

**NATURAL
HISTORY
MUSEUM**
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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NEW DINOSAUR HALL TO CREATE LANDMARK EXPERIENCE IN LOS ANGELES, FEATURING WORLD'S ONLY *T. REX* GROWTH SERIES AND LARGE SCALE, NEVER-BEFORE-DISPLAYED MOUNTS

***OPENS JULY 2011 AT
NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY***



Permanent Exhibition Designed to Inspire Wonder, Investigation and Interactivity, Bringing Visitors Into the World of Dinosaurs and the Scientists Who Delve Into Their Lives

LOS ANGELES, CA – This summer, the much-anticipated new Dinosaur Hall opens to the public at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The large-scale permanent exhibition will be presented in two light-filled galleries – twice the size of the Museum's old dinosaur galleries. The Dinosaur Hall will rival the world's leading dinosaur halls — for the sheer volume of individual fossils displayed; the size and extraordinariness of the major mounts, including the world's only *T. rex* growth series; and the transparent treatment of the science that surrounds

these creatures — not as static, definitive knowledge but as a vibrant, ongoing investigation of mysteries solved and still unsolved.

The exhibition features over 300 fossils, 20 full body specimens, manual and digital interactives, and large-format video. In addition to the *T. rex* series (an adult, juvenile, and baby), the exhibition’s standouts include an imposing *Triceratops*, a 68-foot long-necked *Mamenchisaurus*, and giant reptiles that lived in the oceans covering what is today California. Two-thirds of the full-body specimens have never been displayed before; the specimens that have been displayed have all been re-articulated in new and more dynamic poses.

The Dinosaur Hall is the latest component of NHM Next, the six-year, \$135 million campaign that will transform the Museum. Now at its midpoint, this unique public-private partnership has raised more than \$80 million. The new exhibition follows this summer’s critically-acclaimed, campaign-supported openings of *Age of Mammals* and the Haaga Family Rotunda. By 2013, the NHM Next Campaign will have supported an institution-wide, indoor/outdoor evolution: five new permanent exhibitions; a pedestrian bridge and car park in 2011; 3.5 acres of urban nature experiences and the *Nature Lab*, the outdoor space’s indoor component, in the summer of 2012; and an exhibition about Los Angeles’ natural and cultural history in late 2012.



“The new Dinosaur Hall is a spectacular realization of the goal of our transformation, which is to bring the research and collections of the Natural History Museum vividly to life for a public that is hungry for wonder, discovery and knowledge,” said Dr. Jane Pisano, NHM President and Director. “The exhibition will emerge as one of the major dinosaur experiences in the world, and its specimens and science will easily position the Museum as the West Coast’s hub for dinosaurs.”

Overview

The Dinosaur Hall is organized around a series of questions or mysteries. What is a dinosaur? What was their world like? How did they live, grow and behave? And finally, what happened to them?

To provide insight into how scientists puzzle out answers to these questions — to reveal the stories *behind* these astonishing specimens — the specimen-rich exhibition relies on the ambitious discovery and research programs of the NHM’s in-house Dinosaur Institute, led by world-renowned paleontologist and exhibit lead curator, Dr. Luis Chiappe. Fossils are the building blocks of everything we know about the dinosaurs, but Chiappe has created a sense of a continuum for the thrill of discovery and scientific inquiry — there are specimens yet to be unearthed, and research technologies yet to be discovered.

The new exhibition extends through two conjoining two-story galleries. One is a part of the recently restored 1913 Building (the Beaux Arts structure that was the Museum’s original structure). The second belongs to the newer 1920s Building, which has been seismically renovated and outfitted with floor-to-ceiling windows that allow passersby on the South Lawn outside the Museum to peek at the giants inside.



In all, the new exhibition spans 14,000 square feet, doubling the size of the Museum’s former dinosaur galleries. The Museum’s paleontologists are known to joke about the old fossil exhibitions as “parking lots for bones” — mounts were articulated in static, similar poses, and

most specimens were visible from just one point of view. The Dinosaur Hall allows visitors to wander around and in some instances, underneath, the specimens. Because of their innovative platforms, many of the major mounts are not surrounded by thick glass — providing rare opportunities for up-close looks at the fossils.

This is a key to the exhibition’s visitor experience, as many of these fossils were prepared and articulated in recent years, using modern paleontological methods that forgo the thick layers of shellac used by fossil preparers of decades past. Never-before-seen details of the fossils are therefore revealed. Some have rich red and green hues, colored by the minerals in the lands they were found. Some contain visible internal organs, skin textures, and in one instance, the stomach contents of a last meal.

