

Press pack

EDF Electropolis Museum
The adventure of electricity

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The EDF Electropolis Museum contents

The EDF Electropolis Museum: the history	p. 1-2
The EDF Electropolis Museum: the philosophy	.....	p.3
The EDF Electropolis Museum: the architecture	.....	p.4
The EDF Electropolis Museum: an exciting journey	.....	p.5-7
The EDF Electropolis Museum: other services	.....	p.8
The EDF Electropolis Museum in Mulhouse	.....	p.9
The EDF Electropolis Museum in figures	.....	p.10
The EDF Electropolis Museum: opening hours	.....	p.11
The EDF Electropolis Museum: ticket prices	.....	p.12
The EDF Electropolis Museum in pictures	.....	p.13

The EDF Electropolis Museum the history

The EDF Electropolis Museum opened its doors in October 1992 in Mulhouse, with the support of EDF. It all began with a steam engine and an AC generator which had been in use since the early XXth century and didn't want to die ...

1978

The Dollfus Mieg & Cie (D.M.C.) firm in Mulhouse wanted to save a Sulzer steam engine that drove a BBC AC generator. The two were built at the beginning of the XXth century and had been standing idle for 25 years. The firm got in touch with the City of Mulhouse, the *Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, the Chambre of Commerce and Industry and *Electricité de France*. Different people in these organisations mobilised in their support, and started to think about what could be done to save what they considered a part of Mulhouse's industrial heritage. This led to the museum project and the beginning of a long story.

1980

The *Association pour le Musée d'Énergie Électrique* (AMELEC) was founded.

March 1983

Construction work began on the museum.

18 November 1985

With the help and advice of an English specialist in the restoration of steam engines, the generating set was started up again. A few months later, it was presented to the political and industrial organisations who were to provide the financial backing for the museum.

30 May 1986

The museum was named Electropolis.

6 June 1987

The building housing the BBC-Sulzer machine and a small number of other museum exhibits was temporarily opened to the public.

1987-1990

A part of the museum was revealed to the public and a number of cultural events were held. During this period, plans were laid for further work on the museum and on 21 April 1990 the curtain that had gone up on what was to be the Museum of Electricity was brought down again.

October 1992

On 3 October, the museum, whose mission it was to enlighten the public on all aspects of electricity, was finally opened.

1996

The museum was granted "Musée contrôlé" - today "Musée de France" - status by the French Museums Department, thus officially recognising the quality of the museum's collections.

June 2001

The board of AMELEC decided on a new name for the museum, which now became known as the EDF Electropolis Museum. This new name reflected the backing given by EDF to the museum since it opened in 1992.

July 2001

On 7 July, over 600 sq.m. of entirely renovated permanent exhibition space were opened to the public, which tell the story of electricity from Antiquity to the XIXth century.

September 2002 - May 2003

The museum was closed for extension work. On 28 May 2003, the museum reopened with over 1000 sq.m. of permanent exhibitions covering the "XXth century, electrical century".

December 2006

New permanent exhibition area "Electricity. What's behind the plug ?" especially for children and parents. This exhibition has been coproduced by the Cité des sciences et de l'industrie and EDF.

April 2007

New temporary exhibition area.

December 2009

New permanent exhibition: "Divine wrath".

Bronze statue representing the Greek god Zeus by Robert Wlérick (1937), an extraordinary work of art, donated by the EDF Foundation.

Visitors can discover an 11-metre high wind turbine in the technological garden.

2012

With the renovation of the building for the archive, the museum has received more than 8000 cave chamber for the old archive of EDF.

The removal from the museum to the new building, a part of the reservation meets the standards for preservation of collections.

October 2015 – January 2016

The museum is closed for repairs from October 1, 2015. Reopening January 27, 2016.

Project

Development of the "technological garden" with the subject "renewable energies".

The EDF Electropolis Museum the philosophy

The ambition of the EDF Electropolis Museum is to "display the invisible" by bringing it into the limelight. The idea is to interest, amuse and educate visitors in order to give them a chance to better understand and appreciate their technological environment so that they feel more at home with it.

The museum tells the great story of electricity through the relationship Man has had with it, by following a chronological thread. It starts with the birth of the great ancient civilisations which treated lightning, the main natural manifestation of electricity, as a divinity or as an instrument used by the Gods to express their wrath. Then we move on through the main steps in its appropriation by Man through to the present day, where electricity is at the heart of so many human activities.

