

Rain Forest, Coral Reef and Planetarium Under One Green Roof

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SAN FRANCISCO -- The California Academy of Sciences is practicing what they preach.

The organization's new 410,000-square-foot eco-friendly facility in Golden Gate Park is a living, breathing science experiment. The Renzo Piano-designed structure is the only building in the world to house a planetarium, museum of natural history and aquarium under the same roof. It's a fitting home for the 155-year-old academy and a proper tribute to the science wonders in its collections.

Click through the gallery for a sneak preview of this gorgeous building, which features a rain forest biodome, a coral reef, an underwater tunnel and one of the greenest roofs ever built. You can check it out in person on opening day, Sept. 27, 2008.

Left: The rain forest biodome is kept hot and humid with special lighting and atmospheric control systems. It has four levels designed to mimic different rain forest environments. A 100,000-gallon tank serves as home to Amazonian river dwellers. Stacked on top of it, and accessible via curving ramps, are biomes patterned on habitat in Borneo, Madagascar and Costa Rica.

