

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center

Open Wednesday-Sunday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.



Photo: Mark Stover Expressive Photographics

Through interactive and multimedia exhibits, the Exploration Center highlights the unique places in the sanctuary, marine wildlife, and human connections and impacts to the sanctuary.

Center Description

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries collaborated with the City of Santa Cruz and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation in a public-private partnership to design and build the Sanctuary Exploration Center.

Located just steps from the ocean in Santa Cruz's famed beach area, the Exploration Center hosts state-of-the-art and interactive interpretive exhibits that will serve approximately 150,000 visitors per year.

The Center has a variety of exhibits, a small theater, a state-of-the-art

classroom, an ocean view, administrative offices and a gift and bookstore.

Visitors to the Center are encouraged to participate in learning about the Sanctuary, the issues impacting the sanctuary and ones personal role in protecting one of our nation's ocean treasures.

Visitors learn about watersheds and their role in water quality; touch and feel different sanctuary rocks; use interactive video kiosks to conduct research and monitoring; immerse themselves in a rocky shore, majestic

kelp forest and a deep submarine canyon. Exhibits are designed to encourage people to be curious, ask questions, enjoy and take pride in their sanctuary and help ensure it will be here, generations to come.

The Center demonstrates a commitment to sustainability, using the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria achieving a LEED Gold Certification. In every aspect from facility operations to the gift store, the overall center operations are as sustainable and green as possible.

At a time when people are concerned about many ocean threats including global warming and climate change, the Exploration Center will help visitors to better understand how human activities can cause unintended results, affecting such things as water quality, biodiversity and survival of entire species.

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Exploration Center Goals

- Establish the City of Santa Cruz as a gateway to the Sanctuary providing orientation for visitors.
- Connect visitors to the Sanctuary through exploration, participation and learning.
- Involve and educate visitors about the sanctuary's unique and fascinating coastal and marine natural resources.
- Instill in visitors a sense of personal stewardship with regard to the sanctuary and an understanding of how to help protect it.
- Work and teach from an environmentally sensitive facility that will demonstrate the advantages of sustainability.

The Center includes:

- An architecturally distinct two story LEED sustainable building overlooking the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf.
- Dynamic, interactive exhibits highlighting the sanctuary's natural resources, stressing ocean stewardship and conservation.
- Multimedia displays including a high definition theater.
- A multi-modal transportation center, with metered parking, a rail stop, bicycle facilities and

pedestrian connections and trolley to and from the city's center.

- A state-of-the-art teaching classroom.
- Administrative offices.
- A Gift & Bookstore.

National Marine Sanctuary System

The mission of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries is to serve as the trustee for the nation's system of marine protected areas, to conserve, protect, and enhance their biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural legacy.

Our national marine sanctuaries embrace part of our collective riches as a nation. Within their protected waters, giant humpback whales breed and calve their young, coral colonies flourish and shipwrecks tell stories of our maritime history.

Our nation's sanctuaries range in size from less than one square mile to almost 14,000 square miles, each sanctuary is a unique place needing special protection.

Visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>



Visitors learn about kelp forest ecology using state of the art interactives.



The mini theater highlights seasonal sanctuary visitors and migration.



Visitors pilot a remotely operated vehicle in a deep submarine canyon tank.

Location: Across the street from the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf at the historic "Fun Spot."

Address: 35 Pacific Avenue, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Phone: (831) 421-9993

Hours: Open Wednesday-Sunday 10 a.m. – 5p.m.

Cost: FREE