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Seattle Site-Seeing

GREAT ATTRACTIONS AT
A GREAT PRICE • By Jennifer Worick



The “**Window on Washington Waters**” at the **Seattle Aquarium**, modeled after an area dive site, gives visitors an up-close view of local marine life.

A Puget Sound rockfish the color of a penny glides serenely past me, followed by a silvery king salmon, an icon of the Pacific Northwest. My friend Kerry, crouched by her 2-year-old daughter, Molly, and 4½-year-old daughter, Piper, points out the fish to them, along with orange sea stars, and red, pink and green sea anemones that look a bit like Koosh balls.

We’re all mesmerized as we view the rainbow of sea creatures in the 120,000-gallon “Window on Washington Waters” exhibit in the Puget Sound Great Hall of the Seattle Aquarium. A diver with a plume of upward-billowing air bubbles descends into the tank, looking almost as colorful as the aquatic life in her black-and-orange wetsuit and lime-green flippers. She waves to us and presses her palm against the 12-inch-thick glass, matching it up to Piper’s outstretched hand. An aquarium interpreter standing on our side of the window explains that the massive tank is modeled after a popular dive spot near Neah Bay, on the Olympic Peninsula west of Seattle.

Molly tugs at Kerry’s cargo pants. “Mama, where’s Flounder and Ariel?” (Molly is knee-deep in *The Little Mermaid* these days.)

“Let’s see if we can find them,” Kerry says. “Follow me.” We move farther into the aquarium and discover the touch pools, where Piper gets a “hug” from a purple anemone that closes its swaying strands around her index finger. She and Molly forget all about mermaid princesses.

The girls are equally entranced by the white, translucent moon jellies, the red giant Pacific octopus and the potbelly seahorses, and they clap when they see tufted puffins diving for food and sea otters zipping around their tanks.

To reach another exhibit, we walk through a tunnel that leads to the Underwater Dome, an “undersea room” with an encircling 400,000-gallon tank that provides views of sea life all around us. Spiny dogfish sharks swim over our heads; sturgeon patrol the waters near the bottom; and, as aquarium literature perfectly describes, “Skates bank upward against the current like miniature *Starship Enterprises*.”

My spirits rise in tandem with the skates. A visit to the aquarium is a wonderful way to escape the pressures of my busy high-tech world by marveling at the natural one. Adding to my

Other Great Puget Sound Area Attractions

Below are just a few of the activities and attractions in the vibrant cities of Bellevue, about 15 miles east of downtown Seattle, and Tacoma, about 30 miles south of downtown Seattle.

BELLEVUE

Bellevue Arts Museum: The museum emphasizes the arts, crafts and designs of regional and nationally renowned artists. Exhibits on view include “Beth Levine: First Lady of Shoes,” through June 6. Levine (1914–2006) was the first successful female shoe designer in a field dominated by men, according to the museum, which notes that her designs included the white boots made famous by Nancy Sinatra and her 1966 song *These Boots Are Made for Walkin’*. 425-519-0770, www.bellevuearts.org.

Bellevue Botanical Garden: A free oasis, it’s open daily from dawn to dusk and features a variety of native Northwest flora, a traditional Japanese garden and a Waterwise Garden that demonstrates water-conservation practices. 425-452-2750, www.bellevuebotanical.org.

The Bellevue Collection: This group of buildings—Bellevue Square, Bellevue Place and Lincoln Square—is an entertainment hub in the heart of Bellevue. The collection includes hundreds of shops, along with restaurants, spas, two hotels, condominiums, a 16-screen movie theater, a bowling alley, a billiards establishment, a comedy club and office space. 425-646-3660, www.bellevuecollection.com.

The Bravern: This retail/office/condominium complex, designed to be a Northwest take on a European village, includes shops such as Neiman Marcus, Hermès and Jimmy Choo, several restaurants, a DavidBartonGym and an Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa. 425-456-8795, www.thebravern.com.

Rosalie Whyel Museum of Doll Art: Kids and adults alike appreciate the craftsmanship of doll-making, displayed through the ages via the 1,250 dolls in the collection. 425-455-1116, www.dollart.com.

Theatre at Meydenbauer Center: This state-of-the-art theater showcases dance and classical-music performances, as well as musicals and plays. 425-450-3810, www.theatreatmeydenbauer.com.

Visitor Information: 425-450-3777, www.visitbellevuewashington.com.

