**The original fossils of Lucy and Selam are on display for the first time in Europe in the exhibition** **People and Their Ancestors at the National Museum of the Czech Republic**

Press release on the presentation of the original fossils of Lucy and Selam at the National Museum of the Czech Republic and the opening of the exhibition People and Their Ancestors

Prague, August 25, 2025

**From August 25 to October 23, 2025, visitors to the National Museum of the Czech Republic will have a unique opportunity to see some of the most valuable and oldest paleoanthropological exhibits in the world. For the first time in history, the original fossils of the iconic human ancestors Lucy and Selam are on display in Europe. Until now, the public has only been able to see the original Lucy fossil outside Ethiopia once, during a six-year tour of the United States between 2007 and 2013. The original Selam fossil was officially unveiled only at the National Museum of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa in 2006 when the new discovery was announced. This is also the first and only opportunity to see these unique fossils together in one place, at the beginning of the exhibition People and Their Ancestors in the Historical Building of the National Museum of the Czech Republic. Visitors to the National Museum can admire the 3.2 million-year-old fossil of the Australopithecus afarensis Lucy and the approximately 150,000-year-old Selam, on loan from the National Museum of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, for a period of 60 days. Both exhibits are the most valuable items of Ethiopia's national cultural heritage, and their loan is based on an agreement between the two countries with the support of the Czech Ministry of Culture and the Ethiopian Ministry of Tourism. The exhibition project was officially launched today by Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala together with Ethiopian Minister of Tourism Selamawit Kassa, Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic Martin Baxa, Director General of the National Museum of the Czech Republic Michal Lukeš, and Director General of the Ethiopian Heritage Authority Abebaw Ayalew Gella, together with the discoverers of Lucy and Selam, world-renowned paleoanthropologists Donald Johanson and Zeresenay Alemseged.**

*"This is an extraordinary historical moment – for the first time ever in Europe, we have the opportunity to see some of the rarest fossils of human evolution, Lucy and Selam. I consider it a great success that we have managed to bring these unique exhibits to the Czech Republic, and I appreciate the enormous trust that Ethiopia has shown us by entrusting them to us. This project is proof of our mutual partnership and an example of the government's successful scientific and cultural diplomacy, on which we want to continue to build our cooperation – from science and culture to economic projects. I believe that the exhibition will appeal to the general public, strengthen the friendship between our countries, and inspire young people in particular to learn about human history,"* said Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala.

A unique archaeological find discovered more than 50 years ago by paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and his student Tom Gray in Ethiopia's Afar Triangle near the village of Hadar caused a huge sensation in 1974, and even today it is one of the oldest representatives of hominins, which could be a direct ancestor of the Homo genus. It was named Lucy after the Beatles song Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, which the expedition team members played over and over again on the evening after the discovery. In Ethiopia, she is also known as Dinkinesh, which means "you are beautiful" in Amharic.

Lucy is a species of extinct hominin, a member of the hominid family, who lived between 3.8 and 2.9 million years ago in what is now Ethiopia, an area that was of fundamental importance for human evolution. Scientists determined her age based on the layer of volcanic rock in which the fossil was found. Lucy was about 106 centimeters tall, weighed 28 kilograms, and, after her bones were assembled (47 of them were preserved, about 25 % of the skeleton), she resembled a chimpanzee. Her small brain and upper body structure were similar to those of chimpanzees and apes, while her pelvic and leg bones were already very similar in function to those of members of the Homo genus, indicating that Lucy was one of the ancestors of the Homo genus who already walked upright on two legs. Her sex was determined based on the structure of her pelvic bones. Other characteristics indicated that Lucy had already reached adulthood, even though she was only 12–16 years old, because early hominins matured earlier than modern humans. Thanks to her good preservation, it was possible for the first time to reconstruct the overall appearance and way of life of Australopithecus relatively accurately. None of the later paleoanthropological finds have attracted such public interest or had such a significant impact on our understanding of our evolution.

Together with Lucy, visitors to the Historical Building of the National Museum of the Czech Republic can also admire the skeletal remains of Australopithecus afarensis, known as Selam, which means "peace" in Amharic. It is a very well-preserved fossil of a small child, most likely a girl, approximately 3.3–3.2 million years old, which is about 150,000 years older than Lucy. It was found in 2000 near the site where Lucy was found, approximately ten kilometers from Hadar in the Dikika area. During the research, individual parts of the skull were gradually uncovered, making it possible to reconstruct almost the entire skull, including the intact face. Given that children's skeletons are rarely preserved as fossils, the approximately 2.5-year-old Selam, whose skeleton is about 60 % preserved, is one of the best-preserved child fossils of early hominins. The find helps to better understand how Australopithecus evolved from birth. The anatomy of her lower limbs indicates upright walking. However, her shoulder blades resembled those of apes, and her curved fingers suggest that Selam still often moved around in trees.

