

# THE LIFE AQUATIC

Toronto's newest attraction is a marvel of exotic marine animals that's sure to capture the imaginations of one and all.

BY LAURA SABATINI

Unicorn surgeonfish, porkfish, upside-down jellyfish, guineafowl puffers. These are just some of the city's newest inhabitants, and they all call the **Ripley's Aquarium of Canada** (page 29) home.

Toronto's newest attraction is opening this month after two years of construction, offering an experience that is unmatched in Canada. More than 15,000 marine animals swim and play at the 135,000-square-foot aquarium, which features more than 100 interactive displays and 50 live exhibits, and even allows visitors to touch a number of sharks and rays.

Nine different areas allow guests of all ages to examine an international array of fresh- and saltwater creatures big and small, including emperor angelfish, spotted jellies and piranhas. Peer into the 17 tanks comprising the Canadian Waters Gallery to see species native to the Great Lakes as well as the Pacific and Atlantic oceans—everything from giant Pacific octopuses to walleyes. The vibrant Rainbow Reef display of tropical fish is a colourful exhibit featuring over 100 species of fish from the Indo-Pacific region, including the Picasso triggerfish and the clownfish. The most esoteric water dwellers are featured in The Gallery, home to electric eels, red lionfish and sea dragons.

A moving sidewalk—the longest of its kind in North America—transports guests through the Dangerous Lagoon. This, the most

sizeable tank at the aquarium, is shelter to three different shark species, which commingle with thousands of tropical fishes and other large oceanic vertebrates like green sea turtles.

The deep blue waters of the Amazon Delta and the Caribbean Sea are recreated in Ray Bay, where two tanks showcase six types of stingrays, including spotted eagle rays and cownose ray. Get your camera out for meal time—the flat-bodies fishes feed directly from divers' hands.

If simply seeing this magnificent marine life isn't good enough, how about getting to actually touch some of them? Feel the hard carapace of the horseshoe crab at the Discovery Centre's touch pool, or head to the Shoreline Gallery where bamboo sharks are at your fingertips.

And should you find your curiosity further piqued, book a behind-the-scenes tour for a look at the aquarium's inner workings, including the animal husbandry area and life support rooms. You can even stay late—the attraction offers sleepovers in its shark tunnel. **W**

*The Ripley's Aquarium of Canada is open daily. Admission is \$19.98 to \$34.98; call 647-351-3474 or visit [www.ripleyaquariums.com/canada](http://www.ripleyaquariums.com/canada) for more information and to purchase tickets.*



## Five Fin-Flapping Facts

1. It took 5.7 million litres of water to fill all of the tanks at the aquarium.
2. The shark-stocked Dangerous Lagoon exhibit is filled with 2.9 million litres of water, making it the aquarium's largest tank.
3. The special kreisel tank (a tank made particularly for jellies) is the largest in the world at 16,500 litres.
4. The kelp tank in the Canadian Waters Gallery has a 180-degree window that is made of the largest, thickest and heaviest acrylic panel in the entire facility.
5. The underwater tunnel in the Dangerous Lagoon is 315 feet long and boasts a moving sidewalk that is the longest in North America.