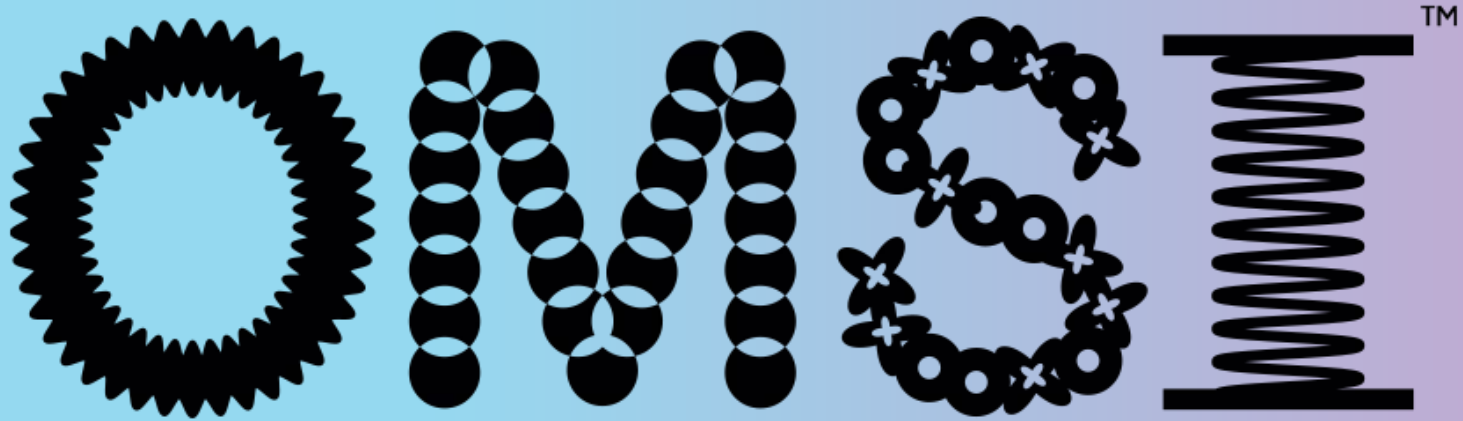


# A sensory guide for museum visitors



**Oregon Museum of Science and Industry**

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# Insider tips to reduce sensory input at the museum

Plan ahead for a successful visit



**Choose a less-busy time to visit.** Some of the busiest days and times include:

- \$5 days (reduced admission on [select days throughout the year](#)).
- Weekends, especially when it's rainy.
- Anytime Portland Public Schools is out of session, including holidays and winter, spring, and summer breaks.
- The opening and closing weekends of featured exhibitions.
- Weekday mornings, especially in spring.

**Consider bringing a change of clothes** if you want to explore one or more water areas and don't like feeling wet afterwards.

**Take a break!** General admission is good for one full day. You can leave the museum and come back later that day, just hang onto your wristband until you're all done.

**Check out a sensory kit.** You can find these at the concierge desk in the main lobby. More details on page 6.

# Insider tips to reduce sensory input at the museum

Plan ahead for a successful visit



**Hack your wristband.** Your band is your ticket, but you do not have to wear it on your wrist. Some guests keep it in a pocket, loop it through a belt loop, or fasten it over the ankle of their pants for less input.

**Access a quiet room.** See the museum map (pages 5 & 6) for locations of OMSI's two public quiet rooms. Each location page in this document has a section called "**Need a Break?**" which has information about the nearest quiet room.



