

Visual story

Great North Museum: Hancock

Last updated: June 2026



What to expect at the Great North Museum: Hancock

I am going to visit the Great North Museum: Hancock. There is lots to see and do but I don't have to do it all in one visit.

The Great North Museum: Hancock is a natural history and archaeology museum. I will find out about animals, dinosaurs, ancient Egyptians and lots more.

It is a safe place to relax and explore and have fun with my family and friends.



Arriving at the Great North Museum: Hancock

This is what the outside of the museum looks like.



If I have a Blue Badge, I can park my car round the side of the museum.



If I come on my bike, I can lock it to the bike racks.



I can relax on the front lawn if I want to and there are picnic benches I can sit at.



I can say hello to the rhino statue.



I can come into the museum up the steps or I can use the ramp.



The welcome desk

When I go inside the museum I will see the welcome desk.

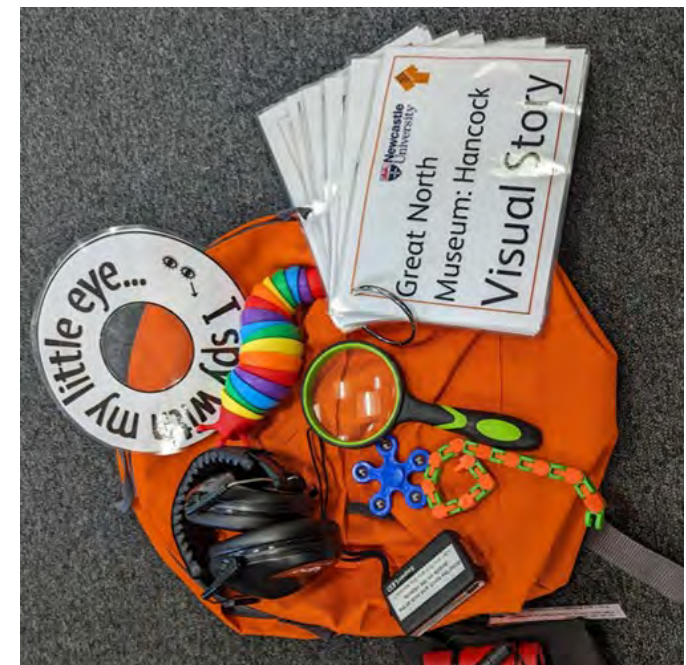
The staff are very friendly and can answer my questions.



I can borrow a sensory support bag or a pair of ear defenders.

I just need to ask the staff.

I can photograph a map of the museum if I want help finding my way around.



The gift shop

The gift shop is near where I come into the museum.

If I have some money, I can buy things but I don't have to.



Meeting people who work at the Great North Museum: Hancock

As I go around the museum, I will see people wearing black tops with an orange arrow like this.

They work here.

They are very friendly and able to help me.



Lockers

I can store things in the lockers while I go round the museum.

It costs £1 and I will need a coin to make them work.

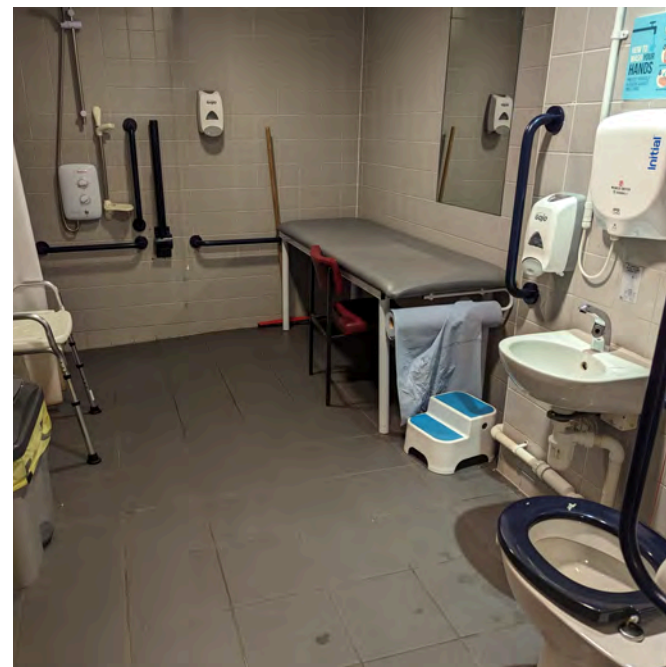


Toilets

There are toilets at the front and back of the museum, upstairs and downstairs.



One toilet is very big and has a changing table and a shower.



