






HOUSTON MUSEUM
of NATURAL SCIENCE

Pre-Visit Resources for Neurodivergent Guests



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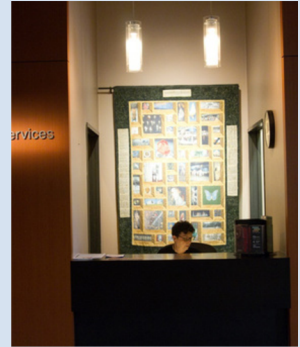


At-A-Glance Tips

Emergency Information

Basic first aid kits are available at Museum Services and on every level of the Museum.

If you and your child get separated, please report to Museum Services, located inside the main Exhibit Hall entrance off of the Grand Hall and report that you and your child were separated. Museum staff are trained to help find your child in this situation.

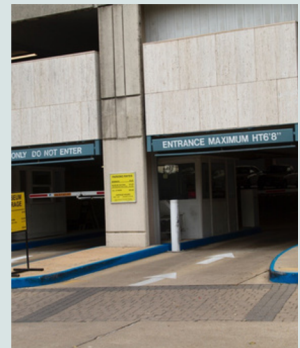


Accessible Parking

There are a few accessible parking spots available at the front of the museum on Caroline Street. We also have accessible parking spots available near the elevators on every floor in the HMNS parking garage.

Plan a little extra time for parking at the Museum District can get crowded. If the HMNS parking garage (Lot B) is full, there are other 3-hour lots in the area (such as Lot C).

Please reference [Directions & Parking](#) located on HMNS website for alternative parking areas.





At-A-Glance Tips



Busy Hours

Our museum halls can get crowded on the weekends, during our free hours on Tuesday evenings three hours prior to closing, during holidays (especially Spring Break), and during the summer. During weekdays in the spring, the halls may be crowded with school groups visiting on field trips.

The best times to visit are right when the museum opens (9:00am) during the week, especially on Mondays. If you have any questions about how busy the museum is, you can call 713-639-4629 to speak with a representative from our Visitor Services Department.



Eating at HMNS

Be sure to plan ahead for lunch - we do not allow food or drink in our exhibit halls!

You can either pack a lunch to carry with you or store it in your car. Lunch and snacks can be eaten in the Grand Hall or outside.

Your Permanent Exhibit Hall ticket allows you to exit and re-enter the exhibits throughout the day, feel free enjoy your meal and then return to the museum





Going to HMNS



Houston Museum of Natural Science was started in 1909.

The museum has many different exhibits that examine topics like astronomy, Native American culture, chemistry, paleontology, and more. When we first get to the museum, I may have to wait in line to get a ticket.

The Museum has hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, so there might be lots of people visiting the museum on the same day as me. If I need help or have a question during my visit, I can ask someone who works at the museum. They will be happy to help me!

I can also ask a Museum staff member for a Sensory Backpack, which has headphones to make things quieter. If I need a special space to relax, the Sensory Room is on the Lower Level.

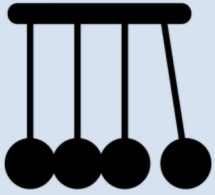


Special Exhibits



There are some areas in the Houston Museum of Natural Science that showcase **special exhibitions**. The exhibitions change every few weeks or months. The layout and items in the exhibition will change depending on the new theme. Sometimes, the special exhibits might be closed while they prepare for a new exhibition.

There might be different rules inside the special exhibition. For example, I might not be allowed to draw, take photos or bring in strollers. I can pay attention to the signs and the directions from the staff to learn more about the exhibitions and the rules.



