

# Tiqets

More ways to culture

## 2020's Best Museums Share How To Improve Visitor Experience



**How can you entice visitors back after a year-long cultural hiatus? By offering a world-class visitor experience.**

It's taken imagination, fortitude, and resilience for museums to emerge from a global pandemic and offer up extraordinary visitor experiences as they've reopened. Those are just some of the qualities Tiqets celebrated in the [2020 Remarkable Venue Awards](#).

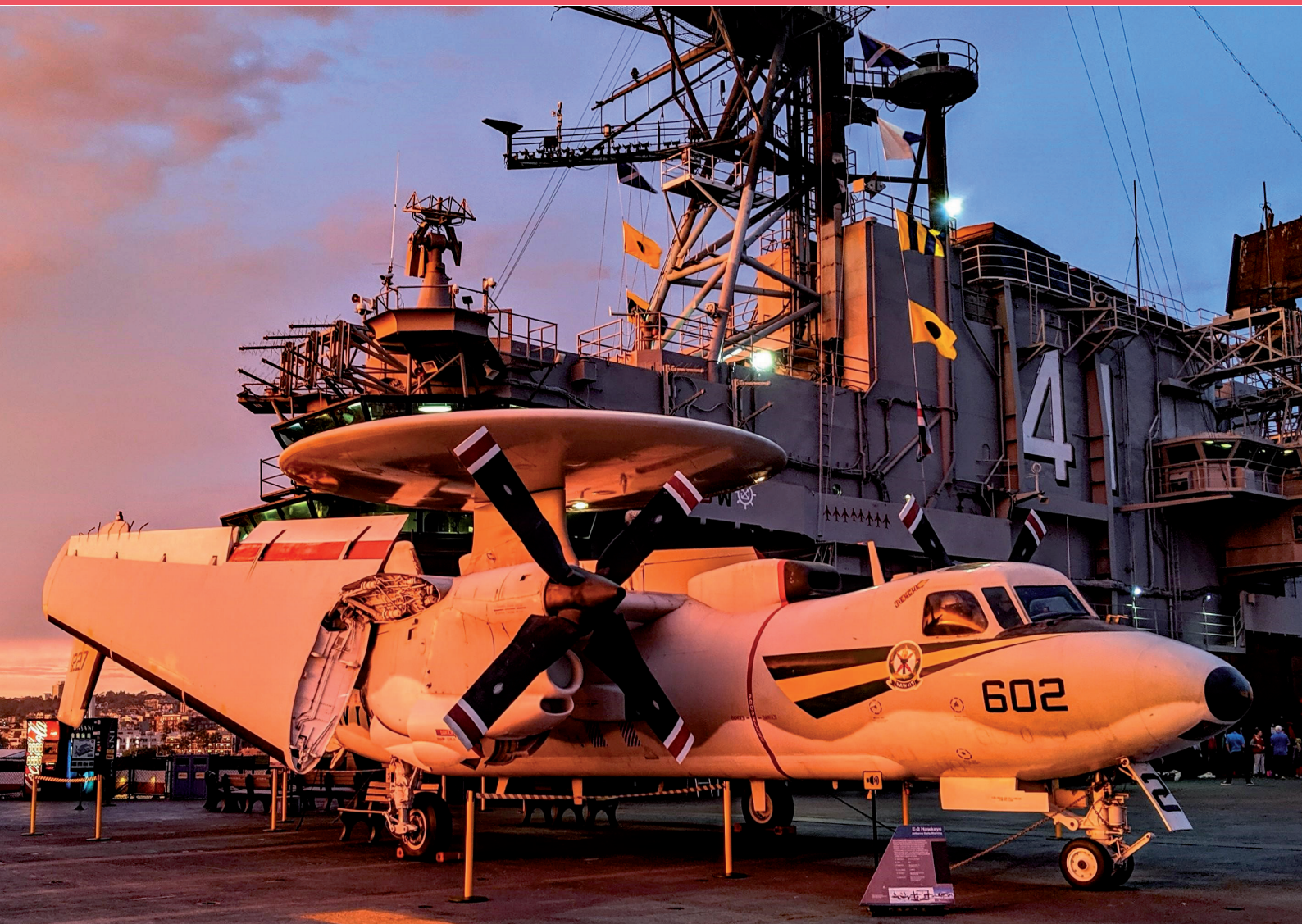
The winners of the 2020 Best Museum Award all have one thing in common: they've translated captivating subject matter into a unique experience, in a stunning space. They were all incredible museums before the pandemic, and they've emerged to showcase an even more highly calibrated degree of customer experience. They've been successful in holding their strong vision while staying creative in execution. They've been not just agile, but truly remarkable.

