



MARCH/APRIL 2009

# Westways

THE MAGAZINE FOR AUTO CLUB MEMBERS

## Peace & Quiet

Where to begin your search for silence

## Hawai'i for FREE

(once you get there)

CENTENNIAL SPECIAL:

Q&A With Norman Corwin

**Plus:**

Day Trip:  
Encinitas

BonAppétit:  
Cheap eats

A Conversation With:  
Caltech's Nate Lewis



The Academy's offerings include (clockwise from above left) Rainforests of the World, which re-creates the environments of Borneo, Madagascar, Costa Rica, and the Amazon; the Morrison Planetarium, a digital planetarium with interactive features; and the Steinhart Aquarium, home to some 38,000 live creatures.

blue jeans, and 60,000 canopy-mounted photovoltaic cells that supply up to 10 percent of the museum's energy needs. David, a structural engineer with a knack for sarcasm, wasn't moved. "Fly ash? Please. Everybody uses fly ash. It's cheaper."

Piano's glassy design unifies the museum with the outdoors and allows for natural lighting. A 2.5-acre Living Roof, planted with nine native California species, such as beach strawberries and California poppies, is San Francisco's largest concentration of native vegetation. Although we were there on a rainy day, from the platform overlooking the roof we saw stunning views of Mount Sutro to the south and the de Young Museum to the north.

During our visit, the museum had been open just over a month, and not every bug had been worked out. The domed Rainforests of the World, for example, was closed due to a leak. From walking around its exterior on several levels, though, we could identify its four separate ecosystems: Borneo, Madagascar, Costa Rica, and the flooded Amazon. We could see butterflies; it was clear that what was inside the sphere was of a different place.

We reached the aquarium by descending stairs next to the Swamp. This was my favorite part of the building. We walked under the flooded Amazonian rain forest and saw armored catfish swimming above. At the Discovery Tidepool, we got hands-on experience with sea stars and other rocky coast residents. "Isaac would love this," I said to my brother, knowing that our 3-year-old nephew would soon be visiting Uncle David in San Francisco.

At the end of an afternoon of walking on hard concrete floors (wear comfortable shoes), we sat down at the Philippine coral reef tank. The colorful tropical fish reminded me of snorkeling in Hawai'i and inspired David to recall some of his scuba experiences from when he worked in Indonesia. "Diving is better than snorkeling," he said, trumping his travel-writing older brother.

We didn't brave the crowds at the planetarium, but that, along with the rain forest (hopefully, in good repair), will be on the agenda for my next visit. And if I go there with Isaac, or any other child, I'll hold him tight when we peer into the alligator's lair. **W**

**DO** The California Academy of Sciences (415-379-8000; [calacademy.org](http://calacademy.org)) is open 9:30 A.M.–5 P.M. Mondays through Saturdays and 11 A.M.–5 P.M. Sundays. Admission is \$24.95 for adults, \$14.95 for children 7–11, and \$19.95 for children 12–17, students, and senior citizens. AAA discounts are available. Admission is free on the third Wednesday of each month.

Bay Area Rapid Transit ([bart.gov](http://bart.gov)), San Francisco Municipal Railway ([sfmuni.com](http://sfmuni.com)), and the city's famous cable cars ([sfcablecar.com](http://sfcablecar.com)) are good car alternatives. The new 74X CultureBus ([sfculturebus.org](http://sfculturebus.org)) plies a route among cultural sites with on-off privileges for \$7 per day.

**STAY** The Orchard Garden Hotel (888-717-2881; [theorchardgardenhotel.com](http://theorchardgardenhotel.com); rates start at \$189) earned a LEED rating through its guestroom key-card energy control system, drapes and carpets made from recycled materials, and chemical-free cleaning products. Its restaurant, **Roots**, serves natural and organic meats and seafood.

**EAT** At Fisherman's Wharf, **Scoma's** (415-771-4383; [scomas.com](http://scomas.com)) has served fresh seafood since 1965. Executive chef Steve Scarabosio insists on wild sustainable fish and implemented green practices long before the city mandated them for all restaurants.

The San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau (415-391-2000; [onlyinsanfrancisco.com](http://onlyinsanfrancisco.com)) has more information. Free maps, TripTik routings, and Northern California & Nevada TourBook guides are available at your local Auto Club office or online at [AAA.com](http://AAA.com).