When I have washed my hands, I can use an electric hand dryer.

These are quite noisy.



Food and drink

There is a café upstairs where I can buy food or a drink.

I have to pay with a debit card or a credit card.

I can't use cash in the café.



If I have brought a water bottle but drunk it all up, the café staff will refill it for me.

I can't eat my packed lunch in the café.



I can eat my packed lunch in this room on the ground floor at the back of the museum.

It's open in the school holidays.

Sometimes it is open during school terms if there is not a school group in there.

I need to tidy up after I have eaten in here and put any rubbish or leftovers in the bin.



I can't eat or drink in the museum galleries.

I need to help keep the museum clean and tidy.

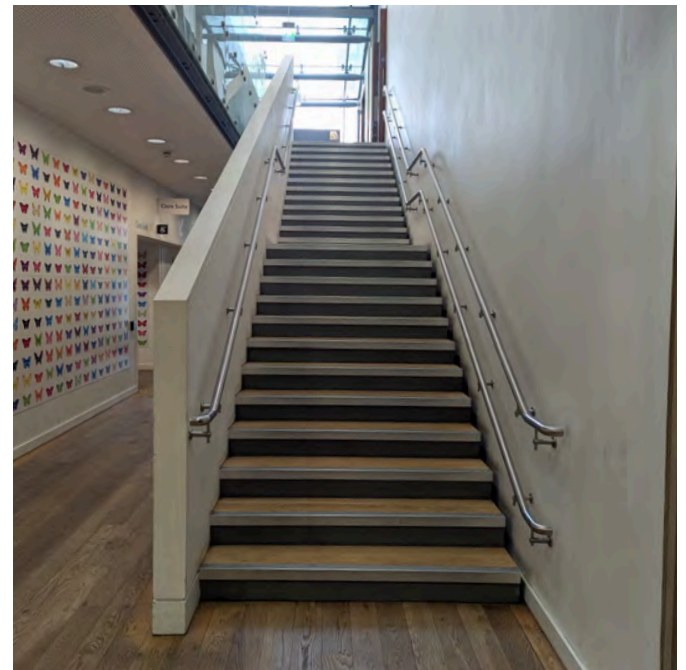
This is because crumbs attract pests which can damage the objects.



Getting around the museum

There are big, old stone staircases at each corner of the museum.

There is a more modern staircase at the back.



Lifts

There is a very big lift at the back of the museum and a smaller one at the front.



Living Planet

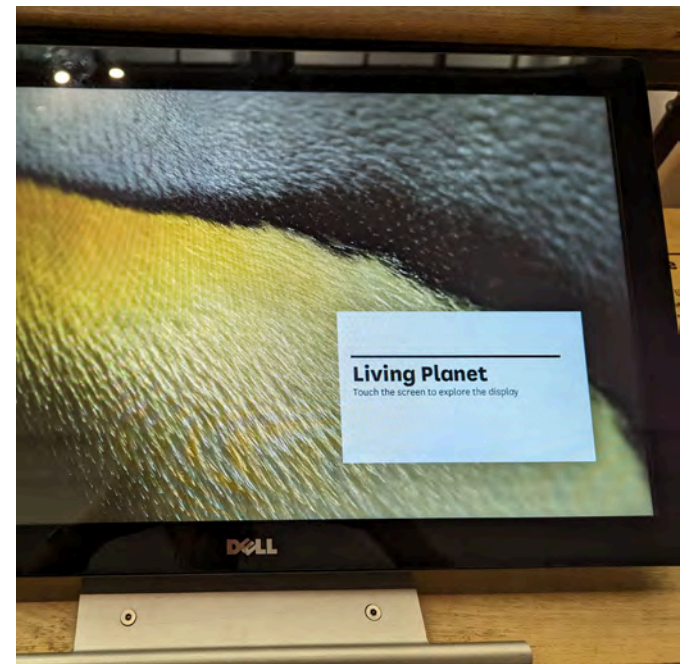
Living Planet is a big, bright gallery with lots of animals from all over the world.

I can explore this gallery upstairs and downstairs.



There are bright screens which can give me more information about the animals.

I don't have to use them if I don't want to.



Hadrian's Wall

The Hadrian's Wall gallery has a really long wall model down the middle, and lots of things to look at around the edge.

I can learn all about the Romans here.



This gallery has some light areas, and some dark areas.

There is a big screen with a film showing and some lit up altar stones to look at.



