



Frequently Asked Questions

About EcoTarium Night Journey

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General Questions

- Can I take pictures/videos during the overnight?

Personal pictures and videos are allowed when the conditions below have all been met: Photographs or videos may not be taken of guests who are in the process of changing clothes or are in a restroom.

- Pictures containing guests who are not part of your group may never be posted or shared publicly without the signed written consent of the adult guest and/or their legal guardian.

Recordings of any kind may not be made during any planetarium show.

- Guests may not make a continuous video recording of a staff-led program, activity, or workshop.

- Is there an example packing list?

We recommend that overnight guests clearly label their overnight gear with the name of the owner and/or their group name (i.e. pack name, school name, etc.).

Example Night Journey Packing List:

- Whatever clothes and layers you need to be comfortable in a variety of temperatures, both waking and sleeping. Like many other older buildings, our museum experiences variable temperatures that can be difficult to adjust, so we suggest dressing in layers for your stay.
- Clothing and shoes appropriate for going outside in the predicted conditions.
- Any personal hygiene items and medications you need, such as a toothbrush, deodorant, or Tylenol.
- A sleeping bag, pillow, and sleeping pad or air mattress (twin size for one, queen size for two).
- Flashlight (adults only please), ear plugs, and sleeping mask.
- Stuffed animals are welcome.
- Do Not Bring: Straws, balloons, toy weapons, pets, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, fireworks, firearms, or other weapons or restricted substances.

We strongly recommend you leave any non-essential electronics and valuables at home. The EcoTarium is not responsible for items lost or stolen during your visit.

- Are you willing/able to make accommodations for overnight guests with atypical or impaired movement/sensory/cognitive abilities?

We do our best to accommodate specific guest needs to the extent we are able. If you or someone in your group has particular concerns about fully participating in the overnight experience, we recommend reaching out to overnights@ecotarium.org or calling our Reservations Department at 508.929.2703 and asking to speak to the overnight coordinator at least two weeks before your reserved Night Journey.

- Can I bring my dog, emotional support animal, or other pet to my overnight?

The EcoTarium is a wildlife zoo regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA prohibits domestic animals anywhere on our property, including those left in vehicles during drop-off or pick-up. The only domestic animals allowed on the property are service animals.

- I need to bring prescription medication that will need to be refrigerated overnight. Is this something you can help with?

Yes. There is refrigeration available in our staff-only area and we are happy to store your medication there until it is needed. Please approach an overnight staff member during check in to arrange this. We request that all medication arrive and be stored in their original container with your name and prescription details clearly labeled.

About Reservations

- When are payments due?

A \$150 non-refundable deposit is required at time of reservation. The next payment (50% of final total) is due the Friday 6 weeks prior to your event. The final payment (remaining balance) is due the Friday 4 weeks prior to your event. No changes may be made to your reservation after this time.

- When is the deadline to let you know if our group size changes?

Group size is not finalized until the final payment deadline, which is the Friday 4 weeks prior to your event. Please note that increases in group size are limited by the number of spaces available before the event reaches its total capacity.

- What if some guests in our group don't show up? Can we get a refund?

All payments for Night Journey are non-refundable, you are able to transfer enrollment to another age appropriate person to take their place. But, as we have already begun making preparations for their stay.

- What is your inclement weather policy?

In the event of a significant snow storm or other potentially hazardous weather event, the EcoTarium will notify the attending overnight groups of any overnight cancellations no later than noon (12:00 pm) on the day of the program. If an overnight is cancelled, all groups scheduled to attend that overnight will have the opportunity to reschedule their overnight experience for another available date at some point within the following 12 months.

About Arrival

- What time should I arrive?

Arrival for the overnight program begins at 5:15 pm and continues until the gate closes at 6:30 pm. Check-in is open from 5:15 pm until 6:30 pm, when programming begins. All guests must stop at the gatehouse at the entrance to the museum grounds in order to receive a parking pass and directions from the gate attendant.

- Can I arrive early to explore the museum?

Night Journey guests who wish to explore the museum before 5:00 pm are welcome to purchase Museum Day Add-On passes for \$5 a person but must be reserved before the day of the overnight. Those with Museum Day Add-On passes will be able to explore the museum from 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. In this case, when arriving at the museum, please notify the gate attendant that you are also part of the Night Journey for the night so that they can give you a parking pass and a map. Otherwise, please do not arrive before 5:15 pm for your overnight. You are welcome to start exploring the museum as soon as you have dropped off your gear and checked in.

