



Families
Ages 6+

Museum explorers Creatures

The Open Futures family trails are funded by

HHT THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST

Welcome

This trail guides you on a fascinating journey of exploration and discovery around the Museum. On the way you'll track down some amazing treasures and experience tales of human history from around the world. You'll also need to search, look, pose and draw.

Whichever way you go, and whatever you discover, enjoy yourself! If you ever feel lost, just ask a member of staff for help.

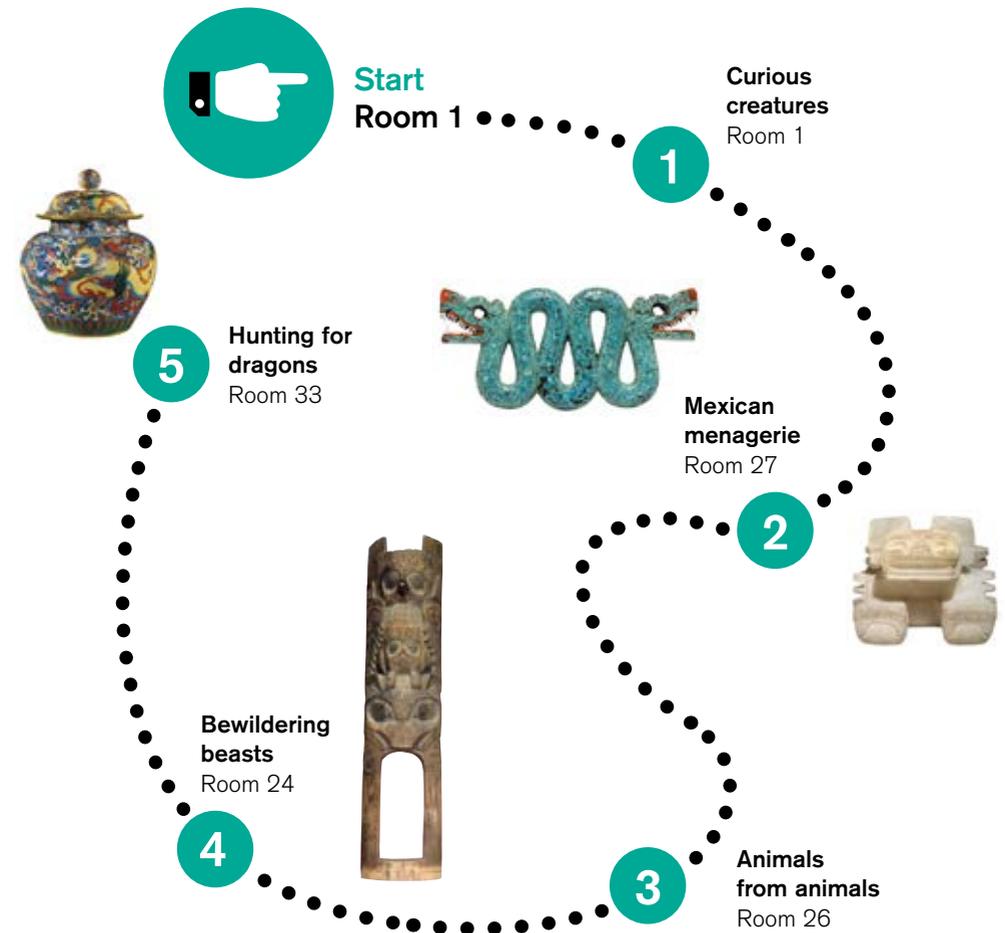
Useful information for families

- You can pick up a map in the Great Court to help you get around the Museum.
- Accessible toilets and baby changing facilities are available. You can breastfeed and bottle feed anywhere on the Museum's grounds but if you would like more privacy, the Museum has two feeding rooms. For details, ask at the Families Desk or Information Desk, or look at the map.
- You can leave fold-up pushchairs in the cloakroom free of charge.
- You can find child-friendly food at the cafés. High chairs are available.
- You can use the Ford Centre for Young Visitors to picnic with your family at weekends and during school holidays.

Discover creatures

Take a trip around the world to discover how people have painted, carved, hunted and farmed animals throughout history. You'll explore the close relationships people have built with real and imagined creatures in the past.

You'll need the sharp eyes of an animal tracker to find everything you need.



1

Curious creatures

Go to Room 1 on the Ground floor. Enter from the Great Court, turn right and go to the far end.

You're surrounded by cases of curious creatures. These were some of the first objects in the Museum's collection over 250 years ago. Back then all of the Museum's objects were called 'rarities'. Some were found in nature. Others were manmade.

When explorers brought these creatures back to the Museum, it was the first time many people in London had ever seen them.



Explore this area and choose your favourite curious creature.



Tell your group why you chose it.



Act out its movements and sounds.



A specimen collecting tray.