Ice Age to Iron Age

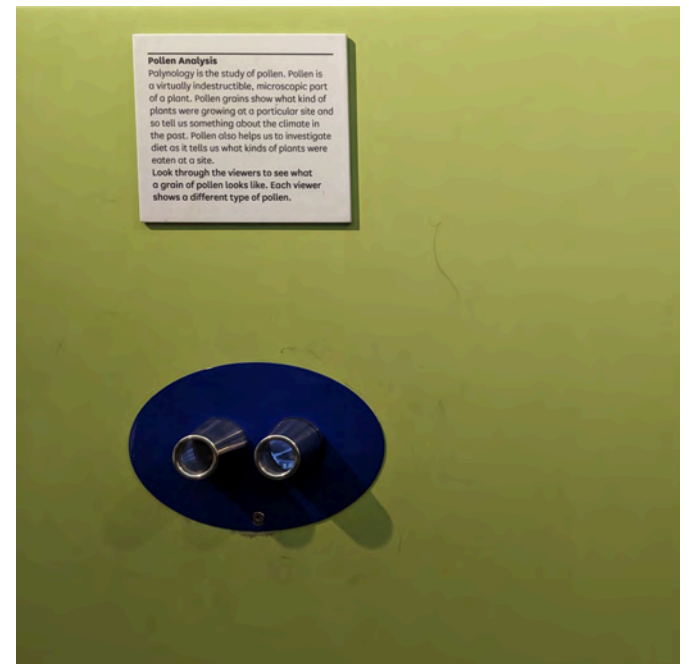
Ice Age to Iron Age is a long, bright gallery.

I can learn about life in prehistoric times here.



I can look through the binoculars in the wall.

I wonder what I will see?



Fossil Stories

The Fossil Stories gallery is very dark inside with some coloured lights.

I will see the big T. rex dinosaur and lots of fossils and models of creatures.



Warning: there are four big screens that show dinosaur videos.

These are not on all of the time and might come on suddenly.



Warning: there is a dinosaur skull that roars when people tap the box to make a donation.



Crystals and Gems

Crystals and Gems is next to the Fossil Stories gallery.

It's still quite dark inside but it has lots of bright and shiny things to look at in lots of different colours.



Explore!

This gallery is very long and bright with lots of different types of things in the cases.

I can look inside the drawers and see what's inside.

Behind the cases is a big room. I can't go inside. It's for staff only.



World Cultures

The World Cultures gallery is very colourful with things from all over the world.

Warning: there are some masks, scary objects and weapons in here.



Ancient Egypt

The Ancient Egypt gallery is a bit darker than the galleries next to it.

There is a tunnel in the middle called 'Journey to the Afterlife'.

This tunnel is quite dark inside, with a screen on the floor. The screen shows moving pictures of snakes, feathers and fire.

It's fun to stand inside and watch the colours and shadows change. But I don't have to if I don't want to.



Warning: at one end of the Ancient Egypt gallery there is a case containing a mummified person who has been unwrapped.



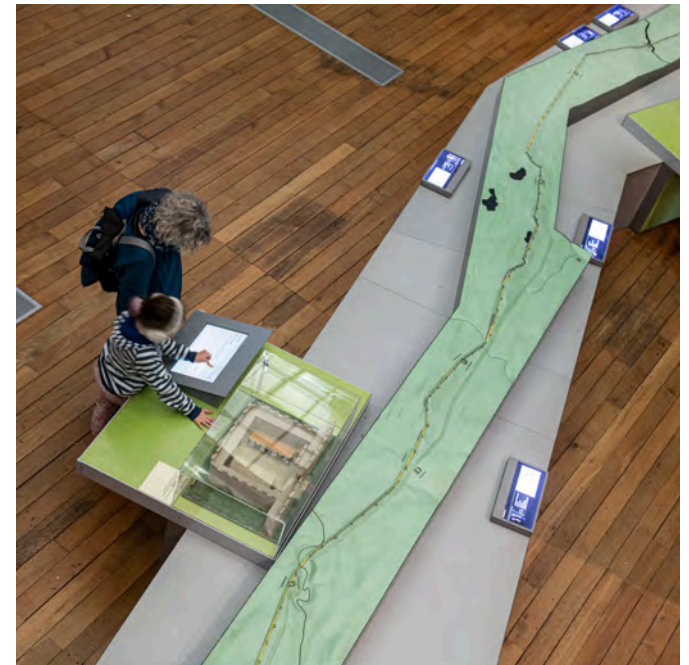
Natural Northumbria

Natural Northumbria is a big, bright gallery with lots of local animals that I might have seen before.

There are lots of buttons to press and drawers to open in this gallery and a big green box showing a film.