- Where do I go when I arrive? Where do I park?

The gate attendant will direct you to our lower parking lot and explain where to enter the museum with your gear. Our usual check-in site is in the Hirsh Center to the right of the lower entrance, accessed from the lower parking lot. The gate attendant will explain where to go.

- How far will I need to carry my gear? Where can I store it until I need it?

Depending on where you park, you may have to carry your gear as much as 500 feet from the parking lot to the entrance. The entrances are wheelchair accessible. Staff can assist guests with moving gear upon request if there are mobility concerns.

All overnight gear should be stored in the location designated for your group at check-in until official “sleeping area set-up” begins. Please do not move overnight gear into the museum before this time.

- What if I am unable to arrive before 6:30 pm? How do I get in?

If you know in advance that you will be arriving after 6:30 pm, be sure to let your group leader know so that they can pass along the information to our staff during check-in. Likewise, guests who are unexpectedly running late should contact their group leader with their new estimated time of arrival. Group leaders are responsible for coordinating late arrivals from their group with the overnight team. If you arrive at the gatehouse and there is no one there to let you in, please call your group leader so they can notify the staff. A staff member will come to the gate to let you in and provide you with any information you need to join the group.

About the Museum

For additional information about the museum exhibits and grounds, please visit www.ecotarium.org/visit/

- How much time will there be to explore the museum exhibits during our Night Journey?

Museum exploration time depends on several factors. In general, you are welcome to explore the museum from arrival at 5:15 pm until programming begins at 6:30. There is usually a 30-minute break in programming to explore the museum and eat snack later in the evening. Additionally, there may be some limited time to explore the exhibits in the morning. If you would like more exploration time, we recommend purchasing the optional Museum Day Add-On experience for \$5/person either with your reservation or in the morning while visiting the gift stop.

- Will your gift shop be open during our Night Journey?

The Museum Shop will be open in the morning before your departure.

- Is there a private space available for testing blood sugar levels, pumping milk, or other necessary personal activities?

Please inform our staff if you need a private space; they will be happy to accommodate you.

- Is there a designated place where I can use tobacco products?

Use of all tobacco products is prohibited on EcoTarium property. However, out of consideration for our overnight guests’ needs, adults of legal smoking age should

consider the interior of their personal vehicle to be the only acceptable location to use tobacco products on grounds during their overnight.

- Is the facility accessible for wheelchair users and others?

Museum is accessible to wheelchair users and others who need to avoid stairs.

- Are there gender-neutral bathrooms available in the museum?

There are two single-stall, gender-neutral bathrooms at the EcoTarium. Both are located on the middle level in the classroom wing.

- Does the museum have a Lost-And-Found?

To inquire about lost items during your Night Journey, please speak with a member of the Night Journey staff.

To inquire about lost items after your Night Journey, please visit the Tickets and Information Desk on the Upper Level or call our Guest Services team at 508.929.2700.

About Eating

- What do we do about dinner? Should we bring an evening snack?

For dinner, we suggest you eat in advance, or bring your favorite picnic. Our Snack Area has plenty of seating.

A healthy evening snack is provided to all guests during their overnight.

- Do you allow outside food deliveries?

Yes, though guests are advised to order their food in time to be delivered no later than 5:30 pm to ensure that they have sufficient time to eat before their program begins at 6:30 pm. Please be sure to provide the delivery driver with your cell phone number so that you can coordinate with them directly when your food arrives.

Staff and guests frequently order pizza from these places:

[Road Runner](#) delivery: 508-797-0314

[George's Pizza II](#) delivery: 508-799-4999

- What sort of snack and breakfast can we expect?

Snacks generally include apples, fruit-filled cereal bars, animal crackers, and water. At breakfast, we offer a variety of cold and hot cereals, bagels with cream cheese, fruit, coffee, tea, and orange juice. We do not serve any food items that include peanuts, tree nuts, or seeds in their ingredient lists.

- What time is breakfast? How long will we have to eat?

Morning wake-up is at 7 am. Breakfast is available approximately from 7:15-8:00 am. Guests have about an hour between morning wake-up and the beginning of morning programming to wake up, pack up, and eat up!

- I and/or my child have dietary restrictions/food allergies. What do I need to know?

