



Tommy Bartlett Exploratory – Fun Facts –

- Tommy Bartlett Exploratory has been highlighting hands-on family fun for more than 35 years. The science center has entertained more than 3.5 million people since its opening in 1982.
- Visitors can stay in the Exploratory as long as they like. Most spend an average of 1½ hours experiencing the more than 175 interactive, scientific and educational exhibits at the attraction.
- A featured exhibit outside is the Giant Lever involving a large 57-foot steel beam, weighing almost three tons, on a support tripod, allowing visitors to pull a rope and test their strength while lifting a 5,000-pound, full-sized vehicle off the ground.
- One of the main highlights at the Exploratory is an area dedicated to the marvels and milestones of space exploration. The space hangar focuses on many “firsts” in space travel, including a replica Mercury Space Capsule, the United States’ first manned spaceship during the historic Project Mercury missions which ran from 1958 – 1963.
- The Mercury Space Capsule is only about 6’10” x 6’2”, which is why only candidates who were under 5’11” and less than 180 pounds were considered for astronaut positions for the program.
- Deke Slayton, one of the Mercury Seven astronauts, was from Sparta, Wis., located just north of Wisconsin Dells.
- The High Wire SkyCycle takes riders on a journey 12 feet in the air. The special modified bicycle balances on the “world’s thinnest bike trail” as daring souls go for a ride.
- The Exploratory is the only place on Earth where people can see the inside of the authentic Russian Space Station MIR core module that houses the key operations living quarters and docking areas for the space station.
- Seeing the Bartlett MIR core module up close gives people a good idea of what life in space is like for the crew of the present day International Space Station program.
- An early version of current gaming technology, the Virtual Sports Center allows players participate in games and extreme sports through a virtual reality computer program.

- The hair-raising experience of the “Bridge of Fire” continues to be one of the most popular exhibits in the Exploratory. The exhibit teaches visitors about the static electricity generator built by Dr. Robert J. Van de Graaff in the early 1940s.
- Tommy Bartlett Exploratory is a playground for people of all ages, with interactive exhibits ranging from mind-boggling puzzles using simple blocks, to computerized toys that use virtual reality and simulation technologies.
- The GravBall simulates the effects of weightlessness through the futuristic game using virtual reality technology.
- Tommy Bartlett’s MIR module is one of only three manufactured by the Russian government.
- In the “Shadow Room,” visitors strike a pose and stand back in awe as they see their shadow cast on the wall.
- The Van de Graaff generator sends 100,000 volts of static electricity through your body making your hair stand on end.
- The virtual reality exhibits are a favorite among the visitors. At the “Kick-It-Pro” exhibit visitors kick a real soccer ball to test the speed and trajectory of their attempted virtual goal.
- Tommy Bartlett’s MIR exhibit was used as a backdrop for CNN and local media outlets in June 1997 when a Russian supply ship crashed into the MIR in space causing severe damage.
- Bartlett’s MIR exhibit took center stage again in March 2001 when the MIR in space was brought down out of orbit. CNN used the site as a backdrop for two days of live news coverage explaining the complexities of the de-orbit process and significance of the MIR program.
- An estimated 285 school and youth groups tour the Tommy Bartlett Exploratory annually.
- Tommy Bartlett Exploratory offers indoor entertainment all year long.