This well-known and much-used chronological approach was a deliberate choice. In contemporary museological practise, the process is far from unique. At the EDF Electropolis Museum, the visitor follows a thematic path, simple and easy to decode. Surprise, innovation and invention stem on the one hand from the attempts to contextualise the subject, and on the other hand, from a totally original museographic and scenographic approach.

The scenography plunges the visitor into atmospheres that evoke the methods of diffusing knowledge at different periods in history: the curiosity room, world fairs... Elsewhere, the objects are presented in certain contexts: a middle class drawing room from between the wars...

The EDF Electropolis Museum the architecture

Built on a 20 000 sq.m. site, the initial building – a cube 25 metres by 25 by 25 - houses the BBC-Sulzer machine. A new building with a dynamic shape now winds itself around the cube. Four semi-cylindrical pavilions form the technological garden.

Designed by local Mulhouse architects' firm AEA and Fanuele in Paris to act as an area of communication, these buildings contain the permanent and temporary exhibition areas as well as all the museum departments. The aim of the architecture is to provide a fine setting for the story of electricity.

The renovation work begun in 2001 on more than 1600 sq.m. of permanent exhibition space was the fruit of close cooperation between the museum's own staff, two Canadian firms Plani-Museum (museological design and programming) and GSM Design (museographic design) as well as the Mulhouse architects, AEA.

You know the history, you can see the decor, now we invite you to follow the history of electricity through the ages from Antiquity onwards.

The EDF Electropolis Museum an exciting journey

Entrance hall

Ample volumes and an original decoration whet the visitor's appetite. An impressive anamorphosis representing the Greek god Zeus questions the visitor. The museum shop offers educational toys and books for all ages. As soon as they arrive, visitors enter the partners' area where details are given of all the organisations and sponsors without whom the museum would never have come into being.

The great gallery with sound and light

The discovery of all the wonders of electricity begins with a ramp 80 metres long and 4.5 metres wide. Gently sloping, it leads the visitor into an introductory area where historical, poetic and artistic references come together in a harmonious pastiche. The visitor is then carried along electricity's own path, from a seaside town to a power station high in the mountains.

The discovery of electricity *from Antiquity to the XIXth century*

Three main areas deal with the following themes, staged in decors inspired by the periods visited:

- **Divine wrath.** In the ancient civilisations, lightning was always a source of fear and mystery, whence numerous interpretations, beliefs and superstitions: certain plants, such as sweet bay, were thought to protect Man against lightning, which was also thought to be divine as it was believed to be a creation of the gods... The visitor comes upon a bronze statue almost 2.50 metres in height, representing the Greek god, Zeus, which is a donation to the museum from the EDF Foundation. A work of art commissioned by the Compagnie Parisienne de Distribution d'Electricité from the French sculptor, Robert Wlérick (1882-1944), the statue of Zeus was presented for the first time in Paris in 1937 at a gigantic international exhibition, "Arts and Techniques in Modern Life".

- **first sparks dedicated to the pioneers of electricity** (Thalès de Milet, William Gilbert). Here we are in the XVIIth century, in the hushed atmosphere of a curiosity room whose display cabinets are filled with treasures such as stuffed animals, fossils and amazing machines. So many questions ! Does the way attracts feathers when you rub it mean it has a soul ? Do all bodies conduct discharges ? To the collections of machines and instruments belonging to the pioneers of electricity have been added many extraordinary items, thanks to loans from other regional museums and collections.

- **worldly electricity with experiments with static electricity.** It is under the chandeliers of a fine XVIIIth drawing room that a demonstrator shows visitors, just as the abbot Nollet did, the extraordinary powers of electricity. Few fields of knowledge have been built up with as much pleasure as that of electricity. There are so many strange phenomena to be observed:

the wind effect of the convective discharge, the point effect, the machine that makes your hair stand up on your head... The bravest of the visitors are awarded the 100 000 volt diploma !

- **discoverers of the invisible** with Volta, Ampère, Faraday and Gramme. The XIXth century saw a scientific and technological revolution with the work of Galvani and Volta. The times of amateur *electricians* merely showing off were over. Knowledge was progressing thanks to the rigorous observation of phenomena and debate between learned colleagues. The visitor is told their astonishing story, admires the objects born of their work, even hears them explaining their discoveries thanks to the magic of sound or holovision.