Pendulum



Loud



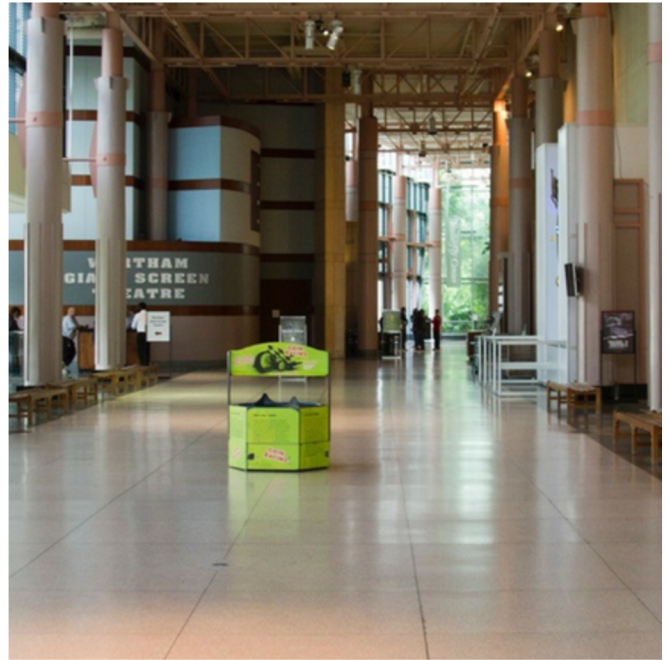
At the **Pendulum**, I can watch time pass by at this visual demonstration of the Earth's rotation.

This is a *Foucault* pendulum, which means there is a weight attached to a string that swings. The direction on the swing changes as the earth rotates.

This is a small area, and I may have to wait for my turn to see the pendulum.



Leaving HMNS



When it is time to **leave the Houston Museum of Natural Science**, I can walk with my family or friends to the exit. I might feel sad to leave the museum, but I can try to remember all of the fun that I had and think about all of the awesome things I learned about and saw. I can try to talk to my family and friends about my favorite parts. I hope I can come back again soon!

