



Galleries and Exhibits

Great Hall

- The 300 foot long introduction to the Aquarium boasts 2-story windows that offer the best views in town of the Charleston Harbor.
- Contrasting terrazzo tiles in earthen and water tones form an artistic representation of the entire coast of South Carolina from the North Carolina to the Georgia border.
- 15,000 gallon *Carolina Seas Exhibit*, the centerpiece of the Great Hall, allows guests to see some of the colorful fish found around the reef habitats off the coast of South Carolina.

Mountain Forest

- Located just beyond the escalator on the 2nd floor of the Aquarium, guests encounter their first taste of the Mountain Forest, the *Mountain Bog Exhibit*. The open-bog displays water, plants, turtles, fish, crayfish and other rare plants and animals.
- The Mountain Forest is a remarkable walk-through habitat depicting a mountain ravine at a cascade.
- On ledges 10-to-12 feet above the exhibit floor, tulip poplar, hemlock and maple trees form a canopy to shelter several species of birds, including the cardinal and doves. The glass roof and special design of the exhibit enables these birds to fly freely throughout the trees.
- Plantings in this habitat include several types of wild iris, violets, partridge berry and Virginia creeper, with rhododendron, sassafras and mountain laurel forming part of a lush under story and a host of wildflowers, ferns, vines and herbs growing near splashing waters.
- One of the many waterfalls in the exhibit plummets into a deep pool where a pair of river otters can be seen playing, eating or having a snooze. A hollow log in this area serves as the otters' den, with one end open for close-up views.

Piedmont

- The exhibit explores the varied life supported by the streams, rivers and man-made reservoirs of South Carolina's Piedmont region
- The *Piedmont Shoals Exhibit* provides a below-water view of a rushing stream flowing over a rocky outcrop. In this fast flowing water live shiners and darters, fish that have small, streamlined bodies adapted for fast swimming in fast moving water.
- The *Piedmont River Exhibit* depicts a free-flowing river environment with a sand-bar pool and includes numerous varieties of fish found in both of these habitats, including blue head chub and sunfish. This exhibit also houses the supposed 120 year extinct robust Red horse. The South Carolina Aquarium is the first aquarium to have this freshwater fish on public display.
- *Reservoirs Exhibit* explains some of the benefits and costs of converting a free-flowing river into a reservoir and the Reservoir Exhibit provides a setting for the freshwater fish that are a familiar sight to South Carolina's fishermen.
- South Carolina's landscape has undergone dramatic changes over the last 100 million years due to fluctuations in sea level and climate. Today, fossils and other geologic features provide evidence of both geologic and man-made changes. The *Shifting Shorelines Exhibit* includes a revolving geological map and live views of a fossil embankment.



Coastal Plain

- Discover the fish, reptiles, amphibians and plants found in South Carolina's Coastal Plain region.
- A *Brownwater Swamp Exhibit* recreates a river swamp in flood condition. The water is a characteristic mahogany and burnished gold, and the exhibit contains fliers, madtom, shiners, mosquito fish and other swamp dwellers.
- The *Swamp Snakes Exhibit* is a microcosm of a swamp habitat and features roots from the fallen tree which provide a place for snakes, including rattlesnakes, corn and rat snakes, to bask.
- The *Blackwater Swamp Exhibit* contains remnants of cypress trees that were felled by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and special effects that replicate the sights, sounds and atmosphere of a swamp at twilight. Included in the exhibit are longnose gar, catfish, sunfish, American eels, and several species of turtles. This exhibit also houses a pair of wood ducks.
- Carolina Bays are geological depressions of mysterious origin that occur throughout the Coastal Plain of Georgia and the Carolinas. A rear-illuminated transparency gives visitors the illusion of viewing the curving far reaches of a Carolina Bay. Toads, anole, and tree frogs live among thickets of pitcher plants, sedge, mosses and sundews.
- The *Alligator Exhibit* provides a home for a group of young alligators in a freshwater marsh setting with above- and below-water views. A *Toddler Exhibit* features a model of an alligator nest with eggs. A sliding lever attached to one of the eggs allows young visitors to view a model of an alligator hatching out of the egg.

Salt Marsh Aviary

- An extraordinary 2,500-square-foot *Salt marsh* anchors this gallery and presents the diversity of this type of ecosystem, including a high salinity marsh, mud flats, maritime shrub and salt shrub thickets, tidal creek, hummock, maritime forest and dunes.
- The Salt Marsh Aviary allows visitors to get a close look at a variety of coastal plants, birds and marine life, including herons, diamondback terrapins and striped burrfish.
- Near the entrance to the Saltmarsh Aviary, animals such as fiddler crabs, rattlesnakes and a red-tailed hawk can also be seen.
- This walk-through exhibit is located at the end of the building which opens over the water, and expansive views of the Harbor and height of the spartina grasses help create views like those from a small boat gliding through a salt marsh.

Coast

- A *Rice Culture Exhibit* highlights the 20-mile band of freshwater swamps where enslaved Africans introduced many skills and traditions that supported rice culture.
- Also found in the Coast is the tribute exhibit to Charleston's *Mosquito Fleet*, a group of African American fishermen that operated from the city between the mid-1800s and mid-1900s. This exhibit explains the success of the fishermen in their use of crafted technology.
- A *Seahorse Exhibit* displays these colorful creatures against a backdrop of sea-whip coral and a bright sandy bottom. Pipefish and seahorses are found in the tidal creeks of salt marshes as well as in coastal waters.



