

**NATURAL
HISTORY
MUSEUM**
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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**NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY TO OPEN
NEW DINOSAUR HALL ON JULY 16, 2011, MARKING THE
HALFWAY POINT IN ITS 7-YEAR TRANSFORMATION**



14,000-Square-Foot Permanent Dinosaur Exhibition Is the Latest Completed Element in \$135 Million Initiative, Uniting Collections and Research, Landscape and Landmark Architecture into a New Experience of Wonder and Discovery

Dinosaur Hall Press Preview July 7, 2011

LOS ANGELES, CA – On July 16, 2011, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County will pass the halfway mark in its seven-year self-transformation when it opens its all-new, 14,000-square-foot **Dinosaur Hall**. Twice the size of the Museum's previous dinosaur exhibits, the Dinosaur Hall will feature more than 300 fossils, 20 full-body specimens, an array of manual and digital interactive displays, and video presentations. It is designed to allow visitors to get up close to real fossils in a way that engages visitors with the discovery and research programs of

the Museum's own Dinosaur Institute, led by world-renowned paleontologist and exhibit lead curator, Dr. Luis Chiappe.

The world's only *Tyrannosaurus rex* growth series, presenting extraordinary fossils specimens of the youngest known baby, a rare juvenile, and a remarkably complete recently-discovered young adult (Thomas the *T. rex*), will be one of the highlights of the new hall. Other standout specimens in the exhibition include an imposing new *Triceratops*; a *Stegosaurus*, topped by kite-shaped armor plates; the predator *Allosaurus*; a 68-foot long-necked *Mamenchisaurus*; and giant marine reptiles that swam the oceans covering what is today California. Two-thirds of the full-body specimens have never been displayed before. Those specimens that were previously seen have all been re-articulated into more dynamic poses.

The Dinosaur Hall will rival the world's leading dinosaur experiences for the sheer volume of individual fossils displayed; the size and extraordinariness of the major mounts, including the world's only *Tyrannosaurus 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 Dinosaur Hall is the latest component of NHM Next, a \$135 million campaign that is currently transforming the Museum. Now at its midpoint, this unique public-private partnership has raised over \$86 million — more than 60 percent of its goal. The Dinosaur Hall follows this summer's critically-acclaimed, campaign-supported openings of *Age of Mammals* and the Haaga Family Rotunda. NHM will become an indoor/outdoor experience, with a new pedestrian bridge and car park in 2011; an exhibition about Los Angeles' natural and cultural history and the *Nature Lab* opening in 2012; and in 2012 and 2013, 3.5 acres of urban nature experiences in greenspace reclaimed from parking lots and paved patios set to debut. 2013 will also see the debut of the Otis Booth Pavilion, a three-story, glass-encased entryway connecting the indoor and outdoor sections of the Museum, made possible by an unprecedented \$13 million gift from The Otis Booth Foundation.

“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 the real thing — gigantic and authentic fossils, as opposed to virtual experiences and two-dimensional representations,” said Dr. Jane Pisano, NHM President and Director. “The exhibition will emerge as one of the major dinosaur experiences in the country, and its specimens and science will easily position the Museum as an international hub for dinosaurs.”



Overview

The Dinosaur Hall is organized around the key questions — or mysteries — that drive scientific research and fascinate the public: 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 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, light-filled, 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 retrofit, 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. NHM 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 new Dinosaur Hall displays these incredible fossils in new, scientifically up-to-date poses and brings visitors closer than ever to the specimens, allowing them to wander all the way around the specimens and to see them from multiple vantage points, from above and below as well as alongside them. Innovative platforms for the major specimens allow provide rare opportunities for up-close looks at the fossils — in many places without even a glass barrier between visitors and the fossils.



This is a key to the exhibition’s visitor experience. Many of these fossils have been newly prepared and articulated, using the latest paleontological methods that forgo the thick layers of shellac used by fossil preparers of decades past. Never-before-seen details of the fossils — once seen only by scientists — are revealed to the public. Details such as color are revealed; some fossils have rich red and green hues from the minerals in the lands they were found. Unique fossils of soft tissue are also on display, including internal organs, skin textures, and in one instance, the stomach contents of a last meal.

“The 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 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 long necked *Mamenchisaurus*, stands in front of the gallery’s large central windows with its long neck and tail sprawling throughout the gallery. Past the *Mamenchisaurus*, visitors meet 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, and approximately 18 years old) joined by a 20-foot juvenile (approximately 14 years old) and a 11-foot baby (2 years old), the youngest known *T. rex* specimen at the time of death. The growth series is a fascinating look at the ways that the *T. rex* grew, a process that included incredible growth spurts and body changes: After hatching as a 2-foot, for example, a *T. rex* could reach 30-35 feet (10,000 to 15,000 pounds) in less than two decades.

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. 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 labs where fossils are prepared after 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 “Gnatalie,” 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 partnered with two of the world'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.

Museum Transformation

The landmark Dinosaur Hall is the key in a seven-year indoor/outdoor transformation of the NHM. Physically, the transformation includes five new exhibitions, new visitor amenities, and a brand new outdoor component. 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's transformation includes:

- July 2011: The highly-anticipated new **Dinosaur Hall**.

A **new entrance** and **pedestrian bridge** leading to the north entrance.
- 2012: A new permanent exhibition exploring the natural and cultural history of Southern California, showcasing the largest and most important collection of historic objects from early Los Angeles.

The **Nature Lab**, an indoor/outdoor hub of public science and hands-on education where live animals, interactive displays and specimens of local wildlife inspire discovery and stewardship of the urban biodiversity of L.A. today.
- 2012/2013: The **North Campus** opens, with 3.5 acres of green space filled with nature

experiences, community science projects, and programming space. It is designed to provide one-of-a-kind opportunities for visitors to meet, explore and understand nature and wildlife in L.A.

- 2013: The three-story **Otis Booth Pavilion** becomes the new main entrance of the Museum, feature the Museum’s iconic 63-foot fin whale specimen as its beacon, the new main entrance of the Museum, with a 63-foot fin whale specimen as its beacon.

The celebration of **NHM’s centennial**. By the time of the NHM’s 100-year anniversary, the Museum is an indoor/outdoor experience with nature, natural and cultural history, many new visitor amenities (new stores, café, restrooms and elevators) and in all, 12 new galleries and five new exhibitions.

About the Museum

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is located at 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90007, near downtown. It is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. 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 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.