

WYOMING LIFE

65 Million-Year-Old T-Rex From Wyoming To Be Auctioned, Could Fetch \$9 Million

A complete Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton sourced from three specimens unearthed in Wyoming and Montana - will be auctioned in Switzerland next month. A Wyoming paleontologist said there's no telling what price a fossil like that might fetch but its estimated worth is \$9 million.



Wendy Corr

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Three fearsome Tyrannosaurus rexes died about 65 million years ago somewhere near the border of what is now Wyoming and Montana.

The remains of those three “kings of the tyrant lizards” unearthed between 2008 and 2013 from the Hell Creek and

Zurich, Switzerland, on April 18.

The fossil, which towers 12.8 feet high, is reportedly “one of the most spectacular T-rex skeletons in existence, a well-preserved and brilliantly restored fossil,” according to the auction house, which values the specimen at \$6.5 million to \$8.7 million.



Close-ups of Trinity, a complete T-rex built from the discovery of three dinosaur fossils in Wyoming and Montana. (Photos Courtesy of Koller)

Priceless

Dr. Scott Persons is a research paleontologist at the Paleon Museum in Glenrock who told Cowboy State Daily that it's hard to place a monetary value on a specimen such as Trinity.

“It's no secret that Tyrannosaur fossils have historically carried a particularly high price because they've just got the ability to capture the imagination,” Persons said.

The three fossils that make up the complete skeleton up for auction come from an area that has produced other significant T-rex skeletons that have fetched millions of dollars at other sales. “Sue” sold for \$8.4 million in 1997 and “Stan” was sold for a record price of \$31.8 million at Christie's in 2020.

Persons said that because the Tyrannosaurus rex was the apex predator of its environment, it's difficult to even find a complete one.

"If you went back 66 million years ago, and you went on a prehistoric safari, you would probably count yourself very lucky if you managed to actually see a Tyrannosaurus, the same way we would count ourselves lucky if we happened to see a mountain lion or a grizzly bear today," he said.

A 2021 study in the scientific journal Nature indicated that only 32 skeletons of adult T-rex have been found worldwide. Persons said he isn't surprised that the skeleton for auction is a composite of multiple individual specimens.

"It's actually extremely rare to find a fully 100% complete, articulated Tyrannosaurus," he said.



(Photo Courtesy of Koller)

Appeal Of The T-Rex

"Of course, Tyrannosaurus is one of the most exciting dinosaurs out there," said Persons, who pointed out that even more than their dramatic appearance, the scientific value of a T-Rex fossil is priceless.

Public Vs. Private Ownership

Persons expressed his opinion that it would be better for society as a whole if Trinity would be sold to a museum rather than a private owner.

“There’s no question that we’d be better off if the skeleton winds up going into a public institution,” he said, “where it can both be appreciated by anyone that comes to visit and where it can also be studied by any qualified researcher.”

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