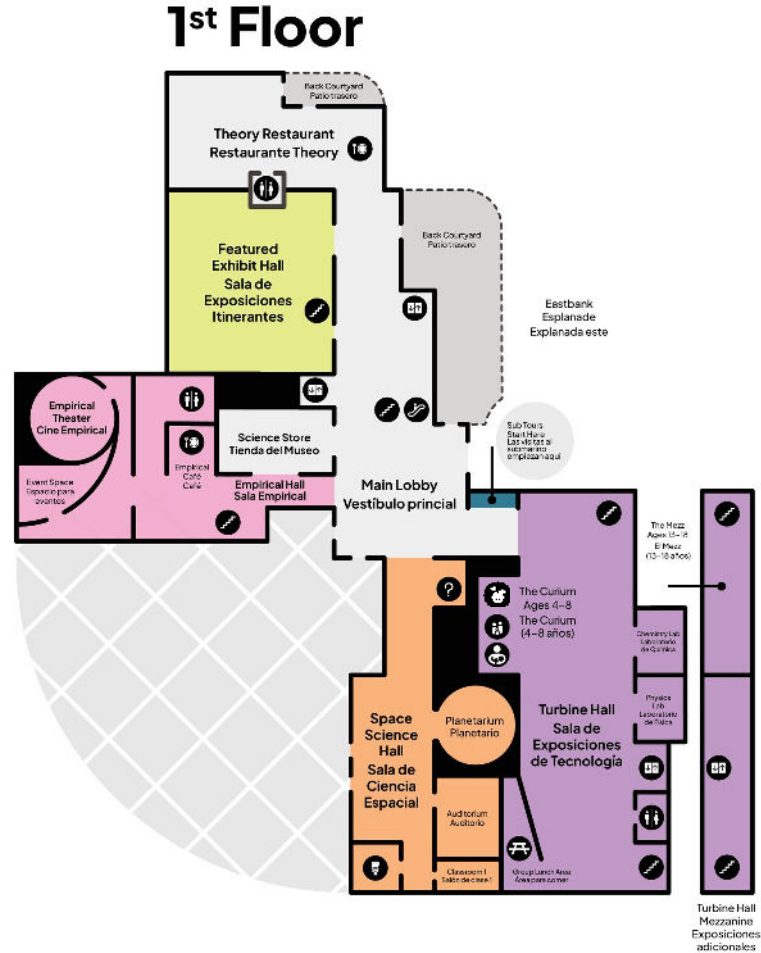
**Ask for help!** Education staff wear green or purple uniforms and can be found throughout the Halls and Labs. Guest Services staff can be found at the Front Desk and the Concierge Desk. OMSI staff are happy to help make your visit fun and enjoyable.

**Accessing Labs.** The Lab spaces (Paleontology, Physics, Chemistry, Discovery, and Life) occasionally close to the public. These closures most frequently take place on weekday mornings during the school year. Daily hours are posted at the entrance to each Lab.

**Wait in line—digitally!** On busy days the Chemistry Lab (and soon— Science Playground) uses a digital queuing system to allow guests to explore other areas while waiting their turn for entry. To join the queue, scan the QR code at the entrance to each space. You'll receive a text when it's your turn to enter!



# Museum Map 1st Floor



# Main Lobby

## What to expect:

As you enter through the glass doors at the front of the building you will see Front Desk where you can purchase tickets.

There are two lines: one for those who are museum members and one for everyone else. When you purchase your ticket, you will be given a paper wristband after checking in at the counter.

At least one volunteer is typically at the start of the line and can answer questions. The science store will be to the far left of the front doors.

Submarine tours meet in the main lobby area. If you are facing the ticketing counter, the submarine tour starting point is to your right.

There are no restrooms in this section of the museum. The nearest gendered restroom can be found down the Empirical hall beyond the Empirical Cafe. The nearest gender-neutral restrooms can be found at the end of the Space Science Hallway.

## Need a break?

- Nearest quiet room is located in the Curium in the Turbine Hall.
- There are tables between the escalator and Theory Restaurant. This area is often quieter with seating.
- You can walk outside the building towards the river to access fresh air. There is often traffic noise from nearby bridges.

## Sensory Considerations:



- This area can be loud and echoey.
- There is a lot of natural light and depending on the season and time of day it may be bright.
- You can ask to borrow a sensory backpack that contains the following:
  - A guide to quiet rooms
  - Child-sized sound-reducing earmuffs
  - 1-2 fidget toys
  - Small weighted mat for lap or shoulders
  - Child-sized sunglasses
  - Visual timer

# Space Science Hallway

## What to expect:

This hallway contains the information desk, a hallway with space-focused exhibits, the Kendall Planetarium, the Auditorium, and a classroom. On the walls are information about space and astronauts.

