

By the sea

Stroll Long Beach's new waterfront and meet some strange fish

BY MATTHEW JAFFE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ZAITZ

The South Pacific frogfish is one bizarre (and hungry) creature: When a potential victim approaches, the frogfish opens a mouth that resembles a malevolent subway tunnel and heartily chows down. It's among the unusual stars of *Weird, Wild & Wonderful*, a summer program at Long Beach's Aquarium of the Pacific (9-6 daily; \$19, \$11 ages 3-11; 100 Aquarium Way; www.aquariumofpacific.org or 562/590-3100).

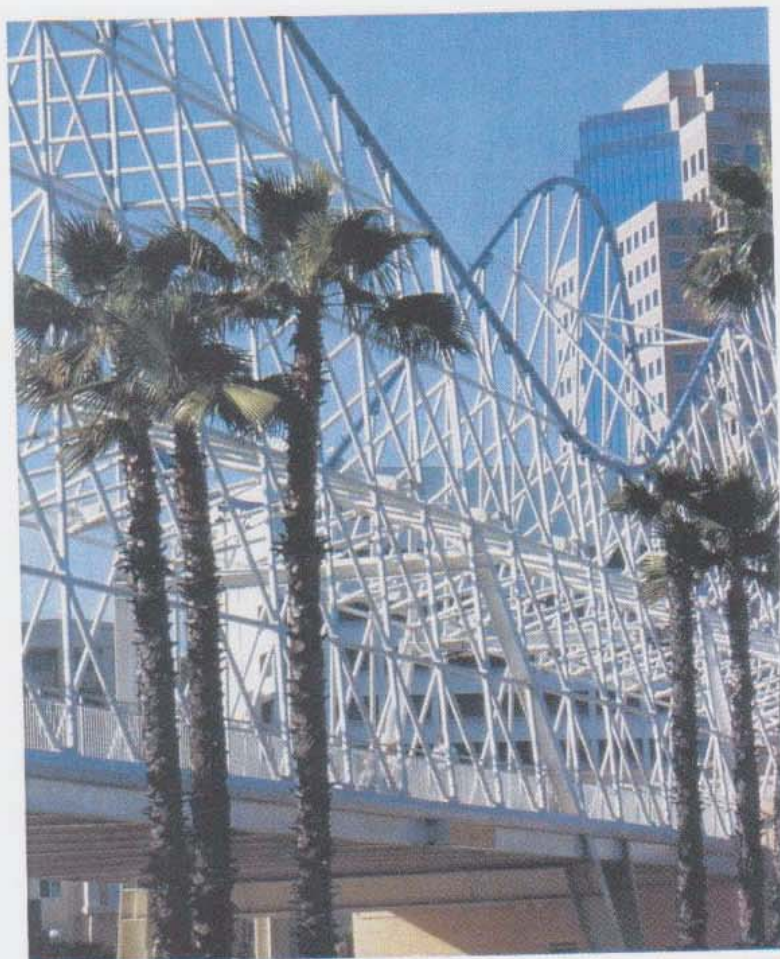
The aquarium is a great start to a day on the Long Beach waterfront, recently expanded to include the Pike at Rainbow Harbor (Pine Ave. at Shoreline Dr.), a long-awaited retail and entertainment center. It was

named for the amusement zone that operated here until 1968, a wild and wonderful place with sideshows, carnival games, and rides.

The new Pike is less colorful but has its original touches. There's an antique carousel, and the bridge to the waterfront evokes the legendary Cyclone Racer roller coaster. With an interior and façade crafted in Ireland, the Auld Dubliner Irish Pub (\$\$, 71 S. Pine Ave.; 562/437-8300) is an appealing alternative to the Pike's other-

wise predictable restaurant lineup.

The waterfront also features restored dune habitat and an attractive harborside walkway that connects to Shoreline Village, the best of the ersatz fishing towns that sprang up along the coast in the 1960s. Shoreline's restaurants include the always-lively Yard House (\$\$, 401 Shoreline Village Dr.; 562/628-



On the waterfront

To reach the Long Beach waterfront from I-710, follow signs for the aquarium. Contact the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (www.visitlongbeach.com or 800/452-7829). Combined admissions to the Queen Mary and the aquarium are available (\$34). Take the AquaBus (\$1; www.lbtransit.com or 562/591-2301) between attractions.



0455), with its huge beer selection, and Parkers' Lighthouse (\$\$\$; 435 Shoreline Village; 562/432-6500), for seafood and harbor views that include the Queen Mary (from \$23; 1126 Queens Hwy.; www.queenmary.com or 562/435-3511).

A new day-long passport for "Haunted Encounters: The Queen Mary's Mysteries Revealed" (\$28) gives you ample opportunity to visit locations on the ship where paranormal events occur. And getting further into the spirit, the ship's magnificent art deco Observation Bar offers "ghostly incantations," a special drink menu.

Not everyone believes in ghosts. But after seeing a frogfish in action, you may find that your range of what's plausible has expanded a bit. *

On a roll: A coaster-inspired pedestrian bridge leads to the Pike at Rainbow Harbor, while the Queen Mary's Observation Bar lets you drink in deco splendor.