

Sights to Behold

The Frost Museum of Science isn't just full of things to do, it's also brimming with things to see

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Museum Park's \$305 million Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science is finally open — after five years of construction, well over a decade in planning, and both construction and financial drama. Pressured by the county to set a spring 2017 opening date, the museum committed to May 8 and greeted more than 28,000 people the first week.

High attendance will be key at the new facility, as Miami-Dade County diverted \$4 million in annual operating subsidies over the next 20 years to repay \$49 million the county provided early last year to

prevent a construction shut down. Now museum operating costs must be earned with ticket sales and event rentals.

Ticket prices are high, and it is worthwhile to take a few minutes to research cheaper options for museum entry. Annual memberships start at \$65. Miami-Dade County residents get a 15-percent discount at the ticket window, students can purchase cheap tickets through Culture Shock, and the Miami-Dade library system has *free* passes for families of four (restrictions apply). While you're at it, consider parking options in the area or taking the Metromover as parking at the museum's on-site garage is pricey.

The complex, designed by Grimshaw Architects, includes four connecting buildings and the surrounding plaza, with the aquarium building's fourth floor, known as "The Vista," as the highlight. The open-air space presents Florida's diverse and endangered environments with stunning views of downtown and Miami Beach, and feels like the smartest and most complete aspect of the museum.

At the top of the 500,000-gallon "Gulf Stream Aquarium" you catch glimpses of the sea creatures, but you must go down two stories to "The Deep," to stand or lay beneath the aquarium's oculus and stare up at the vast sea above you. Sharks, rays, and fish calmly circle above clamoring crowds

of youngsters screaming "shark!"

Tickets include a show at the state-of-the-art planetarium, which currently has two films playing and nighttime laser light shows on the first Friday of each month.

"Feathers to the Stars" chronicles the history of flight with a jumble of exhibits, including dinosaurs and a fighter jet. The visually delightful "River of Grass" allows smaller kids a chance to take out any aggression on digitally responsive Florida Everglades animals. Interactive exhibitions abound to entertain the kids.

As the museum's programming takes shape, it will have a chance to build a community following beyond fourth-grade field trips.



The Frost Science aquarium building curves, like the nearby cruise ships, toward the neighboring PAMM and Biscayne Bay.

Continued on page 40

Museum of Science

Continued from page 39



At the open air, 100-foot-wide “Gulf Stream Aquarium,” you can catch a glimpse of mahi-mahi, devil rays, and sharks, while also taking in Miami’s ever-evolving skyline.



Children frequently surround the “Florida Bay Touch Experience,” reaching into the pool to interact with playful cownose, Atlantic, and yellow rays.



“The Vista,” the fourth floor of the aquarium, is a rare outdoor space, built not only to educate about Florida’s diverse environment, but to be a part of it.

Continued on page 42

Museum of Science

Continued from page 40



Entering “The Dive,” visitors are treated to a below-the-water exploration of the ecosystems seen on the “Vista” level.



A group of boys delight as a shark swims across the viewing windows in the “Gulf Stream Aquarium.”



Two stories below the “Gulf Stream Aquarium,” you find the 31-foot-wide oculus lens offering a unique view up through the water as sharks, fish, and rays cruise above.

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