These four museums serve as examples of how to deliver five-star visitor experiences regardless of what's going on in the world. Read on for inspiration into how to improve your own museum visitor experience.

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# USS Midway Museum





**Joseph Wagstaff**  
 Travel Industry Sales Manager

“An advantage we have over other museums is that people don’t know what to expect. Most people don’t understand what an aircraft carrier is and does. When they get here, they’re enthralled by the vessel itself.”  
 - Joseph Wagstaff, Travel Industry Sales Manager, USS Midway Museum

A unique theme	The perfect setting	5-star experience
A historical naval aircraft carrier with over 60 carefully restored exhibit areas, from the engine room to the flight deck.	The USS Midway is permanently docked in stunning San Diego Bay in California, USA.	Visitors tour the longest-serving US Navy ship at the hands of volunteer docents, many of whom served in the Navy and on this very ship, and have vivid memories to share.

**What visitors say**

“The staff there was extremely friendly and helpful and we thoroughly enjoyed stops with commentaries from the staff. You can tell they love what they do and are passionate about speaking about the midway.”  
 - Rhonda from Switzerland

From the tail end of World War II through Operation Desert Storm, the USS Midway served in the United States Navy for longer than any other ship to date. With her rich history, the ship was decommissioned in 1992 and converted to a museum in the San Diego Bay in 2004. Since then, The USS Midway Museum has hosted about a million guests a year, and boasts over 30 aircraft, a 3D holographic movie theater, maps in six languages, a flight simulator, and a brand new cafe. The brand of the USS Midway Museum is inviting, interactive, and family friendly, which has helped make this attraction so wildly successful.

The USS Midway has more than 87K reviews online, and the average review is 4.9 stars.

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## The secret:

**Recruit knowledgeable volunteers who have riveting stories to share**



One of the USS Midway Museum's core values is guest experience. Another is volunteers. "One of the biggest reasons Midway has been successful over the years is our docents," says Joseph Wagstaff, Travel Industry Sales Manager, USS Midway Museum. "Their stories and the interaction that they have with the guests make the experience more memorable."

With more than 700 volunteers at any given time – mostly veterans, many of whom at some point served on this ship – visitors hear literal war stories and walk away with a much richer experience than they would from an impersonal exhibit.

“ Everything we do starts and ends with our core values. Our volunteers are the secret to our success. Without them, and the man hours that they provide, the museum wouldn't be as successful as it is.”

- Joseph Wagstaff, Travel Industry Sales Manager, USS Midway Museum

The USS Midway Museum found itself fighting a new kind of battle when the pandemic hit in 2020. Thanks to shut-downs and restrictions, the museum experienced an 80% percent drop in attendance and a lot of lost revenue. In addition to closures and attendance restrictions, the USS Midway Museum also hosts about 300 onboard events a year – some with as many as 3,500 guests – and that revenue stream, too, was brought to a standstill in 2020.

## Learns learned from a global pandemic

Some of the museum's in-person tours have translated well to virtual experiences.

- The education department, for instance, which ordinarily hosts more than 50K kids annually, has done a tremendous job shifting to online presentations.
- Wagstaff and his team have also created digital productions to bring the museum online for the general public. For instance, in the live video series Destination Midway, Karl Zingheim, the Ship Historian, tells rousing virtual stories of naval aviation and history first-hand.



As restrictions were lifted and the museum opened to the public, albeit with guidelines in place, the team has created new protocols that will probably outlast the pandemic. For instance, in the past, visitors would wander the ship at their leisure, but tight quarters made that challenging amidst personal-space mandates. Traffic pattern controls were put in place, with one-way traffic throughout most of the ship, and that's worked so well that the museum will probably continue it even after restrictions lift completely.

The museum used to operate on a "free sale" model, where visitors could buy tickets at any point during the day and stay as long as they want, but now, they've moved to a timed ticketing model – which has worked well. "During the high season, we would have as many as 8K people on board, and that can get crowded," says Wagstaff. "Because we have to manage how many people can come on board now, it's actually a more comfortable experience for people. That's been a big benefit."

While the best-case scenario would have been if the pandemic never happened, the positives that have emerged will make the USS Midway Museum – and the other attractions featured in this ebook – even stronger visitor experiences in the long run.

# Musée des Confluences



“ This place has a natural poetry, and the architecture of the museum serves as a masterful preamble.”

- Cédric Lesec, Director of External Affairs and Outreach, Musée des Confluences

### A unique theme

A science and anthropology museum that takes the visitor on a journey through time and across continents to observe the world around us.

### The perfect setting

A stunning glass-and-metal structure on the confluence of the Rhone and the Saône in Lyon, France.

### 5-star experience

Fascinating but highly accessible exhibits and rich programming that tell the story of mankind and the history of life.

