

FYI VANCOUVER AQUARIUM MISSION STATEMENT

"The Vancouver Aquarium is a self-supporting, non-profit society dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display, communication, public programming and education, research and direct action."

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of animals. Although this facility is still of great importance, it has been eclipsed by more spectacular zoos such as the Bronx Zoo and the San Diego Zoo. Other notable zoos around the world can be found in Montreal, Vancouver, Frankfurt, London, Paris, Moscow, New Delhi, Tokyo, and Sydney. Historically, most zoos were established as not-for-profit organizations, but that form of operation is changing as over half of all the zoos in the United States now operate as for-profit organizations or only partially depend on government funding.¹

Some of these zoos are very large, creating a great deal of public interest and publicity as well as generating significant international tourism traffic. This interest and traffic is based on unusual exhibits, collections of animal species, and efforts to re-create the natural setting found in the wild. Even the Walt Disney Company is banking on the continued draw of zoos. Disney's Animal Kingdom theme park, which features a blend of live displays of existing animal species and animatronic displays of species from the past, such as dinosaurs, has proven to be an attractive tourism destination. From both a management and marketing perspective, research shows that improving the zoo environment and demonstrating a concern for animal welfare were important for achieving overall visitor satisfaction levels.⁷

The first public aquarium was established in London at Regents Park in 1853. It eventually failed because of poor design and management, but the idea of a preservation attraction devoted to water life has proven to be successful. Although aquariums are only about half as popular as zoos and wild animal parks combined, they are increasing in number, size, and attendance. The huge Oceanarium in Lisbon, Portugal, which opened as the flagship attraction of Expo '98, represents Europe's largest and possibly the most spectacular of the world's hundreds of aquariums. The Manila Ocean Park in the Philippines, which opened in 2008, combines not only an expansive Oceanarium but also shopping and food to round out its attractiveness to visitors.

Many aquariums are supported and managed as not-for-profit foundations, such as Canada's largest, the Vancouver Aquarium. Others have been developed as for-profit enterprises, such as the chain of Sea World Parks. Recently, many cities, such as Camden, New Jersey, and Long Beach, California, have funded aquariums to help revitalize waterfront areas by attracting tourists and residents to oceanside regions of these cities. One of the most successful aquariums, Baltimore's National Aquarium, helped ensure the success of that city's redeveloped Inner Harbor.



Kruger National Park in South Africa affords many species a safe haven. Photo by Cheryl Clay

Parks and Preserves

Every park and preserve is a little bit different. They may range from famous urban parks such as Central