TACOMA

LeMay—America’s Car Museum: Devoted to the art, design and engineering of cars, the museum features more than 300 vehicles in its temporary location at the former Marymount Military Academy. The museum is building a new

state-of-the-art facility next to the Tacoma Dome. 253-536-2885, www.lemaymuseum.org.

Museum of Glass: The museum has a nearly 200-item permanent collection of 20th and 21st century glass art, and also presents numerous temporary exhibitions. On display through September 19 is “Preston Singletary: Echoes, Fire, and Shadows.” The renowned Northwest artist’s pieces often evoke Native American woodworking related to his Tlingit ancestry. Year-round, visitors can watch live glassblowing in the museum’s Hot Shop. Upcoming visiting artists include Italian glassmaker Davide Salvadore, who will work in the Hot Shop June 16–20, and noted contemporary artist Lynda Benglis, whose visiting artist residency is June 23–27. 866-4MUSEUM, www.museumofglass.org.

Pantages Theater: This 1918 theater was designed after a theater at the Palace of Versailles. Restored in 1983, it now hosts concerts and musicals and, along with the nearby Rialto Theater, is a jewel of downtown Tacoma. 800-291-7593, www.broadwaycenter.org.

Tacoma Art Museum: The museum has a 3,500-item collection that includes the works of many Northwest artists, as well as of famous artists from other parts of the world. “The Movement of Impressionism: Europe, America, and the Northwest” is on view through October 10. The museum is also the starting point for a 90-minute walking tour of Chihuly glass art around the city. 253-272-4258, www.tacomaartmuseum.org.

Washington State History Museum: Current exhibits with themes such as folk art and the search for Sasquatch complement the permanent History Lab Learning Center and Great Hall of Washington History, where displays range from a covered wagon to reproductions of a Salish plank house, to a pioneer-era general store. Also on display, in the “Icons of Washington History” exhibit running through July 3, is the wagon Ezra Meeker drove along the Oregon Trail. 888-BE-THERE, www.washingtonhistory.org.

Midweek @ the Museums: If you’re in Tacoma on a Wednesday, you can visit the Museum of Glass, Tacoma Art Museum and Washington State History Museum for a discounted total rate of \$22/adult, and even less for seniors, members of the military, and children.

Visitor Information: 800-272-2662, www.traveltacoma.com. —J.W.

satisfaction is the modest entrance fee I paid. I got a discounted rate by using the CityPass. For \$59 (\$39 for kids 4–12), I get to enjoy six top Seattle attractions: the aquarium, an Argosy Cruises Harbor Cruise, the Space Needle, the Pacific Science Center, the Woodland Park Zoo, and either The Museum of Flight or the Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame. The pass is valid for nine days, and if I separately paid to go to all of these places, it would cost \$111.60.

Since I’m saving so much money, it’s no problem to see all seven and pay regular admission at the Experience Music Project so that I can also learn about rock bands and fretboards over the course of the week that I’m devoting to recreation. The pass is available from the individual attractions, and you can also preorder it at www.citypass.com/city/seattle.html.

Argosy Harbor Cruise

The day after my aquarium visit, I head to Argosy Cruises at Pier 55 on the Seattle waterfront. It’s a gorgeous bright day. I breathe in the ocean breeze off Elliott Bay and gaze at the rugged mountains on the Olympic Peninsula. Life doesn’t get much better than this. When I board the 115-foot *Spirit of Seattle*, I join like-minded sun seekers on the open top deck of the boat, which has two enclosed decks below.

The *Spirit* backs away from the dock and starts its one-hour cruise around the bay, with Angelina, our tour guide, pointing out landmarks such as the 522-foot Smith Tower—the tallest office building in the world outside of New York City when it was completed in 1914—and Pike Place Market.

The bustling market, founded in 1907, is one of the country’s oldest still-operating farmers markets, and one of the state’s most popular attractions. It can be reached via stairs or an elevator from the waterfront, or at street level on First Avenue, and there’s no admission fee to watch fishmongers toss salmon to each other; hear local farmers tout heirloom tomatoes and Rainier cherries; sample jams and hot sauces; peruse arts-and-crafts stalls; listen to buskers play washboards;



An Argosy Harbor Cruise, left, is a great way to see the Seattle skyline. Aircraft at The Museum of Flight, below, include a World War I Aviatik D.I fighter (front) and a Sopwith Camel reproduction.

and browse stores with goods from all over the world. The market is also known for its abundance of takeout options—ranging from crumpets to piroshki—and for restaurants such as the Athenian, which appeared in *Sleepless in Seattle*.