2

Mexican menagerie

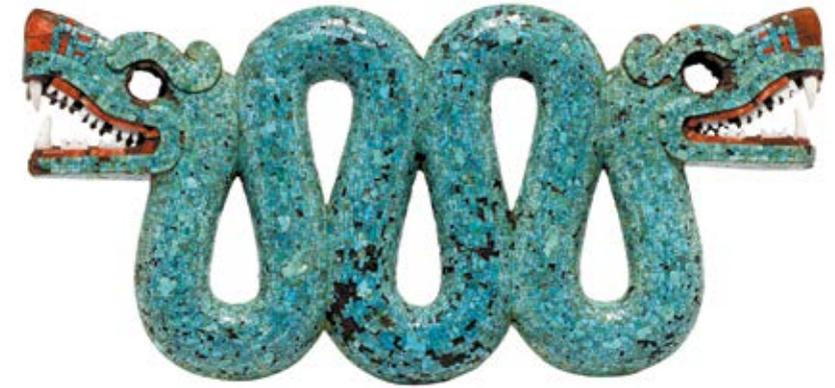
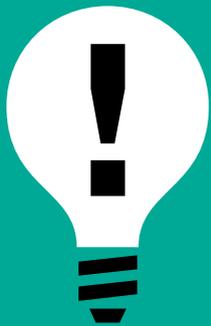
Exit Room 1 at the other end of the gallery and go straight into Room 27.

For thousands of years the cultures of Central America have used fantastic creatures as powerful symbols. They made sculptures of real animals, like rabbits or monkeys, as well as imaginary ones like fire serpents.

Find the large carved sculpture of a coiled rattlesnake in the middle of the room.

What do you think the rattle on the end of its tail is for?

Make the sound the rattle might make.



Explore the rest of this room and find these fantastic creatures:

- Rabbit
- Two-headed serpent
- Monkey
- Butterfly
- Ocelot
- Fire serpent
- Deer
- Owl



3

Animals from animals

Carry on into Room 26.
Find Case 19 at the far
end of the room.

The peoples and cultures of North America placed great importance on the value of animals. They used animals for food and made tools, clothing and decorative objects from them too.



This case contains many fantastic creatures in the form of tools carved from ivory. **Find** the bow drills and snow beaters. They're long, thin and decorated with different scenes.



Choose the object nearest to your eye height and **describe** the scene to the rest of your group.

What **animals** can you see?

What are the **people** doing?

What other uses have **fantastic creatures** been put to in this gallery?



4

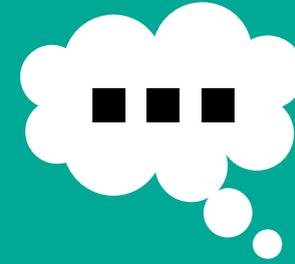
Bewildering beasts

Carry on into Room 24.
Turn immediately right.



Animals often take on different meanings in different cultures. Among the Haida people of Canada the raven is thought to be a trickster and the bear a protector.

Haida people carved this amazing wooden doorway. It stood as an entrance in front of a house. The symbols represent the achievements and rights of the family who lived there.



There are three fantastic creatures carved into the wood. **Can you match them all?**



■ Whale



■ Owl



■ Eagle

What do these carvings tell us about the area where the Haida people lived?

5

Hunting for dragons

Exit Room 24 and climb the steps to Room 33. Turn right and find Case 44.

Animals are very important to the customs, cultures and lives of Chinese people. Dragons are symbols of power and good luck. They are also believed to control the rain.



This beautiful covered jar was made for the royal palace in China over 500 years ago. Any dragon with five claws is a symbol of the emperor.



How many dragons can you see flying through the clouds on the vase? Remember to count their claws.

Nearby is a very strange three-legged toad. Can you **find** it?



You've completed the **Creatures** trail!

What a journey you've been on. You've travelled around the world and explored the relationship between people and animals in different cultures. **Of all the things you discovered, what was your favourite?**

As a reward for completing the trail, here's a special Egyptian creature linked to the rising sun.



Giant scarab statue,
Room 4



You can find even more fantastic creatures in other parts of the Museum:

- **Bark** like a double-headed dog in Room 25.
- **Track down** some wolves decorating an Anglo-Saxon purse in Room 41.
- **See** the dangerous sport of bull-leaping in Room 12.



Other things you could do when you get home:

- **Look for fantastic creatures in your own home**
Photograph them and make a fantastic creature exhibition.
- **Design your own fantastic creature**
Find pictures of six different animals. Mix up their body parts to make new creatures.
- **Perform a fantastic creatures play**
Make sure the main character is a fantastic creature.

**See you back at the
British Museum soon!**

Front cover:

Jade pendant in the shape of a dragon. From China, Qing dynasty, 18th–19th century AD.

Detail of a wooden carved totemic doorway. Made by the Haida people of north-west America.

Detail of a double-headed serpent turquoise mosaic. Mexico, 15th–16th century AD.

Other trails in the Museum explorers series

6+ years

- Ancient Britain
- Ancient Greece
- Ancient Egypt
- Celebration
- Communication

3–5 years

- Time to count
- Colour and shape

Open Futures

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Initiated and supported by the Helen Hamlyn Trust, Open Futures is a learning programme for primary schools, which brings the curriculum to life.

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