

Hall of the Universe Prelude

The universe is all around us—and within us.

Our minds, our hearts, everything we'll ever see or touch are part of the observable universe.

Once upon a time, 13.8 billion years ago, it was all wrapped up within a tiny bubble smaller than an atom.

As it expanded and cooled, stars and planets formed.

Did you know the earth and the sun didn't form until the universe was already two-thirds of its present age?

So we earthlings are newcomers on the scene.

Yet by building ever-better telescopes and space probes, we're able to look far out into the cosmos, and far back in time.

We're finding answers to ancient questions about how the universe evolved.

But astounding new mysteries are emerging, about invisible cosmic constituents called "dark matter" and "dark energy."

These mysterious entities account for much more of the universe than the billions of stars and galaxies we can see.

What's out there—and how did it get to be this way?

Let's investigate—on a voyage into the deepest, darkest secrets of the universe.