Paleontology

There is a big advantage to viewing the many dinosaurs located within The Real America compared to those in “Jurassic Park.” Our dinosaurs are dead and have been for 65 million years. Long before paleontology became popular, sites within our region were famous worldwide for the extremely rich fossil beds and accessible dinosaur skeletons. New and exciting finds are still being made every year, including the first-ever discovery of dinosaur eggs in Montana and the first full-sized Allosaurus in Wyoming. The region was, and is, a true “Jurassic Park.

Days 1-2 - Arrive Denver
One of the most extensive dinosaur exhibits in the nation is at Denver Museum of Natural History. Called “Prehistoric Journey,” the $7.7 million exhibit will offer visitors a unique look at prehistoric life, following a cobblestone path and entering an “enviroroama” where they’ll be immersed in a 3.5 billion year old landscape. Overnight Denver.

Day 3 - Denver to Laramie
The Geology Museum at the University of Wyoming in Laramie is the only museum west of the Mississippi River featuring a full-sized Brontosaurus, as well as many other specimens and exhibits. Just north of Laramie, Como Bluff has given up some of the most outstanding dinosaurs ever discovered. Many Como Bluff finds are in museums in the U.S. and Europe. What is left of the treasures is a fossil cabin, a small cement structure that uses dinosaur bones in place of logs. Overnight Laramie.

Days 4-7 - Laramie to Hot Springs / Black Hills
The Mammoth Site in Hot Springs has recently captured world-wide attention for containing the largest concentration of Columbian mammoths found in the world. Guided tours take visitors within feet of the 26,000 year-old fossils. Nearly 60 Columbian mammoths have been unearthed so far under the roof at the site.
Overnight Hot Springs.

Relentless erosion that created Badlands National Park exposed a vast array of exotic animal remains which are on display along walkways. Rapid City features the Museum of Geology, a world-class collection of dinosaurs, sea lizards, ancient camels, horses, and a mother oreodont with the skeletons of unborn twins encased in her bones. The Black Hills Petrified Forest near Piedmont has Barasosaurus bones dated to the Jurassic period. The Black Hills uplift has also exposed the remains of a cypress forest. The Black Hills Institute of Geologic Research in Hill City prepares fossils and mineral specimens for museums and collectors worldwide. Overnight Rapid City.

Day 8 - Black Hills to Lemmon to Bowman, ND

Near the border in South Dakota, near Lemmon, is the Petrified Wood Park, a collection of petrified logs, stumps, fossils, and prehistoric mudballs found within a 35-mile radius of Lemmon. Over 6.4 million tons of ancient wood have been used to construct structures within the park. Overnight Bowman Lemmon.

Day 9 - Bowman and Dickinson

The Pioneer Trails Regional Museum and Paleontology Department

The museum also studies, collects and curates fossils from all of the different aged outcrops present in the region. These include vertebrates, invertebrates and plants from 73 million year old marine deposits up to the latest deposits of the area, which are 28 million years old. Some of the animals that have been found are mosasaurs, plesiosaurs, dinosaurs, and early mammals that include camels, rhinoceroses, horses and giant pigs. The Paleontology Department conducts Public Day Tours out to our active research sites in the field. The museum also offers a more intense summer field activity through our annual Summer Field School. Overnight in Bowman.

Day 10 – Dickinson to Jordan

Jordan houses the full-sized replica of a complete Triceratops and has an impressive display of fossils taken from the area. Near Glendive, Makoshika State Park contains fossil remains of such dinosaurs as tyrannosaurs and triceratops. The visitor center features the skeleton of a juvenile triceratops unearthed in Makoshika State Park. Overnight Jordan.

Day 11 - Jordan to Havre

Havre, in northern Montana, features the H. Earl Clack Museum and its fossil and geological displays. The museum is the starting point for tours of the nearby Wahkpa Chu’gn Archaeological Site, a buffalo jump site. Visitors can see dig areas with layers of bone, ancient processing areas and cooking hearths. Overnight Havre.

Day 12 - Havre to Choteau

The beginning of the movie Jurassic Park was based on the finds near Choteau, where Egg Mountain exhibits and fossils are on display at the Old Trails Museum. The Pine Butte Swamp Preserve, also near Choteau, has a rich dinosaur bone bed that famous Horner and his protÈgÈs have long mined. Discoveries include the Maisura and its eggs. The Preserve offers dinosaur dig workshops. Overnight Choteau.

Day 13 - Choteau to Bozeman

Famed dinosaur hunter Jack Horner is the curator of the large dinosaur exhibit at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, one of the best dinosaur exhibits in North America. The museum houses several important dinosaur finds, including the skulls of Triceratops and Styracosaurus. Overnight Bozeman.

Day 14 - Bozeman To Thermopolis

The Wyoming Dinosaur Center in Thermopolis features exciting dioramas and exhibits. The museum’s mounted dinosaur skeletons were unearthed less than two miles from the center on the warm Springs ranch. The Wyoming dinosaur Center is the only privately-owned museum of the size in the state. Shuttle bus tours are offered to visitors who want to see a working fossil dig in progress. All fossils found on the ranch will stay in the on site museum. Overnight Thermopolis.

Day 15 - Thermopolis

Fossil Butte National Monument, northwest of Rock Springs, records one of the most extensive concentrations of fossilized fish in the world, all of which were found locally. There are also six private quarries outside the boundaries of the Monument, and several offer digging opportunities and fossils for sale. The Natural History Museum and Dinosaur Collection in Rock Springs, located on the campus of Western Wyoming Community College, is open year-round, and features full-sized life-casts of Tyrannosaurus rex, Triceratops, Stegosaurus, Camptosaurus, and Xiphactinus audax, a rare monster fish. Overnight Kemmerer.

Day 16 - Kemmerer to Pocatello

The Idaho Museum of Natural History located at Idaho State University in Pocatello offers visitors the unique and wonderful diversity of Idaho’s natural heritage with displays on the ice age Giant Bison and Saber-toothed cat skeletons. The museum is currently involved in the recent discovery of two new dinosaur species in a remote location near the Wyoming border. Overnight Pocatello.

Day 17 - Pocatello to Twin Falls