There is a bridge in the middle where I can look down to the Hadrian's Wall gallery below.



Ancient Greeks

This gallery is very long with big cases down the middle.

I can learn about Ancient Greece here.

I will see lots of pots with pictures on them.



If I sit on the benches at the side of the gallery I can press the button and listen to a story.



The Planetarium

If I have some money I can buy a ticket to visit the planetarium.

It is a dark room like a cinema. There are films I can watch about space and the stars.

Some of the sounds may be quite loud but I can ask for the sound to be turned down.

It will be dark when I go in but if I don't like I can speak to a member of staff and they can turn up the lights.



The Mouse House

The Mouse House is a space for young children. There is a tunnel to explore, a big mirror and holes to hide in. There are dressing up costumes and things to do. This space may be noisy if lots of families are visiting.

Sometimes I won't be able to get into the Mouse House because there are booked activities for schools or families.

I can find out on the museum website if it will be open. If it is closed, I can explore the rest of the museum. There will be a free trail I can use if I like.



Things to play with and touch

There are lots of things in the museum that are just for looking at.

But there are also things that I can touch, listen to and play with.



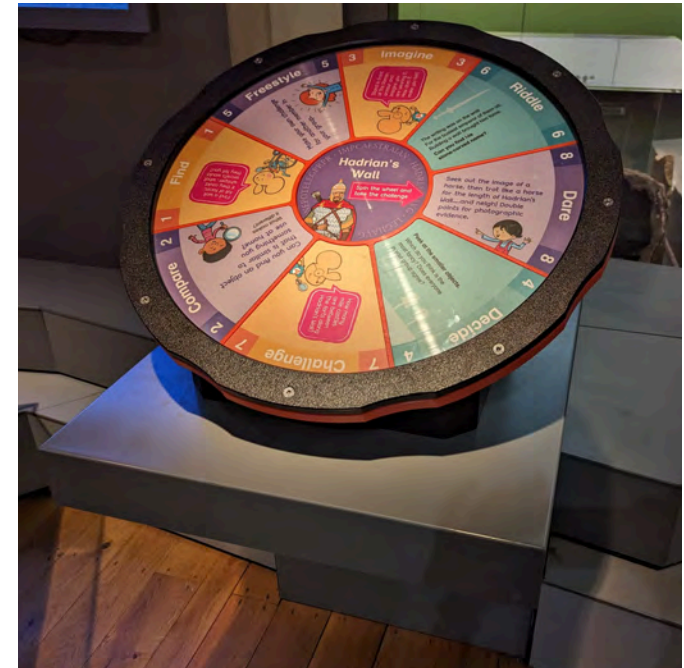
I can build a pyramid in the Ancient Egypt gallery.



Gallery spinners

If I spin these, they will give me an idea of something to do.

I can play a game to see who can score the most points for doing the tasks.

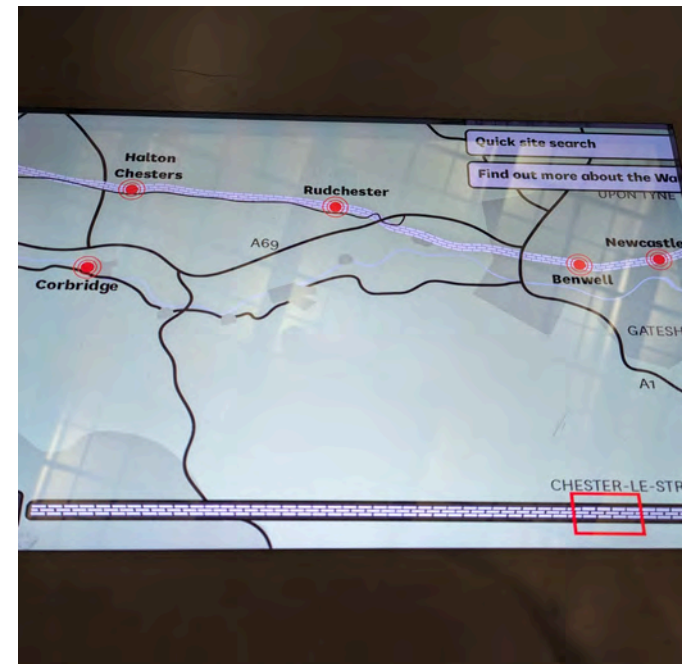


Projectors and screens

There are lots of projectors and screens around the museum which show different things.

Some of them might look like my TV at home but some are on the floor, or really big on the walls.

