

The British
Museum



Families
Ages 6+

Museum explorers fantastic creatures



The Hamlyn family trails are supported by

HHT THE HELEN HAMLYN TRUST

Welcome

This trail guides you on a journey of exploration and discovery around the Museum. On the way you'll track down some amazing treasures and learn tales of human history. 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

- 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, please use the feeding room in the Ford Centre for Young Visitors in The Clore Centre for Education on the Lower floor, Level -1, or one of our baby changing spaces. For details, ask at the Families Desk or Information Desk in the Great Court, or pick up a map of the whole Museum.
- 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.

Museum explorers fantastic creatures



Ancient peoples used **fantastic creatures** like camels for transport. What is your favourite way to get around?

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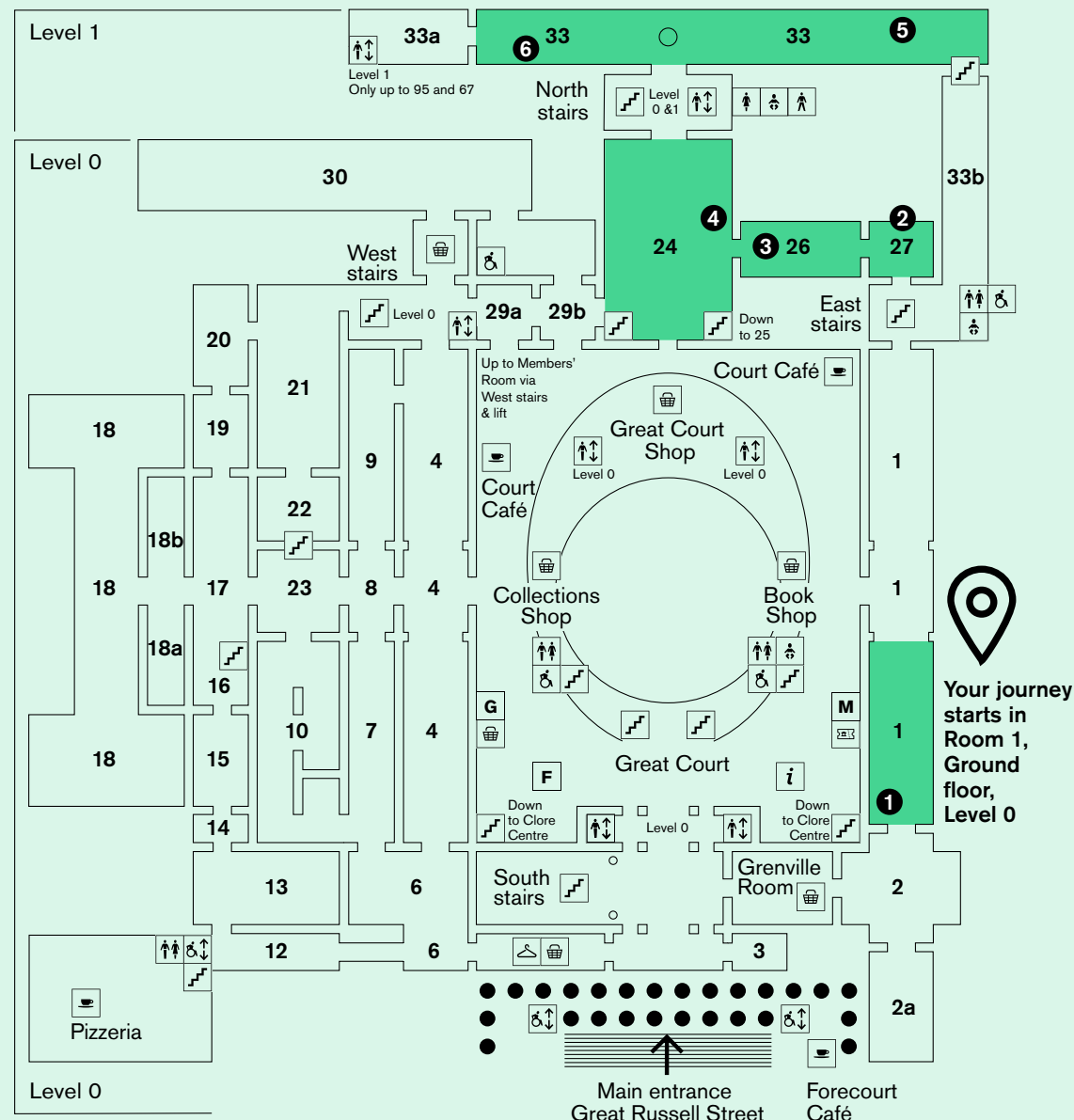
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This map shows the locations of the objects in this trail. You can pick up a map of the whole Museum at the Information Desk in the Great Court. Please note that some galleries may be closed at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances or refurbishment.

