A Museum packed with history

The Provence Room

The Provence Room is a listed Historical Monument and one of the gems of Longchamp. It provides a unique view of 19th-century museum layouts, showcasing fossils and stuffed specimens from Provence where many species have become extinct. Follow the history of this outstanding exhibition room.

From zoo to museum

Marseille Zoo, which opened in 1854 in the Longchamp Grounds and closed on 30th December 1987, was populated with up to 2,450 animals! As they died, the animals were added to the Museum's collections, like the giraffe and its calf that you can see in the permanent exhibition.

Did you know?

The Provence Room is overflowing with historical details. On the walls, below the 40 Provençal coats of arms, the enormous frescos by R. PONSON date from 1869. They depict the region's major ecosystems and mention the names of personalities who contributed to the wealth of the Museum's collections.

Unique architecture

Even when Longchamp Palace was designed in 1869, the right wing was intended to house the Museum's collections. H. Espérandieu worked in close cooperation with the curator C.J. Barthélemy-Lapommeray to ensure the furniture, frescos and architecture of the building matched the themes of the items on display.

1 / Auburtin fresco © MHNM

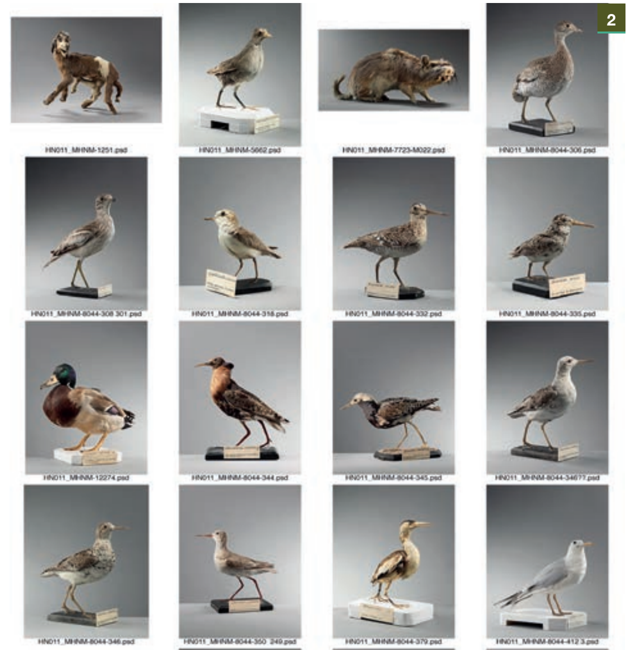
100 years of temporary exhibitions

A large temporary exhibition room is set aside for annual displays of collections from the museum's reserves. The themes vary to reflect the latest news from the world of science, but also depend on our cooperation partners. Contemporary art exhibitions on nature themes are also hosted regularly.

Eyes wide open!

The enormous wall paintings above the display cabinets of the permanent exhibition were restored between 1965 and 1968. They show the evolution of living beings from life's origins to the arrival of *Homo sapiens*. These artworks are quite similar to those painted by Charles R. Knight.
In the west pavilion, some frescos painted in the 1960s recreate the atmosphere of a prehistoric cave, through the main scenes featured in cave art since the Palaeolithic era.

The walls of the Museum's main stairways leading to the first floor regularly display photographic exhibitions or collections aimed at promoting the work of local artists or natural history illustrators. From the landings you can admire paintings by Jean-Francis AUBURTIN that date from 1899 and 1900 and are now listed Historical Monuments. All of the display cabinets designed by Henry ESPÉRANDIEU are also listed Historical Monuments and therefore cannot be removed.



The Museum's missions

To conserve, restore, study and enhance the collections

Today, only a few thousand specimens are on permanent display at the Museum. Since 2013, the CECM (Museum's Center of Preservation and Study) has facilitated the management of the collections in the best possible conservation conditions, all in 34 rooms on 6 levels across a total surface area of 2,000m², as well as the acquisition of new pieces and the hosting of researchers.

To contribute to progress in terms of knowledge, research and dissemination

The CECM opens its doors to researchers and strives to ensure that the knowledge made available through the exhibitions reaches the widest possible audience. Since 1876, its science bulletin, now entitled 'Mésogée', has been exchanged for the publications of 70 institutions in 50 different countries, thus building a unique documentary collection. The specialist resource centre can be visited by appointment.

2 / Digitization of collections the museum's collections 2017

Did you know?

The gecko that was rediscovered in the reserves of the Museum of Marseille in 1986 confirms the importance of conserving taxidermy specimens at the museum, especially when it comes to rare or threatened species.

3 / Centaurea

Key data

Botany:
> 60,000 specimens

Palaeontology:
> 81,000 specimens

Mineralogy:
8,000 specimens

Zoology:
> 550,660 specimens

Human sciences:
> 4,650 specimens

Library:
> 60,000 publications

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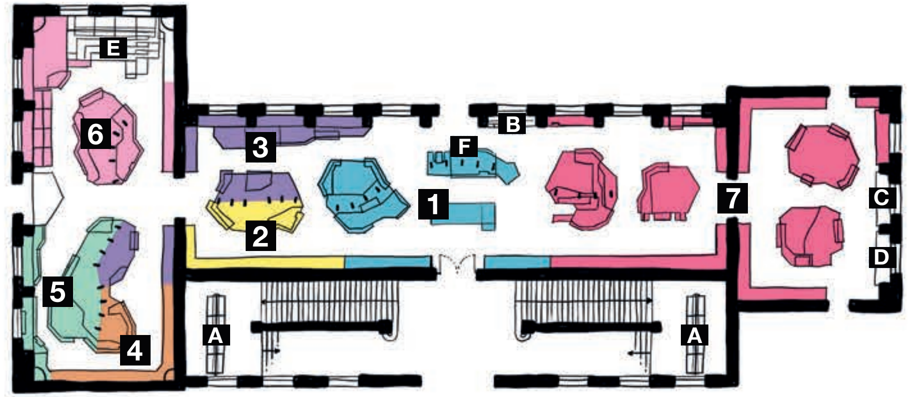
Marseille Natural History Museum

