



MARCH/APRIL 2012

Westways

THE MAGAZINE FOR AUTO CLUB MEMBERS

Tasteful Collections

Museum restaurants
serve up
delectable
dishes with
a side of art



Cut down
commute stress

DayTrip:
Redlands

BonAppétit:
Cheap eats

QuickEscape:
Davis

Art ON A PLATE

Delicious food and fine art have long been considered two of life's greatest pleasures. So why not combine the two interests with a museum dining excursion? As a complement to their artistic fare, many Southern California institutions feature restaurants and cafés that cater to culture lovers with creative, flavorful cuisine. Here are a few of our favorites. BY BETH PHANER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY VANESSA STUMP



Seafood
bouillabaisse



LOS ANGELES

THE RESTAURANT AT THE GETTY CENTER

The J. Paul Getty Museum; 1200 Getty Center Drive; (310) 440-6810; getty.edu

For museum dining where the beautifully plated food matches the stunning views, look no further than The Restaurant at the Getty Center. Aside from the world-class art on display here, patrons could easily spend a day just taking in the colorful gardens and Richard Meier's ingenious architecture, which blends seamlessly with the landscaping. The Restaurant's upscale dining room is spacious and sophisticated, with one wall entirely devoted to the word "taste" and its definition.

Executive chef Mayet Cristobal's Mediterranean-California-inspired menu changes seasonally, and the dishes are often extensions of featured exhibits at the museum. Diners rave about the Dungeness crab cakes with smoked paprika aioli and the seafood-packed bouillabaisse. The reasonably priced three-course prix-fixe lunch (\$34; ends May 6), in coordination with the "Pacific Standard Time" exhibits, is a good way to sample the restaurant's offerings. Additionally, The Restaurant offers dinner on Saturday evenings and a Sunday brunch, as well as a wine list and full bar.

Artful Ambiance: Full-service fine dining in an elegant room with white tablecloths, sage-green chairs, and fresh flowers on each table; floor-to-ceiling windows offer stunning views of the Santa Monica Mountains; patio dining is also available

Top Picks for the Palate: Seasonal dishes may include Dungeness crab cakes, striped bass, bouillabaisse, citrus-glazed short ribs, Cobb salad, and pear and apple galette for dessert

Current Exhibit: "In Focus: Los Angeles, 1945-1980"

LONG BEACH

CLAIRE'S AT THE MUSEUM

Long Beach Museum of Art
2300 E. Ocean Boulevard
(562) 439-2119, ext. 270; lbma.org/cafe.html

Located on the first floor of the historic Anderson House, a Craftsman-style structure built in 1911, Claire's at the Museum is a waterfront restaurant boasting unobstructed views of the *Queen Mary* and Catalina Island. On a pleasant day, opt for patio seating, which surrounds *Structure and Flow*, a huge water fountain-sculpture by prolific artist and the restaurant's namesake Claire Falkenstein (1908–1997).

Open for breakfast and lunch, the eatery showcases California cuisine, including a variety of salads, soups, sandwiches, and pastas. Claire's is also one of the most popular Sunday brunch spots in town, serving an extensive breakfast menu all day (try the Eggstravaganza Omelet), along with specials on mimosas. Afterward, head over to the Long Beach Museum of Art to view the permanent collection, which includes early 20th-century European art, California Modernism, and contemporary California art.



Artful Ambience: Casual, oceanfront dining in the historic Anderson House and on the outdoor patio with numerous yellow umbrella tables; along with the museum's free admission every Thursday, Claire's offers a happy hour from 3 to 8 P.M., with occasional live music.

Top Picks for the Palate: Crème brûlée french toast; blackened salmon salad; Museum Work of Art—a starter combination of bruschetta, calamari, flautas, and spinach-artichoke dip; banana bread pudding for dessert

Current Exhibits: "Oskar Fischinger"; "Small Expressions" (fiber art)



Artful Ambience: Informal patio dining overlooking a sculpture garden and a free-form pond; small seating area with umbrella tables and heat lamps

Top Picks for the Palate: Southwest chicken quesadilla; marinated portobello sandwich; ham and Swiss panini; carrot cake for dessert

Current Exhibits: "Proof: The Rise of Printmaking in Southern California"; "The Original Print: An Introduction to Printmaking in the Postwar Period" **W**

Beth Phaner is a freelance writer and editor based in Huntington Beach.

