



Museum of Nature and Science

**TICKETS NOW ON SALE FOR PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE'S
WORLD-EXCLUSIVE EXHIBITION – ORIGINS: FOSSILS FROM THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND –
OPENING OCT. 19**

*General public can now secure tickets to experience “one of the greatest fossil discoveries of the past half century**” for one time only in Dallas*



Skulls of Australopithecus sediba (left) and Homo naledi (right), photo: Brett Eloff, courtesy of University of the Witwatersrand

DALLAS (Sept. 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 that tickets for the limited-run exhibition – ***Origins: Fossils from the Cradle of Humankind*** – are now available for purchase online at origins.perotmuseum.org. The exhibition, which runs Oct. 19, 2019 through March 22, 2020, will feature the fossils of two recently discovered ancient human relatives, *Australopithecus sediba* and *Homo naledi*.

Origins will mark the first and likely only time these fossils will be on display in the U.S. and will be the first time that ancient hominin fossils have been transported for public display in North America since “Lucy” (*Australopithecus afarensis*) toured the US between 2007 and 2013.

The bilingual (English and Spanish), 5,000-square-foot exhibition will tell the stories of these amazing discoveries, from a young boy’s stumbling upon the first specimen of *Au. sediba*, to the breathtaking journey of six female scientists – dubbed the “underground astronauts” – who excavated the bones of *H. naledi* from a deep and dangerously narrow cave complex in the Rising Star Cave System near Johannesburg, South Africa.

Acclaimed paleoanthropologist, University of the Witwatersrand Phillip Tobias Chair in Human Origins and National Geographic Explorer at Large, Professor Lee Berger, led the groundbreaking discoveries of both *Au. sediba* (2008) and *H. naledi* (2015) that have provided further evidence for the complex and nuanced processes of human evolution.

“Origins: Fossils from the Cradle of Humankind will be a historic opportunity to explore our shared human history by coming face-to-face with the actual fossils of our ancient ancestors,” said Dr. Linda Silver, Eugene McDermott Chief Executive Officer of the Perot Museum. “The Perot Museum of Nature and Science is proud to be part of the discovery story that is shaping our understanding of the roots of humanity. We are committed to facilitating dialogue about and sharing the latest research on human origins, as well as other topics of global importance.”

Origins will bring to life years of scientific research and dynamic partnerships tied to the Perot Museum’s recently launched *Center for the Exploration of the Human Journey*, a global hub for education, communication and research dissemination in the study of human origins, for which Berger serves as Distinguished Science Advisor. The Perot Museum’s partnership with Wits University, the official custodian of the fossils, cultivates projects that strengthen international scientific and academic cooperation.

“It is our pleasure to share these South African national treasures with the people of Texas and the rest of the world. Science should have no boundaries, and our collective knowledge should be made available to the entire human community,” said Professor Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Wits University. “These fossils are evidence of our common origins, and the research and knowledge thereof must transcend boundaries so that they mark a path to a collective future defined by human solidarity. Our partnership with the Perot Museum is built in this spirit, and we look forward to enhancing it in the coming years.”

In the exhibition, guests will have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view the newly discovered fossil skeletons of *Au. sediba* and *H. naledi* and encounter a first-ever, hyper-realistic, life-size sculpture of *H. naledi*. Captivating National Geographic photos of the South African caves located in the heart of the Cradle of Humankind UNESCO World Heritage Site will be on display, as well as an interactive “challenge” illustrating how scientists must fit into tiny spaces to reach underground bones like those of *H. naledi*.

“National Geographic has been instrumental in funding research on human origins for decades,” said Kathryn Keane, Vice President for Public Experiences at the National Geographic Society. “Lee Berger’s unprecedented discoveries, over many years, have greatly advanced our understanding of the story of humanity.”

The exhibition will also feature a simulated excavation site that will provide an immersive, hands-on experience for visitors of all ages and abilities to role-play using the same ground-penetrating technology that paleoanthropologists and archaeologists rely upon for fossil exploration. The final gallery will transport visitors to southern Africa with a display of native animal taxidermy, including a rare white rhinoceros, cheetah, African lion, spotted hyena and klipspringer.

A glass-encased visiting scholar lab within the exhibition will provide research access to the fossils for scientists who might not otherwise have an opportunity to study them – and guests will enjoy a rare opportunity to view this research in real time. The Museum will also create professional exchange and development opportunities for early career scientists from Africa and across the world.

Additionally, a special *Treasures of southern Africa* display will celebrate the various discoveries and innovations of the lower continent, including the world-class research center at Wits University and other African contributions. A variety of items – such as a sculpture gifted to President Bush by President Nelson Mandela, on loan from the George W. Bush Presidential Center, a fossil of an Early Triassic *Thrinaxodon*, rock art and exquisite garments inspired by both modern red-carpet fashions and traditional Basotho blankets – will be showcased throughout the Museum.

Origins: Fossils from the Cradle of Humankind is presented by Highland Capital Management (the 2019-2020 Premier Partner of the Perot Museum) and supported locally by the Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District.

HOURS. General hours of operation for the Perot Museum are 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Sunday.

TICKETS. Museum general admission is \$20 for adults (13-64), \$13 for youth (2-12) and \$18 for seniors (65+). Museum general admission is free for members. Children under two are always free. **ORIGINS: FOSSILS FROM THE CRADLE OF HUMANKIND** requires a surcharge of \$10 for adults (13-64) and seniors (65+), \$8 for youth (2-12) and free for children under two. Member tickets are \$7 for all age levels. **Tickets to Origins are timed entry and available on a first-come, first-served basis. To avoid sell outs, visitors are strongly encouraged to purchase advanced tickets at origins.perotmuseum.org.**

The Perot Museum is located at 2201 N. Field Street in Dallas, Texas. Museum general admission is free for members. For ticket information, parking maps and other details visit 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.

**Reference courtesy of the National Geographic Society*

###

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*

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 palaeosciences, one of its key research areas. Wits' research output has increased by over 50% in the last five 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 its lecture halls. Wits' latest research available at wits.ac.za/research.*

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.*

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Edelman for Perot Museum of Nature and Science
Tori Cox: 1-405-808-2327
PerotMuseumPress@edelman.com

Schalk Mouton, Wits University
+27 11 717 1017
schalk.mouton1@wits.ac.za