

VISIT GUIDE 2026

Vulcania

Saint-Ours · From 33€

https://vulcania.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Tragedy to Scientific Wonder

GOOGLE 4.2 ★★★★☆ 20 717 reviews

TIQETS 4.3 ★★★★☆ 164 reviews

The genesis of Vulcania is rooted in both scientific passion and tragic loss. In **1986**, renowned volcanologists Maurice and Katia Krafft envisioned a pedagogical attraction at the heart of the Puy de Dôme volcano. Their dream was abruptly cut short when they perished in an eruption on Mount Unzen, Japan, in **1991**. This dramatic event marked a pivotal moment, transforming a local idea into a national project dedicated to preserving their legacy and educating the world about volcanic phenomena.

Reviving this ambitious vision was Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former President of France and then President of the Auvergne Regional Council. He personally championed the project after the Kraffts' death, providing essential political support that overcame initial opposition from environmentalists concerned about urbanizing the natural landscape. His intervention ensured that the park would be built not just as a tourist site, but as a serious center for scientific culture, securing funding and land acquisition through regional preemption rights.

The architectural design itself was the subject of intense debate and an international competition in **1994**. Four prestigious architects competed: Ricardo Bofill, Jean-Michel Wilmotte, Henri Ciriani, and Hans Hollein. Although the jury initially favored Wilmotte, the Regional Council selected **Hans Hollein**'s proposal. His unique concept involved burying almost the entire structure underground to preserve the visual integrity of the Chaîne des Puys, with only a monumental cone and restaurant building emerging above ground, symbolizing the volcanic terrain.

Scientific rigor has been paramount since the project's inception. An international scientific council was established in **1993** to validate the scenography and ensure pedagogical accuracy. Owned by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council and operated by SEM Volcans, the park opened its doors on February 20, 2002. It stands today as a testament to resilience, blending cutting-edge geology education with immersive entertainment, honoring the memory of those who first dreamed of bringing the earth's fire to life.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping into Vulcania feels less like entering a theme park and more like descending into the living belly of the Earth. The architecture, designed by **Hans Hollein**, seamlessly merges with the landscape, creating a sense of mystery and anticipation. As you cross the threshold, the ambient temperature drops slightly, mimicking the cool depths of subterranean caves, while the lighting shifts to evoke the glow of magma chambers. The air hums with low-frequency vibrations, simulating tectonic movements, preparing your senses for a journey deep within our planet.

Inside, the atmosphere is one of controlled chaos and wonder. Immersive screens surround you, projecting realistic eruptions and geological formations that seem to breathe around you. The path splits into two distinct narratives: one led by the adventurous Matt, focusing on action and discovery, and another guided by Professor Yapadrisk, offering deeper scientific insights. Whether you choose the thrill of the adventurer or the curiosity of the scientist, the experience is designed to make you feel small yet connected to the powerful forces shaping our world, leaving you with a profound respect for nature's raw power.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Saint-Ours-les-Roches municipality (63). Main access via the departmental road from Clermont-Ferrand. No direct public transport.

OPENING HOURS

Generally open from 10 am to 6 pm. Hours vary by season (summer/winter) and holidays. Be sure to check time slots on the official website before visiting.

PRICES

Children often free under 3 years old (check exact conditions). Discounts possible for groups. Standard adult rate around €33.

VISIT DURATION

Allow at least 3 to 4 hours to discover the scientific exhibitions and fun attractions without rushing. A full day is recommended to enjoy the live shows.

PHOTOS

Photography is freely allowed in outdoor areas and certain indoor zones for personal use. Flash may be prohibited near immersive screens.

AUDIENCE

Park designed for all ages: children follow Pitoufeu while adults learn about geology with Professor Yapadrisk. Accessible to families and school groups.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

Metro

: Vulcania — 2 min à pied

Saint-Ours Station (15 min) · Panoramique des Dômes - Upper Station (18 min)

Bus

: Vulcania — 2 min à pied

La Gare de Saint-Ours (23 min) · Panoramique des Dômes - Station Haute (28 min)

Car

La Gare de Saint-Ours (15 min) · Panoramique des Dômes - Station Haute (19 min)

Bike

La Gare de Saint-Ours (19 min) · Panoramique des Dômes - Station Haute (25 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve Vulcania ?



