



Messel Pit Fossil Site

With more than 40,000 finds to date, the Messel Pit is one of the world's most productive fossil sites, documenting dramatic changes to the biosphere during past geological periods. It reveals the wonders of evolution around 47 million years ago and was designated Germany's first UNESCO World Natural Heritage site in 1995.

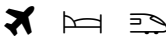


It may be hard to believe now, but back in the mists of time the area around **Darmstadt** consisted of a volcanic lake surrounded by a tropical forest. The result is that Messel Pit offers a particularly bio-diverse window into life in the Eocene period. The oil shale hides a wealth of excellently preserved fossils whose diversity and quality is simply unparalleled. These include more than 100 plant species, 8 fish, 31 reptile, 5 amphibian, more than 50 bird and more than 30 invertebrate species. Exhibits of particular interest are the various mammals, especially the remains of prehistoric horses such as the Eurohippus, which would have fit comfortably in a shopping bag. So far, more than 30 complete skeletons have been recovered. Preserved stomach contents and soft tissue samples even provide information about diet and lifestyle. The pit can be less visited as part of regular group tours. A visitor and information centre on the edge of the pit was opened in August 2010. Its design is based on the oil shale structure. The site is also a viewing platform offering views of the pit site for UNESCO World Natural Heritage sites: guarded tour. In addition, there are numerous information panels should you visit UNESCO World Heritage sites:



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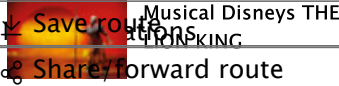
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wish to explore the pit field individually. The
insight gained from the Messel Pit can
be explored in greater depth at the fossil
and local history museum in the nearby
town of Messel, in the Hessian State
Museum Darmstadt and the Selkinger
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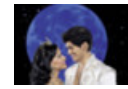
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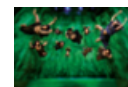
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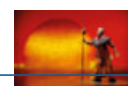
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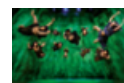
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