



# WHERE THE DINOSAURS ROAMED

New exhibit lets visitors experience  
a prehistoric environment

By Barbara Balfour

**N**estled in Alberta's majestic badlands, Canada's only museum of palaeontology presents the story of prehistoric life unlike anywhere else.

More than 400,000 visitors from across the globe flock to the Royal Tyrrell Museum, in Midland Provincial Park near Drumheller, annually. They come to see one of the largest displays of dinosaurs in the world including a stunning *Tyrannosaurus rex*, (one of three *T. rex* specimens on display) nicknamed "Black Beauty" for its rare darkened bones. The centrepiece of the Museum is the grand *Dinosaur Hall*, with 40-plus mounted skeletons, including favourites like *Stegosaurus* and *Triceratops*, and the many dinosaurs discovered in fossil-rich Alberta over the past 100 years.

The Museum will re-open its newly renovated *Cretaceous Garden* in the spring of 2013, giving visitors a chance to experience a natural environment similar to what the dinosaurs lived in 145 to 66 million years ago. Originally a tropical garden when the Museum opened in 1985, the garden space was closed this past year in preparation for its new showcase of ancient plant life. Rare and specialized plant materials were brought in from Canadian suppliers, mostly from a nursery on Vancouver Island, where growing conditions are closest to those of prehistoric Alberta.

"The garden will be kept around 24°C in the summer and a bit cooler in winter, with a humidity level of 70 per cent," says Museum horticulturist Dawn Christian. "There will be quite a few deciduous and evergreen trees, *Ginkgo* trees from four to six metres tall, some *Sequoiadendrons*, and my favourite — flowering magnolia trees," Christian says.



New and existing displays at the Royal Tyrrell Museum offer guests a glimpse through time.

Images courtesy of the Royal Tyrrell Museum

“There will also be a few fossils in the garden itself, including a large fossil tree stump and a hadrosaur dinosaur’s footprint that was found right next to the Museum. This is the story of the Cretaceous Period when flowering plants first appeared on Earth.” The Garden also features wider walkways and viewpoints, making it more accessible to larger groups of visitors.

But that’s not the only new experience at the Royal Tyrrell Museum in 2013. Also on display is what Curator of Dinosaur Palaeoecology Dr. François Therrien calls a “world-significant discovery” — the first feathered dinosaurs discovered in North America. “Specimens like these have never been seen before, anywhere in the world, and they change what we know about how some dinosaurs looked and behaved,” he says.

Dr. Therrien spends his days reconstructing the world in which dinosaurs lived. “Modern humans have only been around 100,000 years, and we’re talking about animals that lived here for millions and millions of years,” he explains. “The world in which we live is just a recent event in history. It’s a humbling experience when you realize we’re just a tiny part of the long chain of evolution through time.”

The Royal Tyrrell Museum is open year-round. For hours, prices, or to book public programs, go to [tyrrellmuseum.com](http://tyrrellmuseum.com). ■

*The Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology is located at 1500 North Dinosaur Tr. (Hwy. 838), Drumheller, 310-0000 then 403-823-7707, [tyrrellmuseum.com](http://tyrrellmuseum.com)*