There is a scale model of a Gemini space capsule that you can try sitting in. There are other space-related exhibits to explore.

Across from the Gemini capsule is the Kendall Planetarium theater which is a dome theater screen with seats in the round (more information on page 8).

Further down the hall is the Auditorium, a large space that is used for private events or exhibits depending on the time of year. At the end of the hall is a classroom for groups to use by reservation.

There are gender-neutral restrooms at the end of the hall across from the classroom.

## Need a break?

- Nearest quiet room is located in the Curium in the Turbine Hall.

## Sensory Considerations:

- Close to the lobby, the hallway is dark with soft ambient lighting.
- Further from the lobby, the hallway, has more natural light and it could become bright depending on the time of day.
- As you walk into the Space Science Hallway from the lobby the Concierge Desk is to your left. Here you can ask questions, exchange tickets or purchase memberships, and check out a sensory backpack.

# Kendall Planetarium

## What to expect:

The Planetarium is a dome-shaped room with double doors that keep light out of the room.

The seats are in circular rows around the room. The seats are tilted back in a reclined position. The seats are narrow, close together, and attached to each other, this may mean you are very close to your fellow planetarium patrons. The staff member letting you in can help you find the best view.

It is dimly lit before the show begins and then darkens to almost pitch black until the show begins. The show is displayed on the round dome ceiling that projects images 360 degrees above and behind your head.

When the show starts and entry is no longer permitted, the doors are locked from the outside.

No food is allowed in the Planetarium. Please ask your usher if you have any questions.

## Need a break?

- Nearest quiet room is located in the Curium in the Turbine Hall.
- You are allowed to exit the room but there is no re-admittance to the Planetarium during a show.

## Sensory Considerations:



Most shows are approximately 25 minutes long and take place in a darkened room. Depending on which show you are seeing, you might experience:

- Loud noise levels
- A projected program and/or a live presentation.
- Fog, lasers, and other visual or lighting effects.
- Zooming effects that may be disorienting.
- Sudden bright images.

# Turbine Hall

## What to expect:

The Turbine Hall is located to the right of the ticketing desk and submarine tour meeting spot. The Turbine Hall is a large room with interactive exhibits.

The Turbine Hall also includes entrances to the Chemistry Lab, the Physics Lab, the Curium, and the Mezz. The Labs are continually changing so there may be unexpected sensory experiences in these spaces.

There is one family restroom in the Curium and gendered restrooms at the far end of the Turbine Hall on the left side.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room located in the Curium near the family restroom.



## Sensory Considerations:



- There may be many areas being used at once leading to loud and unexpected noises/sounds. High ceilings increase overall volume.
- Lighting can be bright in this area, particularly in summer.
- There is an earthquake simulator that has audio and moves and shakes.
- There is a water area where the ground may be wet and there is the possibility of getting water on yourself.

# Turbine Hall: Physics and Chemistry Labs

## What to expect:

*Chemistry Lab:* There may be fire used in this area for experiments. Depending on visitor volume or if there is a lesson happening, the space may be loud or there may be times when quiet is expected to listen to instruction around a science topic/experiment.

Provided goggles must be worn in this space.

*Physics Lab:* There is a shift in odor in this space. There are many things to touch and experiment with in this lab area.

The labs may be reserved for class programs and closed to the public. Daily hours will be posted on the doors to help you plan.

There is one family restroom in the Curium and gendered restrooms at the far end of the Turbine Hall on the left side.

## Need a break?

- Nearest quiet room is located in the Curium in the Turbine Hall.



## Sensory Considerations:



- The Lab spaces may be crowded during busy hours.
- Both Labs have large windows. Depending on the season and time of day it may be bright and warm.
- Provided goggles must be worn in the Chemistry Lab. You may request safety goggles that fit like glasses and do not wrap around your whole head.
- The Physics Lab has some exhibits that may produce mild electrical shocks.
- The Lab spaces are continually changing so there may be unexpected sensory experiences in these spaces

# Turbine Hall: Curium & Mezz

## What to expect:

*Curium:* This is a space designed for children ages 4–8. There are interactive music, light, and air experiences. It is on the right side of the Turbine Hall as you enter from the main lobby.

