

New nature and science museum to open in Dallas

November 14 2012, by Jamie Stengle



Visitors walk outside the front entrance of the of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science during a media preview in Dallas, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

(AP)—When the new Perot Museum of Nature and Science opens, visitors will be able to feel the ground shake beneath them in an earthquake simulation, program a robot to navigate a maze and even test

their speed against a virtual Tyrannosaurus rex.

"It's just going to be an incredible hands-on learning experience for people interested in nature and science," said Nicole G. Small, the museum's chief executive officer.

The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. Their daughter Carolyn Perot Rathjen, who chairs the museum's board of directors, said she and her siblings thought the donation would be a good way to honor their parents and say thank you to the city. Ross Perot, who twice ran for president, founded two computer-services companies.



A visitor looks at a display of cross sections of the human body at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science during a media preview in Dallas, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

"My mom was a teacher, my dad's an engineer. They have a tremendous passion for education," Rathjen said, who added, "It's a museum that can appeal to all ages."

The \$185 million museum built entirely with private donations has five floors of public space and stands about 14 stories high. The lobby floor of the distinctive building located on almost 5 acres (2 hectares) just north of downtown has open glass walls so visitors can look out into the landscaping. The upper levels of the 180,000-square-foot (16,700-square-meter) museum designed by Pritzker-Prize winning architect Thom Mayne and his firm Morphosis Architects has a concrete covering, making it appear like a large cube floating over a landscaped base.



Emma Fisk spreads her arms like wings to control a virtual bird while using an

interactive display that simulates bird flight at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science during a media preview in Dallas, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

A 54-foot (16.5-meter) escalator contained in a glass-enclosed tube extends outside the building and gives visitors a view of a busy freeway and downtown's skyscrapers.

"It's the postcard view of downtown," said Mayne, who added that the building was designed to make visitors feel like they are part of the city.

A walk down to one of the floors features musical steps. In one display, visitors can pick a virtual competitor to race against—Dallas Cowboys running back Felix Jones, gymnast Emily Richardson, a Tyrannosaurus rex or a cheetah—and then see how their times and average miles per hour compare. Another lets visitors design a virtual bird by custom-picking different features. There's also an animated experience that shows visitors how the solar system was created, a virtual 9,000-foot (2,743-meter) journey down a gas well and the opportunity to feel the force of a tornado.



Emma Fisk looks at a display at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science during a media preview in Dallas, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

Other displays include an array of gems and minerals, dinosaur fossils and animals that have undergone taxidermy.

The current display in a space for traveling exhibits tells the tale of the

museum's construction, and even includes the remnants of a Model T discovered as they prepared the site for construction.



Scenic exhibit manager Jon Altemus, left, and Mario Armenta put the final touches on a display at the of the Perot Museum of Nature and Science during a media preview in Dallas, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

The building is expected to attain three designations for environmental sustainability and features an acre of landscaped roof with native plants, a rainwater collection system and solar-powered hot water heating.

The museum's roots date back to 1936 with the establishment of the

Dallas Museum of Natural History. In 2006 it merged with The Science Place and the Dallas Children's Museum to form the Museum of Nature & Science at Fair Park.



Tyrannosaurus rex bones are on display at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science during a media preview in Dallas, Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. The museum set to open Dec. 1 was named for billionaire former presidential candidate Ross Perot and his wife, Margot, after their five children made a \$50 million gift in honor of them. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

Small said that the museum will still have a presence at the Fair Park location just east of downtown but the new downtown museum will be the main visitor attraction.

If You Go...

PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE: 2201 N. Field St., Dallas, Texas, www.perotmuseum.org , 214-428-5555. Museum opens Dec. 1. Opening weekend schedule: Saturday, Dec. 1, 10 a.m.-midnight; Sunday, Dec. 2, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Regular hours will be Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sundays, noon-5 p.m. Adults, \$15; children ages 2-11, \$10; students ages 12-17 and seniors 65 and older, \$10.

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Citation: New nature and science museum to open in Dallas (2012, November 14) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-11-nature-science-museum-dallas.html>

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