SUE: The *T. rex* Experience

Exhibition Details

Size: 5,000 ft^2 (465 m^2)

Ceiling Height: 14 ft (4.27 m)

Content Specialists:

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The **core exhibition** features a new, fully articulated cast skeleton of SUE with added gastralia, full-scale replications, touchable models, mechanical and digital interactives, large media elements and videos—including a one-of-a-kind SUE light show—and a gallery-wide soundscape.

The optional **add-on package** contains four cases of real fossils from the Field Museum's collections—including real pieces of SUE and a *Triceratops* skull.

The Big Idea

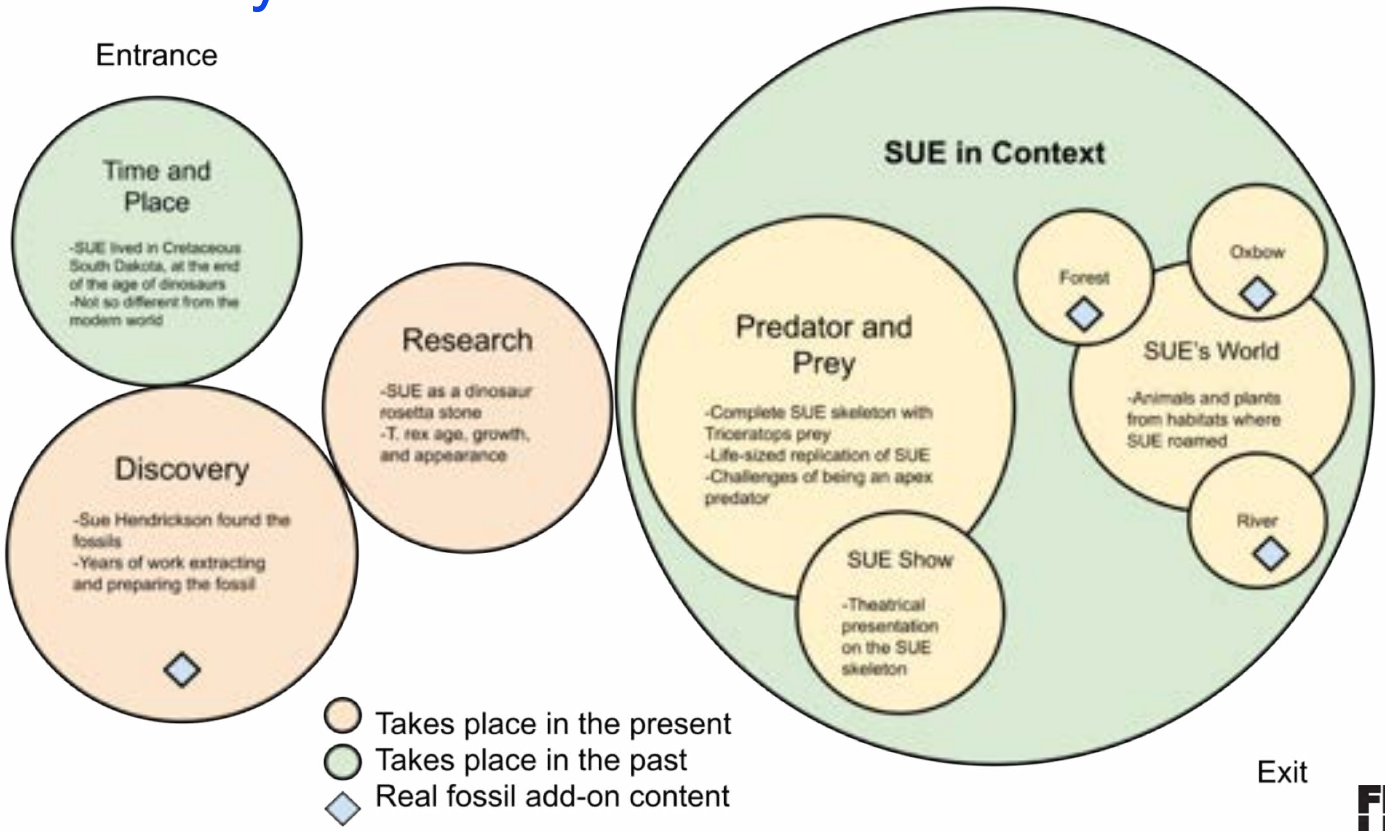
An extraordinary encounter with SUE the *T. rex*, apex predator of the Cretaceous world.

Encounter SUE—the most complete, best preserved *Tyrannosaurus rex* ever found—and the world SUE lived in. *SUE: The* T. rex *Experience* is a journey through Hell Creek, SUE's home and one of the most well-documented communities from the age of dinosaurs. Visitors will get to know SUE as an individual that lived a challenging and dangerous life, but survived to old age against the odds.

