

# Self Guided Griffith Observatory Tour

## Beginning from the Café at the End of the Universe....

As you exit the **Café** in to the foyer, you will see the **Stellar Emporium** right across the way. Do make time to visit this great gift and book shop.

Turn right out of the Café and make your way into the **Gunther Depths of Space**. This is our completely new addition to the Observatory and it is all underground. Although the entire expansion area is known as the Gunther Depths of Space, right now you are on the mezzanine area known as the **Edge of Space**. Proceed straight and enjoy learning about the meteorites and comets in the **Pieces of the Sky** display on your right hand side. Ask the Museum Guides at the information desk to let you hold an actual piece of a meteorite. Look to your left and you will see a **cloud chamber** and a **spark chamber** – and then beyond that you will see the railing and an incredible wall of stars in our lower Gunther Depths of Space.

This **Big Picture**, as it is called, is made from a photograph of a sliver of our night sky blown up to cover a 152' wide and 20' tall expanse. It is the largest astronomically accurate representation of the night sky ANYWHERE in the world. As you look out at it from the Edge of Space you will see bright spots that appear to have fuzzy edges. Look at them through the telescopes on the railings and see the different colors and that much of what you are looking at are not just stars but galaxies – made up of billions of stars of their own. Cast your eyes to the left and you will see a beautiful sand blasted glass representation of our own galaxy, **Our Milky Way**.

Keep walking along and you will pass the **Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon** theater, another brand new space. Inside, on the hour, you can view a great documentary on ***The Once and Future Griffith Observatory*** for no charge. At other times you might find a demonstration on How to Make a Comet (available traditionally in the summer and holiday months).

Past the theater you will find the six-foot globe of **Our Moon** and next to it an actual rock from the Moon. There is a scale in the floor to let you see how much you would weigh on the Moon. If you turn left at the Moon you reach the stairs and the elevator going to the lower Gunther Depths of Space and the restrooms. Go down to the Depths of Space.

As you arrive in the **Gunther Depths of Space** you will find you are up close with the Big Picture. There is a video monitor there to explain all about what you are seeing. Keep coming in to the large area and experience the magnificence of having **The Planets** arrayed all on your left and the Big Picture on the right. Visit each of the planets and read and view all that we now understand about the

planets. There is an alcove below the **Earth** representation and inside you will find a globe of the Earth with a **seismograph** that monitors the Earth's movements. If you want to see and feel the Earth move, jump up and down in front of the seismograph and watch the needle move.

If you are wondering about the relative size of each of the planets, imagine the grey gridded round wall (which is the Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon theater's wall) as the approximate size of the Sun. Each of the planets is scaled to the correct size in comparison to the Sun.

Obviously there is much more to see here, so please enjoy.

Either return up using the elevator or climb up the stairs closest to **Pluto** (yes, Griffith Observatory still recognizes Pluto, as a *minor* planet) and you will find yourself facing a corridor known as the **Cosmic Connection**. Wander up this corridor and you will find a stunning array of celestial-themed jewelry. This represents our Universe's timeline. Where you are beginning is where humankind appears – and that is represented by the faces on the jewelry at the edge of the exhibit. Keep walking up and you will find yourself looking at over 2000 pieces of jewelry, all collected by one woman. She is a long-time Board member of Friends Of The Observatory. Her aim with this collection and exhibit was to help us all realize that the Universe is not just beyond us but is, in fact, around us all the time and we have mementos to remind us throughout our daily lives. Whether it is candy (Milky Way bars), or cars (Saturn) or music we are involved with our Universe in a very personal way. At the far end of the corridor you will see the Big Bang represented by jeweled stick pins.

You have reached the **Center of Gravity – the Friends Of The Observatory desk** is here and members can collect their pre-reserved planetarium show tickets here. Note the beautiful bronze stars on the **Donor Wall** behind the desk. These represent the generous donors who contribute to FOTO, including our capital campaign which helped us raise over 93 million dollars for the expansion and renovation of the Observatory.

