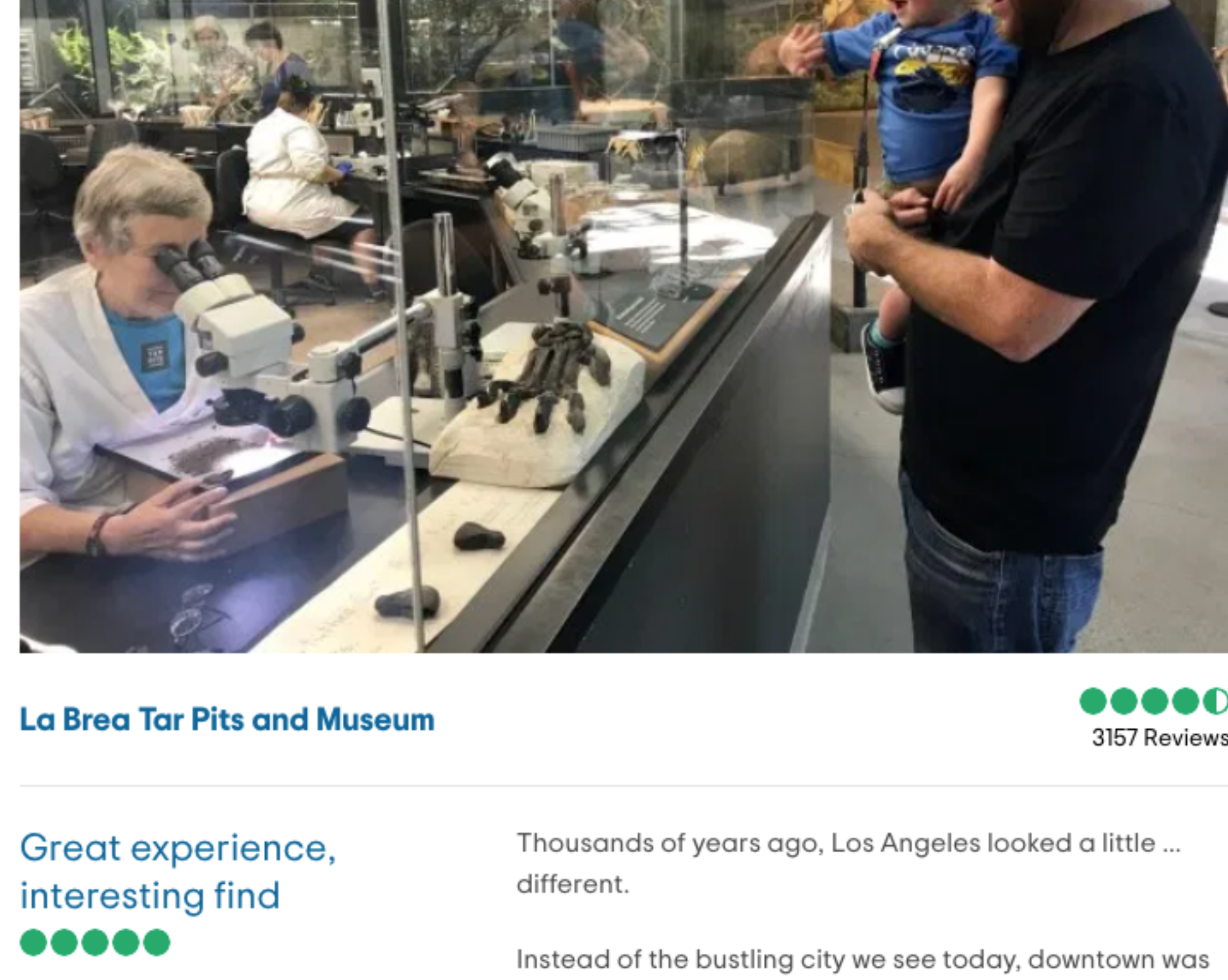


# Curious California

California has a fascinating history. During prehistoric times it was home to some of the most unique animals on the planet. In the 1800s, the Gold Rush helped bring the railroad to town. And in recent years the state has become synonymous with startups and some of the biggest technological advances in the world. When it comes to getting families excited about history and technology, California's museums do it in a way that's so interesting and interactive, your kids won't even realize they're learning. We've partnered with Visit California to bring six of our travelers' favorite family-friendly museums in California.

