

## PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE ANNOUNCES ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THE STORY OF OUR ANCIENT ANCESTORS WITH WORLD EXCLUSIVE EXHIBITION – *ORIGINS: FOSSILS FROM THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND*

*Public can experience “one of the greatest fossil discoveries of the past half century\*\*” when the specimens depart South Africa for a five-month engagement this fall in Dallas, Texas*



*Australopithecus sediba* skull, photo: Brett Eloff, courtesy of University of the Witwatersrand

**DALLAS (July 18, 2019)** – The Perot Museum of Nature and Science, in partnership with the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University) and the National Geographic Society, proudly announces fossils of two recently discovered ancient human relatives (*Australopithecus sediba* and *Homo naledi*) will come to the U.S. from South Africa this fall for the first, and likely only, time to be featured in the limited-run exhibition – *ORIGINS: FOSSILS FROM THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND*.

This exhibition will mark the first time that ancient hominin fossils have traveled for public display since “Lucy” (*Australopithecus afarensis*) between 2007 and 2013.

Discovered in 2008 by then nine-year-old Matthew Berger, *Australopithecus sediba* were some of the most complete hominin skeletons known in the fossil record at the time. Just five years later, the first fossils of another new ancient relative, *Homo naledi* (formally described in 2015), were dramatically unearthed in South Africa by a Wits University team including the Perot Museum’s Dr. Becca Peixotto, director and research scientist of the *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey*. Together, these two remarkable discoveries provide further evidence for the complex and nuanced processes of human evolution.

“As humans, we are innately compelled to explore and understand our origins, and this exhibition provides an extraordinary and historic opportunity to come face-to-face with two newly discovered species of our ancient human relatives,” said Dr. Linda Silver, Eugene McDermott Chief Executive Officer of the Perot Museum. “The fossils featured in *ORIGINS* have never been displayed outside South Africa – and probably never will be again. The Perot Museum is honored to host the exclusive exhibition of these significant specimens and thrilled to have our scientists involved in their actual discovery.”

*ORIGINS: FOSSILS FROM THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND* will bring to life years of scientific research tied to the Perot Museum’s recently launched *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey*, a global hub for education, communication and research in the study of human origins. The exhibition will also showcase the collaboration and dedication demonstrated by a diverse, multinational scientific team of women and men, led by world-renowned paleoanthropologist and National Geographic Explorer-at-Large, Professor Lee Berger of Wits University. Berger also serves as the distinguished science advisor for the Perot Museum’s *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey*.

“Today’s announcement represents years of work by so many dedicated scientists and demonstrates a remarkable collaboration between the Perot Museum, Wits University, National Geographic Society, and numerous government and cultural entities within South Africa,” said Berger. “We are eager to have a chance to share these findings – which shape our understanding of our early origins – with the people of Texas and the world.”

The Perot Museum’s partnership with Wits University, the official custodian of the fossils, will increase research, cultivate scientific communication and maximize accessibility around the world through projects that strengthen international scientific and academic cooperation.

The National Geographic Society partnership will help tell the story by providing photographs, maps, illustrations, graphics and videos of the historic discoveries.

The Perot Museum will present *ORIGINS* from Oct. 19, 2019 - March 22, 2020. Further details on the fossils’ journey from South Africa to Dallas, the exhibition experience and how to purchase tickets will be shared in the coming months. For more information, and to keep up to date on future developments, visit [perotmuseum.org/press](http://perotmuseum.org/press). The Perot Museum is located at 2201 N. Field Street in Dallas, Texas. For details, visit [perotmuseum.org](http://perotmuseum.org) or call 214-428-5555.

***NOTE: To obtain the news release, Perot Museum fact sheet, photos and more, please go to [perotmuseum.org/press](http://perotmuseum.org/press).***

*\*Reference courtesy of the National Geographic Society*

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**About the Perot Museum of Nature and Science.** *The top cultural attraction in Dallas/Fort Worth and a Michelin Green Guide three-star destination, the Perot Museum of Nature and Science is a nonprofit educational organization located in the heart of Dallas, Texas. With a mission to inspire minds through nature and science, the Perot Museum delivers exciting, engaging and innovative visitor and outreach experiences through its education, exhibition, and research and collections programming for children, students, teachers, families and life-long learners. The 180,000-square-foot facility in Victory Park opened in December 2012 and is now recognized as the symbolic gateway to the Dallas Arts District. Future scientists, mathematicians and engineers will find inspiration and enlightenment through 11 permanent exhibit halls on five floors of public space; a children’s museum; a state-of-the art traveling exhibition hall; and The Hogle Foundation Theater. Designed by 2005 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Thom Mayne and his firm Morphosis Architects, the Victory Park museum has been lauded for its artistry and sustainability. To learn more, please visit [perotmuseum.org](http://perotmuseum.org)*

**About the National Geographic Society.** *The National Geographic Society is a global nonprofit organization that uses the power of science, exploration, education and storytelling to illuminate the wonder of the world, define critical challenges and catalyze action to protect our planet. Since 1888, National Geographic has pushed the boundaries of exploration, investing in bold people and transformative ideas, providing more than 14,000 grants for work across all seven continents, reaching 3 million students each year through education offerings, and engaging audiences around the globe through signature convenings and content. To learn more, visit [nationalgeographic.org](http://nationalgeographic.org).*

**About the University of the Witwatersrand.** *Wits University is a research-intensive University, one of the leading institutions on the African continent that produces world-class research that is locally relevant and globally competitive. Wits is a global leader in the paleosciences, one of its key research areas. Wits’ research output has increased by over 45% in the last four years with more than 85% of its research published in international journals. Wits offers a free space for the exchange of ideas and a vibrant intellectual community that fosters debate and knowledge transfer both within and beyond our lecture halls. Wits’ latest research available at [wits.ac.za/research](http://wits.ac.za/research).*

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