

A summer of science

This spring will see the release of the app ScienceGuide, a leisure guide for the natural sciences. It's an incentive to go on a Tour de Suisse of the sciences. *By Daniel Fehr, Florian Fisch and Daniel Saraga*

On the occasion of its 200th anniversary, the Swiss Academy of Sciences, SCNAT, is releasing an app with more than 500 natural science activities. Horizons is recommending 20 extraordinary offerings across the country, from Geneva to Basel and Lugano, ranging from genetic engineering for beginners to subtropical island adventures in the canton of Ticino.



200 years of the natural sciences in five days

Observing the sky with a space scientist, tracking down dinosaurs, and going on nocturnal expeditions to discover bats: 150 local societies and major science associations are making the 200th anniversary of the Swiss Academy of Sciences an event to remember. Each of the 12 participating cities will host five days of debates, guided tours, guided walks and interactive events to choose from.

► 'Forschung live', starting in Davos on 17 June, thereafter in Lucerne, Zurich, St. Gallen, Aarau, Bern, Neuchâtel, Basel, Sion, Lausanne and Geneva, and closing in Lugano on 20 October.
www.forschung-live.ch



A forest for the senses

Nature lovers in French-speaking Switzerland can celebrate all creatures great and small in the company of their favourite magazine La Salamandre. This year's topic is the forest. You can sit in an armchair and listen to an orchestra of animal sounds conjured up by the sound engineer Bosir Jolivet, follow the tracks of the lynx in the photo exhibition of Didier Pépin and Laurent Geslin, and explore the forest with all five senses in the laboratory. And there's also a film about Bruno Manser.

► Festival Salamandre, from 23 to 25 October 2015 in Morges (VD)



Not to be missed



Experience nature



Interactive



Indoors

A summer of science in Switzerland



Snakes and unicorns

Human skulls, mummy powder, sacred amulets and a stuffed crocodile hanging from the ceiling. This curiosity cabinet takes its visitors along on a scurrilous journey through the history of medicine, from Ancient Greece via the alchemists to modern pharmacy.

► [Pharmacy Museum, Basel](#)



Learning by hiking

Book a guided tour in the spectacular mountain landscape of the 'Glarus thrust' between Ziegelbrücke and Chur, to learn how the Alps folded into shape more than 250 million years ago. The old iron mine of Gonzen is also worth a visit, or you can risk a peek inside the 20 metre-wide sinkhole at Hellloch.

► [Geopark Sardona \(GL, GR, SG\)](#)



Do-it-yourself microscope

Whether you're after artistic sound installations or electronic jewellery: in the Labor Luzern, inventors tinker away at their projects. At this summer workshop, children build their own USB microscope and investigate organisms from Lake Lucerne.

► [Labor Luzern, every Wednesday evening, microscopy workshop on 5 August, reservations required.](#)



Awaken your inner child

There's not much in the way of reading here, but you can experience astonishing things with experiments that are being constantly redesigned. That's what's in store at Switzerland's unique science museum for children, where adults too can rediscover their youthful curiosity.

► [Espace des Inventions, Lausanne. 'L'œil nu', until 2 October 2015.](#)



Genetic engineering for beginners

Making bacteria glow through genetic engineering: in the university laboratory, children and young adults can play at being molecular biologists. Researchers take small groups of visitors on a guided tour of modern biology and genetics, right down to the neurosciences.

► [Bioscope, University of Geneva, reservations required.](#)



For botanists and romantics

On Lake Maggiore, a regular boat service will take you to a subtropical island to discover 1,600 exotic plants. It's no wonder that artists used to visit the Baroness Antoinette de Saint Léger on her island residence, which is today a restaurant and a hotel.

► [Brissago Islands, Lake Maggiore](#)

Editor's choice



The die is not yet cast

In the autumn exhibition by 'L'ideatorio', you can discover anew the world of numbers: you can experiment with the magic square or use the software of the Swiss National Supercomputing Center to make a statistical evaluation of yourself.

- [L'ideatorio, 'Diamo i numeri!'](#), from 21 September 2015 to 19 February 2016 in Lugano.