Inspiration Tips

## La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, Los Angeles



**La Brea Tar Pits and Museum** 3157 Reviews

**Great experience, interesting find**

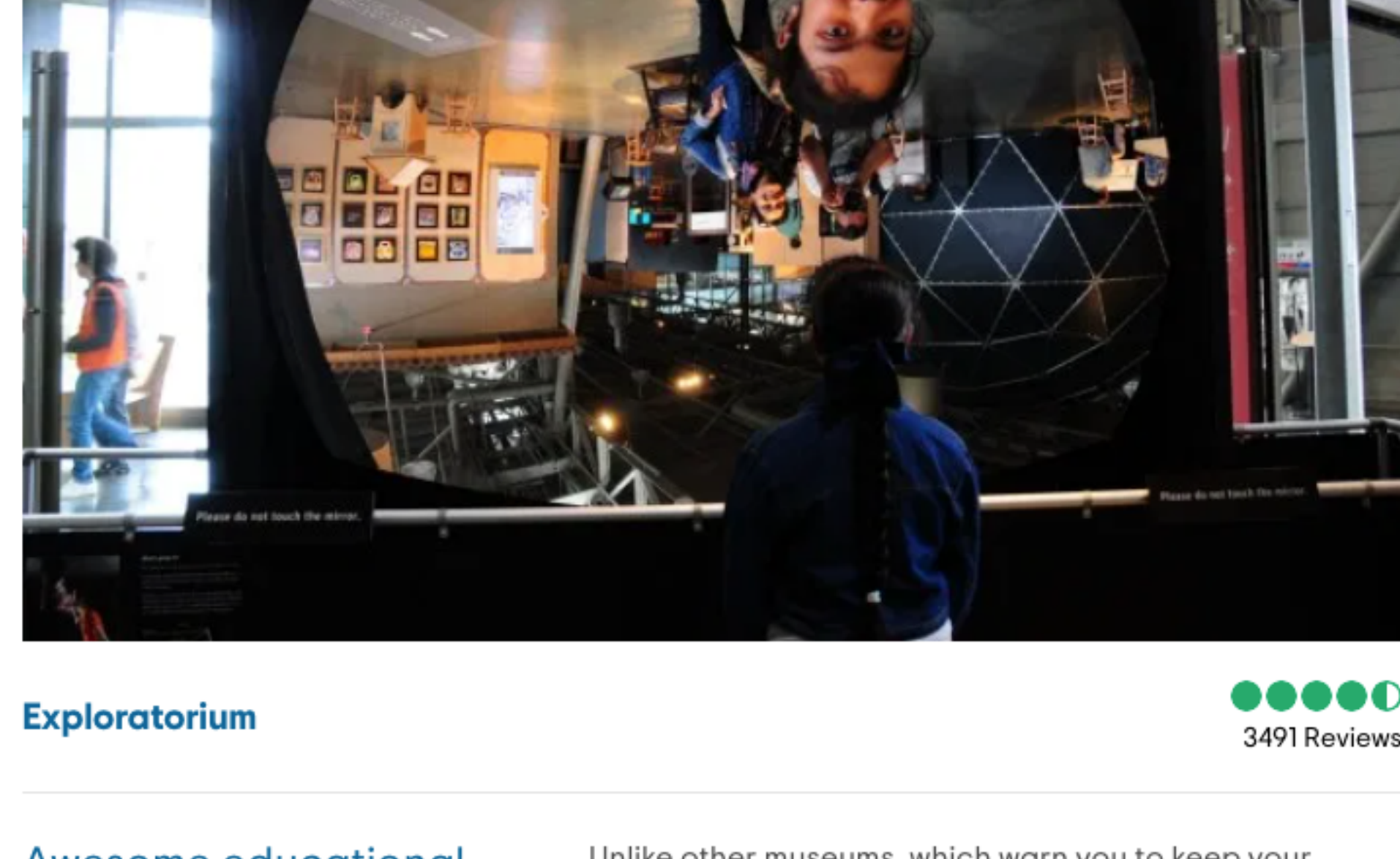
Thousands of years ago, Los Angeles looked a little ... different.

Instead of the bustling city we see today, downtown was a vast wilderness, home to dire wolves, sloths and saber-toothed cats. The **La Brea Tar Pits and Museum** tells the story of prehistoric California in a series of fascinating exhibits that are as fun as they are factual.

Kids will love the fossilized remains of massive mammals like mastodons and mammoths. They'll get a kick out of the lakes of smelly tar that still bubble and foam today. And they may decide their future career while watching the paleontologists and scientists hard at work in the Fossil Lab.

