

## **Press conference on the opening of the new Ice Age hall for children: "Ice Age Children and their World"**

**on Tuesday, 20 May 2025, at 10.30 a.m. in the lecture hall of the NHM Vienna  
with subsequent visit to the new Children's Ice Age Hall (Hall 16 on the 1st floor)**

**Entry: from 10 a.m. via the main entrance of the NHM Vienna, Maria-Theresien-Platz**

The panelists in the lecture hall:

- **Dr Katrin Vohland**, Director General/CEO, NHM Vienna
- **Dr. Caroline Posch**, Scientific Project Manager, Prehistoric Department, NHM Vienna
- **Univ. Prof. Dr. Mathias Harzhauser**, Director, Geological and Paleontological Department, NHM Vienna
- **Mag. Agnes Mair**, Science Communication Department, NHM Vienna & **Josefine**, pupil of the elementary school in Gaullachergasse
- **Gregor Schuberth**, Exhibition Design, architect at Schuberth and Schuberth Architecture and Interior Design
- **Dr. Andreas Kroh**, Deputy Scientific Managing Director & head of the publishing house, NHM Vienna
- 

### **Ice Age children and their world**

The Ice Age intrigues us: it makes us think of iconic ice age animals such as mammoths, giant deer or cave bears. But also of man-made objects such as the cave paintings in Spain and France or the Venus of Willendorf.

The Ice Age is often described as a world of adults, while Ice Age children are neglected. The exhibition 'Ice Age Children and their World' reverses the perspective and combines the Ice Age theme with the children's experience. The concept of the exhibition was developed in cooperation between the departments of prehistory, geology, science communication and exhibition management of the NHM Vienna. In addition, three school classes contributed their ideas, which were discussed in advance in several workshops together with the curators and implemented as far as possible. The architectural office Schuberth and Schuberth was commissioned with the exhibition design.

The Ice Age Hall is designed as a place for all generations, where visitors get a tangible experience that invites them to engage with the topic in a playful way.

For this purpose, the hall was transformed into an ice-age environment: the first thing one sees upon entering are large free-standing skeletons of glacial animals. A network of paths leads to differently themed stations; seating steps and a fireplace in the center of the hall invite the visitors to linger. At the station 'At home on the road', a stylized tent addresses topics such as housing, clothing, play, hygiene and health. Other stations are dedicated to hunting and gathering and nutrition. It becomes clear that animals not only served as food, but were also supplied material for tools, jewelry, and clothing. An ice age cave invites you to explore and discover some surprises.

*"The new Ice Age Hall offers not only young visitors but also adults an unusual and vivid opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of the Ice Age. The people of the Ice Age are strangers to us – we don't really know what amused or angered them, whether girls and boys could play together or stayed in separate groups. Here in the museum one now has the opportunity to get a real feeling for what life was like for Ice Age children. This is a worthwhile experience, because it is always good to try to think about the living environment of people who grow up and live under different conditions or in completely different cultures",* emphasizes **Director-General and CEO Dr Katrin Vohland**, when describing the motivation for this new, very special hall.

### **Ice Age children and their world: The new family exhibition at NHM Vienna**

By Caroline Posch, Mathias Harzhauser, Julia Landsiedl and Agnes Mair

Hall 16 of the Natural History Museum has served a number of purposes in its history: From an ethnographic showroom to pile dwellings, and from a digital planetarium to a lecture hall. After extensive refurbishment, visitors can now explore the living environment of Ice Age children 30,000 years ago.

Everyone knows the term 'Ice Age'. Animals such as mammoths and saber-toothed cats immediately come to mind. The wonderful cave paintings in France and Spain and the Venus of Willendorf are examples of Ice Age art.

Few people are aware that we are still living in the Ice Age today. For 2.6 million years, the change between cold and warm periods of the Ice Age climate has dominated our planet. This has had a significant impact on human development.

But what exactly is this: Ice Age? What animals lived around Vienna at the time? What plants grew here? And what did the everyday life of the Ice Age people look like?