1

Main Level Sensory Map



Loud



Dark



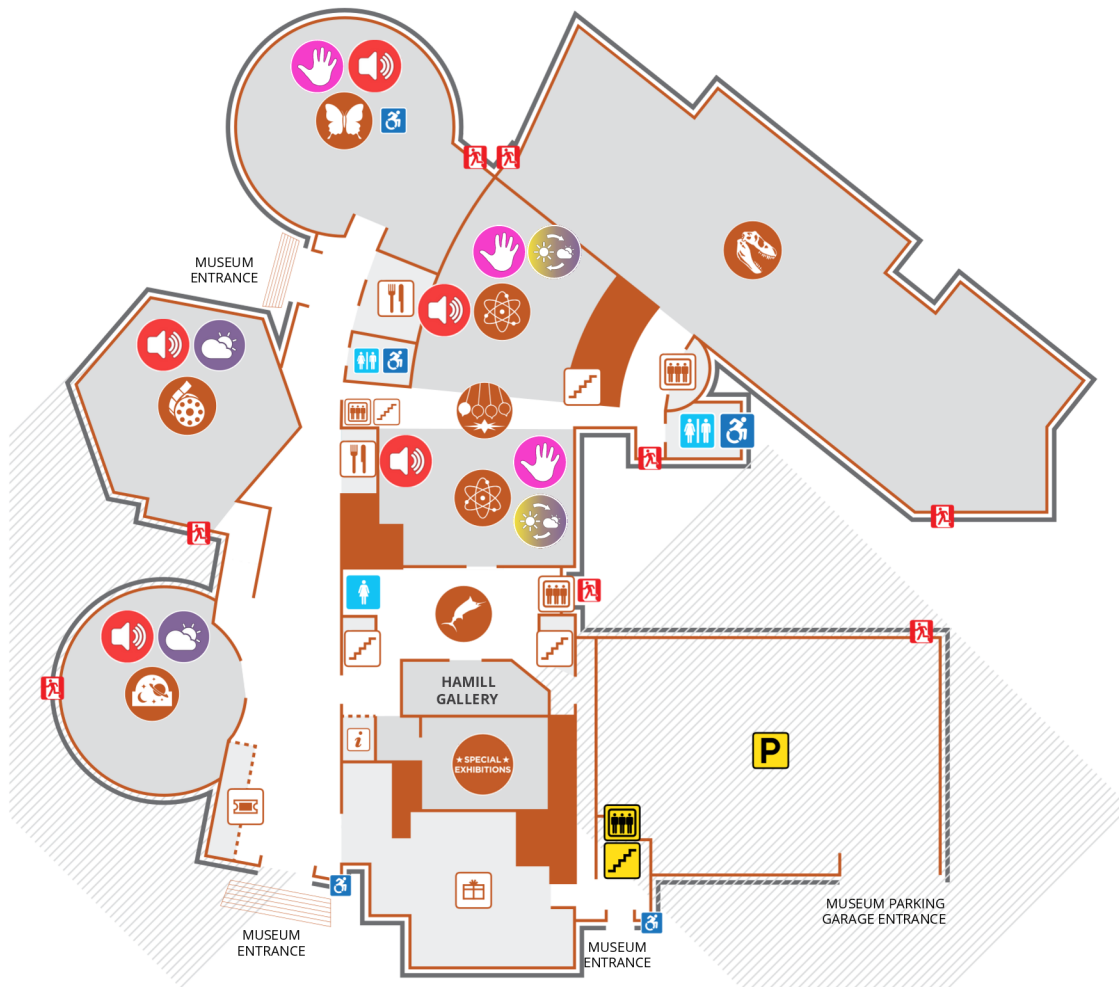
Changing Lights



Tactile



Break Area



MAIN LEVEL



MORIAN HALL OF PALEONTOLOGY



COCKRELL BUTTERFLY CENTER



FOUCAULT PENDULUM



BURKE BAKER PLANETARIUM



GLASELL HALL



WORTHAM GIANT SCREEN THEATRE



THE MATTER & MOTION HALL



* SPECIAL * EXHIBITIONS SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

Restroom

Stairwell

Box Office

Museum Store

Elevator

Food

Museum Services

Emergency Exit

Ramps/Automatic Doors

Garage Parking

Garage Elevator

Garage Stairwell



Grand Entry Hall

First Floor



The Grand Entry Hall is the entrance of the museum. It is a large, open space with moving projections, and sometimes there are bright lights on the floor.

In this space, I can learn about the things I will see and do at the museum.

This space also has the Box Office for buying tickets. Sometimes, I may have to wait in line to buy a ticket.



The Planetarium

First Floor



Dark



Loud



The Planetarium is a theater where I can watch a movie to learn more about outer space. The theater is dome-shaped, which means I can look up to the ceiling to watch the movie play.

I will need tickets before I can see the show. I can go to the theater before the show starts and wait in line before I go to my seat.

The theater will be dark and might feel a little cold. The movies in the Planetarium might be loud or they might make me feel dizzy when I look up at the dome-shaped ceiling. I can close my eyes or ask to take a break outside the theater if I need one.



Giant Screen Theater

First Floor



Dark



Loud



At the **Giant Screen Theater**, I can watch an educational movie on a very large screen. I will need tickets before I can see a show. Some of the movies are in 3D, which means I can wear special glasses to watch the movie. 3D movies look like the action on the screen is actually happening in the theater!

The movies in the Giant Screen Theatre might be loud or they might make me feel dizzy, especially if they are in 3D. If I need a break, I can close my eyes or ask to go outside the theater.



Matter & Motion

First Floor



Tactile



Loud



Changing Lights



The Matter & Motion Hall allows me to explore chemistry with an interactive periodic table and other fun, interactive games.

I can learn more about being a chemist or chemical engineer and find out how chemistry is important in everyday life.

Sometimes there are chemistry demonstrations I can watch. Some of these demonstrations may have strong smells or loud sounds.

Glassell Hall

First Floor



Changing Lights



In **Glassell Hall**, I can explore the ocean with over 40 specimens of fish. Many of the fish are large game fish. There is a touchscreen I can use to learn more about the fish. There are also lights that shine on the floor to make it look like I am underwater.

I can also watch a virtual reality video that shows what it is like to be in a different environment with some animals.

The video might show me standing next to dinosaurs or floating on an iceberg with whales and polar bears jumping out of the water. The video changes sometimes, so it might show me with different animals every time I visit the museum!



