



Museum Access: La Brea Tar Pits Museum

SEASON 3 - EPISODE 10

The La Brea Tar Pits Museum in Los Angeles, CA is located on the only active urban, ice age excavation site in the world. Thousands of fossils have been excavated, cleaned and sorted for research and display. Let's continue the learning with these questions and talking points.

Question 1

Talk about the unique history of the La Brea Tar Pits.

More Talking Points:

1. What made the tar pits so dangerous for ice age animals?
2. Are the tar pits still active? In what ways?

Question 2

Why have many organisms also been discovered during excavation?

More Talking Points:

1. What makes the tar pits unique compared to other excavation sites?
2. Are the fossils actually protected by the asphalt? In what way?

Question 3

In addition to the cleaning of fossils, what other work is done in the Fossil Lab?

More Talking Points:

1. Why is tracking and recording extinct species important for our future?
2. Why do you think so many species have disappeared?

Question 4

Why is research about climate change in the Ice Age important today?

More Talking Points:

1. Why is this work so important?
2. What research would you be most interested in doing? Why?

Question 5

What other types of fossils have been found in the La Brea Tar Pits?

More Talking Points:

1. Why are smaller fossils of plants and insects also important?
2. How are these smaller fossils excavated?





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Question 6

Why was Zed such a 'mammoth' discovery?

More Talking Points:

1. How were Zed's tusks retrieved from the excavation site?
2. How are Mammoths and Mastodons different?

Question 7

What is Project 23? Where was it originally discovered?

More Talking Points:

1. How did the museum transport the deposits of Project 23?
2. Why is Project 23 unique compared to other excavations?

Question 8

How did ice age 'animals' differ from the animals of today?

More Talking Points:

1. How are they similar to the present day animals?
2. Why do you think these similar features have remained?

Question 9

Would you rather study fossils from the ice age or the age of the dinosaurs? Why?

More Talking Points:

1. Discuss the differences between the fossils of these two time periods?
2. Would you rather excavate fossils or study them? Why?

Question 10

Why do you think studying fossils is important?

More Talking Points:

1. How does the study of fossils help us understand our world today?
2. Do you think fossils will continue to be studied in the future? Why?