* The Families Desk is open on weekends and school holidays from 10.00–12.30 and 13.15–16.30

- | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Toilets | Cloakroom | Membership Desk | Café |
| Accessible toilet | Shop | Families Desk* | Stairs |
| Baby changing | Information Desk | Guide Desk | Lift |
| Baby feeding | Ticket Desk | Great Court Restaurant | Level access lift |

Ground floor



Take a trip around the world to discover how people have painted, carved, hunted and farmed animals throughout history. You'll need the sharp eyes and quick wits of an animal to find every object!

Your journey starts in Room 1, Ground floor, Level 0

Case numbers can be hard to find – don't be afraid to ask a member of staff for help finding an object

1 Curious creatures
Room 1

2 Mexican menagerie
Room 27

3 Animals from animals
Room 26

4 Bewildering beasts
Room 24

5 Creatures and cultures
Room 33

6 Strike a pose!
Room 33

1 Curious creatures



Go to Room 1

If you enter in the middle of the gallery and turn right, you'll soon find yourself surrounded by cases of amazing creatures. Among the curious animals are some of the first specimens to be placed in the Museum over **250 years ago**. When explorers brought these creatures back to the Museum, it was the first time many people in London had ever seen them.



The Museum's objects used to be called 'rarities'

Find an animal you have never seen before.

Invent a name for it. Tell your group what's special about it. Act out how you think it might move. What noise might it have made?

Walk back to the opposite end of the gallery.

How many creatures can you count on the way?



2 Mexican menagerie



Go to Room 27

For thousands of years the cultures of Central America have used fantastic creatures as powerful symbols. They have 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 near the middle of the room.

Can you see the detail underneath?

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 incredible creatures. Keep your eyes peeled, as some of these animals are smaller than others!

- A blue serpent with two heads
- A monkey scratching its head
- A ceramic vase that looks like a dog
- An object in the shape of an ocelot



3 Animals from animals



Go to Room 26 and find Case 19

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.

Look at the bow drills and snow beaters. They're long, thin and decorated with different scenes.

Choose the object nearest to your eye level and describe the scene to the rest of your group. What animals can you see? What are the people doing?

The relationship between humans and animals has existed for thousands of years.

Explore the gallery. Can you find any other objects made from animals? What are they? What's the most unusual object you can find?



4 Bewildering beasts



Go to Room 24 and find the large totem

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



Haida Gwaii is a large group of islands off the coast of Canada

Look up. Can you see the raven head? This formed the top of a totem pole (a symbolic sculpture carved from a large tree).

If you could build a totem pole, what animals would you carve into it? What do they mean to you?



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 special creatures carved into the wood. Can you spot them all?