For an extra exciting take on La Brea, consider a [Segway tour](#) of the famous tar pits.

## Exploratorium, San Francisco



**Exploratorium** 3491 Reviews

**Awesome educational cavernous location, great for kids of all ages**

Unlike other museums, which warn you to keep your hands to yourself, the **Exploratorium** is totally hands-on. Maybe that's why it's one of the most popular attractions in the state. Kids, and adults, are encouraged to touch, poke and feel their way around more than 650 exhibits about science, art and human perception.

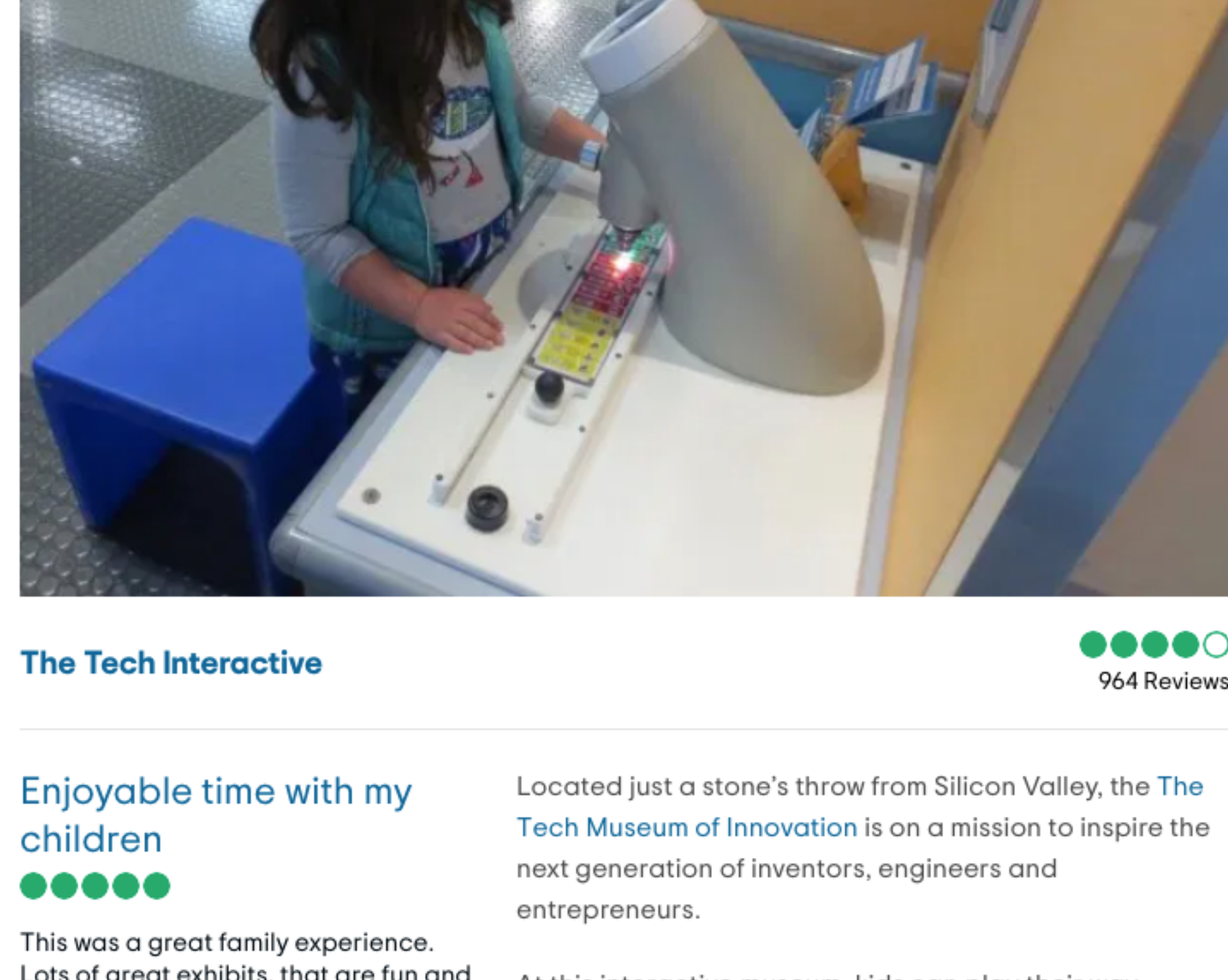
Learn how the light spectrum affects our sense of color in the monochromatic room. See how some of the smallest organisms on the planet live in the Plankton Populations exhibit, and challenge your perceptions of space and proportion in the upside-down world created by the Giant Mirror.