Butterfly Center

First Floor



Tactile



Loud



In the **Butterfly Center** I can walk through a living butterfly habitat. There will be hundreds of butterflies flying around me, and some might even land on me! It is ok if a butterfly lands on me, because they do not bite or sting.

In this exhibit, I can also explore both live and preserved insects. There are interactive games and quizzes I can take to learn more about the insects. There are also some videos that I can watch if I want to.

The videos might sound loud to me, so I can cover my ears or just walk by them if they are too loud. There are also parts of this exhibit that might feel very warm and humid.



Paleontology

First Floor



In the **Hall of Paleontology**, I can go on a "prehistoric safari" and explore skeletons of beasts like the mighty Tyrannosaurus rex and the mastodon.

This exhibit is very large and there may be echoes.

Also, some areas of the exhibit are very dark, so I can try to walk slowly and carefully.

2

Second Level Sensory Map



Loud



Dark



Changing Lights



Tactile



Break Area



SECOND LEVEL



CULLEN HALL OF GEMS AND MINERALS



HAMMAN HALL OF TEXAS COASTAL ECOLOGY



SMITH GEM VAULT



MORIAN CABINET OF CURIOSITIES



STRAKE HALL OF MALACOLOGY



FARISH HALL OF TEXAS WILDLIFE



FRENSEY HALL OF AFRICAN WILDLIFE



MORIAN OVERLOOK



FOUCAULT PENDULUM

Restroom

Family Restroom

Elevator

Stairwell

Emergency Exit

Lactation Room

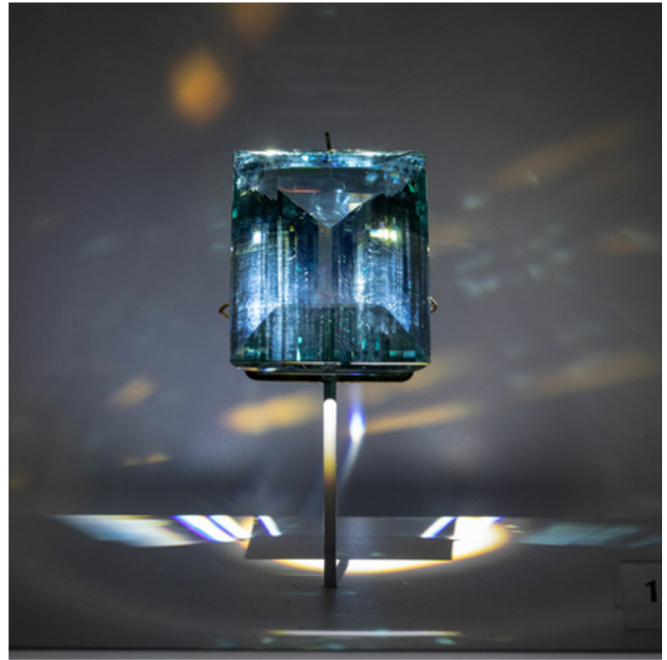
Adult Changing Table



Gems & Minerals Second Floor



Dark



In the **Hall of Gems and Minerals & the Gem Vault**, I can discover more than 450 dazzling minerals.

One of the most amazing gems is a blue topaz crystal weighing more than 2,000 carats!

There is also a huge amethyst geode - a geode is a rock with crystals or minerals inside.

This exhibit is dark and usually quiet.



Malacology

Second Floor



Changing Lights



This is the **Hall of Malacology**. Malacology is the study of mollusks.

Mollusks are a group of animals that includes snails, clams, mussels, squid, and the octopus.

Some mollusks are so small they are hard to see and other mollusks, like the giant squid, can grow to be 60 feet long!

In Malacology, I can get a closer look at these animals through different models and hundreds of shells.

There are also videos I can watch about mollusks. Some of the videos might have loud parts.



African Wildlife

Second Floor



In the **Hall of African Wildlife** exhibit, I can see over 120 African animals.

The animals are all taxidermied specimens, which means that none of the animals in this exhibit are alive.

