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Dinosaur Fossil Unearthed Beneath Denver Museum Parking Lot in Rare Discovery

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Buried hundreds of feet beneath a Denver museum's parking lot, a 68-million-year-old dinosaur fossil has turned a routine energy project into a prehistoric jackpot.

What began as a standard geothermal drilling initiative at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science quickly became a groundbreaking discovery. While conducting test drills in City Park to explore the potential for underground heat energy, scientists uncovered a fossilized vertebra nearly 763 feet beneath the surface. Experts believe the bone belonged to a plant-eating dinosaur such as a *Thescelosaurus* or *Edmontosaurus*, species that roamed the region just before the mass extinction event that wiped out the dinosaurs.

“This was completely unexpected,” said Dr. James Hagadorn, the museum’s geology curator, in an interview with ABC News. “The first thing I thought was, ‘Are you joking?’ It was like finding a diamond vault under a jewelry store.”

The fossil, now officially the deepest and oldest dinosaur specimen ever discovered within Denver’s city limits, is estimated to be 67.5 million years old. The museum revealed the find this week, showcasing the fossil in its current “Discovering Teen Rex” exhibition. It now joins the institution’s extensive collection of over 300,000 fossil specimens.

Fossil Find

Dr. Hagadorn described the moment he heard the news as surreal. “My head just exploded,” he said. “It’s absolutely incredible. These kinds of finds remind us how much history is still buried beneath our feet.”

Though this discovery thrilled museum scientists, it also highlighted the limitations of deep-earth exploration. Hagadorn explained that going down 750 feet requires specialized drilling, and any effort to replicate the dig could compromise the structural integrity of the museum’s parking area. “It would take a hole so large it would consume the entire parking lot, and maybe a chunk of the museum too,” he noted.

Colorado has become something of a fossil hotbed in recent years. A Triceratops horn was once unearthed beneath home plate at Coors Field, and other fossil finds have been reported under Denver International Airport. These discoveries suggest that the state still holds a rich cache of prehistoric life beneath its surface.

Beyond the novelty, scientists stress the scientific value of such findings. Fossils like this one offer important insights into ancient ecosystems, extinction events, and climate shifts, all relevant topics amid modern environmental debates. “They tell us about our planet’s story, how it’s evolved, and how life has changed,” Hagadorn said. “It’s a win for science and for public education.”

The museum is encouraging the public to view the fossil for themselves, with “tons” of upcoming free admission days, according to Hagadorn. He hopes the exhibit sparks curiosity in ancient history and the hidden wonders that may lie beneath any ordinary piece of land.

“There’s an entire library of Earth’s history beneath our feet,” Hagadorn said. “We’re only just beginning to read the first pages.”