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Top 5 Things To Do at Aquarium of the Bay

A visit to Aquarium of the Bay, located at PIER 39 on Fisherman's Wharf, is a perfect half-day outing for families. It is entertaining for smaller children – and fun and educational for older kids and adults. The only Smithsonian Affiliated aquarium in California, it focuses on conservation and education of Bay area waters, from the Sierra to the sea.

Tunnel under the Bay

The crown jewels of the aquarium are two long underwater tunnels that give a diver's eye view of local waters. Much of the San Francisco Bay is quite shallow. What it lacks in depth, it makes up for in breadth and diversity of species. Among the animals encountered in Nearshore tunnels are anchovies, rainbows of rockfish, and the smartest animal in the bay – the Giant Pacific Octopus. The Sharks of Alcatraz Tunnel is full of deeper water dwellers like rays, sturgeons, and sharks, including the sevengill shark which is the largest predatory shark in San Francisco Bay. Be prepared with an exit strategy because kids may not want to leave!

Touch the Sharks

Aquarium of the Bay succeeds at engaging all the senses, including touch. San Francisco Bay is literally at the fingertips with touch pools, which are full of sharks, skates, rays, sea stars, and anemones.

Meet the River Otters

The river otters are the eco-ambassadors for the aquarium because they educate guests about the interconnection between their health and the health of the local watershed. Be sure to leave time and energy to see these playful creatures in action. Try to time your visit during one of the otter talks scheduled throughout the day for a chance to see trainers interacting with the animals.

Visit the Augmented Reality Station

Get up close and personal with some of your favorite marine life through the Aquarium of the Bay's interactive augmented and virtual reality film presentations. Guests can "touch" images of animals from the sea, including whales, dolphins, walrus, polar bear, penguins and seals. Guests can take home high-resolution images of their interactions

Go Behind the Scenes

Get an insider view of what it takes to feed and care for over 20,000 marine animals. Take the catwalk across the tanks, feed the sharks, learn about our dive operations, our jellyfish-rearing program and about how we've successfully bred Pacific angel sharks in captivity.

Visitor Tips

Pack extra clothes: If your kids are enthusiastic about the touch pools, they might get quite wet.

All day admission: Admission is good all day if you need to take a break with your kids for a snack or meal. You can tour all the exhibits in an hour or two or linger over them longer if you'd like.

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