

Senckenberg

Dinosaurs star at Frankfurt's natural history museum

Story and photos by David Ruderman
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Follow the yellow brick road to Frankfurt's Naturmuseum Senckenberg one weekend and you'll quickly realize you're not in Kansas anymore. The three-story natural history museum is home to lions, tigers and bears — oh my — not to mention mastodons, anacondas and quaggas.

While it's a classic rainy day retreat for families with young children, there's a wealth of attractions for visitors of all ages at the Senckenberg that trace the entire history of life on Earth and the planet's place in the cosmos. If it's been a part of the saga of evolution, you'll find it represented here, along with its near and distant cousins, often in a reconstructed version of the appropriate habitat.

An outgrowth of the Senckenberg Natural History Research Society, founded in 1817, the museum is dedicated to promoting scientific understanding and bringing its insights to the public. Exhibits present knowledge in context.

The stars of the show, and the big draw for younger visitors, are

the dinosaurs. For those inclined to meet the monsters at close range, the Senckenberg doesn't disappoint. The exhibits reopened last November after undergoing renovations that present the outside masters of the Mesozoic in brighter lights. The main ground floor exhibit space shows them off to their best advantage, but the Senckenberg has lots more to offer too.

Whether it's crustaceans in their crunchy glory or spiders in their silky splendor, the range of exhibits is extensive and enormously educational for those with an interest in the natural sciences.

Ambiguous about amphibians?

Are you ambiguous about amphibians? Check out the recreations of the Japanese giant salamander and the West African Goliath frog, then move on to the newts and toads.

If fish is your dish you can find exhibits of the jawless, cartilaginous and bony varieties. Visitors can have a good look, for instance, at the rare lobe-fin fish, *Latimeria chalumnae*, a species first discovered by researchers in 1938. The lobe-fin is known to exist in nature



While dinosaurs may be among the main attractions at Frankfurt's Senckenberg Museum, the numerous exhibits showcase the many facets of life on planet Earth. Visitors can examine everything from early fossilized remains to dioramas depicting native cultures.

only in small areas off the east coast of Africa and in Indonesia.

A total of no more than 300 specimens have ever been seen by human eyes. Ancestors of this aquatic rarity dating back to the Devonian period — long before you were in high school — are considered to be evolutionarily significant as prede-

cessors of terrestrial vertebrates, the life forms that crawled out of the sea and found eventually that they could stand up because they had a little bit of backbone going for them.

The museum displays about 800 species of birds. In the large mammals department visitors can get the lowdown on the lives of el-

phants, mastodons and whales. It's a naturalist's delight as well as a wonderful research resource and well of dreams for budding scientists of all ages.

Children in particular will enjoy the large number of exhibits that allow them to touch and otherwise interact with the reconstructed life forms.

The Senckenberg is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturday, Sunday and holidays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Children under 6 enter at no cost. Children age 6-15 pay €2.50, youths

and adults 16-65 pay €5 and those over 65 pay €4.

The museum is located at Senckenberganlage 25, about a 10-minute walk from the Frankfurt main train station, though the trek will be longer with young children in tow. Take the U-4 from the train station to the Bockenheimer Warte subway stop. The children will enjoy the escalator ride and you won't have to waste time and money on parking. The U-6 and U-7 also stop there.

For information on guided tours, classes and workshops call civ (069) 7542357.



Senckenberg visitors young and old admire their favorite animals while browsing through the museum, which is located near Frankfurt's Goethe University.

'CAREing' about local history

Museum showcases men, women who have passed through greater Giessen military community

Story and photos by Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Elvis is in the house. So are Senator Ted Kennedy, German Chancellor Willy Brandt, Secretary of State Colin Powell, President Gerald Ford, Vice President Dick Cheney, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and a host of distinguished military and civilian men and women who have played a role in the history of the greater Giessen military community.

The "house" in question is the CARE Museum, located in Building 59, just inside the main gate of the Giessen Depot. Staffed by members of the Civilian Association of Retired Employees, the permanent exhibit traces the history of the U.S. Army in Giessen, Kirch-Göns, Friedberg, Bad Nauheim, Butzbach, Wetzlar and Marburg.

Among the many historical displays are photographs of those who have lived, worked and visited the military community over the years. The museum also features photos and exhibits depicting the events leading up to World War II such as the "Kristall Nacht" in Marburg in which the local synagogue and Jewish-owned shops were destroyed. "Our heart is still with the U.S. forces," said Hans Becker, CARE president. "We would never do this if our hearts weren't in it. ... I hope to do this until I die."