I can look at an African Elephant, lions on a hunt, and stand close to a Lowland Gorilla. There are several interactive stations and videos that will help me learn more about the animals in the different regions of Africa.



Texas Wildlife Second Floor



Loud



Changing Lights



In the **Hall of Texas Wildlife**, I will walk through the different habitats of Texas. A habitat is a community of plants and animals.

I can visit Piney Woods, Coastal Prairie, and Wetlands, and other types of habitats.

I will learn about extinct animals that no longer exist, vanishing animals that are close to extinction, and invasive plants and animals that are dangerous to Texas habitats.

Every fifteen minutes the lights and sounds in the exhibit will slowly change to simulate, or show me, the difference between what it looks and sounds like at day and night.



Texas Coastal Ecology

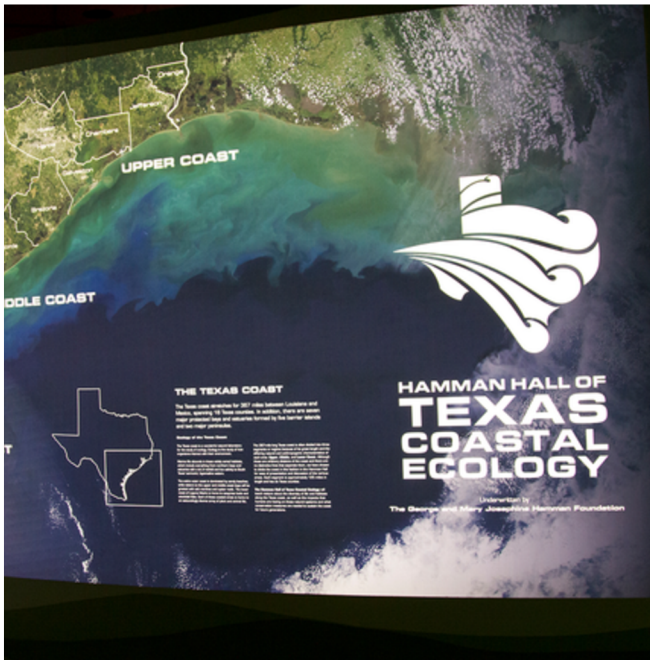
Second Floor



Loud



Changing Lights



The Hall of Texas Coastal Ecology explores the Texas coastline. I can learn about habitats and animals that live on the coast.

Some of the replicas of animals I can see are crabs, waterbirds, and sea turtles. I can also find out about conservation, which means how to keep the Texas coast healthy.



Cabinet of Curiosities

Second Floor



Tactile



In the **Cabinet of Curiosities**, I can learn about how museums originally got started by people collecting things.

I can open the cabinets and explore all of the different things inside. I can touch everything I can reach inside this exhibit!



Overlook

Second Floor



Break
Area



Dark



At the **Overlook**, I can look down into the Hall of Paleontology from above.

I will see large fossils of various beasts, like the mighty Tyrannosaurus rex and the mastodon.

This space is usually dark and quiet and can be a good place to take a break if I need one.

3

Third Level Sensory Map



Loud



Dark



Changing Lights



Tactile



Break Area



THIRD LEVEL



HALL OF ANCIENT EGYPT



SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS



MCGOVERN HALL
OF THE AMERICAS



FOUCAULT PENDULUM



Restroom



Elevator



Stairwell



Emergency Exit



Ramps/Automatic Doors



The Americas

Third Floor



Dark



Loud



The Hall of the Americas celebrates the accomplishments of the native peoples of the Americas and their traditions.

I can see rugs, pottery, beadwork, and other objects representing more than 50 different cultures.

As I walk through this exhibit, I will notice that sounds get louder and softer and the lights get brighter and dimmer.



Egypt

Third Floor



Changing Lights



In the **Hall of Ancient Egypt**, I can learn more about Egypt, which is one of the oldest cultures in the world. I can explore how archaeologists study ancient Egyptian architecture, writing, and religion.

I can also see human mummies. A *mummy* is a body that has been preserved and wrapped in linen cloth. One of the mummies is named Ankh Hap. I can learn more about life during the time when Ankh Hap was alive.