We do not serve any food items that contain tree nuts, peanuts, or seeds during our overnights. However, many of the items we serve were produced in facilities that use these ingredients. In general, we recommend that guests with dietary concerns bring some supplemental food items to their overnight in case the snack and/or breakfast provided do not meet their needs. For answers to more specific questions about snack and breakfast, please call Reservations at 508.929.2703.

NOTE: Guests with severe food allergies should be aware that the EcoTarium is not a nut-free facility. Though we do regularly clean all surfaces, any given food allergen could be present in our facility at any time.

- We plan to bring our own food. Where can we store it overnight? Is there a microwave and/or fridge available to us?

All guest food should be labeled with the name of the group or individual it belongs to and must be stored in one of the following two locations outside of meal/snack times:

- The Hirsh Center and/or at your group's designated gear location
- Inside your personal vehicle in the parking lot

Please do not store any personal/group food in your designated eating area or at your sleeping location.

A microwave and limited refrigeration space are available in our staff-only area and we are happy to heat your food and/or store your temperature-sensitive food there until it is needed. Please approach an overnight staff member during your Night Journey to arrange this.

About Programming

- Which program theme will we experience?

You will experience one of three themes: Crimes, Codes & Clues; Stars & Space; or Science for Wizards. The overnight staff will determine the theme of your Night Journey and you will be notified upon check-in. All groups in attendance on a given night will have the same theme experience.

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- My child doesn't like/know about Harry Potter. What if our night has the *Science for Wizards* theme?

Love and/or knowledge of Harry Potter is not necessary to enjoy and learn from our *Science for Wizards* theme. This theme includes exploration of the scientific method, and the whimsical sides of subjects like chemistry, physics, animal husbandry, and astronomy.

- What sort of activities can we expect to experience?

The particular activities of your evening greatly depend on the theme. All activities are interactive, and most are very hands-on. Your group will all experience the same activities, but it may be divided into smaller groups that do the activities separately. The activities are designed to engage ages 5-12 and do not require any prior knowledge, though younger overnight guests may need adult assistance to participate fully. This is particularly true for young guests who may not yet be confident at reading and writing, as well as English language learners of any age.

- Will we get to touch/pet any animals during our activities?

Our awesome animal ambassadors are working hard to educate our guests during our programs! In order for them to safely do their jobs we have a no-touch policy in place, so while you will be able to see our animals up close, we thank you for not touching them!

- Will we get to ride the train during our Night Journey?

Our train operates seasonally; the Explore Express train does not operate during Night Journey activities. For Night Journey guest who purchase the museum day add on experience you may purchase train tickets during public museum hours.

- Will we get to see a planetarium show during our Night Journey?

As part of the Night Journey program your group will view one of our full dome planetarium shows as a way to close our evening together.

- Will we get to see the mountain lions and/or river otters during our Night Journey?

The mountain lions and river otters usually go to bed behind the scenes before the Night Journey begins. While there is a chance they will be out before you leave in the morning, the best way to ensure a sighting is to purchase a Museum Day Add-On and see them during public hours. Please keep in mind that all our animals have the option to display natural behaviors that may include hiding or seclusion, so we cannot guarantee you will see any given animal during your visit.

- Do adults get to participate in the program activities?

We encourage all adults to participate fully in the activities alongside their youth. Remember whether participate or observing, all adults must be present to chaperone and mentor the youth in their care throughout the overnight experience.

- Will we be going outside during our Night Journey? What if it rains?

All Night Journey guests should be prepared to go outside in the forecasted weather. We will modify programming as needed if conditions on our grounds are hazardous, such as icy paths, extreme cold, or a thunder storm.

- What if a youth in my care or I don't want to participate in a particular activity?

As Night Journey are generally group program, as long as your group has adult supervision per the required youth/adult ratios. An adult leader and youth under your care may explore the museum if they would like during scheduled program times. Please keep in mind that all youth must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

About Sleeping

- When is bedtime? How strict is it?

Official bedtime coincides with the conclusion of the wind down activity and lights-out in the museum. We aim for bedtime to begin around 10:15 pm; however, since bedtime is contingent upon the timing of the evening's programming, it can vary by as much as a half-hour.

