

'Jurassic World' comes alive at Philadelphia exhibit

November 24 2016, by Kristen De Groot

Dinosaurs in museums tend to be of the fossilized variety, but a new exhibit in Philadelphia is bringing the creatures and their world to life.

"Jurassic World: The Exhibition" opens at the Franklin Institute on Friday. Based on the blockbuster dinosaur movie franchise, the experience mixes the vibe of a theme park with the backstory of science, but the big—like, really big—attraction is the animatronic dinosaurs, some measuring over 24 feet tall.

The traveling show made its world premiere in Melbourne, Australia, earlier this year, but Philadelphia's U.S. debut offers some new features.

Here's what visitors can expect at the exhibit, which runs through April 23:

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DINOSAUR PETTING ZOO

Guests can meet a towering Brachiosaurus, come face-to-face with a Velociraptor and get up close and personal with a Tyrannosaurus rex. The lifelike, life-size dinosaurs were designed by The Creature Technology Co., which created the enormous creatures for the "Walking with Dinosaurs" arena shows. A family-friendly "Gentle Giants Petting Zoo" also promises interactions with a baby Pachyrhinosaurus and its 29-foot-long mother. Visitors can even "pet" a small dinosaur.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT FROM MELBOURNE?

The U.S. debut of the exhibit offers a look inside a raptor training paddock, like the one used by Chris Pratt's character in 2015's "Jurassic World." It also includes an interactive raptor.

Tom Zaller, president of Imagine Exhibitions, said that the U.S. show also adds additional science-related content and interactive elements.

The exhibit is nearly double the size of the Australian version.

PRO PALEONTOLOGIST

Exhibit organizers worked closely with paleontologist Jack Horner, one of the best-known dinosaur researchers in the world, to help get the science right. Horner discovered the world's first dinosaur embryos and found that dinosaurs had nests and cared for their young.

In his book "Jurassic Park," Michael Crichton based the character Alan Grant on Horner. Steven Spielberg brought Horner on as a technical adviser on all of the "Jurassic Park" movies—and Horner did it without a college degree and with dyslexia.

FAKE CREATURES, REAL SCIENCE

The museum hopes to appeal to fans of science in addition to fans of the movie. An educator guide offers ways to look at the exhibit through

scientific eyes on topics including: ethics in science; climate change; DNA and genetics; and extinction.

It also offers interactive exhibits. Brave visitors can even stick an arm into a pile of dinosaur dung to feel its squishy, warm interior as a way to learn about identifying animals by studying their leavings.

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