“The new Dinosaur Hall has the potential of inspiring new generations of scientists, since this exhibition highlights discovery-based fieldwork, the experience of going outdoors and finding treasures, and then understanding how they fit within current scientific record,” said Dr. Chiappe. “Most dinosaur exhibitions are organized around specific types of dinosaurs or by periods of time. Our approach is quite different. Using new discoveries and research findings, we’re able to bring visitors into the world of dinosaurs by exploring the great questions of how they lived, behaved, and died, and whether they still exist.”

On View: 1920s Building

As visitors enter this gallery, they are immediately greeted by a magnificent never-before displayed *Triceratops*, mounted on a contoured platform overlaid with representations of quarry maps that show where the bones of the specimens were preserved in sedimentary beds. Framing the gallery is a 40-foot wall showcasing 100 diverse dinosaur specimens — a sly, artful take on traditional paleontological display, with bones, teeth, eggs, footprints, skin patches, and coprolites (which is to say, fossilized droppings). The exhibition’s largest specimen, a 68-foot *Mamenchisaurus*, stands in front of the gallery’s large central windows with its long neck and tail sprawling throughout the gallery. Past the *Mamenchisaurus*, this gallery is devoted largely to the giant reptiles that lived in the ocean when dinosaurs “ruled” on land.

Upstairs are specimens from California, and from the water that once covered it. Here, visitors will come face to face with some of the tallest and longest specimens in the exhibit. The mosasaur *Plotosaurus*, and the plesiosaur *Morenosaurus* are both cantilevered over the main floor in a breathtaking, gravity-defying scene. NHM stalwarts may remember the *Morenosaurus* from the old dinosaur gallery, but the undulating sea monster — the first creature of its kind known to science — has been spectacularly remounted.

On View: 1913 Building and the *T. Rex* Growth Series

The second gallery will reveal three platforms with iconic and surprising specimens to explore questions of dinosaur locomotion, diet, behavior, and perhaps the greatest mystery of all — how and when the large dinosaurs died out. Large-scale tableaux with specimens articulated and mounted to interact with one another, touchable specimens, videos, and interactive displays and interpretive media are distributed throughout the space.

The show-stopping centerpiece in this gallery is the platform featuring a very special trio: the young adult *Tyrannosaurus rex* nicknamed “Thomas” (30 feet) joined by a 20-foot juvenile and a 10-foot baby. The growth series is a fascinating look at the ways that *T. rexes* grew, a process that included incredible growth spurts and body changes.

But it is also a snapshot of dinosaur life: The terrain on which they are mounted finds Thomas and the baby standing on one side, while the juvenile lurches toward the carcass of a duck-billed *Edmontosaurus*. Though nearby content is careful to point out that theories about a long-extinct animal’s behavior are just that, the scene does intend to raise questions about the social hierarchy of the *T. rex*. Recent research suggests these creatures ate one another, but we don’t know if they killed one another. So, to what extent were babies and juveniles tolerated in the *T. rex* social structure? Is Thomas protecting the baby, or is it every dinosaur for itself?

The final tableau debunks the popular belief that all dinosaurs lived together and at the same time. Using a sample of spectacular mounts and displays, visitors investigate iconic dinosaurs that lived and became extinct at different times: the Triassic *Coelophysis*; the Jurassic *Stegosaurus* and *Allosaurus*; and the Cretaceous *Edmontosaurus*. The mystery of how and when the large dinosaurs died out is introduced, with evidence for a mass extinction event at the end of the Mesozoic. This tableau also highlights the evolutionary connection between dinosaurs and birds, providing compelling evidence about why the latter should be considered living dinosaurs.

The second level of the exhibition also takes a closer look at the science behind these specimens, from the fossil hunting badlands where the specimens are found, to the paleontology labs where the fossils are brought once they are excavated. One area focuses on field work: the surprising data that a quarry can reveal in addition to its fossil treasures, and examples of excavation methods (which, unlike lab and articulation work, have not changed drastically over the last several decades). The companion area focuses on laboratory discoveries — research tools that have evolved to include high-tech microscopes, CT scans, and genome studies. A multi-media interactive kiosk allows visitors to “excavate” specimens and investigate the finds.