This exhibit is dark in most places, so I can try to take my time walking through the hall.



Fourth Level Sensory Map



Tactile



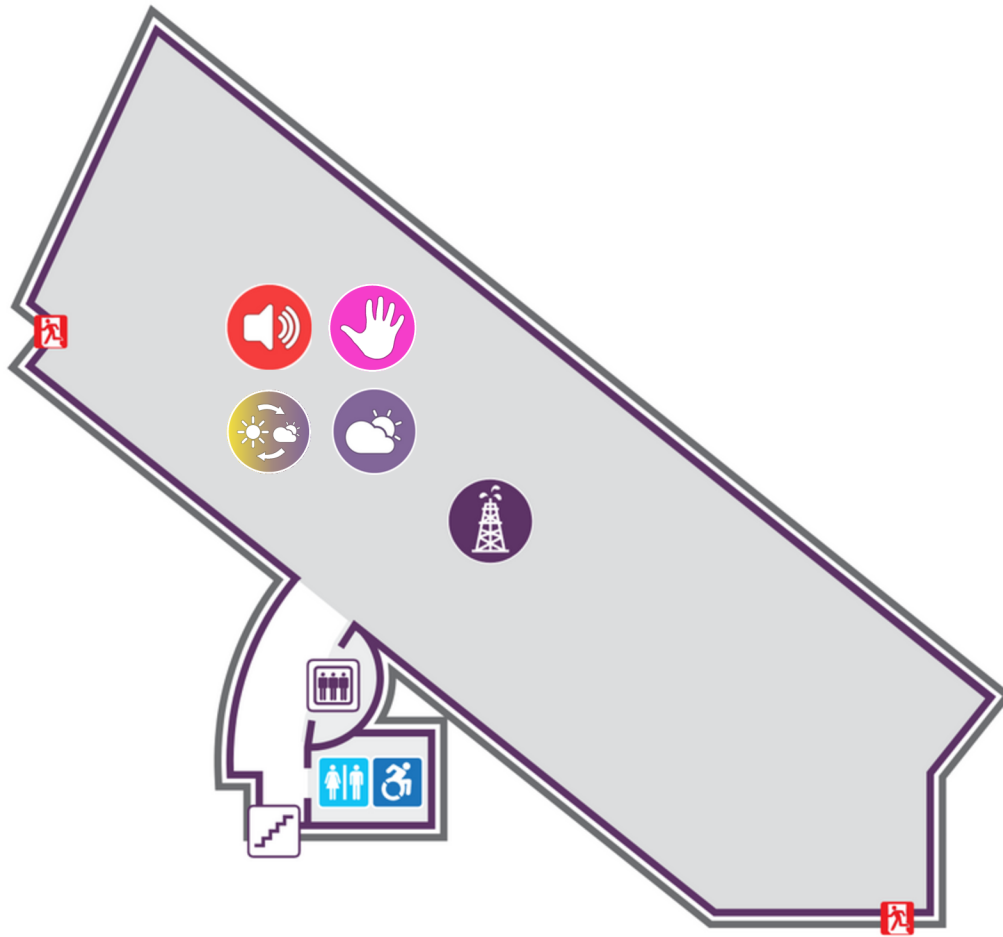
Loud



Dark



Changing Lights



FOURTH LEVEL



WIESS ENERGY HALL



Restroom



Stairwell



Elevator



Emergency Exit



Ramps/Automatic Doors



Energy Fourth Floor



Tactile



Loud



Dark



Changing Lights



The Energy Hall is an exhibit where I can explore different forms of energy and learn how energy affects our everyday lives.

In this space, there is a ride called “Geovator.” For this ride, I will step into a machine and take a pretend ride into the center of the earth and back.

I can also see “Energy City.” This is a 3D landscape of the city that looks like Houston that demonstrates how energy is used throughout the city.

I can also go on the “Eagle Ford Shale Experience” ride. This ride takes me on a pretend journey to explore how oil is drilled from the earth. This ride has loud sounds and moves around while I am inside.



