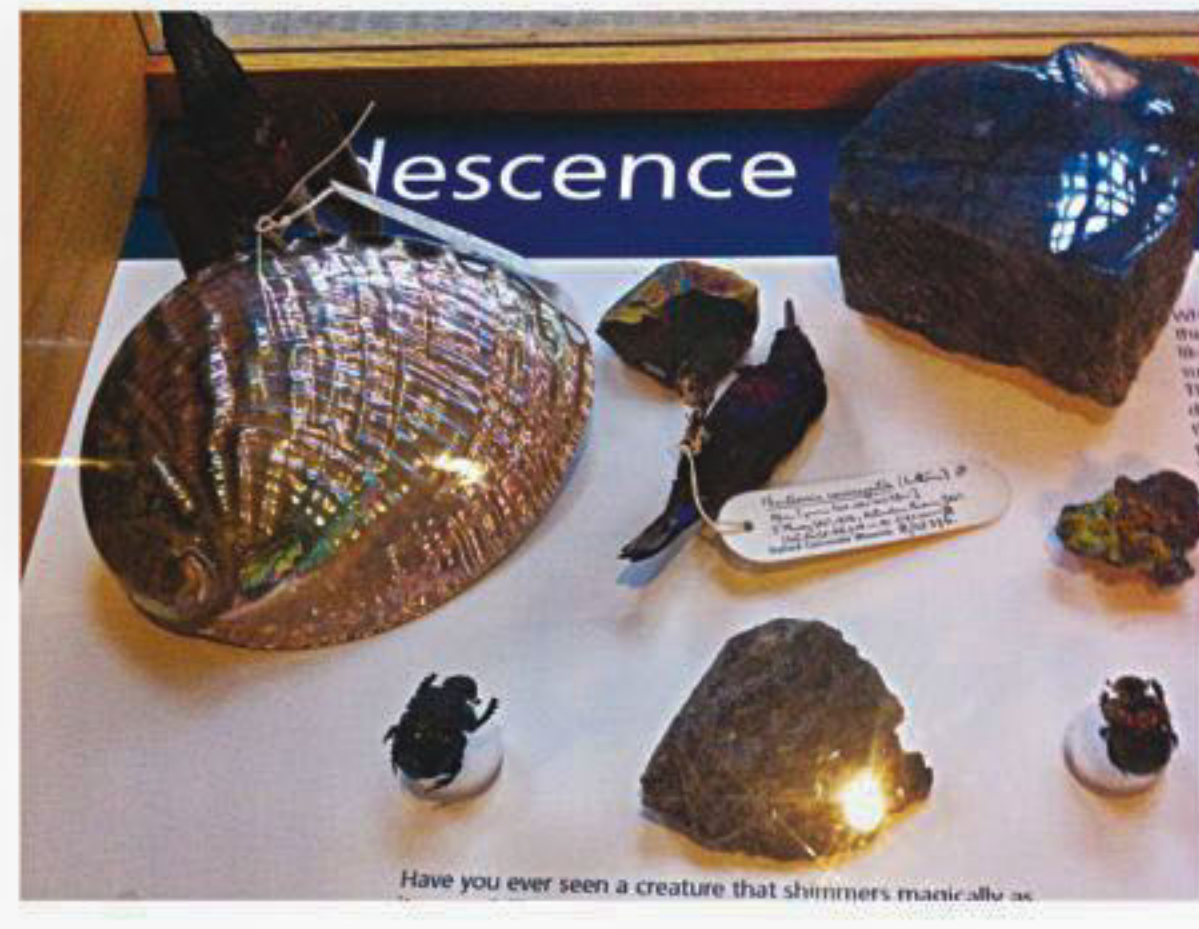


READER'S CHIT

Oxford University Museum of Natural History

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Wandering in Oxford, England, even if it is in winter, can be quite exciting. The city, known worldwide as the home of the famed University, has lots to offer for tourists. Almost 100 km away from London, Oxford is also home to many museums, and galleries.

Last winter, I along with my brother, visited the most talked about museum of the city, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, simply known as Oxford University Museum. Established back in 1850, it is home to almost seven million geological and zoological specimens, mostly dating from the 16th century.

The entire museum has two floors. The ground floor is the Main Court whereas the upper floor is called 'Upper Galleries.'

Upon entering the museum, we first encountered a big dodo bird up close, seemingly present to give a warm welcome to the visitors. The main court is a vast place where all large animals skeletons are kept for display. There are two dinosaurs, a big whale and a large meteorite along with other small animal specimen boxed in transparent glass. There is also a tall statue of Charles Darwin at the far end of the Main Court.

On the upper floor, five types of speci-



men are on display - beehives, live insects, birds, gemstones and earth-sun scale models. The entire Main Court can fully be seen from the upper floor. There is also a café on the upper level. Hot drinks and sweet cakes work best in the chilly weather.

As this museum is a big source of information for school children; groups of stu-

dents are almost always found looking at different exhibits, with their teachers providing a guided tour. There is also a dedicated area called 'the learning zone' for children.

The ground floor has a small makeshift souvenir shop close to the exit. Different souvenirs including fossils and minerals,

museum publications, children's toys, jewelry, postcards, tea towels, ties, mugs, advent calendars and bespoke museum products can be bought. Buying some souvenirs is a must as they are quite affordable.

Although Oxford University Museum of Natural History is quite small, it was one of the finalists of the "Museum of the year 2015" competition for its unique beauty and resourceful collections. The interiors of the museum are also attractive.

Non-commercial photography or filming is allowed in the museum. Otherwise, prior permission from the curator is required. The museum also has a friendly group of staff for the elderly, disabled people and autistic children along with the facilities of wheelchair ramp and lift.

An example of neo-gothic architectural design, the museum building is stunning to look at from the outside too. It is the house of university research, teaching and public engagement. A visit to this museum is a must when you are in Oxford. It is open every day from 10am to 5pm with no tickets required.

By Samiul Raijul
Photo: Samiul Raijul