"XXth century, electrical century"

In a display where live presentations, collections of extraordinary objects and domestic items alternate with special and interactive effects, four themes are illustrated in scenes inspired by the periods visited:

- **the fairy and the financier or the era of the world fairs (1875-1920)**. The arrival of electricity in society profoundly changed the idea of and the need for comfort. It made its first public appearance in 1881, at the Paris World's Fair. The visitors were fired with enthusiasm for this new form of energy, which fascinated as much as it frightened. But progress was to be slow, and private homes were not immediately changed by electricity. First of all industrialists needed to be able to produce, transport and distribute the new energy. Dynamos, alternators, transformers and electric motors would progressively revolutionise the industry. A revolution then took place in transport, communications and lighting. At the end of the XIXth century, electricity was synonymous with pleasure and enchantment. Even the ballerinas at the Opera wore luminous jewellery on stage !

- **the electric light : the incandescent lighting (1879)**. The development and the industrialization of the incandescent lighting by the American Thomas Alva Edison revolutionize the world of the lighting, at the end of the XIXth century. The electric light enters finally homes. At this end of the XIXth century, the electricity rhymes with pleasure and enchantment. Up to the ballerinas of the Opera, who carry bright jewels on stage !

- **the electrical servants and the arrival of electrical appliances in the home (1920-1945)**. Although France was electrified in the 1920s, subscribers were conspicuous by their absence. Similarly, household electrical appliances, although they seemed indissociable from modernity, remained inaccessible to most French homes. It is comfortably installed in Art Déco armchairs that visitors can view an early example of advertising, extolling the virtues of electricity. Young and old alike can play "Ribouldingue", a predecessor of the pinball machine or test their perspicacity by trying to identify some peculiar objects !

- **a machine and men**, a theatrical multimedia show based on the Sulzer-BBC machine. The visitor is thrust into the story of a working class family in Mulhouse and also into that of the great machine, which provided a large quantity of the energy for the Dollfus Mieg & Cie (DMC) factory between 1901 and 1947. Show several times a day.

Other permanent exhibitions complete the chronological approach to the discovery of electricity nowadays:

Electricity: what's behind the plug?

This play area is dedicated to children 5 to 12 years of age, and offers several experiments to discover the different aspects of electricity. Interactive exhibits, games, real or over-sized objects and video displays illustrate what's behind the plug. It is co-produced by Cité des sciences et de l'industrie and EDF.

The Technological garden

An outdoor walk complements and enriches the visit to the museum. In two pavilions and a pleasant landscaped garden, the visitor can see some exceptional equipment, including some veritable technological sculptures; turbo-alternators, circuit breakers, disconnecting switches, rectifiers, scale models... and a wind turbine almost 11 metres in height.

The Control room

Find out all there is to know about the electrical and electronic heart of the museum.

The EDF Electropolis Museum other services

The EDF Electropolis Museum is also:

- **a place for preserving the technical and technological heritage**, with collections almost 12 000 items;
- **a workshop for restoring the collections**;
- **a documentation center** open to researchers on request. The museum has specialised materials on the theme of electricity and its applications, ranging from scientific books (the oldest work, signed by abbot Nollet, dates from 1750) to technical handbooks to advertising materials (posters, videos...);
- **a bank of art work**.

The EDF Electropolis Museum at the heart of the industrial history of Mulhouse

Mulhouse, at the heart of Western Europe, close to the Rhine and flanked by the twin mountain ranges of the Vosges and Black Forest, has always made the best of its geographical location, in the immediate vicinity of Germany and Switzerland.

As early as the second half of the XVIIIth century, Mulhouse laid the foundations of its future economic and industrial growth. The industrious and enterprising middle classes had created an industrial boom, thanks to printing on cloth. Amongst them, Jean-Henri Dollfus, Samuel Koechlin and Jean-Jacques Schmalzer, three pioneers of industry who would enable Mulhouse to enjoy a remarkable period of expansion.

In the XIXth century, the town's infrastructure developed and in 1839 the first railway line was laid. As a result of this industrial development, the city developed a particular interest in all things technical, technological development and social progress.

