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Real Pirates: The Untold Story of the Whydah from Slave Ship to Pirate Ship
National Geographic Exhibition comes to Arizona Science Center

“This is a story of the making of America - a true story more powerful than fiction.” – Jeffrey Bolster, University of New Hampshire professor of early American and Caribbean history

(Phoenix, AZ) September 29, 2011: The classical age of piracy will come to life in Arizona as Arizona Science Center welcomes Real Pirates: The Untold Story of the Whydah from Slave Ship to Pirate Ship. The 8,400-square-foot interactive exhibition will run from Oct. 2, 2011 – Jan. 15, 2012. The exhibition showcases more than 200 artifacts including treasure, weaponry, everyday objects and personal items from the first fully authenticated pirate ship ever to be discovered in U.S. waters.

Real Pirates is a touring exhibition organized by National Geographic and Arts & Exhibitions International (AEI). The exhibition tells the true story of the Whydah – a pirate ship that sank off the coast of Cape Cod nearly 300 years ago. The exhibition features treasure chests filled with coins from all over the world, including authentic coins that visitors can touch, pirate dress items, daily objects used aboard the ship, jewelry, and technically advanced weaponry of the time – 18th century cannon, pistols and swords. These artifacts were painstakingly recovered from the ocean floor by underwater explorer Barry Clifford and his team over the past two and a half decades. One of the most striking artifacts is the ship’s bell, inscribed “Whydah Gally 1716,” which was used to authenticate the shipwreck site as that of the Whydah.

“Real Pirates tells a serious story that reveals piracy as it actually was, not just how it’s usually represented in popular culture,” said Chevy Humphrey, CEO of Arizona Science Center. “We are thrilled to bring an exhibit of this caliber to Arizona.”
Exhibition visitors will get an unprecedented glimpse into the unique economic, political and social circumstances of life in the early 18th century. Highlighted throughout the exhibition are compelling true stories of the diverse people whose lives converged on the Whydah before its demise. Multimedia galleries showcase this period of history, including the slave trade based in West Africa and the economic prosperity in the Caribbean. Visitors can get a sense of everyday life aboard the Whydah pirate ship, and meet Captain Sam Bellamy, one of the boldest and most successful pirates of his day. Then continue on the journey with Bellamy as he sails, looting dozens of ships before a violent storm sank the vessel off the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, April 26, 1717.

“This unique and extraordinary exhibition defines the best of exploration,” said Terry Garcia, National Geographic's executive vice president, Mission Programs. “From an archaeological perspective, we have the discovery of the shipwreck, its excavation and the process by which it was authenticated. From a cultural perspective, we explore the rich history of the Caribbean trade routes during the 18th century and the inextricable link between the slave trade and piracy. This is the first time that this amazing story, with all of its interconnected layers and characters, will be presented in such an engaging format.”

In this exhibition, visitors can hoist a pirate flag, tie pirate knots, and enter the ship as the pirates did, by ducking through a large wooden door and going “below deck” of aboard the Whydah in a life-size replica of the ship’s stern.

Real Pirates personally relates to visitors by sharing the stories of four members of the Whydah crew — people who ended up on the same pirate ship for very different reasons — such as John King, the youngest-known pirate on board the Whydah, who was believed to be younger than 11 years old at the time of the shipwreck. King’s piracy began when the ship he was traveling on with his mother was captured by Captain Bellamy and he joined the pirate crew despite his mother’s objections.

ABOUT ARIZONA SCIENCE CENTER
The mission of Arizona Science Center is to inspire, educate and entertain people of all ages about science. The Center, located at 600 E. Washington Street in downtown Phoenix, features more than 300 hands-on exhibits, live demonstrations, the state-of-the-art Dorrance Planetarium and a five-story IMAX® theater. For more information visit www.azscience.org or call 602-716-2007.