

Where do I board the eco-vessel?

The eco-vessel is docked in the downtown St. Petersburg Municipal Marina at gate 23 just a few slips down from Fresco's restaurant. It is not docked at the Discovery Center.

Boat Slip Address: 400 2nd Ave NE Slip Q47, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

How early should we arrive?

Boarding will begin 10-15 minutes prior to the tour's departure. For times around holidays and peak seasons, please allow at least 30 extra minutes for you and/or your party to locate parking and walk to the boat. Please note that during peak times, parking may not be available at the pier.

Is there parking?

Metered street parking and two paid parking lots are available to the public on the pier. However, spaces are often limited on weekends, holidays, and during peak seasons (spring and summer). There is additional parking throughout the downtown area. We recommend using the Sundial Parking Garage located a few blocks away. All parking is paid.

Food and drinks?

We do not sell refreshments on the boat. You are welcome to bring your own food and drinks. We do not allow alcohol on the eco-vessel. Please be mindful of staying hydrated in the Florida heat. Eco-friendly refillable water bottles are highly encouraged!

Is there a bathroom on the boat?

Yes, there is a bathroom, or a "head" on the eco-vessel. It is available for passengers to use throughout the duration of the trip.

What is your refund policy?

We do not offer refunds if your party is late or misses the tour. If a tour is canceled and refunds are issued you will be notified.

Is the eco-vessel wheelchair accessible?

Yes, the eco-vessel is wheelchair accessible. There are two options for wheelchair boarding. If a guest is not completely wheelchair-bound, they are able to step up onto the boat for boarding and navigate around the boat with the wheelchair. For guests that are completely wheelchair-bound, a ramp is available, but there will be an alternative pick-up location nearby on the Pier. If you require the use of a wheelchair ramp, please coordinate with the eco-vessel crew at least 24 hours prior to your trip by emailing tbwdcecotours@tampabaywatch.org.

What should we wear?

Please dress with consideration to the Florida climate and weather. Sun protection is highly recommended.

What ages are your tours best for?

Our tours are perfect for all ages!

Are pets allowed on the boat?

Service animals are allowed on the eco-vessel.

What happens if it rains?

Tours will still go out in the rain. Visibility, lightning, and high winds are what would limit a tour from going out. If a tour is canceled due to inclement weather, you will be notified.

What makes our tour different?

Our tour is more than a boat ride, it is a hands-on educational experience of all things Tampa Bay. Each trip is led by an expert marine scientist and includes a research-based fisheries trawl net pull. This allows guests to get up close with marine life native to Tampa Bay, including fishes and invertebrates!

What is an otter trawl net?

An otter trawl net is a cone-shaped net similar to those used by shrimp fisheries. The trawl net we use is relatively small. It functions like a funnel; as the boat moves backwards anything rustled into the net moves towards its smallest end. The net is connected to the boat with two lines. The largest part of the net, or its mouth, is pulled open by floats on its top and two otter boards on the side. Animals are gently brushed into the net from a tickle chain at the bottom of the mouth of the net. This net is not designed to rip through habitat and all sample sites are given rest periods of at least one week.

Does the trawl net harm the ecosystem?

No, we use an otter trawl net which is designed to gently move through underwater habitat. Further, we rotate through 30 designated trawl sites, each of which receives a rest period of a week or more before we return. All animals collected are also handled with care and returned to Tampa Bay by the end of the day.

What will we see/catch?

Animals collected using the otter trawl will vary among pulls, but usually consists of a mix of native fish and invertebrate species. Examples of species we might find are pinfish, pufferfish, seahorses, and crabs. Each tour also includes a boat-based visit to a local bird sanctuary island. Other wildlife, such as dolphins and manatees, may also be seen as we move through the Tampa Bay waters.