For many children, the highlight of the Exploratorium is the Tactile Dome. Kids are challenged to work their way through an unlit maze, using only their sense of touch to find their way forward in total darkness. Adults can also get in on the fun.

**"I highly recommend adding on the Tactile Dome: This was the coolest thing that my tween daughter and I have done together," said one mom. "I wish my son would have gone with us - but he was lost in the Exploratorium doing his own teen thing. I'll talk him into it next time!"**

You can buy tickets to the Exploratorium at the museum, but [online reservations](#) are recommended.

## The Tech Museum of Innovation, San Jose



**The Tech Interactive** 964 Reviews

**Enjoyable time with my children**

Located just a stone's throw from Silicon Valley, the **The Tech Museum of Innovation** is on a mission to inspire the next generation of inventors, engineers and entrepreneurs.

At this interactive museum, kids can play their way through exhibits that teach them about the technological innovations that have changed the way humans live. In the Cyber Detectives room, they'll learn about data encryption while decoding secret messages. While the Innovations in Health Care exhibit teaches them about cancer-sniffing dogs and the impact 3-D printers will have on organ and skin transplants.

The museum also has an Exploration Gallery where kids can experience weightlessness, see what the earth looks like from space and learn about the forces that have shaped the planet over the millennia.

**"Be sure to go downstairs to the earthquake simulator if you want to see what an earthquake feels like!" said one traveler.**

## California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento



**California State Railroad Museum** 2757 Reviews

**Simply the best**

My grandson is five and I am 72. We were both thrilled with this museum. It is fascinating and staffed...

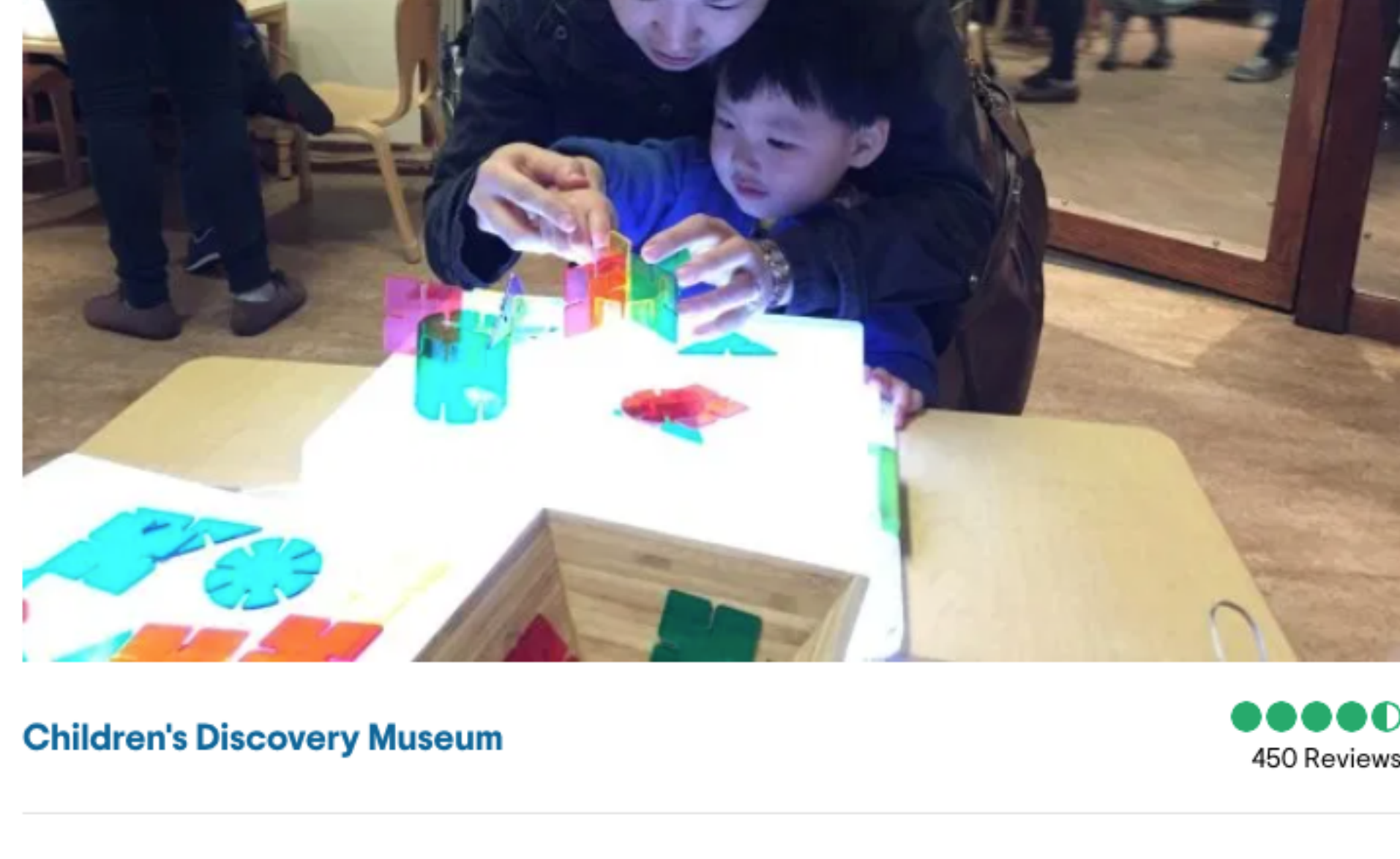
A few millennia after the mastodons, the transcontinental railroad reached California, forever changing the state and the country. At the **California State Railroad Museum**, kids won't realize they're learning about history and technology as they explore the many steam locomotives on display.