Hall 16 of the Natural History Museum provides information on all of that. After a total of two years of planning and refurbishment work, it opens its doors to visitors again. They are provided with information on the Ice Age environment, not – as is so often the case – from an adult perspective, but from the perspective of children.

For a long time, both researchers and museums did little to explore the realities of life of Ice Age children. Their contribution to the society and material culture of the Pleistocene was considered too insignificant. However, recent research suggests that children played an extremely important role in Ice Age social life. They sparked innovation, they engaged in art and helped with hunting and collecting. In the new exhibition, the children of today have the opportunity to compare their everyday life with that of Ice Age children, to immerse themselves in the Ice Age world and to 'grasp' it in the truest sense of the word. The hall has been transformed into an Ice Age landscape.

The Ice Age Hall is designed to provide a space for all generations, a space in which they can playfully acquire tangible and experiential knowledge. The first thing one sees upon entering are large free-standing skeletons of the Ice Age animal world. The room texts are short and encourage visitors to actively try out various things. At ten audio stations, a child from the Ice Age talks about his life – from hunting and playing to "going to the bathroom". One can light a digital fire and slip into ice age clothes. A network of paths connects the themed stations, and seating steps around a fireplace in the center of the hall invite visitors to linger.

At the station 'At home on the road', a stylised tent deals with topics such as housing, clothing, play, hygiene and health. Other stations are dedicated to hunting and gathering and nutrition. It becomes clear that animals not only served as food, but were also supplied material for tools, jewelry, and clothing. An ice age cave invites you to explore and discover some surprises. The stations present numerous originals and copies from the Stone Age collection of the NHM Vienna, including objects such as jewelry made of animal teeth, bone beads and fossil snail shells, tools and spear tips made of stone and bone. These items give an insight into the jewellery and tools used 30,000 years ago, thus offering a view of the everyday culture of the Ice Age people.

### **The oldest ceramic objects were made by children**

One of the archaeological highlights is a clay mammoth, less than two centimeters in size, from the

Pavlov site in the Czech Republic. The mammoth figure was found in 1923, and it later turned out to be almost 30,000 years old. The area between Pavlov and Dolní Věstonice is known for its rich treasure troves of Ice Age figures. A sensational fact: the objects were formed from clay and later baked in the fire, which makes them the oldest ceramic objects in the world. Until recently, the production of figurines of this type was almost exclusively attributed to adults. However, recent research suggests that some of the figures were made by children.

Baby animals can also be found in the newly designed hall. A 'cave bear family' is waiting in front of the Ice Age cave, displaying not only a full-grown cave bear, but also the skeletons of two young animals. In the larger of the two, even the milk teeth are recognizable. So it turns out, that even baby cave bears had to suffer through shedding milk teeth.

Original skeletons of giant deer, saber-toothed cat and the strange South American *glyptodon*, a giant armadillo, are further highlights of the exhibition. The Hundsheim rhinoceros is the paleontological star– a unique specimen of a warm-period rhinoceros from Lower Austria, which died 700,000 years ago by falling into a karst crevasse.

Caves were not only mystical places, but also playgrounds for children running through the damp cave mud. Visitors learn this in a station where the skeleton of a cave lion awaits them. Like people did thousands of years ago, you can leave your handprints in the gloomy cave!

### **What is it like to be a child in the Ice Age?**

If you fancy a search for traces, you can choose from a colorful range of programs for children, families or adults at the NHM Vienna, which not only includes the new Ice Age Children Hall, but also takes you behind the scenes of the museum.

Families can immerse themselves in the world of Ice Age children during guided tours in Hall 16 in May and June. On Deck 50, cave paintings encourage visitors to paint with natural colors. On our digital cave wall, the images created by the visitors merge into a one single work of art. If you want to try being a researcher, you have the opportunity to dig up and identify objects and materials from the Stone Age in our laboratory.

For an even more intense insight into the life of the Ice Age children, birthday programs offer the opportunity to try out Ice Age games and serenade the birthday child with Stone Age instruments. A new highlight will be the evening tour 'Ice Age Children at Night': Families with children from the age of four can explore the campfire-lit hall.