An early example was the founding in 1826 of the *Société Industrielle de Mulhouse* (SIM), an association whose aim was promote progress for people, in culture and in the economy, and which even today wields considerable power and influence.

Mulhouse has always been a city of science and progress; it was here that the first Engineering schools were founded, Chemistry in 1822 and Textiles in 1861. This lively context of scientific and technical culture also led to the creation of a number of technical museums such as the Museum of Printed Fabrics, the Wallpaper museum, the Automobile and Railway museums... which together make Mulhouse the European capital of industrial heritage museums, welcoming 650 000 visitors every year.

This unmatched potential and Mulhouse's rich industrial heritage made the city the ideal site for the EDF Electropolis Museum, which brings together accounts and vestiges of XIXth century industry, the transformations seen in the XXth century and the latest technologies.

The EDF Electropolis Museum in figures

Opened

3 October 1992.

Renovation in 2003

The museum has entirely renewed its permanent exhibitions with the financial support of its partners within the federative association, "Musées sans Frontières":

- the Ministry of Culture and Communication, DRAC Alsace;
- the Alsace Region;
- the Départemental Councils of Haut-Rhin;
- the Mulhouse Sud Alsace urban community.

Cost of the operation: 2 million Euros.

Surface area

3 600 sq.m. opened to the public :

- permanent exhibitions : 2425 sq.m
- temporary exhibitions : 340 sq.m.

Staff

15 employees

Visitor numbers:

2012 : 40 151 visitors

2013 : 37 981 visitors

2014 : 40 488 visitors

2015 : 32 423 visitors (January to September)

2016 : 43 505 visitors (from 27 January)

The EDF Electropolis Museum opening times

The Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

Closed:

- Mondays;
- 1st January, Good Friday, 1 May, 1 and 11 November, 25 and 26 December.

Telephone

- administration: 03 89 32 48 50
- information: 03 89 32 48 60 (answering machine)

Fax

03 89 32 82 47

Internet

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Texts and show "A machine and men" in three languages (French, German and English).

In 2003 the Museum was awarded the national "**Tourism and Handicap**" label for motor and mental handicaps and in 2007, the label for deaf people.

The Museum is air-conditioned.

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The EDF Electropolis Museum ticket prices 2017

Individual ticket prices

Adult	8 €
Child from 6 to 18	4 €
Child under 6	free
Family (2 adults + 2 children from 6 to 18)	20 €
Student	4 €
Works council	6,5 €
Disabled	4 €

Group rates

Adult (over 20 people)	5,7 €
Child over 6	3 €
Child under 6	1.6 €

Guided tours available by appointment in French, German or English

Adults (maximum 30 people)	43 €
School group (idem)	32 €

Birthday parties

10 children and 2 adults	115 €
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Reduced rates for school groups from October to February

Combined ticket

with the Railway or Automobile museum



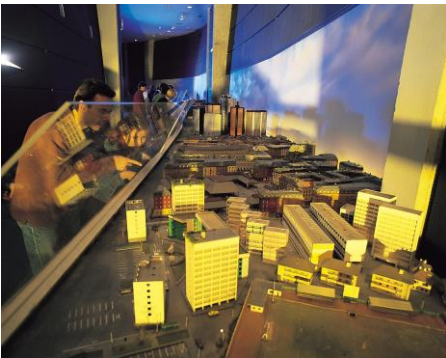
EDF Electropolis Museum in pictures



EDF Electropolis Museum © Marc Barral-Baron



Anamorphosis Zeus © Truly Design



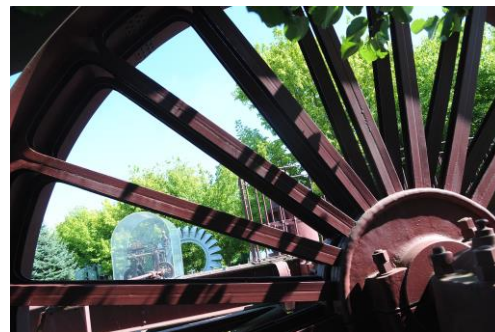
The great gallery © Thierry Werderer



The electrical servants © MMSA/Fred Hurst



The Sulzer-BBC machine(1901) © Atoll



The technological garden © MMSA/Catherine Kohler



What's behind the plug ? © MMSA/Catherine Kohler



The electrostatic theatre © Thierry Werderer