

Contact:

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(773) 947-6003***EXPLORE: BLUE PLANET • RED PLANET*****Opening Date:** Spring 2011**Square Footage:** 17,000 sq. ft.**Museum Location:** Main Floor, East Pavilion

Explore: Blue Planet • Red Planet invites guests of all ages on a journey of exploration that begins in the extreme frontiers of Earth and culminates in a simulated human mission to Mars. The journey unfolds as a quest to answer three profound questions that have captivated our collective imagination throughout the ages: Where did we come from? Where are we going? Are we alone?

In a series of highly interactive galleries, guests and school groups will meet people who are pushing limits of human endurance to unlock Earth's remaining frontiers such as the uncharted deep ocean, subterranean caves, the frozen reaches of Antarctica and the mysterious planet Mars.

Guests will search for answers to life's greatest mysteries as they "venture" to the outermost regions of Earth and space on personal journeys of exploration such as:

- **Oceanographers** venturing to the sea floor to study life forms that survive the crushing pressures and temperature extremes of the ocean abyss.
- **Cavers** rappelling into an unexplored cave in search of extremophile life forms that inhabit the universe underground.
- **Polar explorers** drilling ice core samples in Antarctica to obtain a record of climate change going back thousands of years.
- **Mars scientists** practicing for the first human mission to the Red Planet in a Mars-like environment on Earth.

Through these rich, immersive experiences, guests will discover astonishing life forms such as microbes and bioluminescent fish that flourish in toxic conditions yet contain vital clues about the origins of life itself. They will come to understand how robotics can assist in extreme and dangerous exploration such as the Mars Exploration Rovers that are currently conducting scientific studies on the surface of this highly volatile planet. And they will be able to view and test the latest gear used in advanced exploration like the Bio-Suit, which provides astronauts with enhanced mobility and protection by acting as a "second skin" through advances in biomechanical materials and wearable technologies.

At the center of *Blue Planet • Red Planet* is a 360-degree theatrical experience designed to transport guests from the extreme boundaries of Earth to the distant limits of our solar system—and ultimately to Mars. The presentation "Into the Great Unknown" begins as an invitation to awaken the explorer within each of us, builds to a high-energy, visually stunning ride through the solar system, and culminates in a simulated landing on the Red Planet itself.

Throughout the exhibit space, a series of interactive polling stations will ask thought-provoking questions and gather answers in real time. Questions such as: could you live in sulfur-infused cave? Would you go to Mars if it were only a one-way trip? The cumulative results will be displayed in a fashion that charts the journey of discovery.

All great exploration first begins with imagination. *Explore: Blue Planet • Red Planet* will spark the imagination of each student, teacher, child and adult and inspire them to begin exploring the world, and the universe, that is around them.

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