📍 2 Route de Mazayes — 63230 Saint-Ours

🌐 45°48.776′ N, 2°56.571′ E



ORGANIZATION

Organization

Level 0 (Ground Entrance & Surface)

This level serves as the gateway to the expedition, featuring the main reception, ticket office, and outdoor exhibition areas. Here, visitors encounter the monumental cone structure and open-air displays explaining basic volcanic concepts. It is also where you receive your explorer badge, choosing between Matt the Explorer or Professor Yapadrisk, setting the tone for your personalized journey.

Level -1 (Immersive Exhibitions)

Descending underground, this level houses the core scientific exhibitions and immersive simulations. You will find large-scale screens depicting volcanic eruptions, interactive stations demonstrating lava flows, and detailed models of tectonic plates. The atmosphere here is cooler and darker, enhancing the realism of the subterranean environment and allowing for focused learning away from sunlight distractions.

Level -2 (Deep Earth & Attractions)

The deepest part of the park features high-intensity attractions like 'Premier envol' and advanced geological demonstrations. This zone includes specialized theaters for live shows and educational presentations. The engineering marvels here simulate extreme conditions, such as heat and seismic activity, providing a thrilling conclusion to the educational narrative before ascending back to the surface via elevators or ramps.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility for people with reduced mobility

PMR access guaranteed in main buildings and exhibitions; verification required for some intense attr

Families

Park designed for all ages with differentiated paths for children (Pitoufeu) and adults (Professor Y

Audio guide

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Unmissable Volcanic Encounters

01 Main Attraction Zone

Premier envol

This flagship attraction offers a breathtaking simulation of flying over volcanic landscapes. Riders experience the sensation of soaring above erupting cones and flowing lava rivers with stunning visual realism. It combines motion seats with **immersive projection** technology to create an adrenaline-pumping adventure that appeals to all ages.

> 💡 Designed to minimize wait times, arriving at opening ensures you ride this popular attraction immediately, avoiding the crowds that typically form later in the morning.

02 Scientific Path

Professor Yapadrisk's Laboratory

A dedicated zone for those seeking deeper geological knowledge. Professor Yapadrisk guides visitors through complex concepts like magma composition and plate tectonics using interactive exhibits. The explanations are rigorous yet accessible, making it ideal for adults and older children who want to understand the **scientific mechanisms** behind eruptions.

> 💡 The professor's character was created to balance the playful aspect of the park with serious educational content, ensuring scientific accuracy validated by an international council.

03 Adventure Path

Matt the Explorer's Trail

Tailored for younger visitors and thrill-seekers, this path focuses on action and discovery. Matt leads guests through dynamic scenarios involving cave explorations and volcanic escapes. The narrative is fast-paced and engaging, encouraging physical interaction with exhibits and fostering a sense of **adventurous curiosity** in children.

> 💡 Children often prefer this route because it frames geology as a game, making complex topics fun and memorable without overwhelming them with data.

04 HANS HOLLEIN Outdoor Area

Monumental Cone Viewpoint

Located above ground, this architectural feature offers panoramic views of the surrounding Chaîne des Puys. It serves as a symbolic reminder of the volcanic context in which the park is situated. Visitors can appreciate the scale of the landscape and see how the buried architecture respects the **natural horizon**.

> 💡 Initially criticized for resembling a nuclear cooling tower, the cone was modified at the request of the Regional Council to better reflect volcanic forms.

05 Immersive Hall

Eruption Simulation Theater

A darkened theater where massive screens recreate the intensity of volcanic eruptions. Sound effects and lighting changes simulate the roar of lava and ash clouds. This exhibit provides a safe yet visceral experience of nature's power, helping visitors understand the **destructive potential** of volcanoes without any real danger.

> 💡 The simulations are based on real footage captured by the Krafft couple, honoring their contribution to volcanic documentation and safety awareness.

06 Educational Zone

Interactive Magma Lab

Hands-on stations allow visitors to experiment with materials that mimic magma behavior. You can observe viscosity changes and gas release in controlled environments. This tactile approach helps demystify abstract geological concepts, making the science of **magma dynamics** tangible and understandable for everyone.

> 💡 These experiments were developed in collaboration with geologists to ensure that the physical properties demonstrated accurately reflect real-world volcanic processes.

07 Geology Hall

Tectonic Plate Model

A large-scale model illustrating the movement of Earth's crustal plates. Visitors can manipulate parts of the model to see how collisions and separations create mountains and volcanoes. It provides a clear visual explanation of the **global context** of Auvergne's volcanic activity.

> 💡 Understanding plate tectonics is crucial for grasping why volcanoes exist in specific locations, linking local phenomena to planetary-scale events.

