



PHOTOS BY TIM GRIFFIN

The new California Academy of Sciences features a "living roof" that's home to millions of native plants and an indoor, four-story rainforest.

March of the Penguins

Fish, fowl, and natural wonders return to Golden Gate Park.

BY SURA WOOD

The Flash Gordon–esque, space-age building in Golden Gate Park with the roof resembling an alien launchpad is, in fact, the new home of the California Academy of Sciences. Architect Renzo Piano's prescient, environmentally conscious design completes the dramatic overhaul of the park's Music Concourse. While Piano's vision may not be to everyone's taste, it's difficult to beat the bells and whistles of an eco-friendly, energy-efficient adventure in biodiversity. The gleaming, light-filled facility is equipped with its own private four-story rainforest, a jumbo-size planetarium, and a Philippine coral reef. However, it's the "living roof" dotted with mysterious mounds sprouting 1.7 million specimens of native flora that's generated the most comment. When CAS opens its microcosm of the natural world on September 27, visitors will be greeted by old friends, such as the African Hall's penguin colony and 21 dioramas, plus new exhibits featuring expeditions to the Galápagos Islands and Madagascar and interactive displays addressing the impact of global warming. ■

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