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Sue made front-page news again in 1997 when she went up for auction where the Chicago Field Museum -- with financial partners McDonald's, Walt Disney World Resort, the California State University System and private donors -- purchased the skeleton for a whopping \$8.4 million, the highest price ever paid for a fossil.

Colossal fossil coming to L.A.

By Brenda Rees, PencilNews correspondent

What stands 42 feet tall, weighs 7 tons and has a brain cavity big enough to hold a quart of milk?

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NO, IT'S NOT YOUR math teacher – it's Sue, the most complete and well-preserved Tyrannosaurus rex fossil ever discovered. Two life-size replicas of the 67-million-year-old dinosaur are currently touring the country and may be coming soon to a city near you.

“A T. Rex Named Sue” opens Nov. 18 in Los Angeles at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and will be on display until April 22, 2001. Sue made international headlines twice: The first time was when she was discovered outside a small South Dakota town in 1990 by fossil hunter Sue Hendrickson who was waiting for a flat tire to be fixed.

Sue made front-page news again in 1997 when she went up for auction where the Chicago Field Museum – with financial partners McDonald's, Walt Disney World Resort, the California State University System and private donors – purchased the skeleton for a whopping \$8.4 million, the highest price ever paid for a fossil.

Two exact cast replicas of Sue are now touring the country and leaving an astonishing impression on visitors as big as Sue's own footprint.

Along with the replica Sue, the exhibit includes touchable casts of Sue's leg bone and a tooth, samples of dinosaur fossil skin and an interactive T. rex model that demonstrates how the massive creature might have used its tiny forearms. Those limbs – about the size of human arms – still stump scientists today as to how and why the T. rex developed such small appendages.



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In addition, visitors will be able to “get inside” Sue's head for a multi-sensory experience – one exhibit allows visitors to look through the eyes of a T. rex and compare depth perception, while another exhibit gives an idea of how

powerful the T. rex's sense of smell was.

But visitors to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County will be offered a special bonus that dino-lovers of all ages won't want to miss. It will be the only place where four different T. rex skulls will be on display at the same time.

“We are very excited about Sue coming here because we are going to display items never seen before by the public,” says Leah Melber, science education specialist at the museum. “From our own collection, we will be displaying actual and very rare T. rex skulls – two juvenile and one teen-age skull. If you examine these

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skulls and then Sue's, you can see how a T. rex matured."

Melber anticipates T. rex fever will sweep through every city Sue and her entourage stop at. "T. rexes are fascinating because, well, let's face it – size has a lot to do with it," she explains. "They were these huge predators and the image of a two-legged meat eater draws attention. Sue is certainly overwhelming."

The Natural History Museum is also transforming 500 square feet into a simulated dig site where "junior paleontologists" of all ages can try their hand at uncovering hidden fossils. Nearby, an actual fossil prep station will show the many steps between when a fossil is excavated in the field to when it is placed on public display.

Finally, since Sue will be so close Hollywood, the museum is hosting musical performances that will get visitors tapping their toes to dinosaur tunes like the "Sauropod Shuffle." No doubt, as guests leave the exhibition, they may be singing under their breath: "From Sauropod to Hadrosaur, this groups too awesome to ignore. So now's your change to stop and roar – let's hear it for the dinosaur!"

"A T. Rex Named Sue" opens Nov. 18 and runs through April 22, 2001, at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, 900 Exposition Park, Los Angeles. For more information, call (213) 763-DINO or visit the museum's Web site at www.nhm.org.

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