- Eagle
- Whale
- Owl

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

5 Creatures and cultures



Go to Room 33, turn right and find the jar shown below

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

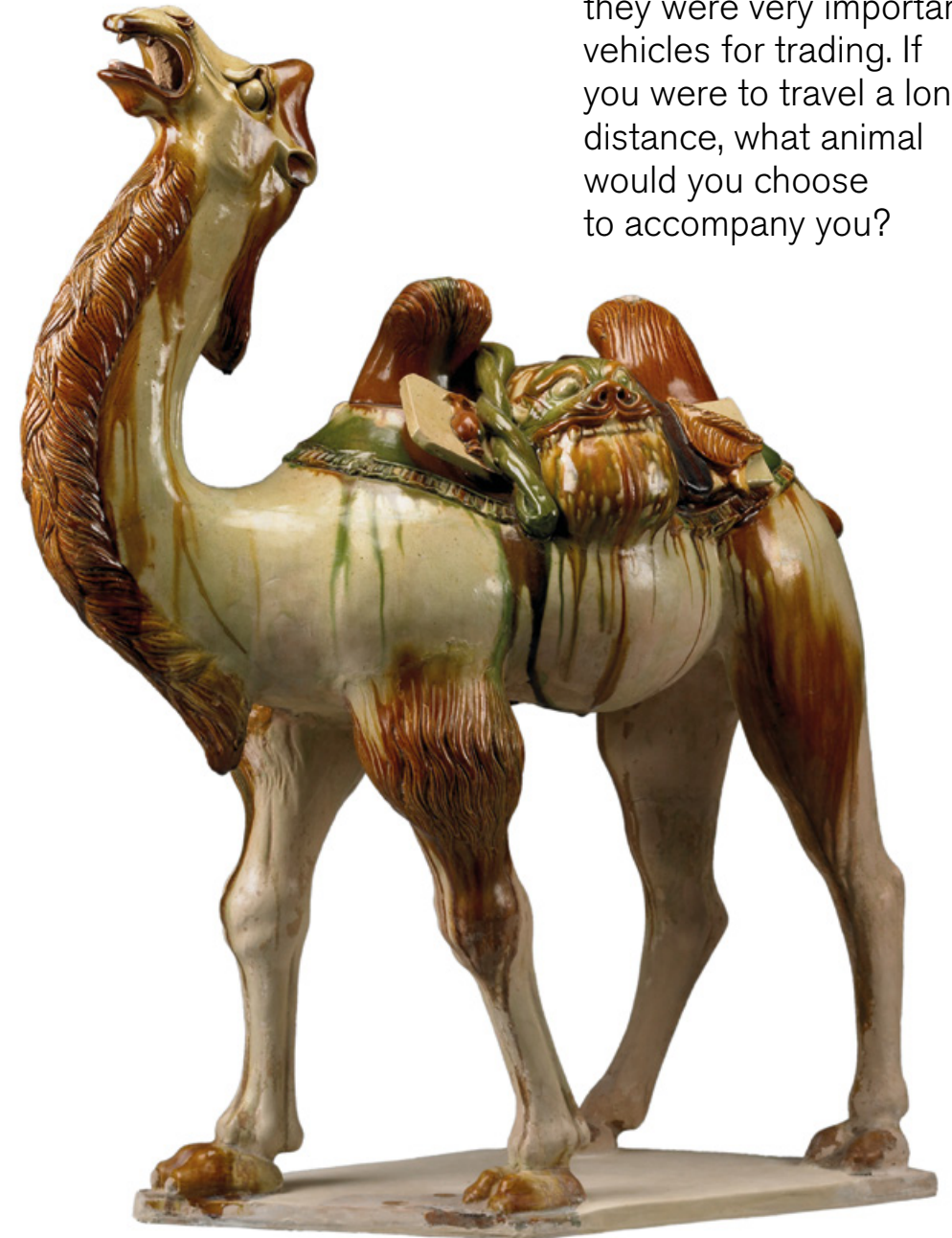


This beautiful covered jar was made for the imperial palace in China over 500 years ago. Any dragon with five claws is a symbol of the emperor.

How many dragons can you see flying through the clouds on the vase? How many claws do they have?

Find the nearby tomb figures. These figures were found in a tomb and may have been used to ward off evil spirits and to go with the deceased in the afterlife.