### What visitors say

“If I had kids, I would take them here to learn about life.”

- Nicolas, Switzerland.

The Musée des Confluences has drawn more than 4 million visitors in under a decade, partly due to the fabulous setting. A confluence is the junction of two rivers, and per its name, the museum was built in 2014 on a peninsula at the intersection of the Rhône and Saône rivers in Lyon, France. It's a magnificent architectural marvel in an exceptional geographic location, giving visitors a panoramic view from the bridge-like metal and glass structure. The museum's fascinating exhibits tell the story of mankind and the history of life in a rich, interactive way. Permanent exhibits include Origins, which takes visitors back in time to the Big Bang and Eternities, which invites visitors to approach questions relating to death from the perspective of forensic medicine, biology, anthropology, philosophy, and theology.

The Musée des Confluences has more than 13K reviews online,  
and the average review on Tiqets is 4.9 stars.

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**The secret:**

**Curate a stunning physical experience**



“The interdisciplinary approach we take can change the way people connect to their common heritage,” says Cédric Leseq, Director of External Affairs and Outreach at the museum. “When presented in a different light, their heritage becomes alive.” Despite its heady subject matter, Musée des Confluences is known for being an inviting museum that’s accessible to everyone, contributing to a culture of influence about learning about the world. In polls taken by the museum in recent years, they discovered that more than 20% of visitors to the Musée des Confluences had not visited another cultural site in the prior year, and for 5%, their visit to the museum was their first museum visit ever.

Finding ways to captivate and engage diverse visitors with a strong narrative, a stunning location, and a range of programming has made the Musée des Confluences one of the premier attractions in France today.

“A museum is not a supermarket. In a museum, you have an experience, and each visitor has a different experience.”

- Cédric Leseq, Director of External Affairs and Outreach, Musée des Confluences



# The Peggy Guggenheim Collection



“ To live in Venice or even visit it means that you fall in love with the city itself. There is nothing left over in your heart for anything else.”  
- American art collector and socialite Peggy Guggenheim

### A unique theme

One of the most important museums of European and American art of the twentieth century, featuring Peggy Guggenheim's private collection.

### The perfect setting

Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, an unfinished palace built on the banks of the Venice canals in Italy – the home in which Guggenheim spent the last 30 years of her life.

### 5-star experience

Visitors are immersed in Guggenheim's own home to view her personal collection, which includes masterpieces from the Hannelore B. and Rudolph B. Schulhof collection, along with the sculpture garden where Guggenheim is interred.

### What visitors say

“Beautiful – highlight of our visit to Venice. This was a fantastic experience, we are in awe of such a wonderful collection, definitely worth a visit.”  
- Anonymous.

American art collector and socialite Peggy Guggenheim spent the last 30 years of her life in Venice, where she curated a breathtaking collection of furniture and art in her home, the Palazzo Venire dei Leoni. In 1979, its first year as an official museum, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection welcomed 100K visitors, and by 2017, that number had risen to more than 400K visitors annually.

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection has more than 7K reviews online, and the average review on Tiqets is 4.7 stars.

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## The secret:

Find new ways to share art and opulence with visitors – both local and virtual



Aside from offering a sublime venue in which to relax and absorb art, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection engages visitors with guided tours and free workshops for children every Sunday, among other activities. Before the pandemic, its audience consisted of around 75% travelers. They came from near and far to tour the art, view the Grand Canal from the Marino Marini Terrace, and relax in the Nasher Sculpture Garden, where Guggenheim is buried with her beloved dogs.

“Our mission is to make everybody feel at home, like a special guest.”  
- Patrizia Martignon, Officer for Visitor Services, The Peggy Guggenheim Collection

The Office for Visitor Services, headed by Patrizia Martignon, constantly works to optimize the museum visitor experience, and pandemic shutdown periods were no exception to that rule. During the lockdown, the museum had to cancel many of its in-person tours and activities, but new types of experiences emerged, including:

- Under the Microscope, a series of Zoom talks about artworks and movements.
- Overcoming Art Practices for the New Normal, a series of free workshops geared toward young people and devoted to public art and social practice.
- Art Is Life, an online art history lecture series.

## Lessons learned from a global pandemic

Other virtual programming has included online tours of the museum collections and a “Virtual Kids Day” to introduce younger children to works of art. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection has also stepped up its social media presence dramatically in the last year. This effort, and the lack of travel during the pandemic, has shifted the museum’s audience to a heavily local crowd.

Still, while the museum used to host 1,000 people a day, with COVID restrictions, that number is now 300. All of these changes have made for both a more accessible and a more intimate museum visitor experience. While shifting to an online-centric model has been an ongoing effort and a work in progress, the museum’s leadership has learned a tremendous amount about engaging visitors in new ways without lowering the caliber of experience.



# Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí





**Montse Aguer**  
Director of the Dalí Museums

“ It is also a pleasure to physically take a walk in a landscape that visitors have already seen in Dalí’s paintings, because they are real. It’s so peculiar; you won’t find anything similar.”

- Montse Aguer, Director of the Dalí Museums

### A unique theme

The art and life of Salvador Dalí, the surrealist Spanish artist known for his iconic paintings.

### The perfect setting

The house in Cadaqués, Catalonia, Spain, where Dalí lived and worked for over a half a century.

### 5-star experience

A priceless immersion into Dalí’s eccentric home, with its unconventional decor, rich art collection, and view of the Mediterranean Sea.

### What visitors say

“Beautiful... Lovely to see how Dali lived with Gala, must see if you are visiting this area. Beautiful house gardens, views... Loved it!”

- Meike, The Netherlands.

Salvador Dalí was excellent at promoting his own work during his lifetime. The surrealist Spanish artist, who died in 1989, is perhaps best known for his painting *The Persistence of Memory*, which helped cement his name as a brand. Montse Aguer, Director of the Dalí Museums, explains: “His persona became a work by itself and his name became a brand. This we need to manage carefully and respectfully.”

The Salvador Dalí House-Museum has 6.6K reviews online,  
and the average review on Tiqets is 4.8 stars.

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**The secret:**

**Offer a one-of-a-kind immersive experience  
with an iconic subject**



Project for Labyrinth, backdrop for ballet  
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, VEGAP 2021

The foundation, which oversees three Dalí museums, has an enormous global reach. Its marketing team takes advantage of international exhibitions, a documentary video trilogy, an extensive website, social media, traditional media, tourism promotion campaigns, and partnerships with tourism offices, hotel associations, and online booking technology companies such as Tiqets.

One of the biggest draws the foundation oversees is the Salvador Dalí House, Portlligat, located in the village of Cadaqués in Catalonia, Spain. Designed by the artist and used as a refuge by Dalí and his wife, Gala, the space, as Aguer puts it, “shows his quintessence throughout the objects in the collection.” It’s a unique house full of charming and quirky spots that museum visitors describe as amazing, perfect, ravishing, unforgettable.

To keep visitors from around the world enthralled and make them feel welcome, the museum provides an interpretation area, audiovisual materials, and places to rest and absorb the experience among the olive groves. The experience takes a cue from Dalí himself: “Salvador Dalí did not want to lead people but invite them through his labyrinth,” says Aguer. “This is why we don’t give visitors too many clues. We want the visitor to feel like they’re in a whole immersion in an intimate and scenic environment.” It’s a truly iconic experience that the Foundation believes even Dalí himself would be enthralled with.

# 4 secrets to creating a 5-star museum visitor experience



## Recruit knowledgeable volunteers who have riveting stories to share

The USS Midway Museum enlists volunteers to act as enthusiastic guides who don't just love the subject matter, but in some cases have lived the subject matter – making them living parts of the museum itself.



## Curate a stunning physical experience – inside and out

Musée des Confluences combines a beautiful landscape with stunning architecture, visually arresting exhibits, and a range of programming to attract all kinds of visitors and create a memorable experience.



## Find new ways to share your experience with visitors – both local and virtual

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection adds on to the in-person experience with sophisticated online offerings – some free, some at a cost – that spread the mission and values of the museum far and wide, and allow people to “come inside” even when they can't travel.



## Offer a one-of-a-kind immersive experience with an iconic subject

Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí offers an experience so true to the subject matter that visitors feel they're getting a rare inside glimpse into the life and mind of a famous artist.

# The 5th Secret: Keep evolving your visitor experience

This last year was challenging for museums around the world, but people will never stop craving new cultural and educational opportunities. For some museums, the pandemic forced a new wave of creativity around how to improve museum visitor experience virtually and create more intimate in-person experiences.

The right staff, a memorable setting, an impressive online offering, and an immersive quality are all elements that can help you create the kind of visitor experience that people will talk about long after the leave – and inspire others to book their tickets.

If you'd like more inspiration, check out [our case study of the Museum of Illusions in Madrid](#), which, despite a global pandemic, successfully launched in spring 2020 with the help of an online ticket booking system.

# Take advantage of the trends to kickstart your recovery

Now you have the knowledge you need to draw back visitors for the rest of 2021. But do you have the tech in place to make that simple?

Tiqets is offering a [free Recovery Package](#) to support venues after lockdown, so you can easily address all of the European traveler's common concerns. We'll help you manage visitor capacity, maximize your revenue, and streamline your marketing and communications to recover faster.

Learn more – and hear strategies from our 3,000 venue partners facing the same challenges – by [getting in touch with the team at Tiqets](#).