*Mezz:* This area located on the Turbine Hall Mezzanine is just for teens ages 13–19. Choose from two entrances: up the stairs across from the main lobby or up the glass elevator located halfway down the Turbine Hall.

There is one family restroom in the Curium and gendered restrooms at the far end of the Turbine Hall on the west side.

## Need a break?

- Nearest quiet room is located in the Curium in the Turbine Hall.



## Sensory Considerations:

- The Curium is smaller and slightly separate from the larger Turbine Hall. The lighting is dimmer and the overall volume is lower. There are auditory elements to interact with that momentarily raise the volume.
- The Mezz is on the mezzanine level of the larger Turbine Hall. It can be loud and hot.

# Featured Exhibit

## What to expect:

This is a space that spans both the ground level and the second floor.

The exhibits change regularly, therefore the sensory considerations may vary depending on the exhibit.

Check the OMSI Exhibit page for more information on the current exhibit.

<https://omsi.edu/exhibits-labs/>

The nearest gendered restroom on the ground level is in the Theory restaurant.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room located in the Curium area near the family restroom on the ground floor and in the Science Playground on the second floor (If you are older than 6, ask staff for access to the quiet area as this space is primarily designed for young children).
- On the ground floor there is an open space between Theory Restaurant and the Main Lobby that is often quieter than the rest of the museum.

## Sensory Considerations:



- These will vary depending on the current exhibit. Frequent sensory considerations may include:
  - Noise from exhibits
  - Crowding and warmth during busy periods
  - Dark theatrical lighting to highlight exhibit pieces.
  - “Immersive” settings that combine noise and lighting elements.

# Featured Exhibit – TITANIC: THE ARTIFACT EXHIBITION

## What to expect:

This exhibit spans 2 floors, with re-entry doors for access to restrooms and elevators at the top and bottom of the stairs.

There are 8 galleries in the exhibit, covering the construction, experience onboard, sinking and rescue, memorial, and artifact recovery of the *Titanic*.

Featuring over 100 real artifacts from the wreckage, this exhibit invites visitors to explore the real people and stories involved in this tragedy from over 100 years ago. Visitors receive a Boarding Pass upon entering the exhibit with information about a real passenger. They follow their passenger's journey through the exhibit and learn their fate by scanning the Boarding Pass in the Memorial Gallery.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room located in the Curium area near the family restroom on the ground floor and in the Science Playground on the second floor (If you are older than 6, ask staff for access to the quiet area as this space is primarily designed for young children).
- On the ground floor there is an open space between Theory Restaurant and the Main Lobby that is often quieter than the rest of the museum.

## Sensory Considerations:



- **Sounds:** This exhibit features a variety of sounds throughout, including music from the early 1900s, mechanical room sounds, ocean noises, and immersive soundtracks.
- **Lighting:** Some galleries are dark with immersive lighting.
- **Other:** Visitors are able to touch a real ice wall. Immersive Gallery: The last gallery of the exhibit features a 360 degree projection of life on the Ship and the sinking.
- **Content Warning:** This exhibit heavily covers themes of death and survival.

# USS Blueback Submarine

## What to expect:

To start the submarine experience you will meet your tour guide. When you are facing the ticketing counter, the submarine tour starting point is to the right. You will join other museum visitors on this tour.

There is a long walk (< .25 mile) from the main museum to the submarine that includes walking down a ramp. There are narrow steps to climb up and down throughout the experience. Before leaving the museum the guide has each participant practice walking through a model of the water lock doors on the submarine to make sure everyone is capable of stepping over and through the tight doors onboard.

The nearest restroom is a family restroom located back within the museum building in the Curium. There may be a portable toilet available to guests on the Submarine dock, depending on the season.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room located in the Curium near the family restroom back in the main building.