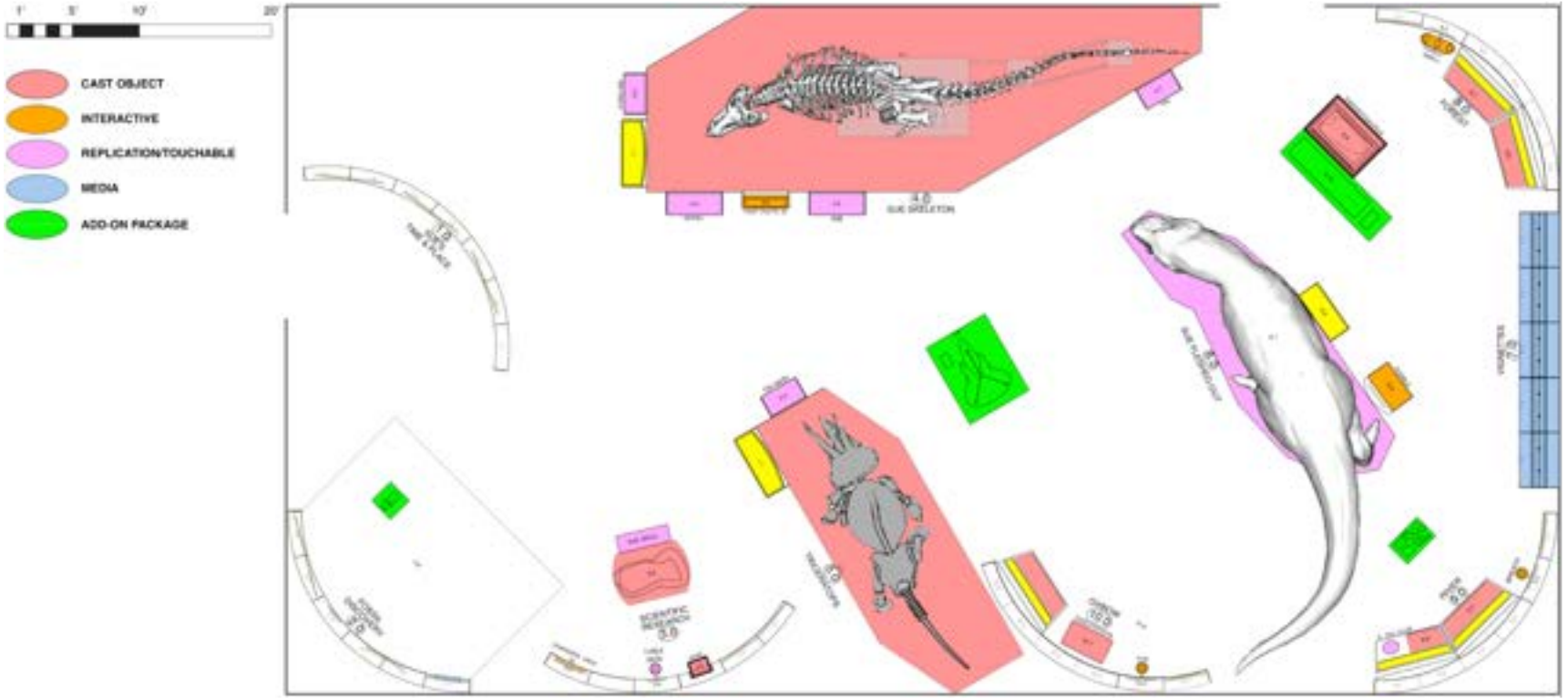
FIELD.

Exhibition Summary

The bubble sizes in this diagram represent the relative weight of sections in the experience.



Experience Map



Section 1: Time and Place


SJE
THE T.REX EXPERIENCE
Welcome to the world of Tyrannosaurus rex
Bienvenido al mundo del Tyrannosaurus rex
SJE
LA EXPERIENCIA T. REX

Visitors entering the exhibition encounter a large, detailed mural of a landscape teeming with life. This is Hell Creek, South Dakota: one of the best-understood ecosystems from the Age of Dinosaurs. Reigning over this world was SUE the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, an apex predator that impacted the entire community. Near the mural, visitors see punchy graphics that establish where and when SUE lived.

Section 1: Time and Place

- Newly commissioned mural of SUE’s world by artist Beth Zeiken
- Graphic introduction to time and place: timeline, map, etc.

Section 2: Fossil Discovery

Moving forward in the exhibition, visitors enter a paleontological excavation. Graphic panels tell the story of Susan Hendrickson’s discovery of SUE in modern-day South Dakota, and a large photo mural shows the Hell Creek Formation today. Visitors can trek across a life-sized reproduction of the hand-drawn map created at the SUE quarry, and inspect some of SUE’s fossilized bones.