Lower Level Sensory Map



Loud



Dark



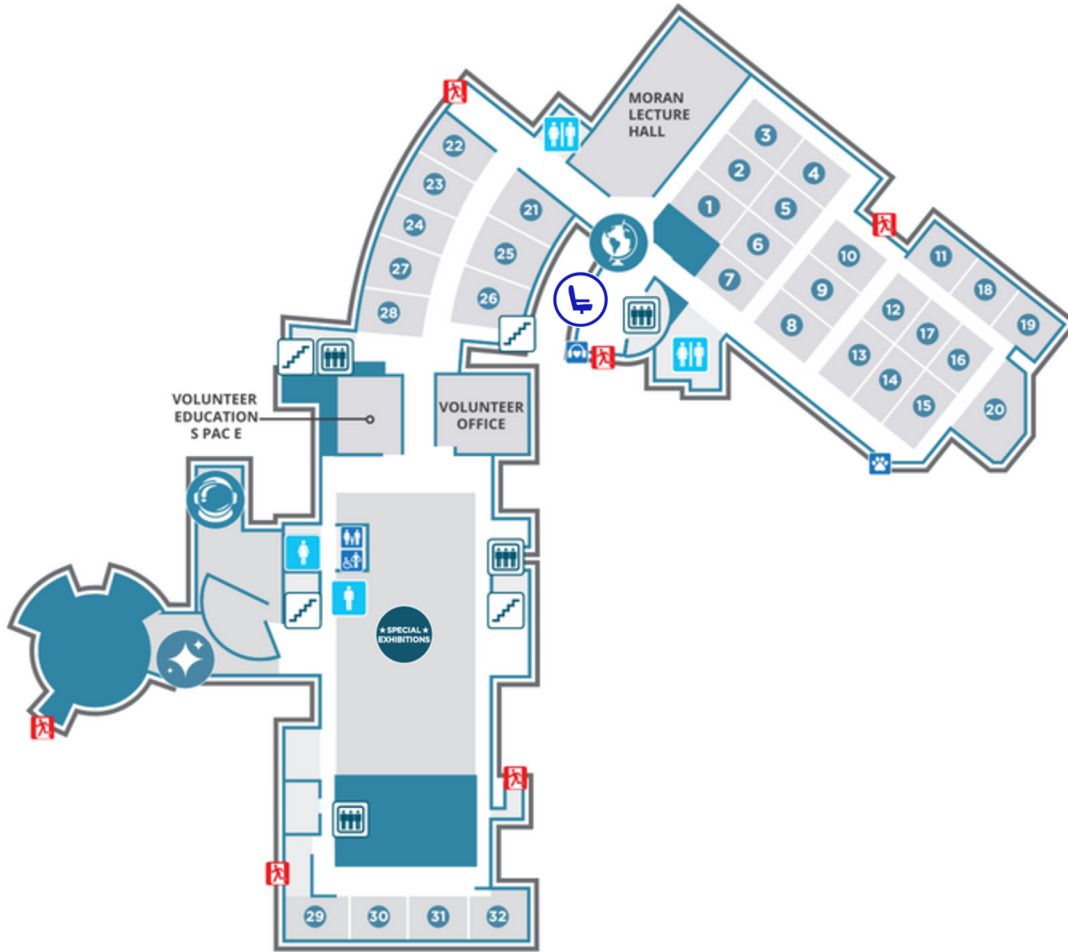
Changing Lights



Tactile



Break Area



LOWER LEVEL



SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS



THE WORLD AROUND US



EXPEDITION CENTER



CLASSROOMS 1-32



FRENSELY HALL OF ASTRONOMY



Restroom



Elevator



Stairwell



Family Restroom



Emergency Exit



Adult Changing Table



Sensory Room



Animal Alcove



HOUSTON MUSEUM
of NATURAL SCIENCE

Pre-Visit Resources for Neurodivergent Guests

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The mission of SPARK – an online research partnership involving 50,000 individuals with autism and their families – is simple. We want to speed up research and advance understanding of autism.



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