Either take the elevator up to the next level or climb our grand staircase to reach the classic level of Griffith Observatory. If you come up the elevator you will find yourself in the **W. M. Keck Foundation Central Rotunda**. If you come up the stairs you will find yourself facing the **South Gallery** (which will have stanchions closing it off). Turn to your right and come down another short flight of steps and then turn left to the Keck Foundation Central Rotunda. One of the important messages of Griffith Observatory is to “look up” and you will certainly want to look up here. The beautiful murals encircling the top part of the walls represent science through the ages. Here you will find astronomy, aeronautics, metallurgy, *etc...* On the ceiling you will find mythological and astronomical representations of the stories about the sky. All of this artwork was painted by Hugo Ballin in 1934.

In the Central Rotunda you will find the **Foucault Pendulum**. A Museum Guide will describe in more detail how the motion of the pendulum proves that the Earth is moving.

Move down to the **Ahmanson Hall of the Sky**. As you are progressing through the corridor note the exhibits lining each side. These exhibits answer questions that our Museum staff have been answering for years – why are there different phases of the Moon, what are eclipses, why do we have seasons, *etc....* These exhibits are designed to be immersive environments to help the visitor truly understand the concepts. Upon reaching the end of the corridor you will find the **coelostat** (a solar telescope) that in the daytime allows you to look at an actual, live image of our Sun. You can often see solar prominences, sun spots and flares. Look around this area and learn more about the Sun and the **Elements**.

Go back the way you came and cross the Keck Foundation Central Rotunda to the **Ann Marie and Jack C. Wilder Hall of the Eye**. As you move down this corridor you will see on your right the **Tesla Coil**. Ask a Museum Guide to demonstrate the awesome power of the Coil. The Tesla Coil was developed by Nikola Tesla as a method to transmit electricity. On your left (across from the Tesla Coil) you will see a small room. Inside is the **Camera Obscura**. This device allows you to see a rotating 360-degree view of the landscape and city outside of the Observatory.

As you reach the end of the corridor you are looking at many of the ways that mankind has observed the sky - from an exact replica of **Galileo's telescope**, to the **model of the Palomar Mountain telescope**, to the Pepper's Ghost dioramas explaining how we have needed the information from the sky to navigate, tell time and decide when to plant crops. There is also a wonderful section detailing how important California has been in space discovery and exploration.

Come back up to the Keck Foundation Central Rotunda and go up the short flight of steps towards the **Samuel Oschin Planetarium** theater. Immediately in front of it is the South Gallery – another beautiful demonstration of art deco design. As a member of Friends Of The Observatory, you can wait here in the South Gallery for your planetarium show, **Centered in the Universe**. When you enter the Samuel Oschin Planetarium theater you will note the comfortable seats (many with donor tags on the arms from people who donate to Friends Of The Observatory) and the beautiful cork flooring. What you won't see are the astounding laser projectors, sound baffling and sophisticated speaker system – all designed to make you forget you are in an enclosed room. As the presentation begins you will see rising up from the floor the most amazing star projector anywhere in the world – the Zeiss Mark IX Universarium specially devised for Griffith Observatory.

Upon leaving the planetarium show you will exit out on to the **West Observation Terrace**. The view from here is magnificent – many times you can

see the Pacific Ocean, Catalina and Palos Verdes, not to mention downtown Los Angeles.

Come around to the front of the building and go up the staircase on either side to the roof. (If stairs are a problem, there is an elevator inside the Keck Foundation Central Rotunda that will take you directly up to the roof level. The **Zeiss telescope** is up there and at full dark a Telescope Operator will be inside to describe and help you see whatever the telescope is trained upon that evening. This telescope has been used by more people than any other telescope in the world.

We certainly hope you have had a great visit to Griffith Observatory and that you will be back soon.