## Sensory Considerations:

- There are many changes in temperature between the museum and the submarine, particularly in winter.
- The ramp down to the sub is steep, made of metal grating and may move slightly up and down.
- The submarine has areas that require crouching, bending, squeezing through tight spaces, and being very close to others on the tour.
- There is a strong smell on board the sub.
- There will be an opportunity to sound a very loud horn, you will be given a warning and can ask to opt out of that part of the experience.

# Empirical Theater & Hallway

## What to expect:

The Empirical Hall is located to the left of the Main Lobby as you are facing the ticketing desk. The Science Store can also be found in this section.

The Hallway will dead-end at the Empirical Theater. There is a small cafe located on the right side of the hallway. You are welcome to bring snacks into the theater.

Empirical theater: [omsi.edu/exhibits/empirical-theater/](https://omsi.edu/exhibits/empirical-theater/)

To avoid climbing steep stairs inside the theater, you may use the accessible entrance on the second floor. Take the elevator to the second floor and follow the hallway to the right to the back of the auditorium, near the restrooms. An usher will let you in.

The nearest restrooms are gendered and located on the ground floor just past the Empirical Cafe, or in the hallway near the Science Playground on the second floor.

## Need a break?

- Exit through the top of the auditorium. At the exit, there is a lobby area that is less populated and the area on the second floor that the auditorium exits through is quiet with less traffic.
- You are allowed to exit the room but there is no re-admittance to the Empirical Theater during a show.

## Sensory Considerations:



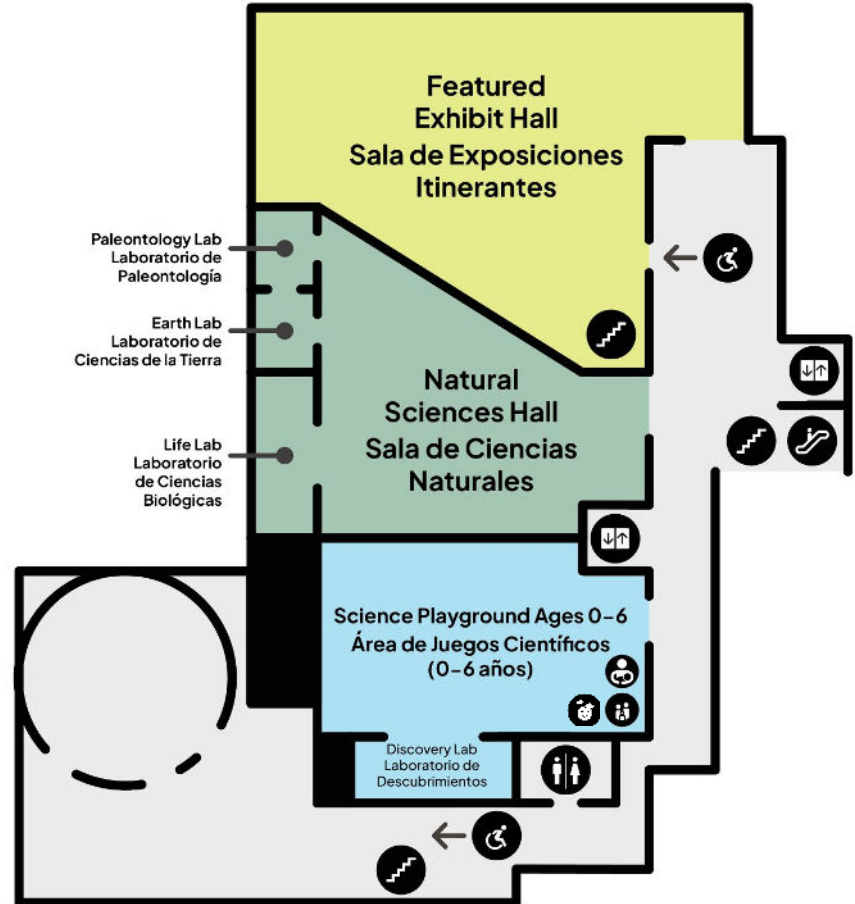
Daytime documentaries are typically 45–55 minutes long. Nighttime movies vary in length.