As our ship travels north, we also see the Port of Seattle grain terminal, where corn, soy and sorghum from U.S. farms are loaded onto ships for

export to the Pacific Rim.

It's exciting to be part of maritime traffic: container ships carrying goods such as toys, apples, electronics products and motorcycles; cruise ships headed to Canada and Alaska; ferries transporting commuters and visitors to and from Bremerton and Bainbridge Island; powerful tugboats and graceful sailboats.

I'm interested to learn that the 399-foot, red-and-white U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Star* is moored in Seattle while undergoing a 2½-year overhaul. It's one of three icebreakers that are based in Seattle and are used to break up ice in the Arctic and Antarctic for maritime safety.

The Museum of Flight

I next use my pass at The Museum of Flight complex at Boeing Field, five miles south of downtown Seattle, where 80 of the museum's 131 aircraft and spacecraft, and hundreds of the museum's 20,000 additional artifacts, are on view.

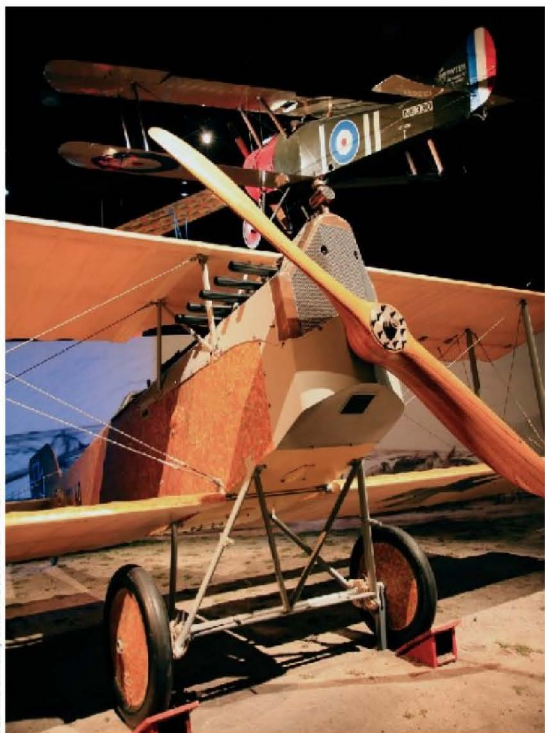
Visitors can take Metro bus No. 124 from downtown (see [county.gov\), or drive to the museum.](http://tripplanner.king-</p>
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At the museum's Airpark, I admire the first *Air Force One*—used by presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon—and the sleek shape of a supersonic *Concorde*, which set a New York City-to-Seattle speed record of three hours, 55 minutes and 12 seconds on its way to the museum in 2003.

Then I climb into the museum's 25-foot-tall Tower to learn about flight patterns, navigation, takeoffs and landings, and listen to Boeing Field air-traffic controllers and pilots talking in real time in their "Alpha," "Charlie," "Roger that" speak. I try to match up the instructions to a plane that's approaching the runway, and cheer when it touches down.

In the museum's airy, six-story Great Gallery, 23 of the 39 historic aircraft on display hang—as if in flight—from the space-frame ceiling. My attention is captured by the 1930 Cessna CG-2 glider, or as I like to call it, the "What Were They Thinking?" To me, the sport glider—which was sold by catalog and attracted 300 buyers—seems to be not much more than a small basket hung in the middle of a single, long, shelflike wing. According to the museum, it was launched to flight speed off a hill or a ridge, via a slingshot device. I can't help but wonder at those who were brave enough to try it.

Which is a good segue to the Personal Courage Wing, which tells stories of true courage, related to World War I and World War II. In addition to presenting first-person accounts of aviators such as the WWII Flying Tigers, the wing displays more than 28 restored and reproduction fighter aircraft, including a rare World War I Aviatik (Berg Scout) D.I, a rare World War II Soviet Yak and a





KIRKENDALL-SPRING PHOTOGRAPHY

The Space Needle and International Fountain, left, are among the many attractions at Seattle Center. Woodland Park Zoo's Humboldt penguin exhibit, below, includes a child-height underwater viewing window.

reproduction of the famous World War I Sopwith Camel.

When I reach the “Bush Pilots of Alaska” exhibit, I realize that these pilots also demonstrated courage, as they flew their small planes over the rugged wilderness. Thanks to these pioneering bush pilots—many of them WWI veterans—remote villages and camps, where no roads led, were able to receive fuel, food and other supplies essential to survival. It’s amazing to me that just two or three generations ago—in my grandparents’ lifetimes—bush planes were the lifeblood of areas otherwise accessible only on foot. In fact, that’s still true today in some parts of Alaska.

