National Postal Museum

Tactile Exhibit Guide for Visitors

This guide is a suggested listing of some artifacts and galleries that have interactive and touchable exhibits, geared to enhance the museum experience for all visitors.

Historic Lobby: The space you are in now is the National Postal Museum's historic lobby. This building was built in 1914 (over 100 years ago!) and has been a functioning post office ever since. It was designed by Daniel Burnham, who also designed Union Station across the street.

- Marble columns- Located every 10 feet on either wall of the historic lobby
- Mailboxes- Between columns on each wall, there is a wall of inserted mailboxes.
- Carved Lions- There are [three?] marble tables spaced down the center of the historic lobby. On each corner of the table is an intricately carved lion.

William H. Gross Gallery: The Gross Gallery is an overview of Philately, including philatelic gems, stamps from around the world and the museum's collection of stamps- the largest stamp collection in the world!

- Engraving plate- Located in front of the spider press is a sample of an engraving plate. Feel the delicate design. Engraving plates like this were used to create stamps until the early 1900s.
- Start your own stamp collection- Located just outside the Stamp Salon is table with trays of stamps visitors can take home.
- Interactives- This exhibit features many touch screen interactives and videos. The videos located along the wall have assistive listening devices. There is a free standing interactive that allows visitors to search for stamps by topic and theme. Lastly, at the start your own stamp collection table is an interactive that allows visitors to design their own stamp.

Atrium: Down the escalator from the lobby is the Atrium. The atrium features a 4 story high glass ceiling. The atrium contains different exhibit areas.

Moving the Mail: This exhibit tells the story of how the postal service faced the challenge of moving the mail quickly, including trains, automobiles, airplanes and buses.

This is a large space with several large objects. It is helpful to orient yourself to this space using a clock analogy. Standing in the center of the Atrium and assuming the "Binding the Nation" entrance is 12 o'clock.

- Semi-Truck- In the back right corner of the Atrium (2 o'clock) is the cab of a semi-truck. Utilize the small staircase to climb inside the truck.
- Mail Car- Located at 4 o'clock, The Railway Mail Service revolutionized the way mail was processed by sorting mail aboard moving trains. Step inside the mail car and see what is was like to be a railway postal clerk. Inside the car you will find cubbies used to hold sorted mail and many mail bags. There is also

a video telling the story of Railway Post Office clerks, as told by four ex RPO clerks. Note that there is only one seat in the whole train car- the toilet!

- Long Life Vehicle and Collection Box tactile- Located in the Atrium at 8 o'clock is a postal service Long Life Vehicle (LLV) and collection box. On the railing in front of these objects is a tactile image of the LLV and collection box.
- Model A and Owens Box tactile- On the railing in front of these objects is a tactile image of the Model A and Owens Box.

Binding the Nation: This gallery provides an overview of mail service in America from colonial times through the 19th century, stressing the importance of written communication in the young nation.

- Forest trail- This forest is a model of what the first postal route would have been like. The first postal route was between New York and Boston and utilized old Indian trails.
- Mud Wagon- Climb inside and touch the body of the Mud Wagon. Mud wagons carried mail and passengers along routes throughout the West.

Systems at Work: Systems at Work recreates the paths of letters, magazines, parcels, and other mail as they travel from sender to recipient over the last 200 years.

- MPLSM- In the back corner of Systems at Work is a table with the MPLSM. Rows of postal workers sat in front of keyboards like this and processed mail by "keying in" the first three numbers of each zip code. The first two or three numbers of the zip code would then sort the mail into bins representing different sections of the country. Postal workers could process more than 60 letters per minute!
- USPS Scanner (IMD)- As you enter the Systems at Work gallery, the table containing the scanners will be on the second table to your right. The IMD scans the bar code on each piece of mail, that barcode can tell us how the mail was sorted, helps track individual pieces of mail and can help determine when the mail will arrive.
- Rural Post Office – As you exit Sytems at Work, you will enter Customers and Communities which features this rural post office. http://arago.si.edu/media/000/029/970/29970_xl.jpg