

Exhibition Galleries

Ground Floor

Irish Animals

This floor is devoted to the variety of Irish animals, starting with the impressive skeletons of the extinct giant Irish deer. These magnificent animals inhabited a landscape that was shared from time to time with the woolly mammoth, hyena and horse.

The cold climate of the last phase of the ice age put an end to these mammals and all that remains are their bones, found in caves or in sediments beneath our boglands.

When the climate warmed again Ireland was colonised by the animals that fill the rest of the gallery.



Irish mammals occupy the front half of the room. Family groups by the leading Irish taxidermy firm of Williams and Son are firm favourites and include badgers, foxes, pine martens and otters.



Ireland's ancient story is written in its rocks. Cases in the window spaces include fossils 500 million years old. Ancient oceans, deserts and coal swamps each have their stories preserved in stone. Minerals that are used to make the materials in our homes are here, along with gemstones and rocks of all ages.

The walls are lined with birds, some of which are now rare visitors or even extinct in Ireland. The golden eagle from Co. Mayo is from one of the last areas to see these birds until a reintroduction programme commenced almost a century later.

Much of the gallery is dedicated to marine animals including our much admired sunfish and basking shark. The numerous groups of invertebrate animals are also well represented – jellyfish, crabs, starfish and shellfish.

River fish include sturgeon from a very different Liffey, before Dublin changed to the major city it is today. A record specimen of trout weighing 11.8 kilos was caught in 1894 at Lough Ennell, Co. Westmeath and takes pride of place.



Ireland has 16,000 species of insects, which reflects the diversity of these animals. Museum research on their distribution assists in the monitoring of our environment.

Record examples of crabs and lobsters complete the array of marine animals at the back of this floor.

First Floor

Mammals of the World

The main exhibition floor has everything from an armadillo to a zebra. These show the amazing variety of mammals inhabiting all corners of our planet from the Arctic polar bear to the Indian rhinoceros. All walks of life are represented from the hunters and the hunted of the African savannah to the pouch bearing marsupials of Australia.

The mammals on this floor are arranged by animal groups. First are the marsupials, including kangaroos and the extinct thylacine. There are mammals with scales (pangolins), spines (echidnas) and those that lay eggs (platypus).

Cases of dolphins are dwarfed by the skeletons of their relatives hanging from the roof. The fin whale is 20 metres long, suspended above the smaller skeleton of a humpback.

The museum boasts several species of rhinoceros, some now on the edge of extinction.

The giraffe was installed in 2003 as part of a continuing restoration programme. Note its close relative the okapi, a shy creature of the forest, not discovered until the 20th century.

The Barrington collection of birds along the north wall includes many which crashed into Irish lighthouses giving the first sample of migrations around our coasts.



The black colour of the large mammals is because taxidermists used oil to keep thick skins from cracking. The elephant is a case in point. The large tusk weighs 80 kilos, a reminder of the threat to these animals from the ivory trade.

Carnivores are next, from the tiger shot by a king to the polar bear shot by an Irish explorer, Leopold McClintock. Mammal teeth are a good guide to diet. Compare the sharp teeth of the carnivores to the gnawing teeth of the nearby rodents.

The last animals on your tour are primates – lemurs, monkeys and apes. Note the features we share with them, forward facing eyes and grasping hands – we are primates too.



museum

National Museum of Ireland

Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Natural History



Museum Floorplan

Ground Floor



First Floor



Reception Area



Emergency Exits



Disabled Toilets



Stairs to Floor 1



Museum Shop



Toilets & Baby Changing



Activity Sheets



Second Floor is NOT accessible to public for safety reasons.

Note Plans not to scale.

Free admission

to the greatest collections of Irish heritage, culture and history in the world.

Museum Shop.

New Exhibitions, family programme and events for people of all ages. For details please visit www.museum.ie

Open:

Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm.
Sunday & Monday 1pm to 5pm.

Closed

Christmas Day & Good Friday

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