I’m intrigued to also discover that the company now known as Alaska Airlines was started by a bush pilot: Linius “Mac” McGee, who launched his business in 1932 with a three-seat Stinson.

One of the country’s most remarkable aviation stories is that of Amelia Earhart. The exhibit “In Search of Amelia Earhart,” on view through May 16, displays photos, newsreel footage and personal artifacts.

As I look at her flight suit, flight goggles and leather flight helmet, I feel that they connote romance, danger and sheer pluck. Her life inspires me to add “fly a plane” to

the growing list of things I want to do during my life.

Space Needle

Not quite like flying a plane, but still a lofty experience, is a ride to the top of the Space Needle at Seattle Center, site of the 1962 World’s Fair. The Space Needle, built for the fair, is easily the most recognizable part of Seattle’s skyline, and looking at the 605-foot structure is almost as cool as riding up it. *Almost.*

After a 41-second trip in a glass elevator that makes me feel a bit like Charlie Bucket at the end of the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, I step onto the Observation Deck, located at 520 feet.

With the wind in my hair, I stroll the circular deck, stopping to look at landmarks such as Mount Rainier; Safeco Field, home of the Seattle Mariners; and Queen Anne Hill, where some members of Seattle’s founding Denny Party—who first arrived in the Puget Sound area in 1851—built a log cabin in 1853. I can also see the

snowcapped Olympic Mountains to the west, the Cascades to the east, and the sparkling waters of Puget Sound, Lake Union and Lake Washington. It gives me an appreciation for the beauty of Seattle’s geographic location that Google Earth can’t quite convey.

The Space Needle’s SkyCity Restaurant also offers views as the 14-foot-wide ring of floor next to the windows revolves a full 360 degrees over the course of 47 minutes. It’s fun to sit here and use my Internet-enabled cell phone to access entertaining information on the Space Needle Website.

For instance, the last of the three elevators arrived the day before the 1962 World’s Fair opened. And—cited under a category labeled “The Unexpected”—The Committee Hoping for Extra-Terrestrial Encounters to Save the Earth claims to have plans from the World’s Fair that show the Space Needle was constructed to send transmissions to advanced beings in other solar systems. And—listed under a category called “The People”—at age 11, Microsoft founder Bill Gates won a dinner at the restaurant from his pastor after Gates memorized the Sermon on the Mount and recited it flawlessly.



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EMP/SFM

The multicolored curvaceous structure I see northeast of the Space Needle is the 140,000-square-foot, Frank Gehry–designed Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum, or EMP|SFM. It's been said that the “swoopy” design reflects Seattle native Jimi Hendrix’s dynamic, unconventional music and performance style, and the bright colors of electric guitars.

One of the museum’s purposes is to pay tribute to Hendrix, and the exhibit “Jimi Hendrix: The Evolution of Sound” features some of his guitars and guitar shards—from such memorable appearances as the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival—along with diaries, drawings, music and video clips, and album covers.

The nearby Guitar Gallery fosters appreciation for the craftsmanship that went into creating masterpieces such as the 1952 Gibson Les Paul and the '54 Fender Stratocaster. I take a break on a guitar-pick-shaped bench to admire the array of instruments and contemplate taking guitar lessons.

I decide to get a head start in the Sound Lab, which has soundproof rooms in which to play EMP-provided instruments ranging from guitars to drums. There are also tutorials for anyone looking to pick up an instrument or lay down a track. You can even record your jam session and create a CD if you like, but my guitar stylings are not quite ready to record for posterity. I spend most of my time on a kickin’ Fretlight guitar that helpfully directs my fingers to the right positions via lighted dots that show up under the fretboard.

With my nascent music ability, I decide to let it rip On Stage, where bright lights, hazy air and the soundtrack of a clapping, screaming audience evoke a real concert. While waiting in line, I form a five-person band with a dad and his 8-year-old, and a teenage couple. We name our group “Frisky Business,” and when it’s our turn on stage, we belt out *I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll* because, well, we do ... a lot. I have a feeling the 8-year-old on the drums is one step away from opening for Green Day. I let him drown out my six-string, since I’ve forgotten everything I just learned.

It always starts so innocently.



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COURTESY: PACIFIC SCIENCE CENTER

The Pacific Science Center Saltwater Tide Pool.

But I'm strutting, and displaying a Joan Jett-worthy attitude.