Families can wander the remarkably preserved dining cars and sleeper cabins that date back to 1862, and see what the future of train travel holds in the light rail exhibit.

**"This is a great place to take kids to see how the railroad help build America," said one traveler.**

But the highlight of any visit, for kids and adults, is a ride on the Sacramento Southern Railroad. Each cabin represents a different era in train travel, and the train is often pulled by one of the museum's vintage locomotives.

## Children's Discovery Museum, San Jose



**Children's Discovery Museum** 450 Reviews

**A magical Experience for the Young....and Young at Heart**

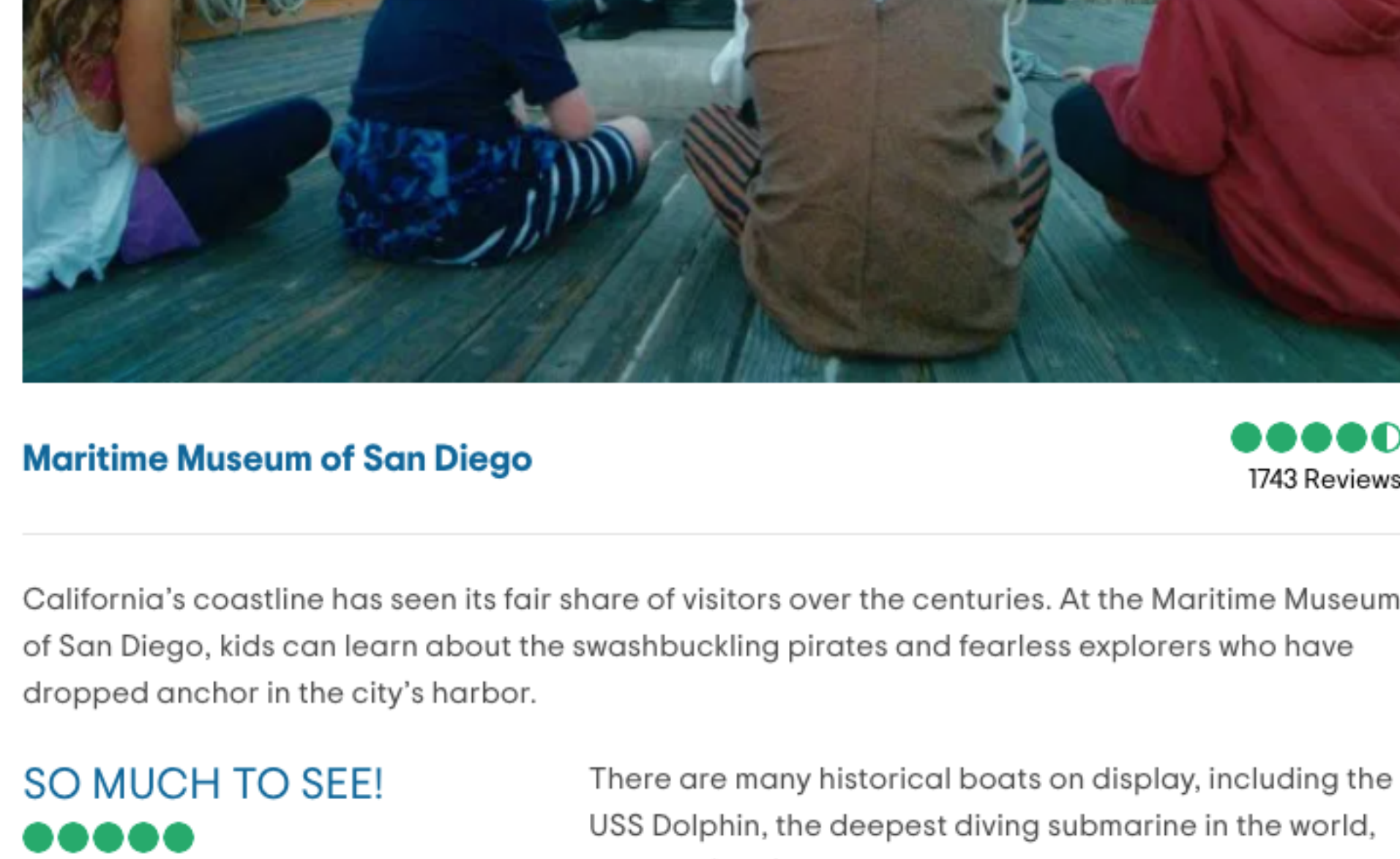
The **Children's Discovery Museum** was designed as a center for learning and discovery. But good luck telling your kids that. They'll be too busy climbing trees, digging for fossils and blowing giant bubbles to realize they're also learning about nature, history and physics.

