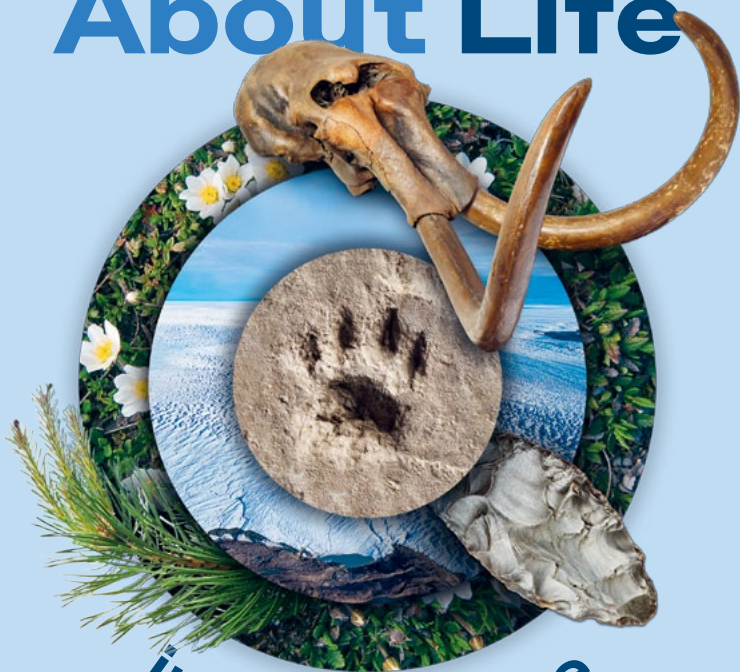


Paläontologische Landesausstellung  
Nordrhein-Westfalen  
in Essen, Münster und Detmold



# About Life



*in the Ice Age*

20 April 2026 – 10 January 2027  
Ruhr Museum at Zollverein in Essen



Skeleton of a cave bear  
(Museum für Ur- und Orts-  
geschichte, Museumszentrum  
Quadrat, Bottrop)

# About Life in the Ice Age

The exhibition being held at the Ruhr Museum with its unique industrial backdrop at the Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage Site presents the diverse habitats that have prevailed in our region at one time or another during the Quaternary Period of Earth's geological history, while also addressing the impact of human activities on the climate in the present day.

With more than 350 spectacular exhibits and thrilling animations, the exhibition offers an insight into what it was like to live and survive in the Ice Age. It shows the surprising variety that characterised the Ice Age, which shaped the region with its cold and warm periods – with landscapes that were created during that period, diverse plant and animal life and the three Ice Age human species: *Homo heidelbergensis*, the Neanderthals and modern humans.

A fascinating look at life and the environment during the Ice Age is offered by original finds, such as the skull of a mammoth or pollen from Ice Age plants, as well as life-sized models of a woolly rhinoceros and a giant deer, original tools made by Ice Age humans, such as hand axes and spearheads, and realistic animations of Ice Age landscapes, including a flight over the Ruhr Valley.

## Between the steppe-tundra and meadow landscapes

During the cold periods of the Ice Age, the northern part of what is today known as North Rhine-Westphalia was covered by an ice sheet that was more than 100 metres thick. During the warm periods, the climate was ideal for the development of diverse flora and fauna. The glaciers gave the overall landscape its current appearance and their melt waters shaped the course of the rivers in the region. Particles transported by the wind led to the creation of loess landscapes and fields of sand dunes, while erosion ate away at the limestone to form extensive cave systems. During the warm periods, sprawling meadows and moors appeared along the Rhine, Lippe and Ems.

The exhibition makes use of popular pictures of the Ice Age and presents these along with science-based reconstructions and impressive animations of Ice Age landscapes in the cold and warm periods.

Above: Meandering river, Poland (Adam Smigielski, iStock)

Below: Ice sheet in western Greenland near Ilulissat (Dr Michael Hambrey)



# Mammoth meets hippopotamus

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a menagerie of animals from the Ice Age. Original bones that have been found, as well as entire skeletons, realistic recreations and other models, present the diversity of animal life and show how different species adapted to the climate. This is where the woolly rhinoceros and the mammoth meet the heat-loving forest rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the giant deer and the cave hyena.

The climate changes during the Ice Age fundamentally altered the habitats of plants and animals. Adaptation or migration to other regions offered ways to ensure the survival of species. However, many species became extinct.