Behind the Scenes of the Exhibition

Many of the hall's specimens were discovered by the Museum's in-house Dinosaur Institute (DI), whose staff, volunteers and grad students are under Chiappe's direction. The DI's ambitious field research program has located key specimens all over the world, from the dinosaur-rich badlands of the American West to remote parts of South America and Asia. Notable accomplishments include sauropod discoveries (including "Gnatie," named for the biting gnats that pestered her excavators) and dinosaur trackways in Utah; research that reveals a relationship between North American and Iberian dinosaurs; the discovery of an extraordinary dinosaur nesting site, with thousands of fossil eggs, in Patagonia, Argentina, and the identification and naming of North America's tiniest dinosaur, the *Fruitadens haagarorum*.

But perhaps the DI's biggest success story is Thomas the *T. rex*, one of the most complete *T. rex* specimens in the world, and for NHM visitors, the most familiar. Excavated by DI paleontologists in Montana from 2003 to 2005, the specimen was brought to the Museum and prepared in a working paleontology laboratory in full view of the public.

To bring paleontology to life, and to infuse the exhibition with the thrill of the field, film crews have been filming Chiappe's expeditions for several years. Using this footage, the multi-media components of the exhibition will reveal life in fossil beds both local and remote — hardships like piercing dust and the dilemma of transporting thousand-pound fossils out of remote badlands, juxtaposed against the triumph of discovery.

After the specimens make their way from fossil fields to the Museum, they begin the journey from research to preparation to full articulation. Seventy years ago, the Museum's own craftsmen created our iconic dioramas, and that in-house artistry continues with the new Dinosaur Hall. DI staff prepared and articulated many of the specimens, molded and sculpted missing bones for the mounts, and created quarry maps and illustrations.

For some of the larger mounts, the Museum outsourced to two of North America's finest fossil articulators. Phil Fraley Productions' Pittsburgh and New Jersey studios undertook several major mounts for the exhibition, including the *T. rex* series, the giant California marine reptile *Morenosaurus*, and the *Triceratops*. Founder and president Phil Fraley headed the articulation of Sue, the iconic *T. rex* of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. The Ontario, Canada-based Research Casting International remounted the exhibition's largest specimen, the 68-foot *Memenchiaursus* and six additional medium-sized mounts. Founded in 1987, RCI is one of the world's largest providers of museum technical services.

The NHM Next Campaign

This landmark Dinosaur Hall is the key to NHM Next Campaign, a public/private partnership that engages donors, philanthropic foundations, the County of Los Angeles, and the State of California. Nearly 60% of the campaign's \$135 million goal has been raised to date. Physically, the transformation includes five new exhibitions, new visitor amenities, and a brand new outdoor component opening each year over the next three years. Philosophically, there is a new approach to exhibits and programs — one which reveals the thrill of discovery, the processes of science, and the ongoing, evolving endeavor that is scientific investigation. It is a thoughtful reconsideration of what science and the story of life on Earth mean to our visitors.

The NHM Next Campaign's components include:

- **Winter 2010:** The **Ralph M. Parsons Discovery Center**, the Museum's beloved interactive learning space, moves to a newly light filled space in the renovated 1920's Building overlooking the outdoor pavilions and Exposition Park's South Lawn.
- **Summer 2011:** The highly-anticipated new Dinosaur Hall opens. A front entrance, plaza, and pedestrian bridge leading to new entrance are also unveiled.
- **2011/2012:** The **North Campus** opens, with 3.5 acres of green space filled with nature experiences, community science projects, and programming space.
- **2012:** The **Nature Lab**, the indoor component to the North Campus, debuts.
- **2012:** A new permanent exhibition exploring the natural and cultural history of Los Angeles and Southern California, opens.
- **2013:** More gallery spaces are unveiled leading to the celebration of **NHM's centennial**. By the time of this 100-year anniversary, the transformation is complete: The Museum is an inside/outside experience with improved visitor amenities (new stores, café, restrooms and elevators), and in all, 12 new galleries and five new exhibits have been opened.

About the Museum

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is located at 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, near downtown. It is open daily from 9:30 am to 5 pm. The Museum was the first dedicated museum building in Los Angeles, opening its doors in 1913. It has amassed one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history — with more than 35 million objects, some as old as 4.5 billion years. The Natural History Family of Museums includes the NHM, the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits (Hancock Park/Mid-Wilshire), and the William S. Hart Park and Museum (Newhall, California).

Image Information

1. A design rendering of the *T. rex* growth series. Photo courtesy of Evidence Design.

2. *T. Rex* foot. Photo Karen Knauer.
3. A *Carnotaurus* specimen, remounted for the exhibition. Photo Karen Knauer.