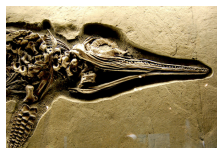


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



A dinosaur fossil in a Bern museum
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Expeditions

[World's Largest Dinosaur Grave Unearthed in China](#)

Thousands of fossils have already been excavated

The eastern Chinese province of Shandong is home to the world's largest mass dinosaur grave, as proven by the unbelievable number of fossils that have thus far been unearthed in more than 30 locations around the site. According to local authorities, more than 7,600 remains have been recovered from their rocky tomb and cataloged. The official Xinhua news agency made the announcement on Tuesday.

A 300-meter (980-ft) long trench near the city of Zhucheng, locally known as Dinosaur City, yielded the impressive archaeological findings. Scientists have thus far dug up numerous bones belonging to full skeletons, and have already discovered a species of hadrosaurus that is some 20-meter long, which is a world record for the species. Until now, paleontologists believed that these duck-billed dinosaurs had no potential of reaching this impressive size.

At this point in time all the dig sites are closed because of the harsh winter, but representatives in Beijing say that the digs will resume as soon as the snow melts and the weather allows for excavations. Despite the impressive number of fossils thus far unveiled, experts say that they have barely scratched the surface of the burial site's massive fossil reserve. There are yet no theories as to why such a large number of dinosaurs died there, or the reasons behind their bodies being so well preserved.

For years on end, China has been largely ignored by the archaeological community, for no apparent reason. However, there were digs throughout the country, done either by amateurs or by state professionals. With the graveyard at Zhucheng, this perception of the nation is bound to change, at least in the scientific circles.

Previous excavations that were done illegally also yielded valuable artifacts, which were smuggled out of the country and sent to private collectors around the world, who paid massive sums for them. Australia confiscated numerous such objects over the years, including dinosaur eggs hundreds of millions of years old. Australian authorities recently returned hundreds of kilograms of fossils to the Chinese government. These were recovered from various ports on the continent-island, in police sting operations.