



NORTH DAKOTA — THE REAL JURASSIC PARK DINO TOUR



Fifty million years ago, North Dakota was a swampy environment that over the next 10 million years or so became a mostly treeless savanna with a diverse group of mammals. Many of these were members of families that still exist today: ancestral dogs, cats, camels, deer, squirrels, beavers, horses, rabbits, rhinoceroses and mice.

The fossils of those and classic dinosaurs like triceratops and T-Rex, were deposited in a huge delta named Hell Creek Delta. These sediments, now turned to sandstone, siltstone and mudstone, make up a heavenly dig site called Hell Creek Formation.



Animal fossils, including sharks, rays, turtles, crocodiles, birds, snails, clams and mosasaurs that inhabited shallow marine waters adjacent to the delta are found in the Hell Creek Formation. The species of dinosaurs that existed at that time were the last dinosaurs to ever live.

You can dig for fossils, including dinosaurs like the T-Rex, on the **fossil digs** held each summer and hosted by the North Dakota Geological Survey.



Attractions in all regions of the state have collections of local prehistoric life, whether plant or animal; from the petrified cypress tree stump in the Long X Visitors Center in Watford City to the life-size Mastodon in the North Dakota Heritage Center and State Museum in Bismarck. Check out the North Dakota Geological Survey's fossil digs, no matter where you are, you are always at the gate of Jurassic Park!



NORTH
Dakota Be Legendary.

Day 1 — Valley City and Bismarck

Barnes County Historical Society Museum – Home to “Gundy the Triceratops” from the Cretaceous Period dated to 65 million years old. Many fossils from the North Dakota Geological Survey are also showcased here.

North Dakota Heritage Center and State Museum – Fossil exhibits in the galleries trace the history of life in North Dakota from about 90 million years ago to the present. The space within the Heritage Center devoted to these fossil exhibits is called the “Corridor of Time.” Exhibits are meant to provide a prehistoric background and setting for the appearance of humans in North Dakota, which occurred about 11,000 years ago. Exhibits include “Dakota” the dino mummy, the Mosasaur, a Paleocene Era pond exhibit, Mastadon and Bison latifrons skull.

Day 2 — Parshall and Watford City

Paul Broste Rock Museum, Parshall – Where you find dinosaurs, you find rocks. One of the most unique and interesting museums in North Dakota is the Paul Broste Rock Museum. Broste farmed near Parshall and had an inordinate fondness for rocks, minerals and fossils. He amassed a huge collection over many years and built a museum out of field stone in Parshall to house the collection.



Long X Visitors Center, Watford City – While excavating prehistoric crocodile remains, a huge, beautifully preserved petrified tree stump was discovered still in growth position. After the rock was removed from around the stump it was determined to be 9 feet in diameter at the base and 8 feet tall – the largest petrified tree stump ever seen in North Dakota. It is housed within the Long X Visitors Center.

Day 3 — Dickinson and Medora

Badlands Dinosaur Museum, Dickinson – The Badlands Dinosaur Museum features 11 full-scale dinosaurs, including a real skeleton of a Triceratops. Visitors can also view a complete Triceratops skull in the museum’s model lab.

North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame, Medora – The museum houses a skeleton of the Oligocene (30 million-year-old) horse, Meshippus. Most people are under the false impression that horses did not inhabit North America until they were introduced by the Spaniards during the early days of conquest, but horses are indigenous to North America.

Day 4 — Bowman

Pioneer Trails Regional Museum and Paleontology Department – The museum is a regional research and repository for history from within 100 miles of Bowman. It has departments active in archaeological and paleontological research, as well as preservation collections relating to local history. There is a full-size triceratops and a fossil lab on site.