Original microscopic pollen – but also mighty roots and the impressive trunk of a 12,000-year-old pine tree – bear witness in the exhibition to the plant world of the Ice Age in the region.



Life-sized model of a woolly rhinoceros  
(Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Karlsruhe)

# Neanderthals, modern humans and the climate

Humans have been living in the Rhine-Ruhr region for 350,000 years. Their use of tools, their ability to make clothes and their development of certain skills enabled them to adapt to changing climatic conditions. Homo heidelbergensis and the Neanderthals became extinct, while anatomically modern humans survived as the only human species.

Scientists have been studying the Ice Age for around 200 years now. The latest findings clearly show how the climate changed cyclically over a period of 2.6 million years and prove that current climate change with significantly rising temperatures is a result of human activity. Impressive exhibits from the industrial age and the multimedia documentary installation “Crying Glacier” that addresses the melting of the Alp glaciers provide plenty of food for thought and opportunities for participation: How can we humans ensure survival on our planet?



Figure of a Neanderthal smoothing a spear (Stiftung Neanderthal Museum / Élisabeth Daynès)

Depiction of climate-change warming in North Rhine-Westphalia in the period 1881–2024 using Warming Stripes (Landesamt für Natur, Umwelt und Klima Nordrhein-Westfalen / Ed Hawkins)



# Events

Our programme of events reveals the secrets of the Ice Age in a fun and educational manner. The programme is designed for everyone – children, adults, families, senior citizens, people with or without disabilities, school pupils and university students, teachers, school classes and various groups.

The programme offers various activities and events, including apps, guided tours, workshops, excursions and interesting lectures, discussions and readings. Even more fun and interaction is provided by night-time expeditions in the museum, a game day, a summer festival, a science slam and performances.

Welcome to the Ice Age!

You'll find all events in the programme booklet and at [www.ruhrmuseum.de/eiszeitprogramm](http://www.ruhrmuseum.de/eiszeitprogramm)

## Free apps

### Audio Guide

About Life  
in the Ice Age



### Rallye

About Life –  
3 museums 1 trip



## The Paläontologische Landesausstellung Nordrhein-Westfalen



Mammoths in Essen, dinosaurs in Münster and marine mammals in Detmold: From April 2026 to September 2027, three fascinating exhibitions will show how life has changed in North Rhine-Westphalia over millions of years. Each exhibition highlights a specific geological epoch, but the focus is always on plants, animals and humans as well – and their survival from the Paleozoic to the current Cenozoic geological era.

The Paläontologische Landesausstellung Nordrhein-Westfalen is a joint project being conducted by the Ruhr Museum, the LWL-Museum für Naturkunde and the Lippisches Landesmuseum Detmold – initiated and funded by the Ministerium für Heimat, Kommunales, Bau und Digitalisierung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen.

[www.landesaussstellung.nrw](http://www.landesaussstellung.nrw)



Life-sized model of a forest rhinoceros (Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde Karlsruhe)

#### Opening hours

Mon – Sun 10 am – 6 pm  
24., 25. and 31.12. closed

#### Admission

€ 10, reduced € 7

children / adolescents under 18  
and pupils / students under 25  
admission free

[www.tickets-ruhrmuseum.de](http://www.tickets-ruhrmuseum.de)

#### Information and booking

Visitor Service Ruhr Museum  
[besucherdienst@ruhrmuseum.de](mailto:besucherdienst@ruhrmuseum.de)

Mon – Fri 9 am – 4 pm  
Phone +49 (0) 201 24681 444

[www.ruhrmuseum.de](http://www.ruhrmuseum.de)

#### Catalogue

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more than 130 images  
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#### Address and how to get there

Ruhr Museum  
in the Coal Washing Plant  
Zollverein UNESCO World  
Heritage Site  
Gelsenkirchener Straße 181  
45309 Essen

#### Tram line 107

From Essen main station direction  
Gelsenkirchen or from Gelsenkirchen  
main station direction Essen to  
stop “Zollverein”

#### Bus line 183

From Altenessen station or  
Zollverein-Nord station to stop  
“Kohlenwäsche”

#### Car

Car parks A1 and A2  
Fritz-Schupp-Allee, 45141 Essen



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Institutional sponsors of the Ruhr Museum:

