Planning Your Visit
A guide for families with children on the autistic spectrum
The Museum of Natural History is proud of its family friendly status but recognises that visiting with children on the autistic spectrum can be challenging.

This guide is designed to help families feel more confident both before and during their visit by providing a bank of images and highlighting some sensory aspects of the museum.

We recommend that parents and carers first read the About the Museum guide, which includes much more descriptive information about the museum and displays, and then use this, the Planning Your Visit guide, as a tool to prepare children for their visit and to give them objects to look for when they are here.

What’s in the guide?
- Notes on how to use the guide
- Notes on museum layout
- A visit planner and image bank
- A reminder of how to behave in the museum

This is a long document. Please help to save ink and paper by only printing those pages you intend to use.

How to use the guide
- Use the visit planner and image bank to create your own introduction to the museum to suit your child’s needs.
- The About the Museum guide includes descriptions of the main spaces and features, which you may find useful. There are also some notes about the museum layout on the next page.
- The following symbols highlight certain sensory aspects of the museum and appear by relevant pages in this guide.

For further information or advice regarding visiting, please contact the Family Education Officer:
Telephone 01865 282537 Email education@oum.ox.ac.uk
Museum layout

The images in the ‘Ground Floor’ and ‘First Floor’ sections of the image bank are roughly organised to reflect the museum layout from left to right as you face the back of the museum. However, things do move around from time to time and so may not look exactly the same as they do in the pictures or from one visit to the next.

Ground Floor

- From left to right, the five Court aisles mainly contain displays about: birds and mammals; fish, amphibians, and reptiles; museum highlights; rocks and minerals; fossils.
- The outer aisles contain displays about classification, evolution, and geology.

First Floor

- The left aisle contains displays about birds, shells, crystals, and gemstones.
- The back aisle is a temporary exhibition space.
- The right aisle contains displays about insects.
- The front aisle is where the café is.

Visit Planner and Image Bank

- There are 60+ images in the image bank. Please help to save ink and paper by only printing those pages you intend to use.
- The images are a mixture of general views and specific objects and displays.
- ‘Sensory’ symbols appear where relevant.
- Print, cut out, and paste your chosen images onto the My Visit template. Use as many copies of the template as you need.
- The template includes blank space for you and your child to write below each image.
Cut out and paste your chosen images in the boxes and write any notes below
ENTRANCES, EXITS, AND THE LAWN

View from outside the main door

Great Debate plinth outside the main door

Dinosaur footprints
THE STAIRS AND LIFT

Stairs on the left as you enter
Stairs on the left from the first floor

Stairs on the right as you enter
Stairs on the right from the first floor

Lower ground floor / accessible entrance
Ground floor lift
THE STAIRS AND LIFT

First floor lift
TOILETS

Doorway before the smaller set of women’s and accessible toilet

Inside the accessible toilet

Inside the smaller set of women’s toilets

Inside the smaller set of women’s toilets
GROUND FLOOR

- View from inside the main door
- Welcome desk
- Screen by the welcome desk
- Family activities trolley
- A–Z drawers
- DNA model
GROUND FLOOR

An outer aisle

View in to the birds and mammals aisle

Elephant skeletons in the birds and mammals aisle

Pitt Rivers Museum entrance

Statue of Charles Darwin

Fish, amphibians, and reptiles aisle
Ground floor

- Crocodile in the fish, amphibians, and reptiles aisle
- Insect display in the central aisle
- Touchable bear
- Central aisle
- Sensing Evolution table of touchable objects
- Mineral aisle
GROUND FLOOR

Mineral tent

One of the touchable objects in the mineral aisle

Fossil aisle

Out of the deep display case

Shop

Chair
GROUND FLOOR

Flooring

Door

‘Please Touch’ sign

Visitors in the Museum

Ammonite (*Titanites giganteus*)
Dorset, England
140 million years old

Now extinct, ammonites lived in warm Jurassic seas. This is a fossilised shell of the largest species found in Britain.

*please touch carefully*
FIRST FLOOR

Bird aisle

Gemstone case

Entomology aisle

Live animals in the entomology aisle

Bee hive in the Bee Room

Screen in the Bee Room
FIRST FLOOR

Café
How to behave in the museum

- Walk when you are inside the museum. Do not run.
- Speak in your normal voice.
- Stay with your adult.
- Do not climb or sit on the cases or the stonework.
- You can drink bottled water anywhere in the museum. You can eat and drink other drinks in the café, in the porch, or outside on the lawn. Do not eat or drink other drinks anywhere else in the museum.
- There are people working in rooms behind the doors in the museum. Do not open a door or go through a doorway unless you have checked with your adult.
- You can touch objects in the museum if they are next to a sign that says ‘Please Touch’. Do not touch other objects in the museum unless an adult says you can.
- There are live animals in some of the cases. Do not tap on the glass of these cases.
Written by Caroline Cheeseman and Susan Griffiths, Joint Museums Outreach Service & Carly Smith-Huggins, Public Engagement.

Photography by Pete Ryan & Scott Billings

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www.museums.ox.ac.uk