

# AAA WORLD

MARCH/APRIL 2016

## Totally CHARMED in BALTIMORE

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2 Days/1 Night

Pacific Coral Reef at  
the National Aquarium



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COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM

## Totally Charmed

*Along the harbor, or elsewhere in town, there is plenty to enjoy in Baltimore, Maryland.*

By John C. Moyer

IT'S KNOWN AS CHARM CITY, but you could also call Baltimore the Comeback City. Resilience is in its DNA. It has come back from wars, economic downturns and more. In 1904, a fire destroyed most of the downtown area—1,500 buildings—but it wasn't long before a well-planned city center rose from the rubble. Today, Baltimore is a city filled with vibrant neighborhoods and entertaining attractions.

For many people, thoughts of Baltimore begin and end at the Inner Harbor. While it is true that you could spend all of your two days at the Inner Harbor, it would be just as easy to spend that time enjoying museums, dining and shopping around town, never setting foot in the harbor area. We always aim for a mixture of both.

### DAY ONE

#### THE INNER HARBOR

Make the Baltimore Visitors Center your first stop. Due to reopen in March 2016 after a several-month renovation, there you can purchase attraction tickets, including the Harbor Pass, a combination ticket that provides savings on admission to up to four attractions.

Pick up a copy of the *Visit Baltimore Restaurant Guide* for later. This city on the bay offers fabulous fresh seafood choices—and shame on you if you don't indulge—but crab cakes are just the beginning. Baltimore has become such a foodie town that you could spend all your time going from one excellent eatery to another.

Back outside, just a short walk will take you to The Maryland Science Center to find a planetarium, an IMAX theater, a rooftop observatory, and exhibits that will capture the imagination of toddlers, teens and adults. The newest exhibit, Science and Main, invites you to discover scientific applications in everyday life. There are also chances to have a food fight at the Chaos Café, design and launch a paper airplane, and *see* your singing voice.

One of the Historic Ships in Baltimore is up next: the USS *Constellation*. Built in 1854, this is the last all-sail warship built by the U.S. Navy and the last Civil War-era warship still afloat. You can find her at anchor in the harbor, waiting for you to visit.

If touring the ship prompts a desire to get out on the water, you've got a few options. For a tour combined with a speedboat thrill ride, consider Seadog Cruises. For a more sedate ride, consider a brunch,



Roundhouse at the B&amp;O Railroad Museum



Babe Ruth statue at Camden Yards



Baltimore water taxi



Fort McHenry

lunch or dinner cruise on Spirit Cruises' enclosed and climate-controlled *Spirit of Baltimore*. Most of the cruise companies sail spring through fall; *Spirit of Baltimore* sails year-round.

Hungry yet? Lunch is served by a variety of establishments in the Harborplace Pavilions. Choose from Johnny Rockets, Bubba Gump Shrimp Co., Tir Na Nog Irish Restaurant and more. The pavilions are also a great place to shop for your Baltimore souvenirs. Other restaurants nearby include Phillips Seafood, the Hard Rock Café and Chef Bryan Voltaggio's Family Meal, which serves American-style comfort food. Voltaggio has a more upscale restaurant, Aggio, in the Power Plant Live! complex.

Fed and full, we come to the star of the Inner Harbor: the National Aquarium. Its three buildings house a tropical rain forest, an Australian river gorge habitat, and nearly 20,000 animals encompassing more than 700 species. The newest exhibit is the Mid-Atlantic shoreline-focused Living Seashore, featuring two touch pools that offer the opportunity to get close to Atlantic stingrays, moon jellies and more. Probably the most popular exhibit, however,

is Blacktip Reef with its 870 animals from 86 species, including blacktip reef sharks and a 500-pound sea turtle named Calypso. Watching the action is easy from multiple levels, including a spectacular floor-to-ceiling underwater viewing area.

If your time in Baltimore includes a Friday night, consider the aquarium's Half-Price Friday Night. After 5 p.m., admission is half the usual price—and the crowds are about half the size, too. The last ticket sold on Fridays is at 8 p.m.; after that, guests have 90 minutes to explore the Aquarium. Some exhibits, however, may close earlier than 9:30.

Other Inner Harbor options include Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium, the Charm City Carousel, the Maryland 9/11 Memorial and the Top of the World Observation Level, which offers a bird's-eye view of the harbor and the city from the 27th floor of the World Trade Center.

#### GETTING AROUND

The Baltimore Water Taxi can help you navigate the waters from one side of the harbor to the other. On land, both residents and visitors travel around town on the free Charm City Circulator shuttle buses. There

are four routes that will take you to many attractions and into the city's neighborhoods.

And speaking of neighborhoods, if we only have room to call out one of the city's wonderful neighborhoods, we choose Hampden, a quirky area filled with eclectic restaurants and home to the annual HonFest each June. Check out the Corner Charcuterie Bar and The Food Market along with unique shops such as Atomic Books or the Doubledutch Boutique clothing store.

#### NIGHTTIME

Where to begin? Within walking distance of the Inner Harbor is Power Plant Live!, an entertainment complex with nightclubs and restaurants. If you haven't eaten yet, or if you get peckish after hitting the clubs, we recommend the Meatballs and Spaghetti pizza at Joe Squared.

If you're not into the club scene, there are several theater companies in town. Perhaps check out the Everyman Theatre. From April to June, the resident company is producing two American classics on a rotating schedule. If you time it right, you might be able to see *Death of a Salesman* on Saturday night and *A Streetcar Named Desire* Sunday afternoon.

