



AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC

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Digital Images Available Upon Request

AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC TO DEBUT NEW SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GALLERY DURING ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Explore underwater habitats from kelp forests to deep-sea reefs and meet animals like the California two-spot octopus, sharks, scorpionfish, eels and pipefish

May 24, 2023, Long Beach, California—Towering kelp forests, colorful hydrocorals, swaying seagrass, and artificial and rocky reefs...Southern California is home to these vibrant ocean habitats and an abundance of sea life from octopus to fish the size of a mountain lion. The ocean wonders found off the coast of this region rival those found around the world. You don't need a boat to set sail for this aquatic adventure. The Aquarium of the Pacific invites you to connect with these local treasures as you explore its newly reimagined Southern California Gallery. As you visit the new exhibits, find out about threats to these important ecosystems, like climate change, and the actions you can take to protect and restore them. The gallery, which is under construction and opens July 1, 2023, during the Aquarium's 25th Anniversary Celebration.

The Southern California Gallery will feature over ten exhibits and more than three dozen species. Highlighted animals will include the California two-spot octopus, leopard and horn sharks, California scorpionfish, a moray eel, California spiny lobsters, Catalina goby, and California's state marine fish—the Garibaldi. Visitors will be able to get up close to these animals as they explore a variety of new exhibits.

Two of the exhibits will focus on underwater habitats off Catalina: Casino Point kelp forests and deep-sea hydrocorals at Farnsworth Bank. Another exhibit will focus on oil rigs, which serve as artificial reefs located between the mainland near the Aquarium and Catalina Island. An ecosystem has formed on the pilings that rise up from the sea floor since the placement of oil platforms, which started in the 1960s.

The color changes as visitors explore the Aquarium's expansive new seagrass meadow exhibit, inspired by seagrass in shallow waters of bays in Orange County. These underwater meadows not only serve as a nursery for juvenile fish, but also a natural protective barrier against coastal erosion and are a reservoir for carbon.

From these sunny waters, the Aquarium will take you into dark cavernous rocky reefs exhibit where you will see a pod of California spiny lobsters. Visitors will also be transported forty miles off the shore through the Aquarium's new open ocean exhibit where they can watch sea jellies floating in this blue-water environment. Next to the Southern California Gallery, visitors can explore local marine life at the nearly-three story tall Honda Blue Cavern with iconic giant sea bass, the Seal and Sea Lion Habitat, and the ray touch pool.

The ocean off Southern California is home to many animals, habitats, and special places that need protection. These ecosystems are at risk due to threats like climate change and pollution, but there is still time to help. "The Aquarium has a variety of conservation initiatives to restore California's marine and coastal ecosystems and species. But true success in conservation depends on participation from everyone. Small actions of individuals, such as properly sorting and disposing your waste and being careful not to disturb or remove marine plants and animals when you visit them, collectively roll up to impactful results," said Jennie Dean, Aquarium of the Pacific vice president of education and conservation.

Since its inception, the Aquarium of the Pacific has been helping local habitats and animals. These efforts include programs for local endangered species such as white abalone, giant sea bass, and green sea turtles. Ongoing programs to help local habitats include wetlands restorations, monitoring and data collection through scientific diving, whale photo I.D. project, trash cleanups, and more. You can learn more about these programs as you watch the Aquarium's new Great Hall short film during your visit to the Aquarium. This film, along with a Southern California nature photography exhibit, a daily contest to find an octopus figurine hidden in exhibits, a new podcast series, and other programming are part of the Aquarium's 25th Anniversary Celebration, which runs from May 26, 2023 through December 31, 2023.

Aquarium of the Pacific

The nonprofit Aquarium of the Pacific is a community gathering place where diversity is celebrated and where important challenges facing our planet are explored. The Aquarium is dedicated to conserving and building nature and nature's services by building the interactions between and among peoples. Home to more than 12,000 animals, Aquarium exhibits include *Babies!* and *Coral Reefs: Nature's Underwater Cities*. Beyond its animal exhibits, the Aquarium offers educational programs for people of all ages, including its First Wednesdays featuring guest speakers. The Aquarium offers memberships with unlimited FREE admission for 12 months and other special benefits. To make a donation to help support the Aquarium, please visit [Pacific.to/donate](https://aquariumofpacific.org/donate). To visit, advance reservations are required for everyone and can be made at aquariumofpacific.org or by calling (562) 590-3100. The Aquarium of the Pacific is located at 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach, CA 90802.



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