- This area is darker than the main lobby and becomes darker as you enter the theater.
- There are steep stairs up to the seats in the auditorium; all guests exit at the top of the theater.
- The audio is loud and the screen is large and bright.
- The seats are narrow, upright, and low to the ground.

# Museum Map 2nd Floor



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor



# Science Playground & Discovery Lab (ages birth–6)

## What to expect:

This area is located on the second floor to the left of the Natural Sciences Hall. It is reserved for children ages 6 and under and their caregivers. Older children are welcome with their group that includes someone 6 or younger.

There is a limit on how many people can be in this space at any given time so there may be a wait during busy hours.

This space includes a variety of interactive play areas for children including a climbing structure, a water play area, an imaginative play area, and plenty of spaces for quiet play. There is a smaller play area for infants and another for toddlers in the center of the space.

*Discovery Lab.* The experiences in the Lab change frequently. Activity calendars can be found on the Lab's windows and at [omsi.edu/exhibits/discovery-lab](https://omsi.edu/exhibits/discovery-lab)

There are two family restrooms and one ADA restroom located within this area, near the Discovery Lab.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room located next to the Discovery Lab.
- There are snack tables between the climber and the water area.

## Sensory Considerations:



- Science Playground can be very loud. Noise-cancelling headphones are available to borrow from staff.
- OMSI staff may be able to provide dry clothes depending on available stock.
- The water area has smocks for guests to wear and a cave-like space to experience water play without getting (as) wet.
- The Discovery Lab offers a variety of sensory play and hands-on activities that children can engage in independently or with their caregivers.
- The Discovery Lab tends to be quieter than the rest of the Science Playground.

# Natural Sciences Hall

## What to expect:

This area is located on the 2nd floor. There is an area displaying rocks and minerals and a large globe with projections. There is an area on human development that includes a prenatal exhibit showcasing real human fetuses as they develop through every stage of pregnancy. The largest part of the Natural Sciences Hall is reserved for temporary and rotating exhibits.

In addition to exhibits, you will find the Paleontology and Life Labs (more information on page 17).

The nearest gendered restrooms are in the hallway around the corner from the Science Playground. All areas are flat.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room in the Science Playground on the second floor (If you are older than 6, ask staff for access to the quiet area as this space is primarily designed for young children).



## Sensory Considerations:



- This space tends to be darker and louder than other areas within OMSI.
- The lab spaces may be crowded during busy hours.
- Within the Paleontology Lab there are items that you can touch and feel with your hands.
- The Life Lab contains a variety of reptiles and insects in enclosures. Occasionally OMSI staff will bring out an animal for closer encounters.
- Where the globe, rocks, and minerals are displayed is darker than other areas of this hall.

# Natural Sciences Hall: Paleontology & Life Labs

## What to expect:

These labs are located on the 2nd floor.

*Paleontology Lab:* Within the Paleontology Lab there are items that you can touch and feel with your hands. Staff work on preparing fossils in this space, and you can talk with them about what they are uncovering.

*Life Lab:* This room is home to a variety of living animals that you can observe in their enclosures. Occasionally, staff will bring out an animal for closer encounters.

The nearest gendered restroom is in the hallway around the corner from the Science Playground. All areas are flat.

## Need a break?

- There is a quiet room in the Science Playground on the second floor (If you are older than 6, ask staff for access to the quiet area as this space is primarily designed for young children).



## Sensory Considerations:



- The Lab spaces may be crowded during busy hours.
- Both rooms are lit with bright overhead fluorescent lighting.
- The Paleontology Lab can be very loud or smelly when staff are using tools and chemicals to uncover and preserve fossils.

# Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Pacific University Occupational Therapy students Jenae Wadleigh and Jessica Liang for their expertise and content development.

Learn more about the ways that Occupational Therapists support wellbeing, access, and participation at <https://www.aota.org/>

OMSI support from: Katie Forbes, Alexis Baghdadi, Holly Hawk, Annie Douglass, and the Museum Engagement Team