Dudley Wigdahl

**Aquarium of the Pacific's
curator of mammals and birds**

BY PAUL LASLEY ■ PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN KNIGHT

Feeding capelin and herring to a parcel of penguins, including one named Patsy, at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach is all in a day's work for Dudley Wigdahl, curator of birds and mammals. They are picky eaters—all the fish has to be restaurant quality. Wigdahl heads the team designing the aquarium's new penguin habitat, scheduled to open in May. Magellanic penguins don't require spaces with snow and ice, so they're ideal candidates for the relaxed SoCal lifestyle. For Wigdahl, helping to create this display and work with the birds is clearly a dream, which he is excited to share with the public.

How did you get interested in caring for marine mammals and birds?

I've always had a great love for animals. Even as a small kid, I always had pets. I grew up on the coast, not 5 miles from here. I was a beach rat. I'd see fish, sea lions, seals, and gray whales. And then of course, Marineland, which used to be [on the Palos Verdes Peninsula], was a bicycle ride away. I went to college down at San Diego State and got my bachelor's degree in zoology. I've been with it for 35 years.

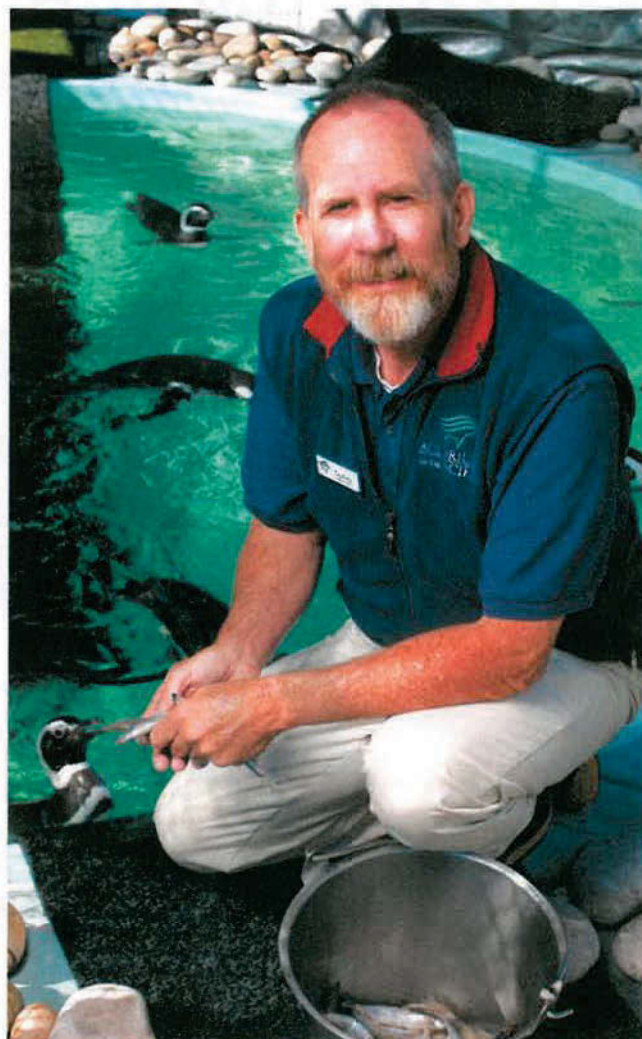
And now you get to create a penguin habitat.

On May 17, we'll open the June Keyes Penguin Habitat, with about a dozen Magellanic penguins. This

is a temperate species of penguins, and they're just magical. People love penguins. They're drawn to them. Penguins are naturally comical and curious. It's been a really cool opportunity to start from scratch, finding the birds and using my staff and researchers to develop a habitat that'll make these birds feel at home.

What was the inspiration for the exhibit?

The exhibit patterns itself after an area near Chile's Isla Magdalena called Puñihuil. It's a cold saltwater exhibit—5 feet in depth and about 15,000 gallons. The dry area will look desertlike: rocky shore, a high rock face. The dens are along the back wall so the penguins can go in and breed when



it comes time to do so. We also have this curved glass that allows kids to look at the birds from below.

Can people help feed the penguins?

Starting June 2, guests can come and interact with one or two birds at a time as part of the behind-the-scenes "Animal Encounter" program. They'll be able to touch and feed them. The encounters give us an opportunity to talk about the changes that are going on in their habitat—global climate change, overfishing, oil pollution, things that are affecting the numbers of these birds in the wild.

Where are the birds from?

A quarter of the birds came out of a stranding facility near Rio de Janeiro. Thousands of birds have been stranded over several years due to changes in their habitat. A lot of them are rehabbed and sent back to the wild, but some have long-term issues and are not considered releasable; that's the group that was brought into the U.S. The rest are from other zoos where they were born. **W**

Reservations are required for "Animal Encounter: Penguin" (\$90). For information about the June Keyes Penguin Habitat, call (562) 590-3100 or visit aquariumofpacific.org.