The program is not only aimed at families: from May to November, the curators of the exhibition will tell you how it was created and which research results are the basis for the contents of the hall in guided tours and lectures.

A hard-copy program is included in the press kit.

QR code for the event calendar [https://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/event\\_calendar](https://www.nhm-wien.ac.at/event_calendar)

**Caroline Posch in portrait**  
**Sabre-toothed cat, giant deer and a mini mammoth made of clay**  
by Juliane Fischer

The prehistorian Dr. Caroline Posch specializes in Stone Age research. On the occasion of the new permanent exhibition 'Ice Age Children and their World', she tells us about everyday life 30,000 years ago.

**How did you get into ice age research?**

Even as a young child, I always wanted to go behind the barriers in museums and touch the stone, the sword or the jewelry. In the Pharaoh's exhibition I wanted to climb into the sarcophagus. That's why my long-suffering mother always used to say: 'You can only touch this if you are an archaeologist!' After graduating from school, I was left with the question of choosing between classical archaeology or prehistory and early history. My fascination with the Stone Age then developed during my studies.

**Exhibitions are now more interactive, more 'tactile'.**

True, we have made 3D prints or copies of many objects for visitors to touch. Ultimately, this is the fascination in archaeology: holding stone artifacts, ceramics, and other items in your hands and knowing that thousands of years ago people touched and worked on these things the same way. I call such moments 'frozen movements' and you become aware that these were people like us.

**So who do we meet in the newly designed Ice Age Hall?**

At first glance we see a giant deer with antlers spanning three and a half meters. From the right a saber-toothed cat purrs at us and if we look closely, we find a very small mammoth made of clay. It is one of the first man-made clay figures and is only two and a half centimeters tall – very cute. It was discovered in Pavlov in Moravia, Czech Republic, more than 100 years ago. Further back in the hall there is a stylized tent and an ice age cave where you can meet a cave lion.

**What was it like inside an ice age cave?**

Very dark. If you are lucky enough to be in a cave like Chauvet in France, you can see pictures of cave lions, mammoths, bison and horses as well as the handprints of the Ice Age people on the walls in the torchlight.

**Mammoths, giant deer, giant armadillos: why were the animals bigger in the past?**

The 'megafauna' is typical of that period: a large body can store more body heat and is therefore better protected against the cold. At the end of the last cold period, the climate became warmer again. Mammoths no longer found enough mosses, lichens and grasses and eventually disappeared from Europe. The last specimens lived on the Wrangel Islands in Siberia until about 4,000 years ago.

**When was the last long cold period?**

That was the Würm glaciation, from 115,000 to 12,000 years ago today. In general, the Ice Age is a period that has been lasting for more than 2.6 million years. During this ice age, cold and warm periods alternate. At the moment we are in a warm period, the so-called Holocene.

**The exhibition has been designed by children and for children. Why?**

We were all children once – a fact that is often overlooked by prehistoric archaeology. Especially in older periods of human history, such as the Ice Age, we very often only imagine the world as one of adults. It is assumed that in an ice age group of 20 people at least half were under 15 years old.

Children are important drivers of new ideas and innovations. This is what we wanted to make visible to the children of today. In the planning phase, we conducted three workshops with children between the ages of eight and ten. Since the room is supposed to be for them, we thought it would only be fair to ask this target group for their ideas.

**What reaction of the children surprised you the most?**

We had, of course, planned topics such as the Ice Age wildlife, art, hunting and gathering for the exhibition in advance. But there were questions such as: how do I make a tool without tools? What is life

like without a permanent home? The children were also fascinated by topics such as hygiene, fashion, jewelry and food.

### **What sort of things did people eat then?**

It always depends on where you lived. In Lower Austria it was relatively cold, so we assume their diet contained lots of meat, such as reindeer, bison or horse meat. We can prove the grinding of cattails in Czech sites, and people probably ate berries, mushrooms, insects, mollusks, maggots, snails, as well as birds and their eggs depending on the season. Interestingly, it is difficult to prove that they ate fish in our region.

