

The hitchhikers guide to the last 3.5 billion years essay sample

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The only book to pack when you get aboard the Sirius Cybernetics Time Machine III to visit your ancestors from the Time of the Dinosaurs, the Time of Trilobites and beyond...

Containing such important information as:

- which species of Jurassic conifer not to rest under if you don't want to be rudely disturbed by a one-ton pterosaur relieving itself in your direction;
- what not to do when cornered by a herd of peckish Velociraptors;
- and much, much more life-saving information, gathered by our intrepid band of field officers who have traveled through millions of years . . .

Advise to first time human travelers: follow the recommended sequence of visits so as to save your psyche from getting totally overwhelmed. Exercise caution when handling unfamiliar flora and fauna with sharp teeth and fierce look.

CENOZOIC ERA

(20 million years ago)

Meet the *Proconsul africanus*, which Murdock (2003) believes to be humans' great, great ancestors — that is if you believe Darwin's theory. You have 0.000001% chance of finding a living organism resembling you. Would like to make that clear at the start so you won't waste time looking for great, great grandpa and grandma.

Earth was too cold and land dry at this time for trees to grow. Forests were replaced by grassland. There was no snow yet, just too much cold. You won't feel too isolated with cows, sheep, goats, and horses to talk to. They're a beastly lot, so to speak. When you talk to them don't go too near or talk too loud. Because if you do, you'll offend them.

Mammoths, you're probably familiar with them if you've watched ICE AGE, evolved as such to keep them warm. If you're warm, those woolly mammoths will offer you warmth if you will ask them nicely.

Take note that before taking a rest, make sure that the boulder you are reclining on is not some giant spider luring a victim who looks different, but food still. To spot a fake boulder, throw a pebble on that seemingly innocent piece of nature. If it reacts to the pebble, you'd better find the mammoths or run to the nearest ocean. Giant spiders don't like bathing.

Swimming is highly discouraged for it could cause irreparable damage to your system. You may find non-poisonous relics, organisms and the like on the beach for souvenirs.

DINOSAUR ERA

(120 million years ago)

Nothing really got extinct. When aboard the Sirius Cybernetics Time Machine III, you need to stop thinking that those giant lizards are just bones in the museums, long dead and harmless. When you reach your destination, you might find yourself face to face with a thing that resembles a lizard but

multiplied a thousand times over. But before you take a walk, lock the time machine and keep the key. You don't want a 50-foot fierce-looking, flesh-eating reptile in your neighborhood, do you? So anyway, while still on board the Sirius Cybernetics, you need to leave those modernist thoughts and think like a prehistoric man. Expect to get trampled, to get eaten, to get ripped to pieces. But don't panic, these things are avoidable of course, that's why you have this guide.

Bring a Disguise 101 Automatic mini pouch. When you see a vicious, adept killing machine coelophysis (Parker et al. 2006), just press 2 and you'll be transformed into one. You'll even become good buddies with a coelophysis and get to hear its story. Button 1 is reserved for postosuchus-sightings. They're the biggest predators of this time. Button 1 can only be pressed once and lasts for four hours. Remember that.

Don't get surprised if you'll see little variations in color in this era. In fact, you'll see very little grass and no flowers. Plant life would seem drab, with only green and brown in color. Most of the ground is covered by ferns and mosses. You see, something really terrible happened before the dinosaurs' time that's why the earth is still recovering from that devastation in this period.

If you find yourself on the beach, don't try walking to the end, because that would take forever. All lands were joined to form one huge continent that stretched from pole to pole.

CARBONIFEROUS PERIOD

(320 million years ago)

If you see mounds suddenly group together to create what we now call mountains, you're probably in the Carboniferous period where such things are considered normal. Oceans would probably shrink and close too. Just keep calm, that's like re-arranging the furniture at home.

Those pesky insects have been given life in this era. However, they're not very little at this time. In fact, a present-day dragonfly would shudder at the thought of an insect from 320 million years ago. Galactica sources explained that there was an over-abundance of oxygen at this period that's why living things here were giants! Despite their size, these insects are still afraid of OFF! lotion insect repellent. Don't forget to bring one.

The beach is always inviting, no matter the time period. Remember though that sharks at this time are pretty ferocious. Don't swim too far from the ocean lest you'll get stuck inside a shark's belly.

Before birds became birds, they were lobe-finned fish first. Unbelievable? Some fish even went as far as evolving into dinosaurs. How they evolved can be found in the Galactic Encyclopedia, if you're really that interested. Anyway, your towel will come very handy here to keep out the insects, wipe your sweat when it's hot, or cover yourself when it's cold (Hieb 2006).

Unlike the earlier period, land plants are already present, like horsetails, vine-like plants, and conifers. Take care that you won't stumble on carnivore

vines that would devour anything that has flesh. They're normally violet in color, easy to spot.

CAMBRIAN EXPLOSION

(520 million years ago)

This era is properly called the Cambrian explosion. ⁴ Why? Suffice it to say that animals suddenly appeared during this time — they just exploded everywhere! (Waggoner and Collins 1994). They were probably considered pests in the more posh galaxies in the western reach. Instead of getting butchered, the more advanced galactic inhabitants thought it proper to just send them to an obscure, young planet to make it seem more civilized. They mostly landed in oceans.

Understand that these animals are used to discrimination, but not brutality. You have to be respectful when you meet one near the sea where they mostly live, or else it might vent its unspent emotions on you. A trilobite, for example, when moved to tears will launch into the sad story of his life for the next 50 years. You don't want that happening. They generally reside near the sea, so when you're hit with an urge to pick souvenirs from the beach, don't pick trilobites.

You need not worry about big carnivores though because they aren't here yet. What abound are crawlies, slugs, the Burgess Shales — rather a fancy name for an arthropod, and some mollusks. Biggest thing to remember is

not to just sit anywhere. Make sure you won't be sitting on an eight-legged, crawling animal with a shell on its back.

Plants in this period are entirely unicellular. You'll find algae here, algae there. Nothing but algae in blue, green, or blue-green colors.

Life is simple here and could get uninteresting for someone used to more interaction with dogs and cats. But if you want to write a book about algae, this is the best time to go. Or if you get dumped, you'll find solace here.

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