Face to face with a baby mammoth

The Zurich Unterland region also used to be a home to mammoths. The only mammoth museum in Switzerland is displaying the skeleton of a Zurich specimen that was found during building work in Niederweningen in 2003, along with a unique model skeleton of a newborn mammoth.

- [Mammutmuseum Niederweningen \(ZH\)](#), open on Sunday afternoons.



Cave exploration for claustrophobics

They offer everything that a proper cave ought to have: underground gorges, imposing caverns, subterranean waterfalls and 40,000-year-old stalactites and stalagmites. But this kilometre-long path through the Beatus Caves is also very easy to reach, either with a guide or on your own.

- [Beatus Caves at Lake Thun](#), until 25 October.



Back to the future

From robot art to film music, a Jules Verne collection and priceless first editions of famous comics: the exhibitions of the unique European Museum for Science Fiction can't tell us what the future will bring, but they can tell us all the more about the present.

- [Maison d'ailleurs, Yverdon-les-Bains \(VD\)](#). 'Portrait-Robot', from 21 June 2015 to 31 January 2016.



Relax and twitter

Some 260 bird species – many rare, migratory birds among them – live, breed and twitter away in the marshy delta of the rivers Ticino and Verzasca at the northern end of Lake Maggiore. Besides observation points there are also leisurely nature trails through this small-scale nature paradise.

- [Le Bolle di Magadino, Lake Maggiore](#)



Pimp your gadget!

Everyone can turn up here to tinker with electronic gadgets, to repair them or develop new ones. Members can build a drone, print in 3D, take part in the next hackathon or learn how to program in Raspberry Pi.

- [Fixme Hackerspace, Renens \(VD\)](#), open to everyone on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings.



Free as a bird

Lying on a table with virtual reality glasses on, you can gently flap your wings or swoop down in a sudden nosedive. Whether you're a bird lover or not, the bird flight simulator Birdly is an unforgettable experience that no one should miss out on.

- [BirdLife Nature Centre, Neeracherried \(ZH\)](#). 'Flying like the birds', until 31 October.



Sloth motion

There's a full moon in the middle of the day. In the dark, underneath the dome, you can now see the movements of the nocturnal sloth. And there are also anacondas, night apes, armadillos and, of course, the cute honey bears with their huge eyes.

- [Nocturama in the Papillorama, Kerzers \(FR\)](#).



Weatherproof universe

This new observatory, open since 2012, offers a direct, telescopic view of multi-coloured stardust, distant galaxies and nearby planets. Even a hailstorm won't stop you on your 50-minute journey through space in the Planetarium.

- [Sternwarte, Schaffhausen](#)



Journey to the centre of the Earth

You can travel down a thousand feet, in groups of eight, into the Opalinus Clay, This layer of rock is over 180 million years old and is ideal for storing highly radioactive waste. A visit to its research centre will help you form your own opinions.

- [Mont Terri, Saint-Ursanne \(JU\)](#), reservations required.



Zurich rocks

You can experience a magnitude-8 earthquake in a simulator, observe the consequences of climate change on an interactive globe, and admire 160-kilo smoky quartz crystals. The earth sciences look forward to seeing you.

- [FocusTerra, ETH Zurich Zentrum](#), reservations required for the earthquake simulator.



A sideways view of mountain culture

From mountaineering stories in the age of mass media to a fictitious hotel project for Chinese tourists: small is beautiful in the Alpine Museum, which offers an innovative mix of interactive installations and critical reflections on an age-old topic: the Alps from Slovenia to France.

- [Alpine Museum, Bern](#). 'Bivouac' until 28 June; 'Himalaya Report' until 26 July.

200 years of the Swiss Academy of Sciences

On 6 October 1815, a gathering of 32 like-minded persons in the garden of the natural scientist and apothecary Henri-Albert Gosse in Mornex near Geneva led to the founding of the General Swiss Society for all the Natural Sciences, the predecessor of today's Swiss Academy of Sciences, SCNAT. It was the first national association for the natural sciences. Today, SCNAT represents over 130 specialist organisations, regional societies of the natural sciences and commissions, and has a total membership of some 35,000 natural scientists. Exactly 200 years on, the original goals of the Academy remain topical: organising a network that promotes research in the natural sciences and that disseminates its findings.