

# Mammoth

EXTINCT MAMMAL

WRITTEN BY: [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) (edited for length)

**Mammoth**, (genus *Mammuthus*), any member of an extinct group of [elephants](#) found as [fossils](#) in [Pleistocene](#) deposits over every continent except Australia and [South America](#) and in early [Holocene](#) deposits of [North America](#). The [woolly](#), Northern, or Siberian mammoth (*Mammuthus primigenius*) is by far the best-known of all mammoths. The relative abundance and, at times, excellent preservation of this [species's](#) carcasses found in the [permanently frozen ground](#) of Siberia has provided much information about mammoths' structure and habits.



Lyuba, the most well-preserved woolly mammoth (*Mammuthus primigenius*) ever found, on display at the Field Museum, Chicago. It died in Siberia about 42,000 years ago and was about one month old.  
*Spencer Green/AP*

Mammoths figured significantly in the art of primitive [humans](#); [cave](#) dwellers in Europe realistically depicted herds of these animals. Mammoths were sometimes trapped in ice [crevasses](#) and covered over; they were frozen, and their bodies were remarkably well preserved.

**Crevasse**, [fissure](#) or crack in a [glacier](#) resulting from stress produced by movement.

Many mammoths had a woolly, yellowish brown undercoat about 2.5 cm (1 inch) thick beneath a coarser outer covering of dark brown hair up to 50 cm (20 inches) long. Under the extremely thick skin was a layer of insulating [fat](#) at times 8 cm (3 inches) thick. The skull in *Mammuthus* was high and domelike.

On which continents were mammoths not found (hint- look at the underlined words)?

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What type of mammoth is the best-known? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a crevasse? \_\_\_\_\_

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How thick was a mammoth's layer of fat? \_\_\_\_\_