Once the planetarium show concludes, lights-out/quiet hours are in effect. Night Journey staff will be not present to enforce respectful quiet-time behavior during sleeping hours, so it is extremely important that all chaperones enforce this behavior in the youth of their own group. Guests (especially children) should not be exploring the museum or making unnecessary noise during lights-out, and all exhibits will be off from 10 pm to approximately 7 am.

- Can my child go to bed before the official lights-out time?

Museum lights are not turned off until the planetarium show has begun at the end of the night. Guests are welcome to skip the planetarium show in favor of retiring "early", but trying to go to bed any earlier than lights-out will be very challenging, since the museum will still be bright and potentially loud. Children who are not able to stay awake until 10 pm may not be a good fit for a Night Journey.

- Where will I sleep?

All guests sleep only inside the museum among the exhibits. Groups are generally assigned a sleeping area within the museum, but there is flexibility if you do not feel that your assigned area will permit you a comfortable rest. We do not promise that your group's sleeping area will be removed from the other groups' sleeping areas.

- How dark is the museum at night?

There are a wide range of light levels throughout the museum. We try to assign groups to sleeping areas that contain a variety of light levels to accommodate different preferences. There are a few exhibit spaces that are completely dark (or nearly so) and a few that are quite bright, but the majority of spaces are comfortably dim. Eye masks are recommended for those who need true darkness to sleep.

- Can I bring an air mattress? What about a cot? What about a tent?

Air mattresses are not only allowed but encouraged, as our floors are very hard. Cots are allowed, but should not be used on any of the rubberized flooring. Tents are not permitted.

- Is there a place to change into pajamas?

There several multi-stalled restrooms and two single-stalled restrooms where overnight guests may use to change.

- Will I have access to my car overnight?

The museum building is locked from the outside during lights-out, so we recommend that guests remove any needed items from their car before the end-of-program wind down activity.

- Will I be able to charge my phone overnight?

There are electrical outlets available in several locations inside the museum, though a few of them turn off when the lights do and most are somewhat removed from the sleeping areas so we are unable to guarantee you will be able to charge electronic devices. The EcoTarium is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

- Where can I plug in my CPAP machine, or other medical device?

Please notify a member of the Night Journey staff when you arrive and we will make sure you have a sleeping location that suits your needs.

- I snore loudly and I don't want to keep everyone else from sleeping. What do you suggest?

There is sleeping space available in the designated area for guests who wish to isolate themselves out of respect for those who would be sleeping around them.

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Please let a member of the Night Journey staff know when you arrive if you would like to sleep in a designated area for this purpose so that we can be sure it is in order for sleeping when you need it. Advanced notice is not required, but is always appreciated.

About Departure

- Can we leave before morning programs have finished?

Yes. Please notify a member of the Night Journey staff before the end of evening programming if you are planning on an early departure. You will be given departure instructions based on the planned time of your departure.

- How do morning pick-ups work for parents who did not attend the overnight with their child?

Morning pick-ups, prior to 9:45 am, are not encouraged for our overnight programs, as we do not have a staff member at our gatehouse at that time. Please notify the Reservation Department in advance if your group plans to have adults arriving for pick-ups at the end of your overnight.

- Can we stay after the program ends and explore?

The morning after your overnight, you may choose to purchase a Museum Day Add-On wristband for an additional \$5 per person that will allow you to stay and explore our museum and grounds through the end of that museum day. All guests who do not choose to purchase wristbands must exit the grounds upon completion of their overnight experience.

NOTE: All overnight gear must be moved to personal vehicles at the end of the overnight experience (if not earlier), regardless of whether or not guests will be staying for additional exploration time.

- How do we get souvenir EcoTarium overnight patches?

Night Journey experience patches may be purchased by your group, in advance for discounted price \$1.50 each. Pre-purchased patches will be given to the group leader at the end of the overnight along with the youth return admission passes for their group. Patches may also be purchased individually, the morning of your Night Journey, from the Museum Gift shop. The price for the patch from the gift shop is \$3.00.

- Does everyone get a return pass for free admission another day? Do the return passes expire?

All youth (age 18 and under) who attend an overnight will receive a pass for one return admission to the museum another day, good for one year.

- Can we use our return passes to continue visiting the museum after our program ends instead of buying a Museum Day Add-On wristband?

Yes, you may use your return passes to continue visiting the museum after your program ends. Be advised that the value of the return pass is greater than the cost of the Museum Day Add-On wristband. It's a better value to purchase the wristband and save the return pass should you come back for another visit.