Section 2: Fossil Discovery

- Life-sized quarry map on the floor
- *T. rex* discovery media piece
- Graphic timeline of SUE's journey

Section 3: Scientific Research


Studying SUE
Estudiando a SUE

In this section, visitors understand SUE's importance as a research specimen. As the most complete and best preserved *Tyrannosaurus rex* ever found, SUE is a rosetta stone for dinosaur biology. Visitors follow along with recent Field Museum research, including how fast *T. rex* grew up, how old SUE was at death, and why we currently think that *T. rex* had scales, not feathers. A touchable replica of SUE's skull as it was found lets visitors investigate the fossil in detail, including SUE's serrated teeth and holes in the jaw caused by a parasitic infection. Visitors can also test their knowledge with a digital quiz hosted by a quirky cartoon SUE.

Section 3: Scientific Research

- Crushed skull cast, as found in the field
- Baby and juvenile *T. rex* jaw casts
- *T. rex* skin touchable
- Quiz digital interactive
- Graphical overview of research on SUE

The final sections of the exhibition occupy the majority of the floorplan, and visitors can circulate through them freely. A naturalistic soundscape and shifting hall-wide lighting contribute to the dynamic, immersive experience.

Section 4: Predator and Prey

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a 40-foot cast of SUE's skeleton facing off against *T. rex*'s nemesis, *Triceratops*. Pairing SUE with *Triceratops* reinforces SUE's heroic persona: this individual survived longer than any other known *T. rex*, and did so while tangling with huge, imposing prey on a regular basis. Visitors can walk around both dinosaurs, and touch casts of SUE's bones. A digital interactive lets visitors explore 3D models of SUE's injured bones and see how the mounted skeleton has been updated according to new research. A life-sized replication of SUE stands nearby, with a small *Edmontosaurus* dangling from its jaws. Visitors can walk around and touch this detailed model.

Visitors who linger here will be treated to a narrated show. Illuminated bones on the skeleton and dramatic lighting tell SUE’s story: this was a top predator that lived a challenging and dangerous life, but survived to old age against the odds.

Section 4: Predator and Prey

- Cast of SUE skeleton
- Cast of *Triceratops* skeleton
- Narrated SUE light show
- SUE vs. *Edmontosaurus* fleshed-out replication

Section 4: Predator and Prey

- Bronze touchables
  - SUE miniature relief
  - SUE arm
  - SUE rib
  - SUE tail vertebra
  - *Triceratops* skin
- Digital rail

Section 5: SUE’s World


Dinosaurs flourish at the end of an Era
Flowers blossomed in hardwood forests
Small dinosaurs foraged among the trees


What lived in rivers and ponds?

Animated scenes of Cretaceous South Dakota play on a giant projection screen, imbuing the space with continuous life and movement. Extended periods of calm are punctuated by exciting moments of dinosaur action. Nearby, visitors can explore SUE's world in detail. Three displays representing the three locations depicted in the animations (forest, river, and oxbow) contain fossils from the animals and plants that lived there. In addition to dinosaurs large and small, visitors meet surprising oddities such as a paddlefish and the opossum-like *Didelphodon*. Visitors can investigate smell stations (a pleasant-smelling cedar forest contrasts with SUE's rancid breath), feel reproductions of dinosaur skin, and sense the infrasonic rumble of a vocalizing *T. rex* at a touch table.

Section 5: SUE's World - Forest

Newly evolved flowering plants changed the landscape—and the herbivores that ate them

Replications:

- *Edmontosaurus* skull cast
- *Pachycephalosaurus* skull cast
- *Anzu* jaw cast
- 3 plant fossil casts

Interactives: *T. rex* rumble table and forest smell station

Section 5: SUE’s World - River

Hell Creek was lush and wet, similar to the American southeast today

Replications:

- *Ankylosaurus* skull cast (touchable)
- Paddlefish and sturgeon fossil casts
- Turtle skull cast

Interactive: SUE’s breath smell station

Section 5: SUE’s World - Oxbow

The nearby inland sea influenced the landscape and fauna of SUE’s world

Replications:
- *Didelphodon* skeleton cast
- *Palaeosaniwa* jaw and arm bone casts
- Palm frond cast

Interactive: “*Didelphodon*” fur touchable

Add-On Package

Section 2: Fossil Discovery

Real pieces of SUE:

- “Float” fragments
- Sun-bleached rib

Section 5: SUE’s World - Forest

Edmontosaurus articulated tail and fossil leaf slab (“Edmonto-food”)

Section 5: SUE's World - River

Fossils found with SUE

- *Cobbania* and other plant fossils
- *Myledaphus* tooth
- *T. rex* tibia
- *Thescelosaurus* hip
- *Archeroraptor* tooth

Tiny fossils, big stories

- Crocodile armor
- Gar fish vertebra and scale
- Ornithomimid toe bone
- Turtle shell fragment
- Marsupial partial jaw

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Section 5: SUE's World - Oxbow

Triceratops skull

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