

## Get Out! – Getting Guests Outside and Doing Science

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1. Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

2. Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Public aquaria are popular and highly regarded venues to explore the diversity and natural habitats that most visitors otherwise will never experience first-hand. Aquaria can promote learning about the health of our very special underwater world and as a result guests are inspired to appreciate this very special world.

Getting guests outside our aquaria walls greatly increases our effectiveness and inspires both our future scientists and to take positive conservation actions. The Cabrillo Marine Aquarium (CMA) is located in the Port of Los Angeles, the largest shipping port on the West Coast of North America. At CMA's doorstep are open ocean beach, breakwater with a fishing pier, and a mitigated salt marsh. CMA and its Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM) partner have a menu of opportunities to engage the community in actual science in these environments.

CMA uses a dedicated exhibit gallery where students conduct scientific projects in full view of guests. This gallery is designed to grow young animals and young scientists. Our joint field surveys with NHM involve guests in sampling our local sandy beaches, mudflats, and tide pools. Community contributed observations are the basis for current and evolving field guides available through iNaturalist [<https://www.inaturalist.org/places/pt-fermin>]. Guests work alongside staff to measure organismal diversity and abundance. They sample plankton. They participate in sample collection for environmental genomics (eDNA). All these efforts contribute to a better understanding of how populations and environments change, and what we as a community can do to make it a better world for all.

Today's enterprising aquaria are partnering with like-minded institutions to broaden public understanding of ecosystems, communicating science and conservation messages. Together we connect people and nature to our "ocean city" and "urban ocean".