## DAY TWO BEYOND THE HARBOR

If you want to get a relatively early start, begin at Fort McHenry, which opens at 9 a.m. There's enough to see and do at this War of 1812 National Monument and Historic Shrine to keep you busy until the town's other museums and attractions open.

Heading back toward downtown, stop at the Baltimore Museum of Industry. Exhibits covering Baltimore's industrial past include the Platt and Company oyster cannery (the original resident of the museum's quarters), a gallery on garment production, a print shop and more. There's also an interactive exhibit that allows visitors to create their own video game.

A perennial favorite of kids and railroad buffs is the B&O Railroad Museum. Home to an amazing array of railroad artifacts, the museum is built on the ground widely acknowledged as the birthplace of American railroading and is now a National Historic Landmark. The museum's historic

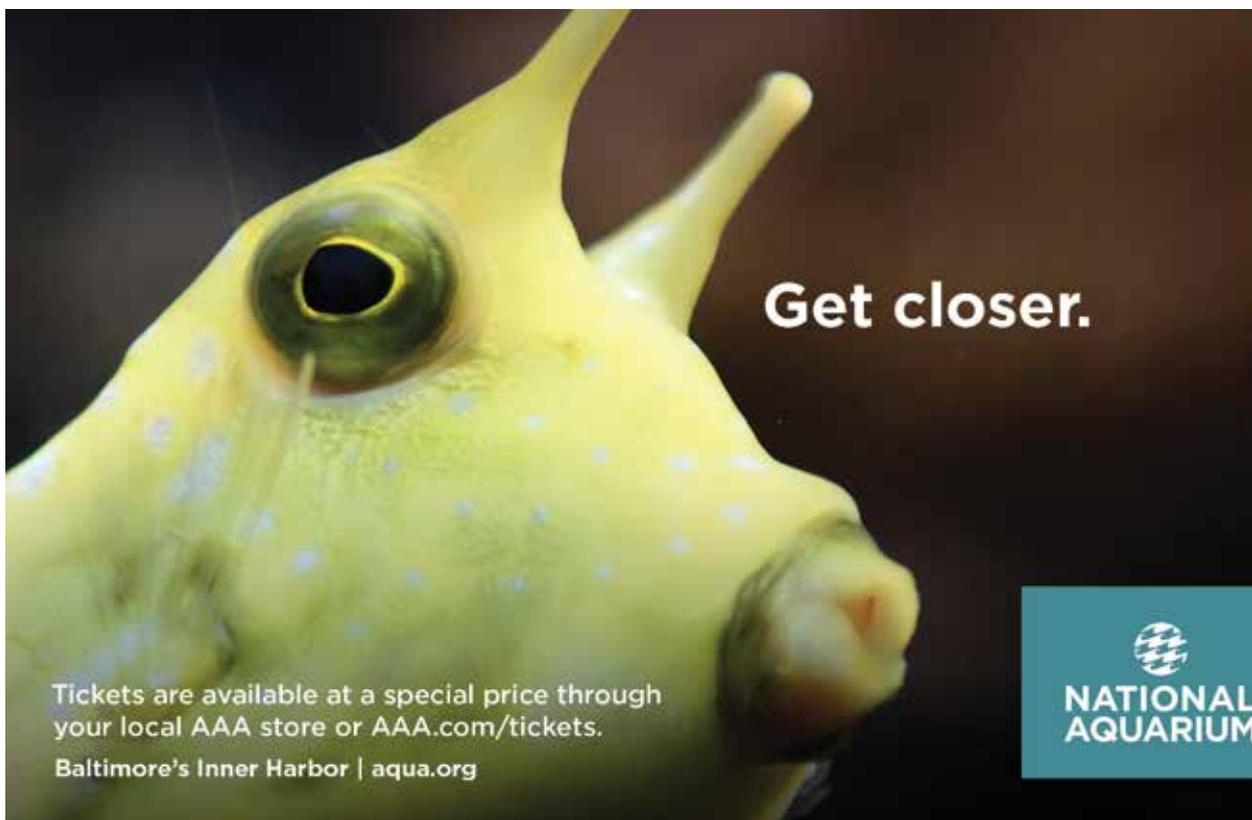
collection includes nearly 200 locomotives and pieces of rolling stock.

If art's your thing, you've got three outstanding venues from which to choose. The legendary American Visionary Art Museum features original works of art by self-taught artists. The Walters Art Museum houses an incredibly varied collection of Greek sculpture, Roman sarcophagi, medieval ivories, and 19th-century European and American masterpieces. And The Baltimore Museum of Art has an engrossing collection of historic, modern and contemporary art that includes the largest holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world. Recent gifts of prints and drawings from the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation and the collection of Marguerite Matisse Duthuit appear in the museum's New Arrivals exhibition, on display through June 2016. One more thing about the Walters Art Museum and The Baltimore Museum of Art: admission is free every day.

A few more brief mentions before we let you stop reading and start packing. If you've got youngsters in tow, you'll want to visit Port Discovery Children's Museum, awarded "Best Children's Museum" in the U.S. by Fodor's Travel in 2015. Baseball fans should visit Camden Yards and the Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum. Pop culture fans won't want to miss Geppi's Entertainment Museum. And for history and culture buffs, the Jewish Museum of Maryland details the Jewish community's influence on the town and throughout the state, and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture offers an inspiring look at the contributions of African American Marylanders.

After only two days, you'll find so much left undone that you'll want to come back to this comeback city. <<

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