The CARE Museum was born in January 1989 after the military community staff approached former German employees who had spent decades serving the military community about the possibility of documenting the U.S. military presence in Giessen. Twelve retired German workers, with an average of about 40 years of employment each among them, began the arduous process of collecting historical records, artifacts and photographs from city archives, local newspaper "morgues" and fellow employees. During the process what began as a record of the U.S. military's presence quickly expanded into a wider showcase of military history in the aforementioned towns and cities.

Photos, uniforms, crests and other historical remnants depict everything from the destruction caused by Allied bombers during World War II to visits by dignitaries over the years following reconstruction, support of the Berlin Airlift during the Soviet blockade of West Berlin to deployment during Operations Desert Storm, Joint Endeavor

and Enduring Freedom. Besides giving newcomers to the 284th Base Support Battalion a historical look at their temporary home, the museum also attracts local interest. "We have German visitors — many students of history from the university," said Becker.

During a tour, hosted by members of CARE who donate their free time to maintain the museum, visitors learn how the depot once served as home to the German Infantry Regiment 116 around the World War I timeframe and as an airbase for the German Bomber Wing 55 starting in 1938.

Visitors can also see the impact of Allied bombs on the city of Giessen during Allied air raids on Dec. 4 and 6, 1944. Railroad accidents, former Prisoner Of War camps, a look at medieval Butzbach which dates back to 773 and a historical look at the Army and Air Force Exchange Service are also presented.

Many of the photographs were taken by Heinz Magel who served as a staff photographer for some 12 years of his 42 years of service with the U.S. military. One of his most popular photos is a simple ID photo of Sgt. Elvis Presley, who lived in nearby Bad Nauheim from October 1958 to March 1960 while serving with the 3rd Armored Division on Friedberg's Ray Barracks.

Elvis, the Soldier

"At the time I didn't know who Elvis Presley was," said Magel, during an interview with the *Hessen Herald* in 1995. "I just took his picture like everyone else. But then people always said, 'Presley, Presley,' and I thought — who is Presley? Then I found out."

As Becker leads visitors through



CARE members Henry Schroth and Hans Becker view exhibits dedicated to local unit participation in Deserts Shield and Storm.



A bar of soap brought back from the Persian Gulf region during Operation Desert Storm.

the former POW detention cells that now serve as the CARE Museum, he shares his personal insights into the events of the past century. A native Marburger, Becker said he remembers as a boy seeing the Marburg synagogue burn. At age 17 while serving with the Reichsarbeitsdienst, a work brigade run by the Nazis for youths before their military conscription, he was drafted into the German navy only to be sent home before he could serve because the navy had been put out of commission by the Allies.

As the end of the war neared and a call came for young recruits to

When the U.S. military rolled into Marburg, Becker said he jumped at the chance to gain employment, saying he was initially paid 270 Reichs marks per month — "enough to buy a couple of packs of cigarettes. The money wasn't worth a damn. I had a hot meal in the depot — that was the important thing."

From his first job in June of 1945 issuing shoes, Becker eventually rose to be the chief of the warehouses by the time U.S. facilities were closed in Marburg in 1954. His reputation as a diligent worker and manager led to continued employment at the Giessen Depot.

These and other stories await anyone with the desire to learn more about local history at the CARE Museum which is open every Thursday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

With the impending drawdown of the 284th BSB and return of U.S. installations to the German government by 2008, Becker and fellow CARE volunteer Henry Schroth said they would like the city of Giessen to carry on the tradition when the U.S. military departs.

"We hope the city of Giessen will come to an agreement with us," said Becker. "We discussed this in the days when the museum opened. We will find a way."

For more information about the museum call the 284th BSB Public Affairs Office at mil 343-1600 or civ (0641) 402-1600. (David Ruderman contributed to this story)



Photos by Karl Weisel

Taking a magic carpet ride at the German Film Museum

The German Film Museum is one of several museums set side by side on the Sachsenhausen side of the Main River in Frankfurt. Featuring permanent and temporary exhibits, the museum is also the home of a small movie theater dedicated to showing impor-

tant films from cinematic history. This month the theater features several films by deceased director Stanley Kubrick. A special exhibition on the noted director is currently under way and continues through July 4. The museum is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sun-

days from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 2-8 p.m. Photo left: Masks from the films "Enemy Mine" and "Frankenstein." Right: a blue screen technique used to eliminate and replace background in a film.