

# Houston Loves 'Lucy'

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**WHAT:** "Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of [Ethiopia](#)" at the Houston Museum of Natural Science

**WHEN:** Aug. 31-April 20

**HOW MUCH:** \$20

**WHY GO:** [Houston](#), we have a fossil.

But it's not just any old fossil making its way to the Houston Museum of Natural Science at the end of the month. "Lucy," as she's known, is a 3.2 million-year-old hominid discovered 33 years ago in Ethiopia. With 40 percent of her skeleton intact, Lucy is the oldest and most complete adult human ancestor fully retrieved from African soil.

How'd she get her name? The fellows who dug her up in 1974 were inspired by the [Beatles](#) song "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds."

This will be the first time since its discovery that the fossil will be displayed outside Ethiopia. (Last year, both the [Smithsonian Institution](#) and [New York's American Museum of Natural History](#) announced that they would not host the exhibition, arguing that Lucy is too fragile to travel.) Lucy is scheduled to visit [New York](#), [Denver](#) and [Chicago](#), but plans have yet to be finalized.

The Houston show is not all about Lucy, according to museum president Joel Bartsch, who worked with the Ethiopian government in organizing the exhibition. "Very few people in [North America](#) have an understanding about what Ethiopia is all about," Bartsch said. The Ethiopian government "decided they wanted to take Lucy . . . and use her as a goodwill ambassador to get people to come to the exhibition, and while they're there, learn about all that Ethiopia has to offer beyond the prehistoric stuff."

To that end, "Lucy's Legacy" offers more than 100 artifacts -- including fossils, paintings, coins, musical instruments and religious artifacts -- that will enlighten visitors about the country's heritage.

**DON'T MISS . . .** *Lucy*, of course. Scientists believe the fossilized partial skeleton, found in the [Afar region](#) of northeastern Ethiopia, was once a 3½-foot-tall, 60-pound ape-man species. . . . An untitled *78-foot-long, 10-foot-high mural* displayed in an almost complete circle represents 6 million years of human evolution and is set against a changing environment of flora and fauna. . . . *The first coins ever minted by an indigenous African*

*civilization*, which were formed in Aksum during the reign of King Endubis (AD 270-300).

**EXTRAS:** Starting in September, the museum hosts a *series of lectures* about the exhibition Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. On Oct. 9, museum curator Dirk Van Tuerenhout talks about "*Ethiopia as Cradle of Mankind*"; on Oct. 16, former ambassador to Ethiopia Tibor Nagy Jr. discusses "*Ethiopia's Tradition of Social Harmony and Religious Tolerance*." Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased through the museum's box office at 713-639-4629. Visit the spa at the *Four Seasons Hotel Houston* (1300 Lamar St., 713-650-1300, <http://www.fourseasons.com/houston>; \$150) for a "Lucy Body Wrap," which includes a light exfoliation and face massage.

**EATS:** *Blue Nile* (9400 Richmond Ave., 713-782-6882) is a highly regarded Ethiopian restaurant serving traditional dishes. Entrees in the \$10 range. When in Houston, barbecue is a must, and the place to go is *Goode Co. Barbeque* (5109 Kirby Dr., 713-522-2530). Grab a po' boy or jalapeño pork sausage dinner and dine on the covered patio. Entrees run \$10 or less.

**SLEEPS:** Several Houston hotels are partnering with the museum and offering special rates. In most cases, visitors who buy these packages can avoid lines and receive 50 percent off tickets. One of the participating hotels is the swanky *Hotel ZaZa* (5701 Main St., 713-526-1991, <http://www.hotelzaza.com>), which opened in June and is one of the few hotels near the museum (just a block away). Standard rooms with double beds range from \$235 to \$275 a night. For other packages and to book, go to <http://www.visithoustontexas.com> and click on Special Offers.

**INFO:** *Houston Museum of Natural Science*, 1 Hermann Circle Dr., 713-639-4629, <http://www.hmns.org>.

-- John Maynard