- A *Camouflage Exhibit* displays southern flounder against smooth, uniform sand. Visitors observe how flounder hide from predators by changing the color and pattern of their skin to match their surroundings. This exhibit sometimes displays octopus or scorpionfish, often lurking within the rocks on the exhibit's bottom.
- A *Sea Turtle Exhibit* and accompanying displays emphasize the importance of barrier islands and beaches in providing safe nesting areas for loggerhead sea turtles.
- A look-down *Bottom Dwellers Exhibit* has an angled acrylic top for viewing unusually shaped fish that have adapted to life on the sea floor, such as belted sandfish.
- At the *Fish Sounds Exhibit*, visitors can hear the underwater sounds from fishes known as grunts and drum.
- A large *Schooling Fish Exhibit* encourages visitors to try to follow a single fish to see how predators might have difficulty singling one out from the crowd. Accompanying panels describe the behavior of the fish and explain why they school and how they are able to synchronize their movements, and a video presentation shows the amazing diving abilities of pelicans and other aquatic birds that feed on schooling fish.
- The *Surf Zone Exhibit* provides a unique 360 degree view of life beneath the waves. Fishes such as Florida pompano and sea robins live in this dynamic zone.

Ocean Gallery

- The gallery allows visitors to see the varied habitats found in the ocean off the coast of South Carolina.
- The gallery extends over two levels of the Aquarium, and the focal point is a massive, two-story *Great Ocean Exhibit* which holds over 385,000 gallons of water and contains hundreds of animals visible in major views: Sandy Seafloor, Deep Ocean, and Rocky Reef.
- The first expansive (a 9 foot by 20 foot window) view of the world contained in the Ocean Exhibit replicates the *Sandy Seafloor*. Here the porkfish and porcupine fish cruise by. "Caretta," the Aquarium's 250-lb loggerhead sea turtle, enjoys spending time swimming and entertaining guests near this ocean view.
- The *Deep Ocean* view boasts a breathtaking vista where schools of jack and an occasional shark roam. The Open Sea window of this exhibit is fitted with an uninterrupted sheet of acrylic that measures 17 feet wide by 28 feet high.
- Displays on this upper level of the Ocean Gallery are representative of the open seas habitat of the Ocean Exhibit.
- A *Sargassum Exhibit* contains a floating mat of the seaweed that covers the ocean's surface miles off the South Carolina coast. This seaweed provides a stable anchorage for a remarkable community of animals, including the Sargassum fish, gulfweed crabs and pygmy filefish.
- The *Jellies exhibits* are also representative of the open sea habitat. Seasonally, sea nettles, moon jellies, and comb jellies inhabit these exhibits designed with the surface, sides and bottom remaining out of view to project the illusion of viewing limitless bodies of water.
- *The Marine Mammals Video Presentation* focuses on the seasonal migrations and activities of the whales and dolphins that pass through South Carolina's waters, and a Marine Mammal Migration Exhibit includes a map of the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland to the Bahamas showing species off the coast at different times of the year.
- As visitors descend the staircase connecting the upper and lower levels of this gallery, they pass a *Marine Mammal Wall Mural* depicting life-size silhouettes of whales and dolphins sighted off South Carolina. A shimmering light casts shadows along the upper portion of the mural, which is covered



- with a scrim, and creates an impression of descending underwater. Cascading whale sounds follow you as you descend the stairs to the Deep Ocean Gallery.
- To the left, a *Reef Habitat Exhibit* extends this view of the large exhibit. Curving out from the right side is a spectacular *Ocean Transect Exhibit*. The wraparound effect created by these exhibits -- and the uninterrupted sweep of acrylic fronting the displays - produce a sensation of being part of this underwater world rather than just viewing it.
 - A *Toddler Exhibit* extends the theme of the Reef Habitat with a life-size model of a vase sponge. Views into the sponge reveal smaller models of the fish and animals that live inside.
 - The *Rocky Reef View* of the Great Ocean Tank Exhibit contains a variety of reef formations where fish congregate. Shafts of light extending into the water from 30 feet above illuminate this view of the ocean.
 - Adjacent to the Rocky Reef View, visitors are able to look into a large angled window showing a *Deep Sea View* of this exhibit. The bottom and walls of the exhibit are obscured, giving viewers the impression of standing at the edge of the Continental Shelf looking off into the vast, unexplored depths of the sea. Sharks and pelagic fish glide in and out of view and reinforce the sensation of awe and wonder.
 - Extending from the opposite side of the massive Ocean Exhibit, an extraordinary *Ocean Transect Exhibit* simulates a panoramic view of the ocean floor off the South Carolina coast, from the shallow blackfish banks to the snapper banks, along the continental shelf edge and out to the deep-water coral mounds located on the continental slope.

Touch Tank

- Allows visitors not only to see, but also to touch a variety of live invertebrates (animals without backbones) found along the coast of South Carolina.
- Aquarium staff and volunteers are on hand to tell you about these animals and help you to better understand the life in the Atlantic Ocean.
- A videoscope gives a magnified view of some of the animals, and a collection of shells and fossils helps you identify the animals you sometimes find washed up on the beach.

Changing Exhibit

- The Changing exhibit in the Countess Alicia Spaulding-Paolozzi Exhibit Gallery presents 2,500 square feet of space for special traveling exhibits.
- In an effort to increase excitement and awareness of the Aquarium's exhibits and in an effort to develop more environmental enthusiasts, the South Carolina Aquarium introduces a new changing exhibit *every few years*.
- In 2008, the Aquarium opened CAMP CAROLINA in the changing exhibit space.