08 History Section

Krafft Memorial Exhibit

A tribute to Maurice and Katia Krafft, showcasing their photographs and research notes. This exhibit highlights their pioneering work in close-range volcanic observation. It serves as a poignant reminder of the risks scientists take to advance our knowledge, emphasizing the **human cost** of exploration.

> 💡 Their deaths on Mount Unzen directly inspired the creation of Vulcania, turning a tragedy into a lasting educational legacy.

TIPS

Mastering Your Expedition

TIMING

Arrive exactly at 10:00 AM opening time to beat the crowds and secure immediate access to 'Premier envol'. School groups typically arrive later, ensuring a smoother start to your day.

BILLET

Book tickets online in advance, especially during July-August and weekends. This guarantees entry and allows you to skip potential ticket queues upon arrival.

PARCOURS

Choose your side (Matt or Professor) immediately upon entry. Stick to one path initially to avoid confusion, then explore the other if time permits, ensuring a coherent narrative experience.

PHOTO

Capture the best panoramic shots from the monumental cone viewpoint. The contrast between the modern architecture and the ancient volcanic landscape creates striking images.

PAUSE

Eat lunch before 12:30 PM to avoid peak crowds at the main restaurant. Reserving a table early ensures a relaxed meal without long waits during high season.

ENFANTS

Let children lead with Matt's trail for engagement, while adults can follow Professor Yapadrisk for depth. This dual-path system keeps everyone interested without boredom.

AUDIOGUIDE

Use the audioguide in English if needed, particularly for the scientific sections. It provides additional context that enhances the visual exhibits significantly.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable hiking shoes and bring a light jacket. The underground areas are cool year-round, and significant walking is required across different levels.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Should I book Vulcania tickets in advance?

Online booking is highly recommended, especially during peak season (July-August) and on weekends. It guarantees your entry and helps you avoid potential queues at the ticket counters. During off-peak periods, purchasing

Are the tickets cancellable?

Yes, tickets purchased online are generally cancellable free of charge up to 7 days before the visit date. Beyond that, penalties may apply depending on the promotional offers. Always check the specific terms during your

Are there reduced rates for children?

Preferential rates exist for children and teenagers, often with free admission for under 3s. School groups also benefit from specific discounts. Consult the official price grid on the website to find out the exact age br

What is the price of an adult ticket?

The standard rate for an adult is around €33, but it can vary depending on the season and current promotions. Stay packages including accommodation sometimes offer better value for money. Compare the available options be

How long does it take to visit Vulcania?

Allow approximately 3 to 4 hours for a complete visit including exhibitions and main attractions. If you wish to attend live shows and take your time, a full day is ideal. Express visits are possible but risk missing som

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

A President's Personal Bet

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing did not just support Vulcania politically; he personally submitted a bid for the land. When a private offer exceeded his, he invoked the region's right of preemption, showing his unwavering commitment to the project's success despite financial and environmental challenges.

Buried Architecture

Hans Hollein's design is unique in that nearly the entire park is underground. This decision was made to preserve the visual purity of the Chaîne des Puys, ensuring that the park blends into the landscape rather than dominating it, a rare feat in theme park design.

Scientific Validation

Unlike many theme parks, Vulcania's content is vetted by an international scientific council established in 1993. This ensures that every exhibit, from magma simulations to tectonic models, meets rigorous academic standards, making it a trusted educational resource.

From Tragedy to Triumph

The park stands as a memorial to the Krafft couple. Their tragic death in 1991 transformed a local tourism idea into a national priority, driven by the desire to honor their legacy and educate future generations about volcanic safety and science.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Beyond the park gates, the region offers rich cultural and natural experiences. Just outside, the **Chaîne des Puys**, a UNESCO World Heritage site, provides spectacular panoramic views of volcanic cones against the sky. For a taste of local heritage, visit the nearby Church of Saint-Ours-les-Roches, a classic example of rural Auvergne architecture. After your adventure, refuel at **Restaurant Le Vieux Four**, where traditional dishes like truffade warm the soul. Nature lovers can extend their trip with a peaceful walk in the adjacent **Banne d'Ordan Forest**, immersing themselves in the preserved wilderness of the Massif Central before heading back to Clermont-Ferrand.



Vulcania is more than a visit; it is an expedition into the soul of our planet. By walking through its tunnels and witnessing simulated eruptions, you gain a visceral understanding of the forces that shaped the Auvergne landscape. Leave with a renewed perspective on the ground beneath your feet, carrying the memory of **volcanic majesty** and the thrill of scientific discovery long after you return to the surface.