Although camels did not originally come from China, they were very important vehicles for trading. If you were to travel a long distance, what animal would you choose to accompany you?



6 Strike a pose!



Turn around and walk back through the gallery until you find the golden sculpture of Garuda



Garuda (meaning 'devourer') is a mythical bird-like creature popular in both Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. He is often represented with the body of a male warrior.



Garuda acts as a guardian and is sometimes referred to as the enemy of all snakes

Garuda is often shown holding a snake in each of his claws.

Sadly this Garuda lost his before coming to the British Museum. What do you think might have happened to the snakes? Can you find the snakes around his neck?

Curious combinations.

If you could be half human and half animal, what animal would you choose and why? What special power would you have?

Copy his pose!

Whose pose was the best?



You have completed the fantastic creatures trail!

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

- Find the two-headed dog in Room 25
- Track down some wolves decorating an Anglo-Saxon purse in Room 41
- Uncover the dangerous sport of bull-leaping in Room 12



Head back to the Families Desk to receive a stamp!

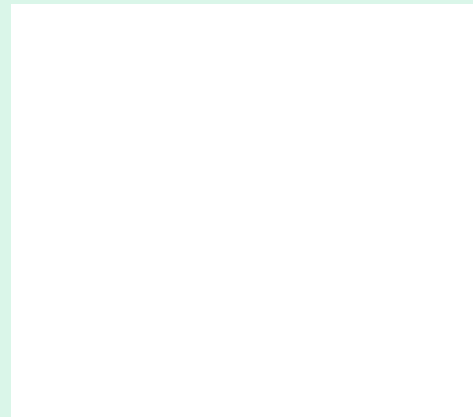
What an adventure you've been on. You've travelled around the world and explored the relationship between people and animals in different cultures. Of all the things you discovered, which was your favourite?

Name _____

Age _____

Date _____

Favourite object _____



At home

Other things you could do when you get home:

- Take a picture of fantastic creatures in your own home and make your own exhibition.
- Learn about other fantastic creatures and why they are so important.
- Design your own fantastic creature formed of six different animals.



Finish the design for this two-headed serpent by adding the head of your favourite creature from the trail.

Trails in the Museum explorers series

Ages 6+

- Africa around the world
- Ancient Britain
- Ancient Egypt
- Ancient Greeks
- Fantastic creatures
- Journey across Japan

Ages 3+

- Colour and shape
- Time to count

You can find out more
about our family activities
at britishmuseum.org

See you at the British
Museum again soon!

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Cover: 'Sancai' (three-colour) ceramic tomb figure of a camel, said to be from the tomb of General Liu Tingxun, China, AD 728.

1 Stuffed Bird of paradise, New Guinea, about 1889–1937. © The Natural History Museum, Tring.

2 Coiled rattlesnake figure made of granite. Mexico, about 1325–1521.

Double-headed serpent from the Turquoise Mosaics. Mexico, 1400–1521.

A green onyx vessel in the form of a crouching monkey. Mexico, AD 900–1521.

Hollow pottery figure representing a dog from Colima. Mexico, 300 BC–AD 300.

Offering vessel, made of onyx, in the form of an ocelot. Mexico, about AD 400–600.

3 Drill bow made of bone and ivory by Eskimo-Aleut. North America, before 1855.

Ivory snow knife made by Arctic Peoples. North America, before 1949.

Walrus ivory snow knife made by Eskimo-Aleut. US, before 1949.

4 Totem pole with a doorway carved at the bottom, made by Haida, Canada, before 1897.

5 Large cloisonné enamel jar with a domed cover. China, 1426–35.

'Sancai' (three-colour) ceramic tomb figure of a camel, said to be from the tomb of General Liu Tingxun, China, AD 728.

6 Figure of Garuda made of gilt bronze from Tibet. China, 19th century.

7 At home activity: Double-headed serpent from the Turquoise Mosaics. Mexico, 1400–1521.

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