

An environmental treasure awaits right here in Tampa Bay

Tucked away among the mangroves of Apollo Beach, the Manatee Viewing Center offers a unique slice of Florida and a chance for the whole family to see manatees up close. That's just the start of the treasures you'll discover.

The center is situated across the clean, warm water discharge canal of **Big Bend Power Station**, which delivered reliable electricity to the community for 16 years before the commercial operation of Big Bend Unit 4 in 1986. That year, people started seeing manatees in large numbers in the power station's discharge canal, where salt water – taken from Tampa Bay to cool Unit 4 – flowed back to the bay. When Tampa Bay reached 68 degrees or colder, the mammals would seek out this new refuge. The Manatee Viewing Center was soon born. Today, Big Bend's discharge canal is a state and federally designated manatee sanctuary that provides critical protection from the cold for these unique, gentle animals.

As you tour the Manatee Viewing Center, Tampa Electric hosts and volunteers are happy to answer your questions. There's a reason we've hosted millions of people since 1986 and earned the Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor: because Tampa Electric's Manatee Viewing Center is a place like no other.

Tampa Electric's Manatee Viewing Center



Directions

6990 Dickman Rd., Apollo Beach, FL 33572

Take Interstate 75 to Apollo Beach, Exit 246. Turn west on Big Bend Road (C.R. 672). Travel 2.5 miles west to the curve intersection of Big Bend and Dickman Roads. The **Manatee Viewing Center** is on the right.

For information, call
(813) 228-4289



tampaelectric.com/manatee

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Tampa Electric's Manatee Viewing Center

Established 1986



Tampa Electric's Manatee Viewing Center welcomed its 6 millionth visitor in 2020.

Where Nature Meets Technology

Come for the full experience



Manatee
Viewing Center 

What to do

Tampa Electric's Manatee Viewing Center provides you with unique opportunities. Delight in the manatees from observation platforms. Marvel in the butterfly garden. Touch the famous rays from the Tampa Bay Rays MLB baseball team in their winter home, Cownose Cove. Stroll the self-guided nature trail over the tidal flats or take the 1.4-mile round-trip hike to the 50-foot observation tower with spectacular views. Step inside the environmental building for colorful displays that highlight the manatee and its habitat, and feel the force of hurricane-strength winds in the hurricane simulator.

Manatee photo courtesy of K.W. Erbes, Medina, MN.

What to wear

Many points of interest at the facility are outdoors, so dress for the current weather conditions. Comfortable shoes are suggested – be prepared to cover a lot of ground! Shirts and shoes are required.

Hours of operation

Open daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., from Nov. 1 through April 15. The center is closed Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, and is closed at 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

Facilities

The Manatee Viewing Center is ADA-compliant. There is a picnic shelter, restrooms and the South Shore Café. You'll find many unique items in the souvenir gift shop, proceeds from which help fund facility enhancements at the center. Smoking is permitted in designated areas only. Admission and parking are free.

Use our web cameras from home.

During the Nov. 1 - April 15 season you can log on to tampaelectric.com/manatee to use our web cameras.

Group reservations

Reservations are requested for groups of 10 or more and can be made online at tampaelectric.com/manatee.

A few more things

Only service animals are allowed.* Alcohol, boating, fishing, outdoor grills, drones, swimming and feeding wildlife are not permitted. Overflow parking is available as needed. The best time to see manatees is when the water temperature in Tampa Bay is 68° F or colder.

*"Service Animal" means any animal trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Pets providing emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship are not recognized as service animals under ADA regulations. Misrepresenting a dog as a service animal is a criminal violation.

