, regulator assemblies and dive computers may be available for your use; however, during high demand periods they cannot be guaranteed to be available. Tanks and weights will be provided by ARB.

Diving to the Habitat

Visit time inside Aquarius ranges from 25 to 60 minutes with approximately five minutes required for an initial safety briefing. For dives inside Aquarius with a maximum dive depth of 50 feet, ARB procedures dictate a maximum bottom time of 82 minutes. We ask that during dives in which you enter the habitat, you go no deeper than 50 feet - the depth of the grating at the entrance to Aquarius - unless specifically agreed with the dive supervisor in advance.

Water temperatures are typically warm enough that staff members do not wear a wetsuit for dives directly to and from the habitat since getting in and out of it reduces available time inside. Once inside the wetporch you will be asked to shower and towel off before entering the main habitat living areas.

You will probably want to bring a dry shirt to wear inside. If possible, staff will put it in a transfer pot for dry transfer to the habitat.

Cameras in housings may be left submerged in the wetporch but should not go inside the habitat. There is a risk of ongassing (habitat atmosphere entering the housing under pressure), which might cause the housing to fail on ascent.

Cameras to be used inside will need to be transferred by ARB staff using a transfer pot. Transfer pots are approximately the size of a five-gallon bucket. Please speak with ARB staff regarding any specific requirements. ARB/FIU takes no responsibility for damaged equipment due to the unique aspects of working under pressure in Aquarius including transfer through the water. We have successfully worked with many types of equipment, some of it very sensitive and expensive, with very few failures. But, transfer pots can flood and pressure can harm equipment.

Be aware that there are web cams inside Aquarius that stream live to the Internet.

Passengers on ARB Research Vessels

Aquarius is located at Conch Reef, approximately nine miles from the Aquarius Shore Base. Transit time is about 45 minutes each way. Life jackets are required to be worn on research vessels and will be provided by ARB. Closed toe shoes (or wetsuit booties) are required to be worn at all times. Water and towels are provided, but visitors should bring any food, sunscreen or other items they may require.

For Visiting Press: Publications and Other Media Products

We request to review all staff-attributed quotes and require a copy of all finished articles and products. Media products should mention that Florida International University (FIU) operates the Aquarius undersea laboratory. An Aquarius Reef Base fact sheet is also included as part of this package.

Transportation and Local Accommodations

Miami International Airport (MIA) – 75 miles (1:24) from ARB shore facility.

Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) – 105 miles (1:51) from ARB shore facility.

There are a number of hotels within 10 miles of the shore facility, including:

Islander Resort – A Guy Harvey Outpost

82100 Overseas Highway, Islamorada, FL, 866.573.4235

Hampton Inn & Suites Islamorada

80001 Overseas Hwy Islamorada, FL, 33036 United States, 866-538-9298

Historic Tavernier Inn Hotel

91865 Overseas Hwy Tavernier, FL, 33070 United States, 866-538-0294

Coconut Palm Inn

198 Harborview Drive Tavernier, FL, 33707 United States, 866-538-0315

Required forms checklist:

- FIU A23 Releases Diving and Boating.pdf
- NEW A8 Participant Information Form.pdf



Transfer pot dimensions (inside measurements):

- Small: 12 in (height) x 6 in (diameter)
- Medium: 18 in (height) x 12 in (diameter)
- Large: 24 in (height) x 14 in (diameter)



R/V Sabina

- Length: 43 feet
- Divers: 8
- Speed: 12-14 kts



R/V Bond

- Length: 42 feet
- Divers: 10
- Speed: 15-20 kts



R/V Research Diver

- Length: 30 feet
- Divers: 8
- Speed: 12 kts