Some of these will make sounds too.

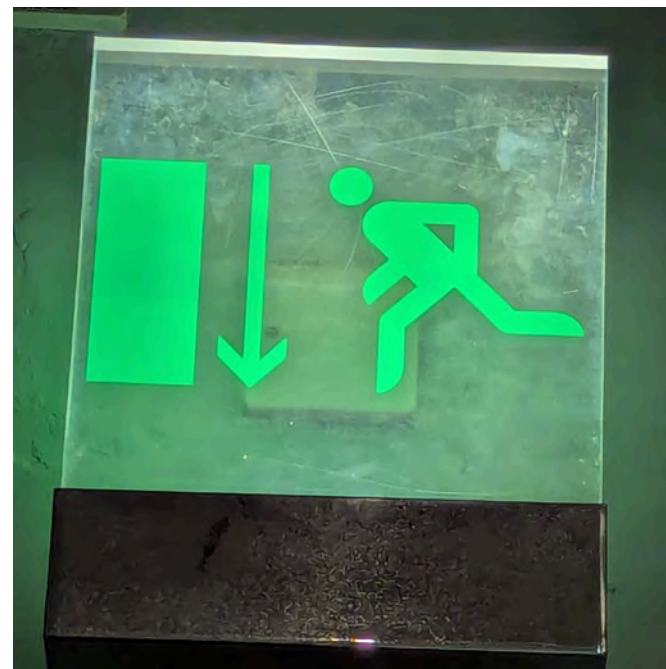


If I need to leave in a hurry

If I hear a loud siren noise and a loud voice saying “Please leave the museum by the nearest exit” that means I need to leave the building quickly and calmly.

I will follow one of these signs to go outside and wait by the rhino statue at the front of the museum.

I won't go back inside until a person who works at the museum tells me that it is safe to go back inside.



Calm spaces

Sometimes it can get very busy in the museum.

If I need to relax or calm down in a blank space, I can take some time out in the Nook Pod sensory recharge space in the Ice Age to Iron Age gallery.

I can also go to one of the stairwells at the back of the museum.

They have blank, white walls and just one object at the bottom of each staircase.



Library

If I go up to the second floor, I can go into the Library.

If the doors are open, I can go in.

I can look at the books or sit and read.



The Librarian is very friendly and I can ask questions.

Sometimes the Library is quiet, but sometimes it can be busy.

There is a sensory support bag in the Library if I need one.



Donations

If I'm enjoying my visit to the museum, I can make a donation, but I don't have to.

There are lots of different donation points in the museum.

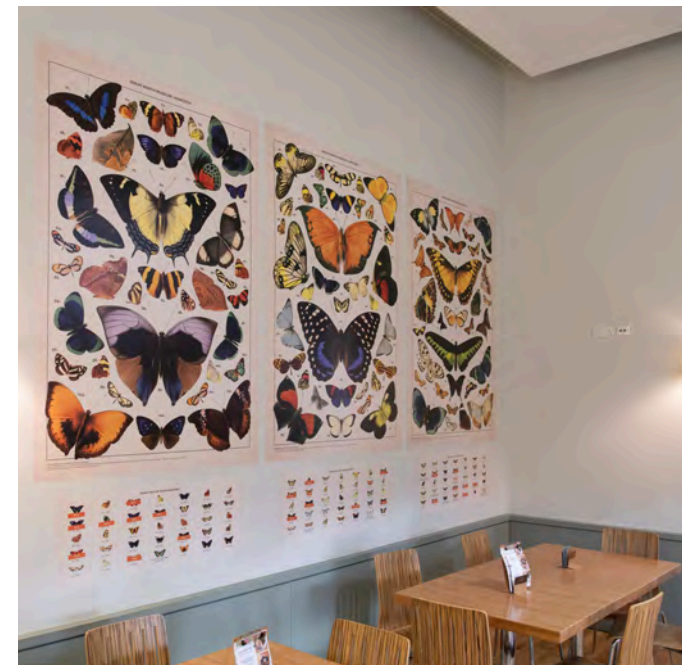
Some are for cash and some are for contactless debit and credit cards.



I might see a really big wall in the museum with lots of butterflies with people's names on.

These people have either donated to the museum or been given a butterfly as a gift from a loved one.

The wall is full now, so the museum has new butterflies to sponsor on the wall of the café.



Help us improve the Great North Museum: Hancock's visual story

We hope this visual story is useful.

If after your visit you feel we have missed any important sensory information, please email us and let us know:

info@greatnorthmuseum.org.uk