The Children's Discovery Museum is especially popular with kids 10 and younger. There's also a special section designed for children younger than 4.

**"This museum can keep kids busy and happy for hours!" said one traveler. "You name it, they have it - bubble play, water area, corn doll making, supermarket/restaurant play area, firetruck, ambulance, Wells Fargo carriage, castle, arts area, face painting. Basically plan to be there for hours, and let your kids go crazy/happy/content."**

In addition to all the interactive exhibits, the Children's Discovery Museum also hosts regular performances by groups ranging from Tahitian dancers to Japanese drummers, as well as art classes and special events, throughout the year.

## Maritime Museum of San Diego, San Diego



**Maritime Museum of San Diego** 1743 Reviews

California's coastline has seen its fair share of visitors over the centuries. At the **Maritime Museum of San Diego**, kids can learn about the swashbuckling pirates and fearless explorers who have dropped anchor in the city's harbor.

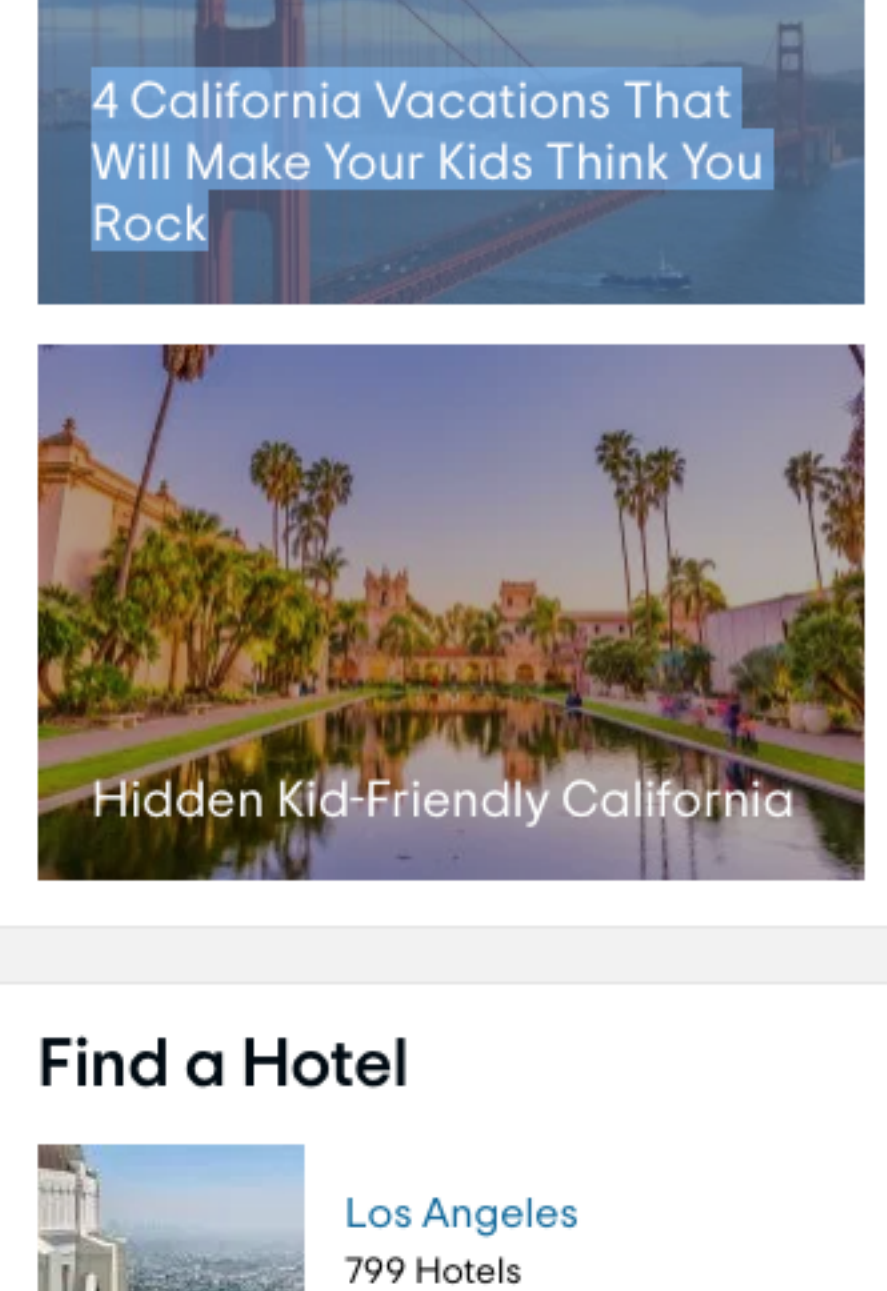
**SO MUCH TO SEE!**

There are many historical boats on display, including the USS Dolphin, the deepest diving submarine in the world, and the San Salvador, the first European vessel to reach the West Coast. Several of the boats are still operational, including the America yacht, which operates **whale watching tours** throughout the migratory season. Your kids won't realize they're getting a lesson in marine biology as they watch gray whales and dolphins breach and spout around them.

**"I would absolutely recommend taking this tour if you are in San Diego during the whale migrating season," said one traveler. "At one point we saw a group of five whales!"**

Visit [TripAdvisor](#) to see all of the amazing family vacations the Golden State has to offer.

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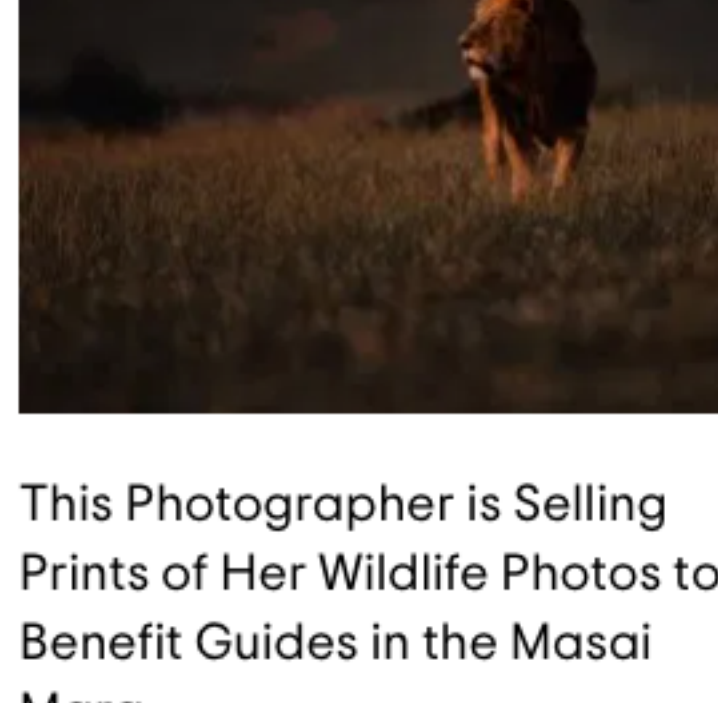
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