Establishment of the Museum

In 1980, the Executive Yuan announced its plan for the development of the National Museum of Natural Science (NMNS). NMNS is the first of three science museums in Taiwan, established under the country’s plan for the implementation of 12 cultural construction projects.

The museum’s Planning Office was set up in 1981, and the Executive Yuan appointed Professor Pao-teh Han, then Dean of the College of Science and Engineering, National Chung Hsing University, to serve as its director. Under Han’s guidance, the Planning Office set forth two goals for the development of the museum:

(1) To explain the principles and phenomena of natural science and encourage the public’s interest in science. To assist schools, at all levels, to achieve their science-related educational goals, and to form a basis for the long-term development of natural science.
To collect representative natural specimens of Taiwan, as well as related information (including anthropological relics and artifacts). To use collection and research for the purposes of exhibition and education.

The museum's exhibits incorporate science, technology, life and art, and have been completed in four phases. Phase one included the Space Theater and Science Center. The second, third and fourth phases consisted of the Life Science Hall, Chinese Science Hall and Global Environment Hall, respectively.

The Science Center, Space Theater, administrative offices and museum grounds were officially opened on January 1, 1986. James Gardner, a world-renowned museum designer from the UK, was commissioned to design the Life Science Hall. Back & Polituer, also from the UK, specializes in the construction of museum exhibits, and was contracted to build the Life Science Hall exhibits. The hall was opened to the public in August of 1988.

The Chinese Science Hall is divided into six exhibition units. The Global Environment Hall includes Microscopic World, Life on Earth exhibit area, Bird's Eye View Theater, the 3-D Theater and the Environment Theater. These facilities were built with the assistance of well-known museum design companies from the US, Japan and the UK, and were simultaneously opened to the public in 1993.

Over the past decade, the number of visitors has reached nearly three million annually. To increase the city's "green space" and to promote tourism, the Taichung City Government, taking advantage of the museum's professional reputation and educational concepts, provided 4.96 hectares of land, located across the street from the museum and originally designated as No. 54 Park, for the purpose of creating a Botanical Garden. The Botanical Garden opened to the public on July 23, 1999.

On September 21, 2004, the 921 Earthquake Museum of Taiwan opened to the public, and operates as an exhibition center under the NMNS umbrella. It currently includes a fault hall, earthquake images hall and administrative center. Some of the damaged classrooms are being repaired for re-use, and the outdoor stage and principal's dormitory will be turned into visitor service areas. Completion of this work is expected in 2005.