Visitor guide



First floor

Permanent exhibition: “Evolving Earth”

The newly-curated layout invites visitors to discover the Earth and the Living around us. It combines the biodiversity of the past with that of the present and studies how humans have influenced the recent evolutions of the living world. The exhibition blends into the historical decor of the Palace, offering an opportunity for poetic contemplation. The story of life on Earth unfolds through 7 main, highly original, sequences. Each sequence covers a living function and illustrates the very extent of biodiversity via a whole array of adaptations in as many different forms, colours and organs.

1. Live here!

We live within interlocking ecosystems containing a hugely diverse concentration of living beings that perpetually interact: animals, plants, fungi, micro-organisms, etc. We are but a tiny cog in the wheel of the system of life and the mineral world, of the Earth and, more widely, the universe. From the Amazon rainforest to here in Marseille, it is this constant interaction between very diverse living things that allows them to coexist.

1 / Amethyst © MHNM

2. Reproduction

In terms of reproduction, there is no end to the habits and customs of the living world. Sexually or asexually, alone or in groups, single-cell organisms and larger beings all produce new individuals of similar fecundity that will ensure the survival of the lineage.

2 / Starfish © MHNM

3. Self-protection

To living things, self-protection is the first rule of survival. To ward off predators, brave the climate or fight against disease, they are armed with horns, venom, stings or armour, whatever it takes!

3 / Polar bear © MHNM

4. Getting food

To grow and develop, living beings require raw materials. Within an ecosystem, organisms are part of a food network and all rely on one another, no matter what their size or means of nourishment.

4 / Vulture © MHNM

5. Many breathe... but some do not!

Most organisms use oxygen to generate the energy they need to live, grow and reproduce. Some species, however, use other molecules or chemical reactions, be they at the bottom of the ocean or at the top of the highest mountain.

5 / Pomfret © MHNM

6. Communication, perception

It is vital for living organisms to communicate with each other if they are to warn of danger, identify a sexual partner, attract a pollinator and so on. The nature of their messages is every bit as complex as the incredibly diverse organs they use to send or perceive them.

6 / African wild dog © MHNM

7 / Squid © MHNM

7. Evolution

Adaptation, heredity, variation, selection, mutation, convergent evolution, genetic drift, emergence and extinction of species... Even the tiniest variations occurring through the generations can have an impact on the evolution of living things.

8 / Hercule beetle © MHNM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To find out more....

A - Prehistory
In the main stairway, the regional prehistoric collections nicely round off the theme of this permanent exhibition devoted to the evolution of our species.

B- Measuring time
Cross-perspectives between the history of Earth and the Universe from an astronomical angle, and the more perceptible stances of the seasons and life’s generations.

C- Changing scale
From bacteria to elephants, from the invisible to the infinitely distant... There are multiple ways to measure life and it’s all a question of scale!

D- Museum history
The birth and growth of the Museum: a look back at the history and anecdotes of this two-hundred-year-old institution.

E- Breaking news
A short-term exhibition among the permanent displays! From 2020, a focus on Nature and the threats to biodiversity in a space devoted to mediation.

9 / Hydrocephalic skull © MHNM

Created in 1819, the Natural History Museum of Marseille is located in the outstanding setting of the Longchamp Palace. Built by the architect Henry Espérandieu in 1869, the palace houses one of the most beautiful water towers in Europe, as well as the two oldest museums in Marseille: the Fine Arts and Natural History museums. Awarded the ‘Musée de France’ label in 2002, the Museum is reputed for the heritage value and scientific quality of its collections. Through an immense diversity of natural curiosities, it showcases cultures and habitats from across the world.

Practical information

Longchamp Palace (right wing)
13004 Marseille

MUSEUM OPENING TIMES
Tuesday to Sunday from 9am to 6pm
Closed on Mondays except Easter Monday and Whit Monday.
Open on Ascension Thursday.
Closed on 1st January, 1st May and 25th December.

ACCESS
Metro Line 1 / Station: Cinq Avenues – Longchamp
Tramway Line 2 / Stop: Longchamp
Bus routes 6, 7, 42 and 81
CECM (Museum’s Center of Preservation and Study)
Marseille 14th arrondissement

ADMISSION
Temporary exhibition + permanent collections full rate €8 - reduced rate €5
Free for Permanent collections without temporaty exhibition
Free admission on the first Sunday of each month
Free admission for the under 18s
Free for school and activity centre groups

INFORMATION
Reception desk: +33 (0)4 91 14 59 50
museum@marseille.fr
office-subscriptions-information:
+33 (0)4 91 14 59 55

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#NOUSSOMMES MARSEILLE

VILLE DE MARSEILLE


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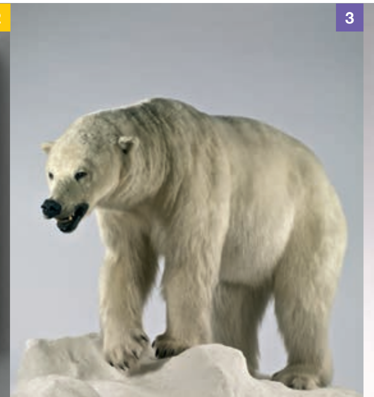
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