

Aquarium Photo Tips

The Monterey Bay Aquarium offers the potential for some truly stunning photos, but with the windows, water and subtle lighting, it can be quite challenging to get a photo you'll want to brag about. Our resident photographer provides the following tips to help.

Use a Digital Camera

The advantage of instantly viewing your photos is huge. If you don't like the results from the first shot, you can improve upon it with a subsequent shot, by making adjustments that partially override the automatic systems in your camera.

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Learn How to Work the Controls on Your Camera Before You VisitThe control options on digital cameras can be complicated, so it's best to practice these skills at home, where you aren't under pressure to capture a spectacular vacation moment while trying to understand your camera. With so many control options available on digital cameras, it's important to figure out which ones will be most useful to you. Let's take a look at a couple of examples of aquarium photographic challenges, and the camera controls that may help you overcome them.

Camera Controls Tip: Using Exposure CompensationLet's say you're trying to photograph a close-up of a pale yellow sea star in the touch pool exhibit. You move in nice and close, and take the shot. But when you look at the image on the back of your camera, it's much darker than you expected. This is because the automated metering system in your camera is being fooled by an overly bright and highly reflective subject. If you simply shoot it again, the camera will probably duplicate the mistake and create another dark image. But if you know how to tell the camera to brighten the image, you can correct the problem on the spot and shoot a significantly better photo.

One of the simplest tricks is to use a feature called "exposure compensation". It lets you brighten or darken your next photo by compensating for the incorrect choice that your camera's computer has made when faced with a tricky exposure situation. Not all cameras have this, but if yours does, you'll want to read about it in the manual and practice using it.

Camera Controls Tip: Turning Your Flash Off It's important to know how to turn off the flash feature of your camera. Some of our exhibits are beautifully lit, and are best photographed with the exhibit lighting and no flash. In fact, some of our animals are very sensitive to flashes of light, and flash photography is prohibited at their exhibits. You'll know you've turned off the flash when you see the universal symbol of a lightning bolt with a diagonal slash through it.