



Martorell Exhibition Centre

• **centre
martorell
d'exposicions**



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1. PRESENTATION

1.1 Martorell Exhibition Centre

Barcelona is opening the new **Martorell Exhibition Centre** in the city's Ciutadella Park. It is under this name that the **first public museum ever built in Barcelona and Catalonia** is now reopening its doors. **Originally inaugurated as the Martorell Museum** in 1882, it later became the Geology Museum in 1924 and remained operative until 2010, when it closed its doors to the public.

This recently renovated unique historic building has become the second facility open to the public as part of the **Citadel of Knowledge (Ciutadella del Coneixement)**, after the Hivernacle, representing a new landmark in Barcelona's strategy to refurbish and establish the Park as a hub for science and research.

As the new headquarters of the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona, this Centre's cultural activity will help to **consolidate the Ciutadella Park's scientific facet**, to bring science closer to the local people and to bring to fruition this great project that will convert the city's oldest park and its surrounding area into a leading European hub of knowledge, outreach, research and innovation.

The Martorell Exhibition Centre has two exhibition spaces and a multipurpose room. It will be offering **science exhibitions covering themes of important social impact** relating to both the climate crisis and the loss of biodiversity, as well as the exploration of today's frontiers of knowledge.

The Centre is currently showing two temporary exhibitions: ***Nature or culture? An outlook from the perspective of the natural science museum***, created by the Museum itself; and ***WOW. Museum Animals: Science, Skill and Art***, an exhibit hosted in collaboration with the Parque de las Ciencias de Granada.

The new facility is playing an essential role in the transformation of the area as a key crossroads for culture and science in Barcelona. It is located between a **cultural district** that runs east-to-west in the city (an area bordered by the Picasso Museum, the Santa Maria del Mar Basilica and El Born Centre de Cultura i Memòria – El Born Cultural and Memorial Centre) and the north-to-south coordinates of a future **scientific district** (the Castell dels Tres Dragons, the Hivernacle and the Umbracle).

The Martorell Exhibition Centre aims to **work and create synergies with other nearby agents in the science community**, including the city's Zoo, the Institute of Evolutionary Biology, the Barcelona

Institute of Science and Technology, Pompeu Fabra University and Fundació Pasqual Maragall.

Link with photos of the new centre:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Lq8WXnbigtq5yQPpuUy8dDn9PJLyfMr?usp=sharing>

1.2 Refurbishment of the building

Funded by the Barcelona City Council and the Government of Catalonia, the year 2021 saw the start of the full-scale refurbishment process of the Martorell building, the first public museum in Barcelona and Catalonia and the origin of the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona. The initial Martorell building, inaugurated in Ciutadella Park in 1882, was designed in the neo-classical style by architect Antoni Rovira i Trias.

The overall criteria applied to the renovation of the building, which has been catalogued as a site of local interest, was to preserve its original layout and volumetrics as much as possible. One significant change that does not modify the overall image of the building was the creation of a second access along the street Passeig Picasso with three large openings in the façade, providing transparency for the Centre and connecting Ciutadella Park with the district of Sant Pere, Santa Caterina and La Ribera.

Work has recently begun on a new pedestrian crossing on Passeig de Picasso, between Carrer de la Fusina and the Martorell Exhibition Centre, which will provide easier access to the facilities and improve connectivity with the Park. Construction work is scheduled to conclude at the end of March.

The building's full-scale refurbishment has been divided into three phases, with a total anticipated cost of €6.2 million:

Phase 1: Completed. The entire interior of the building has been refurbished to reconcile the respect for historic heritage with the current usage demands of a facility that is open to the public.

Phase 2: Completed. Coinciding with the Centre's official opening, the work was concluded to enable access to the building from within Ciutadella Park. A platform was built to accommodate ramps, while respecting the original podium of the doric columns and the petrographic collection consisting of 31 stone blocks attached to the lateral façades of the building.

Phase 3: In progress. The final touches are being made to the refurbishment project, which is envisaged to repair and restore the façades and their stone ornamentation, sgraffiti and decorative elements. Once commissioned, the works are expected to begin in September. This construction phase is compatible with the normal operation of the Centre, which will remain open during its normal hours.

