

# A voyage to our coastal past

Say "Santa Barbara" and people think of a vacation destination that's also home to the rich and famous. While that's true today, for more than 10,000 years it's been a gathering spot for a variety of people with one thing in common: a dependence and interaction with the sea.

Our coastline has been the site of various prehistoric settlements. It's seen pirates, seafaring explorers, whalers, fur hunters and enemy submarines, to name just a few. If you find that hard to believe, visit the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (it used to be the Naval Reserve Center) and you'll discover how unique our coastal community really is.

## Yesterday

The museum has two floors packed with exhibits and interactive displays that will appeal to young and old alike. On the ground level are historical displays that begin with the Chumash era. You'll find displays and models of the tools and techniques the Chumash used to lived from the ocean. A 23-foot *tomol*, or wooden plank canoe, is one of many items on exhibit.

Ever had a hankering to go deep-sea fishing? You can, in a way, with the Virtual Deep-Sea Fishing exhibit. Strap yourself into the seat, get your heavy ocean rig ready and wait for the big one to strike. Once you set the hook it's up to you to land it... or have it throw the hook out and swim away. It's one of many hands-on exhibits that use technology in a different way.

On the ground floor you'll find a comprehensive history of Santa Barbara's love affair with the sea. Models, charts, diagrams and miniatures trace the appearance of galleons and caravels by European explorers.

As California evolved under many flags, it was still dependent for supplies that were carried by ships. All these eras, and the types of ships that plied the channel, can be seen in displays that also tell of California's whaling industry, active up to 1971.

You'll see how Stern's Wharf became an essential fixture for Santa Barbara; allowing supplies and people to come ashore in this part of California. There's even a display of the Santa Barbara's Undersea Garden, a tourist attraction that opened in 1967 and was an attempt to create a marine-oriented tourist attraction in the harbor. Check this one out; you're in for a surprise.

## Today

Alongside models of sailing ships you'll find scale models of submarines, naval war ships and transports. The museum has an incredible collection of models, many made by Dwight Brooks, whose attention to detail and workmanship is legendary. If scale models are your thing, you'll find the museum's collection outstanding.

One of the most incredible models to be seen at the museum is a quarter-scale flying model of the Loughead Brothers F-1 Flying Boat. The model, with an 18-foot wing span, hangs from the ceiling above the main floor. It was built by the Santa Barbara Radio Control Modelers Club for the museum and flown in November 2004 at Lake Cachuma. It was built in a small shop at the end of State Street in 1918 by Allan and Malcolm Loughead, with assistance by Jack Northrop, a graduate of

Santa Barbara High School who later on went to start Northrop Aviation. The Loughead brothers went on to start their own company, Lockheed.

Much of Santa Barbara's maritime history and heritage is filled with unusual episodes and events. Today, technology pays a big part in marine study and exploration, and you can find samples of this at the museum as well. The Fred Kavli Diving Technology Exhibit is filled with tools and items from early hard-hat diving days to present deep-sea diving suits that are basically one-man submarines.

Upstairs you'll find more multimedia exhibits along with more traditional displays. Don't be surprised when you see a ship on the second floor, it's the Munger Theater, a state-of-the-art hall that features marine-themed documentaries and shorts throughout the day. Just behind the theater you'll have a chance to spy on the harbor through a submarine periscope. As you walk around the various exhibits on the second floor you'll get a bird's-eye view of the F-1 Flying Boat. Keep in mind this is a model, not the real thing!

## The Day Tripper

Tony Galván

## What's happening?

The Santa Barbara Maritime Museum offers many ways for young and old alike to share and learn about our maritime history. Boat handling courses are offered as are navigation workshops. Presentations and lectures are always scheduled at the Munger Theater, check its website for details. The first and third Saturdays during the summer are Saturdays for Kids Day. Check the website for details and times.

Whether you romanticize about the sailing ships of yesterday or want to plunge into the murky depths in a high-tech submersible, take a walk along the decks of the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum and learn more about Santa Barbara's maritime heritage.

## If you go

### Santa Barbara Maritime Museum:

**Admission:** Adults, \$7  
Military active duty, \$4;  
in uniform, free  
Seniors (62+), \$4  
Students (with ID), \$4

Youth (6-17), \$4\*  
Children (1-5), \$2\*  
Infants, free  
Members, free

**Community Day:** The  
third Thursday of every  
month is free to the public.  
Website: [www.sbm-m.org](http://www.sbm-m.org)

\*Children under 12 must be accompanied by someone 16 years or older.

**Address:** 113 Harbor Way, Suite 190 **Phone:** 962-8404 **Summer hours, Memorial Day to Labor Day:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; (closed Wednesdays)