

Zhejiang Museum of Natural History

Anji, China 2014–2018

Founded in 1929, the Zhejiang Museum of Natural History is located in Hangzhou and has a collection of over 200,000 specimens covering geology, ecology and palaeontology. The eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang is the site of many important discoveries from the Cretaceous period. A new, second branch of the museum has been established in Anji, in the north of the region, forming the centrepiece of a new cultural district.

The new museum is set on a sloping site in a large natural park surrounded by bamboo forests and overlooking rice fields in the valley below. It comprises a loose infrastructure of spacious exhibition halls, taking into account the large scale of some of the exhibits: Dinosaur fossils and life-size models, large-scale wildlife dioramas, accompanied by multimedia and interactive exhibition elements.

The staggered composition of the eight, single-storey, bar-shaped pavilions step down the hillside. They follow the natural topography, minimising the visual impact on the landscape, and frame an open garden. A loggia, or covered walkway, loops around this central space, mediating between the external and internal areas of the museum.

At the northernmost point, an entrance pavilion welcomes visitors and offers views over the central garden and landscape beyond. Located on either side of the garden, each exhibition hall can be accessed directly or in sequence following the stepped loggia. The southernmost pavilion faces out towards a lake at the lowest end of the site.

The solid forms of the pavilions are embedded within the dense landscaping of the central garden and the surrounding parkland. The planting extends onto the green roofs of the building complex which is rendered in red ochre to match the clay earth of the hillside site, reinforcing the relationship between the museum and the landscape.

Project start	2014
Completion	2018
Opening	2019
Gross floor area	58,000 m ²
Client	Zhejiang Museum of Natural History, People's Government of Anji County
Architect	David Chipperfield Architects Shanghai



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Architect	David Chipperfield Architects Shanghai
Partners	David Chipperfield, Mark Randel (Design lead), Libin Chen
Project architects	Alessandro Milani (Competition), Miguel Angel (Preparation and brief to Developed design), Shen Huiwen (Developed design, Design intent details), Chuxiao Li (Site design supervision)
Project team	Hans Christian Buhl, Zhexu Du, Tianyuan Fan, Jinghui Hou, Andrew Irvin, Han Li, Huiqun Liu, Jidi Pan, Fengjuan Sun, Nora Wuttke, Liping Xu, Zhixun Zhou; Visualisation: Andrew Irvin
Competition team	Zhexu Du, Fengjuan Sun, Nora Wuttke, Liping Xu; Graphics, Visualisation: Alessandro Milani, Zhexu Du <i>In collaboration with</i>
Local design institute	Zhejiang South Architecture Design Ltd., Hangzhou (Technical design to Construction supervision)
Structural engineer	Ove Arup and Partners Ltd., Shanghai (Concept design); Zhejiang South Architecture Design Ltd., Hangzhou (Developed design to Construction supervision)
Services engineer	Ove Arup and Partners Ltd., Shanghai (Concept design); Zhejiang South Architecture Design Ltd., Hangzhou (Developed design to Construction supervision)
Building physics, Acoustics	Zhejiang South Architecture Design Ltd., Hangzhou
Lighting consultant	Sunlux Lighting Design, Hangzhou
Exhibition planning	Triad China Ltd., Shanghai
Landscape architect	Levin Monsigny Landschaftsarchitekten, Berlin (Concept design), Zhejiang South Architecture Design Ltd., Hangzhou (Developed design to Construction supervision)