1.3 The Martorell Museum and Ciutadella Park, an inseparable pair

The history of the Martorell Museum is closely tied to Ciutadella Park. Since day one, the Barcelona City Council conceived the city's first major park as a place for recreation, yet also as a place for the promotion of science and culture. For the Park's design, architect Josep Fontserè drew inspiration from the urban layout of Paris's *Jardin des Plantes*. The idea was that the Park would house scientific and cultural services in keeping with the demands of the modern capital city that Barcelona aspired to become. In this milieu, the natural scientist and antique merchant Francesc Martorell i Peña bequeathed his natural science and archaeology collections to the city of Barcelona, as well as the economic funding for the construction of a museum to house it all. Hence, the Martorell Museum, built between 1879 and 1882, was the first building to be created inside the Park.

Not long after the opening of the Martorell Museum, the Hivernacle, the Umbracle, the Zoo and other scientific cultural facilities were built, including the weather station (which no longer exists), the replica of the mountains of Montserrat (now located within the Barcelona Zoo), the installation of a dolmen and a menhir from the Alt Empordà Region (which no longer exist), 100 stone blocks from the most important quarries of Catalonia (31 of them continue to stand today and are attached to the façade of the Martorell Exhibition Centre), the replica of an extinct animal (the Mammoth on display in the Park), an aquarium (which no longer exists) and several famous naturalist sculptures, among other items.

Through the years, the Martorell Museum eventually became too small to hold its ever-growing collections. In 1924, its space was allocated exclusively to the collections of rocks, minerals and fossils, becoming the Geology Museum. At that time, the zoological and botanical collections were moved to the neighbouring Castell dels Tres Dragons.

1.4 The Citadel of Knowledge: past and future join hands

The Citadel of Knowledge is a scientific and urban planning project designed to transform Ciutadella Park and its surroundings into a leading European hub of knowledge, outreach, research and innovation. This is one of Barcelona's most important urban transformations of the near future.

The initiative envisages a renovation of Ciutadella Park bearing in mind its origins as a centre for science and the assets of its vicinity, which include universities, museums, research centres, foundations and companies.

The **Citadel of Knowledge** is organised into five major projects:

Refurbishment of the emblematic facilities that comprise a hub of great heritage value, including the already refurbished Martorell Exhibition Centre and Hivernacle, as well as the Umbracle and the Castell dels Tres Dragons, the latter two of which are pending refurbishment; the **new Mercat del Peix**, located in the former central fish market, which entails the creation of a new research and innovation complex of some 45,000 m² focusing on biomedicine, biodiversity and planetary wellbeing; **the CSIC BioScience Park**, which envisages the construction of a new bioscience centre that will bring together the different research units of the CSIC in Catalonia on the land currently occupied by the State Mobile Park; the Strategic Plan for the Zoo (2019-2031), which promotes and strengthens scientific activity at the Zoo in the areas of biodiversity conservation, wildlife management and animal welfare; and finally, the **Central Library**, the future Public Library of the State in Barcelona, which will be located on the land neighbouring the França Railway Station and will serve as the city's central urban library, of metropolitan dimensions.

It is anticipated that 80% of the project will be completed by the end of this term of office and that within ten years, the entire Citadel of Knowledge complex will be an internationally renowned reality, bringing together nearly 2,000 researchers.



The Citadel of Knowledge is a project spearheaded by the Barcelona City Council, in collaboration with the Government of Catalonia, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, Pompeu Fabra University (UPF), the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), the University of Barcelona (UB), the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), Fundació Pasqual Maragall and the Barcelona Institute of Science and Technology.

1.5 Chronology of the Martorell Museum and Ciutadella Park

1869. The fortress known as the *Ciutadella* was torn down following a lengthy citizen protest.

1878. The merchant and natural scientist Francesc Martorell i Peña bequeathed to the city his natural history and archaeology collections, along with the funding needed to build a museum to house it all.

1881. Inauguration of **Ciutadella Park**, the city's first public park, designed by architect Josep Fontserè.

1882. On 25 September, Mayor Rius i Taulet inaugurated the **Martorell Museum**, the embryo of the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona, which was designed by architect Antoni Rovira i Trias.

1888. Inauguration of the Exposition of Barcelona, the Hivernacle, the Umbracle and the Castell dels Tres Dragons, the latter of which was designed as a restaurant by architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner.

1892. Inauguration of the Barcelona Zoo.

1905. The large stone blocks from the leading quarries of Catalonia were installed in the gardens of the Martorell Museum. Today, 31 of those blocks are attached to the façade of the building.