### **NUMBER GAMES**

by Andreas Kroh

- The last cold period, also known as the Würm glaciation, began about **115,000 years ago**.
- **11,700 years ago**, the Holocene started, the warm period in which we live today.
- During the last cold period, about **32%** of the Earth's land area was covered by ice.
- At the height of the last cold period, the sea level was up to **120 meters** below today's level.
- According to current research, the glaciers of the Alps are considered to have been up to **2,586 meters** thick in places.
- The latest computer simulations showed that the Inn glacier stretched almost to Munich with a length of just over **300 km** about 25,000 years ago.
- At the height of the last cold period, about **130,000 people** lived in Europe, which corresponds approximately to the population of Innsbruck.
- Up to **200 million mammoths** populated the mammoth steppes of Europe 42,000 to 21,000 years ago today, before their numbers dramatically decreased due to the rapidly dwindling habitat and hunters.

Sources:

Seguinot et al. 2018 <https://doi.org/10.5194/tc-12-3265-2018>

Tallavaara et al. 2015 <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1503784112>

Nogués-Bravo et al. 2008 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.0060079>

### **From the Ice Age to the South Seas**

At the opening of the Natural History Museum in 1889, the Hall that is today's Ice Age Hall for children housed the ethnographic collection from Indonesia and its neighboring islands in the western Pacific Ocean. The paintings and sculptures by well-known Viennese artists were chosen to tally with the exhibits. They were designed to give the audience insights into a foreign world.

Since 1928, the ethnographic collection has been housed in the Weltmuseum Wien, the former Museum of Ethnology. The hall was then used for the presentation of the anthropological collection, for a digital

planetarium and various special exhibitions. The decoration program was preserved as a historical record.

### **Children's Guide to the New Ice Age Hall**

The ice age has now reigned for 2.6 million years – often large parts of Europe were covered by snow and ice. How did people – and especially children – live in these cold times? Which animals did they encounter? Where did they live and play? Did they brush their teeth? The latest publication of the NHM Vienna is aimed specifically at children and presents the living world of the Ice Age from their point of view.

The book is available at the museum shop for € 9.90.

**Press material:** <https://www.nhm.at/presse/pressemitteilungen2025/kindereiszeitsaal>

### **General request for information:**

Mag. Irina Kubadinov, Head of Press Department, Press Spokesperson

[https://www.nhm.at/irina\\_kubadinow](https://www.nhm.at/irina_kubadinow)

Tel.: + 43 (1) 521 77 – 410 ?? [irina.kubadinow@nhm.at](mailto:irina.kubadinow@nhm.at)





Mag. Nikolett Kertész-Schenk, Bakk. BA MAS, Press Officer

[https://www.nhm.at/nikolett\\_kertesz](https://www.nhm.at/nikolett_kertesz)

Tel.: + 43 (1) 521 77 – 626 ?? [nikolett.kertesz@nhm.at](mailto:nikolett.kertesz@nhm.at)



Press photos 1/6

	<p><b>Mammoth clay figure</b>, 32,000 years old. This small mammoth comes from Pavlov (Czech Republic) and is part of an entire zoo of animal figures found in the region. Researchers consider them to be magical objects. There are, however, recent discussions about these figures being toys.</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter</p>
	<p><b>Sabretooth cat</b>, <i>Smilodon populator</i>, 40,000 years old, Rio Areco, Buenos Aires, Argentina Sabre-toothed cats lived in the woodlands and grasslands of America. They hunted in packs for bison, camels and giant armadillos. While their 'saber teeth' could inflict deadly wounds on their prey, they were too thin and too fragile to bite through bone.</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>
	<p><b>Hundsheim Rhino</b>, <i>Stephanorhinus hundsheimensis</i>, 700,000 years old The Hundsheim rhino lived in Europe 700,000 years ago during a warm period. This specimen fell into a crevasse on Hundsheimer Berg and was quickly covered by a layer of mud and stones. As a result, its skeleton is almost completely preserved.</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>
	<p><b>Giant deer</b>, <i>Megaloceros giganteus</i>, 13,000 years old, Ireland With a shoulder height of two meters, the giant deer was one of the largest animals in the glacial steppes of Europe. Its antlers had a span of up to 3.6 meters and could weigh 50 kilograms. They are the first antlers ever carried by an animal.</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter</p>

