

TRAVEL

# Testing science centers for fun

By ALICE RHEIN  
STAFF WRITER  
arhein@ohiohomecomm.net

Just like every living organism has its own unique characteristics, so do science centers. I did some experimenting this summer, traveling to five science centers, and have some interesting results to report. These are presented in no particular order.

## New science center

It's an architectural example of phoenix rising from the ashes. The exposed ducts and elevators only add to the techno feel of the place, and, praise be, the equipment is all in working order — so far. That was the main criticism about the old center. Nothing worked. Here, lights blink, water flows, drums drum — you get the idea.

The New Detroit Science Center is based on the curriculum followed by Michigan science teachers. There is a section on waves and vibrations, which includes sound waves and our favorite light wave mnemonic ROY G BIV. The Daimler-Chrysler Motion Laboratory gives demonstrations of principles of science, such as friction, and kids can be chosen to glide along the floor in a hovercraft.

The IMAX Dome Theatre has

Toledo  
Ann Arbor  
Cranbrook  
Detroit  
Cleveland

www.cositoledo.org/  
www.aahom.org/  
www.cranbrook.edu/institute  
www.sciencedetroit.org/  
www.greatscience.com/

a new screen and a better sound system. And on the fourth floor is the special exhibition area.

I would hope the center is a work in progress, as there is little in the way of explaining the point of many of the experiments. Sure, you want to ignite the spark of curiosity in little minds, but don't leave them guessing. A few placards here and there to provide explanations and the New Detroit Science Center is well on its way to being a place where learning can be fun.

## Cranbrook Institute

It's still the best place to take in the natural sciences. And no place can come close to replicating the beauty of its Bloomfield Hills grounds. Cranbrook offers those budding geologists plenty of rocks and minerals to view. Years ago, it was pretty much a place where parents repeatedly told their children "do not touch." (Perhaps that was just

my parents.) But in recent years, more hands-on exhibits have been added.

One of Cranbrook's gems is the planetarium and the programs offered for children in its theater. Little kids love the Young Stargazers program, where planets and stars come out in the simulated night sky.

Cranbrook also hosts traveling exhibits in its downstairs exhibition area.

## Hands-On museum

OK, technically it's not a science center, but this Ann Arbor location has some of the most intelligent and well-explained displays I've seen. Want to know how your vocal system works to produce various vowel sounds? There's a gizmo here that shows you.

Yes, there's also the science center requisite — the tornado machine — but tucked away in an unassuming corner is the best explanation of the Bernoulli effect (it's what helps make planes fly) that I've ever seen.

What the Hands-On has above other centers is the ability to explain complex science principles in simple-to-understand terms.

The museum's come a long way since it was a fire house. And an addition was added last year. The expanded preschool area includes water play, a two-tier house and a baby area with all the latest in politically correct infant stimuli. But, judging from the swarm of little ones on recent Saturday, they could have made the area twice as large.

## Great Lakes Science

Perhaps it just couldn't live up to my expectations, since I had heard so much about the great

Cleveland science center, but I was disappointed. I should say there are a great number of innovative displays designed to help children learn about the conservation of the Great Lakes, and that's a good thing.

But so much of the equipment wasn't in working order, despite the fact that there seemed to be plenty of staff. You know that because they all walk around in white lab coats.

The center boasts some great live programs throughout the day, and staff members seem genuinely interested in helping kids make sense of what's what.

Still, so many of the displays were simply a matter of push a button, watch, and move on. It's no wonder that there was a half-hour lineup for kids to take a turn at hitting a baseball to see their speed. At least it's something both interactive and personalized.

## COSI-Toledo

COSI is my favorite science center — and not just because it has an awesome toddler area with a treeshouse to climb and an ambulance to drive.

COSI knows how to make science fun. Though it often hosts national exhibits, the beauty of COSI is that you never get tired of its permanent installations. And there are displays that interest people of all age levels, including those in the early throes of high school.

For most kids, the area that's always a draw is the sports center, where they can test their speed and skills at running, throwing, cycling, and playing virtual volleyball. Granted, COSI could do a little more here explaining the physics and body mechanics involved with just a few well-placed posters, but it's not all just for fun. The Life Force area lets kids be junior detectives while explaining medical concepts.

While every science center is designed for learning and fun, I've concluded they're not all created equal.



Just my imagination: COSI-Toledo lets kids use building blocks to create all sorts of things, including a makeshift drum set.

Electrifying: It's hard to resist the urge to be a mad scientist when confronted with the Plasma Ball at Cleveland's Great Lakes Science Center.



CGS  
COMMON  
GROUND  
SANCTUARY

Art in the Park benefits Common Ground Sanctuary's crisis services for youths, adults & families

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 10-6**  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 10-5**

- \* OVER 170 ARTISTS
- \* FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT
- \* FREE ADMISSION
- \* PLUS FREE PARKING IN CITY DECKS 12 HOURS SATURDAY, ALL DAY SUNDAY
- \* ONE OF THE TOP-RATED SHOWS NATIONWIDE
- \* CHILDREN'S AREA: ART AND ACTIVITIES
- \* SILENT AUCTION

SPONSORED BY: **FOR INFORMATION: CALL 248-454-8150**  
**WWW.COMMONGROUNDSANCTUARY.ORG**

A Money Market Bonus account is a safe place for your money. Especially when the market has such sharp teeth.



## Bank One's Money Market Bonus

**3.51% APY**  
on balances of \$10,000 or more

**3.30% APY**  
on balances of \$1,000 to \$9,999

Not only does our Money Market Bonus account give you immediate access to your money, but it's FDIC-insured and has interest rates that are even higher than most money market accounts. At Bank One, there's nothing to be afraid of.

[www.bankone.com](http://www.bankone.com)

1-800-235-5633 for Personal Accounts  
1-800-404-4111 for Business Accounts

**BANK ONE**

Member FDIC. Available at Bank One, Michigan locations only. Annual Percentage Yield (APY) shown are valid through 9/30/01. Minimum deposit to open a Bank One Money Market Bonus account is \$1,000. Interest rates are variable and determined at Bank One's discretion. The current APY on balances up to \$1,000 is 3.30%, on balances of \$1,000 to \$9,999 is 3.51%, on balances of \$10,000 to \$24,999 is 3.51%, on balances of \$25,000 to \$49,999 is 3.51%, and on balances of \$50,000 or more is 3.51%. Fees could reduce earnings. Bank One reserves the right to limit the deposits to this account to \$100,000 per customer. Banked deposits may not be accepted. Similar product available for businesses, but the APY and balance tiers may vary. © 2001 Bank One Corporation