1906. Creation of the Natural Science Board, formed by politicians and scientists, for the management of the facilities of Ciutadella Park.

1907. Installation of the sculpture of a Mammoth as part of a project that aimed to reproduce up to eight extinct animals and position them in different places around the Park. The Mammoth was the first and only sculpture that was ever installed. The models of the other seven animals have been conserved and can be viewed in the *Nature or culture?* exhibition.

1914. Death of Avi, a very popular and well-loved elephant at the Barcelona Zoo. His skeleton can be viewed in the *Nature or culture?* exhibition.

1924. The Martorell Museum became specialised in geology, changing its name to the Geology Museum. The zoology and botanical collections were moved to the neighbouring building, Castell dels Tres Dragons.

2010. Closure of the Geology Museum to prepare for the move of the pieces envisaged to form part of the permanent exhibit at the headquarters of the Natural Science Museum on the grounds of the Fòrum. Since then, despite its being closed to the public, the Centre has continued to house the geology collections and has accommodated the work of the research and conservation staff.

2011 (27 March). Inauguration of the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona on the grounds of the Fòrum.

2019 (April). Signing of the Agreement representing the start of the Citadel of Knowledge project.

2021. The Barcelona City Council approved the project for the full-scale refurbishment of the Martorell Museum.

2022. Adaptation of the facilities of the Castell dels Tres Dragons to house the geology collections and to accommodate the research and conservation staff of the Geology Museum. Relocation of the collections.

2023 (January). Signing of the institutional protocol for the promotion of the Citadel of Knowledge and placement of the first symbolic stone of the Mercat del Peix research complex.

2023 (December). Inauguration of the restored Hivernacle.

2024 (February). Inauguration of the Martorell Exhibition Centre.

2. NATURAL SCIENCE MUSEUM OF BARCELONA

The **Martorell Exhibition Centre** forms part of the complex of facilities that make up the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona. This complex comprises the main headquarters of the Museum on the grounds of the Barcelona Fòrum; the **Botanical Gardens of Barcelona** and the **Historic Botanical Gardens**, both of which are located in Montjuïc, as well as the **Castell dels Tres Dragons** (located in Ciutadella Park, and which houses the research centre, collections and documentation).

In all, this institution, which has expanded to occupy three major public parks in Barcelona—Ciutadella, Montjuïc and the Fòrum— has amassed **145 years of history** and a heritage of **four million pieces** in the areas of mineralogy, petrology, palaeontology, zoology and botany.

The Natural Science Museum of Barcelona is a consortium formed by the Barcelona City Council and the Government of Catalonia.

3. EXHIBITIONS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY

3.1 Nature or culture? An outlook from the perspective of the natural science museum



The exhibit **Nature or culture? An outlook from the perspective of the natural science museum** presents a journey through the evolution of natural history museums, from the cabinets of curiosities of the past to the modern natural science museums of today. This exhibition combines modern museum resources with emblematic pieces from the Museum's collections, as well as historic furniture and display cases from the original Martorell Museum. Through these objects, the exhibit aims to **raise thought** about the way humankind's relationship with nature has evolved, to **rethink** the role played by museums and collections throughout history, and **to consider** the future challenges to be faced by these institutions in a society in the throes of a climate crisis and amid the widespread use of artificial intelligence.

Created for all audiences, this exhibition has a dual focus: global and local. While the core of the exhibit presents the history of the Martorell Museum and the Natural Science Museum of Barcelona, peripherally it explores the history of museums around the world.

Nature or Culture? aims to raise questions. For this reason, each of the exhibition's five areas begins with a question that invites visitors to reconsider the historical narrative that they have been told about museums, their collections and their uses. Those areas are: (1) **Possessing nature: curiosity, need or whim?** (2) **Why do we collect and exhibit nature?** (3) **The 20th century: survival or modernity?** (4) **What should the museums of the future be like?**

The histories of both the Museum and Ciutadella Park are so closely intertwined that the second area features a section that explains the origins, evolution and future of Barcelona's first

large public park.

The display resources reflect the local-global and historical-current duality that forms the underlying concept of the exhibition. Much of the original furniture of the Martorell Museum has been restored, including both the cabinets in which the collections were stored and the showcases in which the pieces were displayed. This immensely valuable heritage affords insight into the past conception of museums and the way their pieces were exhibited.