Press photos 2/6



**At home on the road**

In the Ice Age, people lived under rocky outcrops or in the bright entrance area of caves. In the open landscape, they built tents from wooden poles or mammoth bones. These tents were big enough to offer room for a whole family.

© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell



**Three cave bears, *Ursus spelaeus***

Adult animal, 45,000 years old, Vypustek cave, Czech Republic  
7-month-old young animal, 35,000 years old, cave in the Hartelsgraben near Hieflau, Styria  
Newborn, 50,000 years old, Salzofenhöhle, Styria, Austria  
Cave bears lived during the last ice age and disappeared 24,000 years ago. They were herbivores.

© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell






**Ruppersthal bone plate**, loess sediment and bone on glass fibre mat, 22,000 years old, Ruppersthal, Lower Austria

22,000 years ago, in Ruppersthal, , Stone Age people went on a mammoth hunt. They then dismantled their prey on site and carried parts home. A lot of bones that had remained on site were discovered in 1971 and recovered on glass fiber mats. They look exactly the same as they did 22,000 years ago.





© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell



Press photos 3/6

	<p><b>Illustration:</b> Ice Age children and their world:</p> <p>People hunted mammoths, giant deer, horses and reindeer, foxes, wolves, rabbits and birds. They ate the meat and used skins, bones, tendons and offal for clothing and tools. They also collected shrubs and grasses, edible plants, berries and fruits. Bird eggs, insects and snails were special treats. Children presumably hunted smaller animals and participated in the daily gathering.</p> <p>© colorful dog illustration, Zurich</p>
	<p><b>Cave lion</b> , <i>Panthera leo spalea</i>, 35,000 years old, Slouper Cave, Czech Republic</p> <p>During the Ice Age there were cave lions in Europe. They looked similar to today's African lion, but were larger. Despite their name, they didn't live in caves all the time. As carnivores, they found plenty of prey to survive in the mammoth steppe and in the glacial forests of southern Europe.</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>
	<p><b>In the cave</b></p> <p>For the Ice Age people, caves were special, enchanted places. Brandishing torches they wandered deep into the interior and decorated the walls with paintings. They probably engaged in rituals there as well. Children also went exploring in caves, alone or with adults. This is proven by small hand and foot prints. However, the idea that Ice Age people lived in caves is only partly correct – if so, they stayed in the entrance area.</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>

**Press photos 4/6**

	<p><b>Chain of elephant tusk snails</b> 24,5000 years old Langmannersdorf, Lower Austria</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter</p>
	<p><b>Tools: blade, drill, sting, scraping tool and birch pitch</b> (from left)</p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter</p>
	<p><b>Illustration:</b> Ice Age children and their world: bunterhund illustration, Zurich</p> <p>© bunterhund illustration, Zurich</p>
	<p><b>In the new Ice Age Hall for children</b></p> <p>© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter</p>

**Press photos 5/6**



**In the new Ice Age Hall for children**

© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter



**In the new Ice Age Hall for children**

© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter



**In the new Ice Age Hall for children**

© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter



**In the new Ice Age Hall for children**

© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter



**Press photos 6/6**

	<p><b>In the new Ice Age Hall for children</b></p>
<p>© NHM Vienna, Chloe Potter</p>	<p><b>In the new Ice Age Hall for children</b></p>
	<p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>
	<p><b>In the new Ice Age Hall for children</b></p>
<p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>	<p><b>In the new Ice Age Hall for children</b></p>
	<p>© NHM Vienna, Wilhelm Bauer-Thell</p>