

T. rex gets new home in Smithsonian dinosaur hall

April 15 2014, by Brett Zongker



A crate containing the fossilized jaw bone of The Nation's T. rex (Tyrannosaurus rex) presented to the museum by the US Army Corps of Engineers during ceremonies at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History on April 15, 2014 in Washington, DC

A Tyrannosaurus rex is joining the dinosaur fossil collection on the National Mall on Tuesday after a more than 2,000-mile (3,200-kilometer) journey from Montana.

For the first time since its dinosaur hall opened in 1911, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History will have a nearly complete T. rex skeleton. FedEx is delivering the [dinosaur bones](#) in a truck carrying 16 carefully packed crates.

The T. rex, discovered in 1988 on federal land in Montana, is about 80 to 85 percent complete. It's one of about half a dozen nearly complete T. rex skeletons that have been uncovered. This specimen could become the most prominent with its new home in one of the world's most-visited museums. About 7 million people visit the [natural history](#) museum each year, and it offers free admission.

Many people think of the T. rex as the ultimate dinosaur, and it's the first thing they want to see, paleontology curator Hans Sues said. Now the museum will be able to show a real skeleton and allow scientists to continue studying it.

"In some ways, I think of it as the most American of all dinosaurs: this big, huge animal that was dominating its ecosystem," Sues said.

Scientists want to learn more about how T. rex related to other animals and what its short arms were used for, Sues said.

Visitors can get their first look beginning Tuesday as curators begin unpacking and examining each bone of the skeleton over the next six months. But it will take five years for the [museum](#) to overhaul its dinosaur hall with the T. rex mounted as the centerpiece of a \$48 million gallery devoted to the history of life on Earth.

While pieces of the exhibition have been updated over time, this will be the first comprehensive reimagining of the dinosaur hall since it opened in the early days of paleontology, Museum Director Kirk Johnson said.

"There's so many things that have happened in science in the last 100 years that this will be a great new hall," he said.

The T. rex was previously displayed at the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana. It is on a 50-year loan to the Smithsonian that could be extended. It was previously scheduled to move to Washington last year but was delayed due to the government shutdown.

Washington's current 103-year-old dinosaur hall closes April 28 for renovations. A temporary dinosaur exhibit will open later this year.

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