



### Newport Aquarium Timeline

- Early 90s:** Jamie Burchenal, Thomas Heekin, Jr. and William Kreidler first began their quest to share their love of fish with the Greater Cincinnati area. They combined with two other businessmen (Barry Rosenberg and Dudley Taft) to create Aquarium Holdings of Northern Kentucky LLC, and later partnered with Oceanic Adventures, a company that specializes in building aquariums.
- April 1996:** Kentucky House Bill 815 (Kentucky Tourism Development Act) is signed into law. This legislature was designed to encourage the growth of major new attractions that cost more than \$1 million. It was the first of its kind in the nation and provided the opportunity for developers of approved projects to recover up to 25% of their development costs over a ten-year period) (Ky. Commerce Cabinet, Dept. of Travel).
- March 1997:** Aquarium Holdings of Northern Kentucky LLC finalizes site location and completes site plans and feasibility study.
- June 19, 1997:** Aquarium Holdings becomes the first recipient of the state's Tourism Development Act.
- July 1997:** GBBN Architects are selected to design Aquarium's exterior; Frank Messer & Sons are named to lead construction.
- November 1997:** Formal groundbreaking for construction takes place.
- May 14, 1999:** The documentary, *A Fish Tale: The Making of the Newport Aquarium*, airs on WCPO-TV.
- May 15, 1999:** Amid much fanfare, Newport Aquarium opens to the public.
- June 18 - 21, 2000:** Baby Gentoo penguins from the Bronx Zoo hatch at the Aquarium.
- June 20, 2000:** The Aquarium presents *Under Pressure: The Race to the Ocean Floor*. This temporary exhibit highlighted the deepest depths of the ocean and the divers who make the journey.
- March 1 - 11, 2001:** Several Aquarium staff members travel to South Africa to collect sharks for a new exhibit.
- May 12, 2001:** *Guardians of the Deep: A Shark Encounter*, a new temporary exhibit featuring a diverse range of sharks, opens.
- May 24, 2001:** A documentary on the Aquarium's shark collection in South America, *A Shark Safari*, airs on WCPO-TV.
- April 2002:** The Aquarium adopts a new mission statement: *Captivate, Educate, Advocate Conservation*.
- May 6, 2002:** The country music group Emerson Drive uses the Aquarium as a backdrop for their music video, "Fall into me." In 2003, the group goes on to receive an award as "top new group" from the Academy of Country Music.

- March 27, 2003: After an extensive year-long evaluation, the Newport Aquarium receives accreditation from the highly regarded American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA).
- April 11, 2003: *Turtles - Journey of Survival* opens. This temporary exhibit features 23 different species of turtles.
- April 21, 2003: The documentary *Turtle Tracks*, which highlights turtles' "journey for survival" airs on WCPO-TV.
- June 2003: Groundbreaking takes place for the Aquarium expansion.
- June 21, 2003: Newport Aquarium expands conservation efforts with a satellite tracking program. Together with the Bald Head Island Conservancy and SeaTurtle.org, the Aquarium provided transmitters that can be tracked from [newportaquarium.com](http://newportaquarium.com).
- August 2003: The total number of hours donated by Aquarium volunteers reaches 100,000 hours.
- September 2003: The Aquarium begins a new "Adopt an Animal" program that allows guests to become an adoptive "parent" to one of the Aquarium's animals.
- December 6, 2003: Scuba Santa makes his first appearance at the Newport Aquarium's new winter promotion, *Santa's Water Wonderland*.
- May 2004: Newport Aquarium is rated one of the twenty-five top-rated attractions in the country by the world-renowned Zagat Survey® in its *U.S. Family Travel Guide*. This guide also placed the Newport Aquarium as the No. 1 aquarium in the Midwest.
- May 1, 2004: The First Annual *Turtle Derby* takes place. Tortuga Slew wins by a beak.
- May 29, 2004: The Newport Aquarium's expansion exhibit opens to the public. The new permanent exhibit, *Hidden Treasures of the Rainforest Islands*, features Asian small-clawed otters, Burmese pythons and lorikeets, all within an interactive rainforest exhibit.
- February 24, 2005: Eric Rose, a former member of the Walt Disney Co.'s leadership team, is named executive director.
- June 10, 2005: During the "Summer of the Sharks," the Newport Aquarium displays Sweet Pea, the only Shark Ray in the Western Hemisphere in its *Surrounded by Sharks* exhibit. Sweet Pea is featured on the Today Show on June 11.
- December 11, 2005: The Aquarium's "Scuba Santa" is featured in a high-profile article in the *New York Times*. He later makes appearances on The Today Show, The Early Show and MSNBC.
- February 25, 2006: Less than two months after the first successful gentoo penguin birth at the Newport Aquarium, a king penguin is born. Only four institutions in the U.S. were able to breed king penguins in 2005.
- June 2006: The Detroit Free Press ran a feature article on the Newport Aquarium, including photos under the headline "Northern Kentucky aquarium rivals Chicago's famed Shedd" and it stated, "Newport Aquarium's exhibits are on par with the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago."
- November 2006: Newport Aquarium was named Best Rainy Day Outing in 2006 in Cincinnati Family Magazine

- December 2006:** "Scuba Santa" is interviewed for Good Morning America and is included in an article in USA Today.
- May 2006:** A unique and interactive exhibit dubbed "Shark Central" opens to the public. Guests can touch sharks.
- February 16, 2007:** Scooter, a male Shark Ray, joins Sweet Pea in the Surrounded by Sharks exhibit, creating the world's first Shark Ray Breeding Program. Scooter was featured on Discover Channel Canada's "The Daily Planet" on Feb. 28.
- October 26, 2007:** Newport Aquarium's underwater sword-fighting pirates are featured on CNN's American Morning.
- November 2007:** Newport Aquarium and its sister aquarium, Adventure Aquarium, in Camden, NJ, are acquired by Herschend Family Entertainment.
- November 22, 2007:** Newport Aquarium's "Scuba Santa" is featured on CNN's American Morning.
- December 2007:** Newport Aquarium is one of only two institutions in the country to breed Gentoo Penguins.

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