The exhibition also includes emblematic pieces from the Museum's collections, such as the skeleton of the elephant known as L'Avi, who was a celebrity at the Zoo long before the famous gorilla Floquet de Neu; a diorama of the last two Peregrine falcons of Barcelona that lived in the bell tower of the Santa Maria del Pi Basilica; the collection of models of extinct animals that were originally intended to become sculptures in Ciutadella Park (only one of them, the Mammoth, was ever produced) and the re-creation of an old office of the Martorell Museum. To illustrate the current-day features of museums, the exhibition provides interactive devices, audiovisuals and special pieces including a robot.

Accessibility

The museum has implemented its own accessibility resources that allow the exhibition to be enjoyed by different groups with functional diversity. By way of example, those resources include tactile pieces, signs and a guide map in Braille, as well as an audio guide in Catalan, Spanish and English.

Areas and texts of the exhibition

<https://museuciencies.cat/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Textos-exposicio-Natura-o-Culture.pdf>

3.2 WOW. Museum animals: science, skill and art

Taxidermy specimens and naturalised animals afford a unique opportunity to observe animals from very close up, to examine their shapes, volumes, textures, colours and how they have adapted to their environments. How else could we get close enough to a tiger to appreciate its fur and its size? And to look closely at the stripes of a zebra? And to count the scales of a python?

All civilizations have developed techniques to preserve the bodies of animals after their death. Dogs, cats, fish and birds that were alive over a thousand years ago have reached us in a good state of conservation. Yet taxidermy as we currently know it is a relatively recent technique. Its

origins are linked to the scientific and naturalist practices of the cabinets of curiosities that came about during the Renaissance period and set the precedent for what would later become natural history museums.

This discipline, which combines art and skill in equal parts, has not ceased to evolve thanks to new technologies and the emergence of new materials that have provided extraordinary results. Such is the case of the taxidermist, Antonio Pérez Rodríguez, a leading international reference in this discipline and the creator of the naturalised animals in this exhibition. Antonio Pérez has developed a new technique called "taxidermy in movement", a faithful portrayal of nature where art, skill and science come together in powerful compositions. **WOW** presents six naturalised scenes of Mediterranean and African animals, including a group of fifteen wild goats leaping during a stampede, two zebras engaging in a fight and a lion hunting gnu. These are panoramic scenes of great beauty, filled with drama and realism, like fragments of real life that have been frozen in time.

Coordinated by the Parque de la Ciencias de Granada, this exhibition has made its way to European cities including Brussels, The Hague, Porto, Newcastle, Paris, Toulouse and Trento, as well as countless cities around Spain.



Antonio Pérez Rodríguez (Santa Fe, Granada, 1955)

A self-taught artist with a great passion for the animal kingdom, he is one of the leading taxidermists in Spain and an international reference in the depiction of animals in motion in the wild. When bringing them to life, this sculptor analyses their movement, their expression and their anatomy. In his own words, these taxidermy pieces are, "the joining of art and nature to make beauty last longer".

Areas and texts of the exhibition

<https://museuciencies.cat/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Textos-exposicio-WOW.pdf>

4. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Martorell Exhibition Centre

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08003 Barcelona

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Tel: 93 4132293

Opening hours

October - February

Tuesdays - Saturdays, from 10 am to 7 pm,

Sundays and holidays, from 10 am to 8 pm

March - September

Tuesdays - Sundays, from 10 am to 8 pm

Days of closure

Non-holiday Mondays

1 January, 1 May, 24 June and 25 December

Prices

Regular admission:

€6.50

Discounted

admission: €4.50

Free admission: the first Sunday of each month, all day long; every Sunday of the year after 3 pm; 12 February (Santa Eulàlia Holiday); 18 May (International Museum Day); and 24 September (La Mercè Holiday)

How to get there:

Metro

L4 Jaume I, Bogatell

L1 Arc de Triomf

Tram

T4: Parada Marina

Bus

V19, H16, B20, B25

Car

The Museum does not have a car park of its own. Nearest car parks: Passeig Lluís Companys, Passeig del Born, Plaça de la Catedral, Avinguda Cambó and Via Laietana.

Bicing city-wide bicycle rentals

Closest stations: Passeig Lluís Companys- Parc de la Ciutadella, Carrer Comerç and Avinguda Marquès de l'Argentera (in front of the França Railway Station).

