



A visitor takes in the serene beauty of an aquarium

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A Sentosan Macaw Parrot perched upon a dead tree watching its surroundings closely

Familiar Fish

By Alex Corazzini

As someone who has lived their entire life in the Boston area, I spent summer after summer at the New England Aquarium. Whether it was a camp activity watching the behavior of seals interacting with humans, trudging through the tidepools of the Boston Harbor Islands, or simply hours of watching sharks live peacefully alongside their prey, I can distinctly remember the sheer curiosity and wonder brought on by these sights. The hours of laughter and glee were some of the best moments of my childhood. But as I grew up and spent more time on school, work and other responsibilities, these memories fell by the wayside to be swept away with all the other old memories. And travelling more than 350 miles away from the nearest family or friends was the perfect time to awaken these long-slumbering memories. I was a nervous wreck as move-in day approached. The 9 ½ hour car ride down the Eastern Seaboard following a hasty morning goodbye from my family didn't contribute much to lightening the mood. After months, even years of preparation, with SATs, applications, supplemental essays and awards, it was time to begin my life as an adult.

A New Beginning

After hours of dreamless sleep, I had come to accept the facts I was facing: college move-in day had finally arrived. With an afternoon move-in time that following day, my dad and I decided we would take a quick peek inside the glass pyramid across Baltimore Harbor. After a quick jog through the light drizzle and a short chat with the ticket agent, we stepped out of the frigid Baltimore rain and into a whole new world. All around us, everything changed. Instead of the consistent pitter-patter of rainfall, we were met by the shrieking caws of tropical birds. Replacing the dull color of the outdoor brick walkway were gigantic tanks of equatorial fish, glistening in bright pigments under the sizzling spotlight, and tropical tortoises, content to stay cool in their moss-colored carapace. I was immediately stunned by this drastic change. The sense of calm the birds had. The lack of any sense of panic that the turtles suffered from. The simple lack of care from any of the creatures astonished me, and as the clouds took a brief respite from their somber mist and the sun was able to peek its rays out, the glass-lined corridors began to shimmer, all the uncertainty and fear I felt about moving in began to melt away.

Forgotten Memories

Replacing it were stacks of memories travelling back as far as I can remember. The first time I saw a Green Sea Turtle gliding through its tank. The two pet turtles I bought because of it. Every adventure I had ever had due to the love of nature, the Aquarium had brought out of me. It all came flooding back to the forefront of my mind. This effect continued to strengthen throughout the exhibits. Seeing the penguins glide across the surface of the water reminded me of days spent tubing in water parks all over Massachusetts. Even the one lazy broad-shelled turtle who simply bobbed and floated around his tank reminded me of those days I just wanted to kick back, relax and hang out. The experience I had at the National Aquarium was wonderful. Not only due to its beautiful creatures and fantastic atmosphere, but due to its ability to captivate and calm me. The sounds and sights of the Aquarium helped me to reconnect with many joy-filled memories that helped me feel like home wasn't so far away. That's why, if you're ever feeling homesick, the National Aquarium is the place for you.