*"The exhibition of the original fossils of Lucy and Selam at the National Museum of the Czech Republic in our new exhibition People and Their Ancestors is a dream come true for me personally and undoubtedly one of the most significant moments in the history of our institution. It also proves that we are among the top museums of international importance and that we are capable of organizing world-class exhibition projects in the Czech Republic. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ethiopia, its Ministry of Tourism, and all my colleagues from the Ethiopian Cultural Heritage Authority for the extraordinary trust and generosity with which they have provided us with this unique opportunity. It is a great honor for us to welcome some of the most valuable paleoanthropological exhibits in the world to Prague and to give the public the opportunity to see them for the first time in Europe,"* says Michal Lukeš, Director General of the National Museum of the Czech Republic.

Lucy, whose skeleton was discovered in 1974, and Selam, a child fossil found in 2000, from one family of human ancestors, represent key evidence of human evolution and the importance of Ethiopia as the land of origins.

The National Museum of the Czech Republic is opening a new exhibition entitled People and Their Ancestors, which will take visitors on a journey through millions of years of human history. The exhibition is not just about fossils, but tells the fascinating story of the entire human race – from the first steps of hominins who left the trees to modern humans, whose way of life, livelihood, and social structure have gradually changed. Visitors can admire a number of unique finds from the Czech Republic as well as exhibits of European significance. The first part of the exhibition is devoted to the evolution of the human race itself and tells a story spanning almost seven million years, illustrated by casts of rare fossils. Visitors will learn about the first hominins who descended from the trees, Australopithecus, and the first members of the Homo genus who began to leave Africa. The exhibition also commemorates our "lost relatives," such as Neanderthals, Denisovans, and Flores Man. The exhibition also includes a narrative about the origins of anatomically modern humans and their journey to populate the entire planet. Special attention is paid to the changes in the structure of the skeleton that led to perfect adaptation for walking on two limbs.

The absolute sensation is the exhibition of fossils of the two most famous Australopithecus – the iconic Lucy and Selam. The exhibition is complemented by hyperrealistic models of figures from the studio of French sculptor Élisabeth Daynès, who also created reconstructions of Lucy and Selam, allowing visitors to look into the faces of our ancestors.

Another part of the exhibition invites visitors into the world of prehistoric hunters and gatherers. On display is, for example, a world-renowned object from the collections of the National Museum of the Czech Republic – a cast of the skull of a Neanderthal from Gánovce, approximately 105,000 years old, or the remains of the oldest modern humans in Europe from the Koněprusy Cave, whose faces are approximated by hyperrealistic models. The exhibition presents the most comprehensive overview of Paleolithic finds from the Czech territory: from the oldest artifacts from Přezletice dating back to 600-400 thousand years BC, through the famous mammoth bone deposit from Dolní Věstonice, to the artistic creations of hunters from the end of the Early Stone Age. It also captures the fundamental turning point associated with the arrival of the first farmers in the 6th millennium BC. Visitors will see reconstructions of dwellings from that period, delicate jewelry made from spondylus shells, Mediterranean statuettes, and the oldest evidence of textile production. The section devoted to the Eneolithic period shows the first copper objects and finds associated with the elites of the time, such as the rich grave from Velvary. An extraordinary discovery nicknamed the "Amazon of Tišice" is also on display here for the first time. The new exhibition at the National Museum of the Czech Republic not only features display cases full of rare paleoanthropological and archaeological finds, but above all tells a thrilling story that begins in the African savannah and leads to the birth of our civilization. It is a story that concerns us all—because we are all part of its continuation.

The loan of both exhibits, the fossils of Lucy and Selam, was the first step in mutual cooperation between the museums of both countries. On August 25, 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the National Museum of the Czech Republic, the Ethiopian Ministry of Tourism, and the Czech Development Agency, in which these institutions express their common intention to cooperate and strive to establish a permanent exhibition of the Children's Museum in Addis Ababa.

The public will also have a unique opportunity to meet the discoverers of Lucy and Selam, Donald Johanson and Zeresenay Alemseged, in person during a discussion moderated by Daniel Stach on August 27, 2025, at 6 p.m. in the New Building of the National Museum of the Czech Republic.

Visitors to the National Museum of the Czech Republic have the opportunity to see both unique fossils until October 23, 2025, during extended visiting hours from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The most convenient way to secure a tour is to purchase a timed ticket for a specific day and time in advance online via the National Museum website and mobile app.

For more information, visit [www.nm.cz](http://www.nm.cz)

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