It's hard to relinquish the stage, but I'm also eager to see the exhibit "Taking Aim: Unforgettable Rock 'n' Roll Photographs Selected by Graham Nash," which runs through May 23. The nearly 100 photos—from 40 different famous photographers, including Graham Nash from Crosby, Stills & Nash—are stunning character studies.

I'm a sci-fi enthusiast, too, so when I continue on to the Science Fiction Museum, the *Star Trek* and *Lost in Space* uniforms, robots of all sizes and a model of the *Star Wars* Death Star cause me to quiver like an Alderaanian. I can almost hear *The Imperial March* when I press the button to light the battle station, which in the movie contained a weapon that destroyed whole planets and created a disturbance in The Force.

Several exhibits later, my breath catches when I see the red eyes of a T-800. That darn Terminator still has the ability to scare and thrill me, even when it's a model that was used in one of the films.

Pacific Science Center

I balance science fiction with science reality by strolling across the Seattle Center grounds to the Pacific Science Center. "Pac-Sci" began as the U.S. Science Pavilion for the World's Fair, and that legacy continues via the Science Playground, where you can have fun with activities such as spinning a giant gyroscope, and via the technology exhibits, where you can try to beat a robot at tic-tac-toe.

In the courtyard under the five-building



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complex's signature white arches, I see a family of four climb into a giant water wheel and start walking to generate power and move the water. I pick up a water-powered gun and try my hand at hitting targets, happy to discover that I'm pretty good. I learn more about hand-eye coordination in the Body Works exhibit, where displays also explain color blindness, reaction times and proper nutrition. Clearly, the french fries I had for lunch were a bad idea.

Next I travel from Earth to space via the *Hubble* 3D IMAX film, being shown through the summer. The Hubble Telescope celebrated its 20th birthday in April, and the film follows astronauts as they work on the telescope to extend its life to 2013 or beyond. There's also spectacular footage of Earth as seen from space. One of the film's stars is astronaut Greg Johnson, who attended West Seattle High School and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Washington.

After the film, it's quite a mental journey back in time to the "Dinosaurs" exhibit, where eight half-size and full-size animatronic dinosaurs move and roar. I feel like a 10-year-old kid on her birthday when I see the knobby-headed, 20-foot-long *Pachycephalosaurus* move his head and bellow, and I take the controls of the "Pneumoferosaurus"—air-and-iron lizard—to see how animatronics work.

Equally fascinating are the 600-plus exotic creatures that inhabit The Tropical Butterfly House. Orange-barred sulphurs and blue morphos flutter about my head and land delicately on plants such as the Egyptian star cluster and the jungle flame. I can't say I'm just as fond of the science center's boa constrictors and colony of East African naked mole rats, but I do like the hermit crabs in the Saltwater Tide Pool.

Woodland Park Zoo

With a few exceptions, such as snakes and rats, I think animals rock, so a few days after our aquarium explorations, Kerry and I visit Woodland Park Zoo with Molly and Piper (who are still mimicking the aquarium otters by pretending to eat snacks while using their bellies as a table).

The girls love, love, love penguins, so we begin at the west entrance and start with the Humboldts from coastal Peru. Thanks to concave underwater windows placed at kid height, Molly is able to press her nose against the glass and watch the penguins zip and dive. It's hard to tear her away, but we distract her with a cheese stick and move on. There's no snack for me, so it's harder to pull myself away from the gorilla area, where I'm entranced by one female's seemingly wise, contemplative face.

I know I need to keep up, however, because there are still lions and tigers and bears to see ... and elephants, giraffes, orangutans, wallabies, Gila monsters, tarantulas, Chilean flamingos and peregrine falcons—1,100 animals, representing 300 species, in all. Not to mention parrots from Australia to feed, farm animals to pet and a carousel to ride.

As we shepherd the girls down one of the winding paths of the 92-acre zoo, Kerry notes: "Even on a busy day, it never feels crowded. The layout and the landscaping make you feel as if you can stroll without feeling jostled."

I agree. The trails twist and curve around trees and animal exhibits so that you just seem to happen upon a sloth bear or a hippo, or the meerkats scampering around in their new savannalike exhibit, which opened this month.

At the zoo, as at all the attractions I've visited with CityPass, there's something interesting everywhere I turn. The pass is a great way to see, at a great price, numerous sites that represent the quality and diversity of Seattle's many attractions. **S**

Jennifer Worick is a Seattle-based freelance writer and book author. For more information on activities and attractions, contact Seattle's Convention and Visitors Bureau at 866-732-2695; www.visitseattle.org.

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