

# RoadTrip

## Go Cruisin' Down Dinosaur Alley

**WHERE:** The District and Maryland.

**WHY:** Mighty *T. rex*, a Capitalsaurus and an upcoming dino park.

**HOW FAR:** About 65 miles, or nearly 2 hours from start to finish.

Forget the distant, dusty dinosaur digs of Montana and Utah. Our region also delights dino fanatics.

One of the most popular reptiles at the National Museum of Natural History's Dinosaur Hall is a replica of giant *Tyrannosaurus rex*. But don't overlook the exhibit's underdogs, says Matthew T. Carrano, curator of dinosaurs at the museum. You'll discover a baby horned dinosaur skeleton and a small plant-eater dubbed *Thescelosaurus*. Carrano's fave is the rare *Ceratosaurus*, a medium-size meat-eater that roamed the earth with its better-known Jurassic pals *Allosaurus* and *Diplodocus*.

The Smithsonian museum is not far from the spot near the U.S. Capitol where a dinosaur fossil was first unearthed in Washington, in 1898. Nearly a century later, local paleontologist Peter Kranz persuaded D.C. officials to dub the creature *Capitalsaurus* and name the site *Capitalsaurus Court*.

In Maryland, the state's official dinosaur, *Astrodon johnstoni*, rules the day at Baltimore's Maryland Science Center, where a 67-foot-long model is on display. Visitors can also see such local relics as a cast of a tooth from an *Acrocanthosaurus* dinosaur. (The original is at

the natural history museum.) Thomas R. Lipka of Westminster discovered the original tooth and other fossils at a quarry in Muirkirk along "Dinosaur Alley," a stretch of land along Interstate 95 and U.S. Route 1 between Baltimore and Washington.

One of the first three dinosaur fossils ever reported in the United States was unearthed in Dinosaur Alley in 1858. The former iron mine is one of the only places on the East Coast where 115-million-year-old dinosaur fossils from the early Cretaceous Period can be found. And within the next decade, it's going to become a dinosaur dig park, the first of its kind on this coast. Most of the fossils pulled from its hills are small, but several months ago, amateur paleontologist Michael Styer of West Laurel discovered a 26-inch arm or leg bone at the pit.

No one knows what dino hunters will discover next, but you can get a peek at the future park and other fossil-rich formations by contacting the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Happy hunting.

— Barbara J. Saffir

To schedule an appointment to view fossil sites in Prince George's County, call Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission planner Eileen Nivera at 301-699-2522.

**Road Trip maps are available** at [www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip](http://www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip), as are addresses and hours of operation (be sure to check before you go). Have an idea for a trip? E-mail [roadtrip@washpost.com](mailto:roadtrip@washpost.com).

**WEDNESDAY IN STYLE** | Escapes uncovers the lesser-known tales of Antietam.

**Start here** (at the U.S. Capitol)

Watch 15 snarling life-size monsters in the stage production "**Walking With Dinosaurs — The Live Experience**," Sept. 19-22 at Verizon Center.

Check out the pint-size dino exhibit and take a free pontoon ride at **Bladensburg Waterfront Park**.

Paleontologist Peter Kranz takes kids and their parents on dinosaur fossil hunts in streambeds at **Acredale Community Park**.

Some of America's first dino fossils were discovered in a former iron mine behind the Visitor Center at the **Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center**.

At a former iron pit in Muirkirk, Smithsonian paleontologist Peter Kroehler and a volunteer dig up a 26-inch dinosaur bone, which was discovered several months ago by an amateur paleontologist. The site is slated to become the **East Coast's first dinosaur dig park**.

Use the free WiFi at the **Greene Turtle Sports Bar & Grille** to go online and buy dinosaur books and geological maps.

Meet Maryland's mammoth state dino and catch an Imax dinosaur movie at the **Maryland Science Center**.

Visit the dinosaur-size Maryland Food Center, where you can buy one crab for \$1 and slabs of fish at **Frank's Seafood** restaurant.

Workers unearthed an 11-inch fragment of a thighbone from a 10-ton dinosaur near **McMillan Reservoir** in May 1942.

Buy a toy dino now and return Nov. 15 for a three-month-long African dinosaur exhibit at the **National Geographic Society**.

Baby dinosaurs and their gargantuan parents reside in the Smithsonian Institution's **National Museum of Natural History**.

Washington's first dino fossil (a tailbone) was found in January 1898 on a block now dubbed **Capitalsaurus Court**.

MAP BY JEROME COOKSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; SMITHSONIAN PHOTO BY CHIP CLARK — SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY; OTHER PHOTOS BY BARBARA J. SAFFIR FOR THE WASHINGTON POST