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Academy of Sciences Survival Guide Told in 6 Amazing Nature Shots

The Bay Area is both blessed and cursed with some of the very best kids museums in the country. The exhibits are unbelievable, but the crowds can get unbearable. But fear not: We've created the Academy of Sciences Survival guide, told in jaw-dropping images from their upcoming exhibit, **Big Picture**, running Aug 1–October 31. Click through for our 6 tips!



Let the Wave Pass

It's tempting to shuffle the little's along to make sure they see it all, but don't let the pace of the crowd determine yours. Let your budding scientist study the leaf-carver ants for 20 minutes if she pleases, and you might find yourself pleasantly outside the fray. A good time to go: Weekdays after 1:30 pm, when most of the field trips have left for the day.

Image courtesy of The California Academy of Sciences



No Fighting! Get Your Planetarium Tickets Peacefully

Planetarium tickets are included with the price of admission, but go FAST. Get there first thing in the morning and zip around to the back of the Planetarium to the desk where they hand out the tickets for that day's shows. Once you have your tickets, you can explore the rest of the museum. Or pop out and spend the morning in Golden Gate Park (make sure to get your hand stamped!) and come back for your scheduled show and thinner afternoon crowds. Another option: The planetarium opens an hour early every day for members only. Get info on showtimes at calacademy.org.

Image courtesy of The California Academy of Sciences



Cool Down

I mean, it's a jungle—did you expect it to be chilly? After an hour in the steamy [Rainforests of the World](#), schlepping snacks and making sure your toddler doesn't squash any endangered spices, the whole family will be ready for a cool down. The elevator automatically drops you into the aquarium, but take a detour and head for the [living roof](#) first. The fresh air will rejuvenate the whole crew.

Image courtesy of The California Academy of Sciences



Don't Hunt for Your Lunch

The [Academy Café](#) was designed with finicky families in mind. The cafeteria-like set-up lets you choose from tacos, salads, stews and more. And don't forget the self-serve Strauss soft serve ice cream. Give the kids a hearty snack upon arrival and hit the café around 2 p.m. to avoid the crowds, then take your grub to the grassy outdoor dining area where there's room to run around and spills don't matter.

Image courtesy of The California Academy of Sciences



Seek Out Some Solitude

Even the most social kids (and their music-festival-going parents) might need a time out from all the action. Head upstairs to the Naturalist Center, where the crowds are sparse and drawers full of bones and fossils and jars floating with centuries-old creatures will leave them in silent reverence.

Image courtesy of The California Academy of Sciences



Spend Some Time With the Bigger Beasts

The **Tusher African Hall** features the beloved decades-old dioramas filled with lions, cheetahs, zebra and antelope, and is sometimes overlooked by tourists and others not in the know (it's located directly to the left of the main entrance). Stake out a spot in front of the 25,000-gallon penguin tank in time for the feedings, which take place daily at 10:30 a.m and 2p.m. We recommend you take a peek at the **museum's floor plan** before you visit, and map out the things you don't want to miss.

Image courtesy of The California Academy of Sciences