

# Fossilized field trip

Fryxell Museum will leave kids wide-eyed



Leslie Klipsch

The 22-foot long skeleton of Cryolophosaurus greets Fryxell Geology Museum-goers at the door.

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

It's spring-break season in the Quad-Cities and many of us are looking for new and exciting ways to entertain our children or grandchildren. After a recent visit to the Fryxell Geology Museum with my husband and three young children, I can assure you of one thing: Augustana College's Fryxell Museum is a Quad-Cities gem.

According to museum literature, the Fryxell houses one of the largest and finest collections of rocks, minerals and fossils in the Midwest. Used originally as a teaching resource for Augustana geology students, the museum now serves a varied audience including curious community members, students of art and natural design, and groups of children eager to learn about the development of life-forms and the formation of rocks and minerals.

On an overcast Saturday afternoon, my family was delighted to walk through the unassuming doors of Swenson Hall and be greeted by the complete 22-foot long skeleton of Cryolophosaurus, which is a large, crested, carnivorous dinosaur discovered in Antarctica in 1991 by Augustana paleontologist Dr. William Hammer. Though much smaller than the dinosaur skeletons you might see at Chicago's Field Museum or New York's Museum of Natural History, to a small child this complete fossil is astounding — as was



evidenced by the fascinated gaze of my 3-year-old daughter.

Another highlight is the state-of-the-art fluorescent mineral display. Tucked away at the back of the museum, the display tickled my 6- and 8-year-old as all five of us crowded behind the thick black curtain and watched the wondrous fluorescent minerals come to life in all of their bright and vibrant hues.



We were perhaps equally thrilled by the two billion year old fossil simply resting next to a display case. The Fryxell is small, but such interesting encounters made for a nice afternoon of family fun.

The museum is named after Dr. Fritiof Fryxell who joined the faculty of Augustana College in 1924 and began to expand the geology curriculum and establish a geology museum from material culled from the natural history collections. Susan Wolf, associate curator and educational programs coordinator, said that today the museum is used as a teaching resource for the college's geology courses. Though most exhibits remain the same, she says that staff is always "bolstering the collection with new specimens being added to the exhibits frequently."

In addition, the museum is open to the public and offers free educational programming



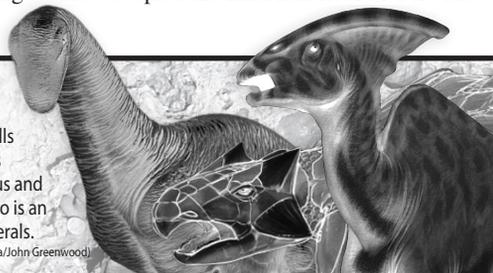
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Sintayehu Klipsch, age 3, holds the card she chose for the museum's fossil and mineral hunt.

for schools and organizations through Augustana's student-teaching community outreach. Such access and education promotes earth science awareness and an understanding of the Earth's history, perhaps bringing to life what Dr. Fryxell once said, "True appreciation of landscape comes only when one is alive to both its beauty and its meaning."

## My favorites

I enjoyed the display of precious stones and intricate fossils, but the highlight of our adventure was the fossil and mineral hunt that occupied the final half hour of our visit.

**ON DISPLAY**



According to the Fryxell Geology Museum's website, the fossil collection includes a Tylosaurus skeleton and skulls of Parasaurolophus (left), Ankylosaurus (middle), Apatosaurus (right), Allosaurus and Tyrannosaurus Rex (page 32). There also is an impressive collection of rocks and minerals.

(Photos and illustrations by iStockphoto/Wikipedia/Chris Srnka/John Greenwood)

The kids drew cards with pictures of items from the museum's collection from a wooden box and then searched the museum for its real-life match. While I love the high-tech gadgetry and highly interactive, computerized features of many modern museums, I appreciate the charm of the simple treasure hunt offered at the Fryxell. Thanks to the size of the museum, kids can scavenge independently and find great pride as they unearth their ancient plunder. Parents and grandparents can guide, observe and delight in their children's journey of discovery.

### Ms. Wolf's Favorites

"I continue to marvel at not only the remarkable formation and preservation of rocks, minerals and fossils, but also the remarkable beauty of our natural world and its specimens," Ms. Wolf replied when asked what she loves about the museum. She believes a visit to the Fryxell Geology Museum allows you to take a walk through Earth's history and come away with an understanding and appreciation for not only the art and science of geology, but also the beauty and wonders of the world.

### Why you should go

Not only did I enjoy watching my

children examine the skull of a Tyrannosaurus Rex and gape at an original Macintosh computer, but simply being on a college campus prompted entertaining conversation about the big, bright future. As we strolled the grounds outside of the museum and soaked up the Augustana atmosphere, my 8-year-old declared a theater major, while my 6-year-old revealed his dream of becoming a taste-tester.

### When you should go

Normal museum hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays during the academic school year (820 38th St., Rock Island, 309-794-7318). Admission is free and the website is [augustana.edu/fryxellmuseum](http://augustana.edu/fryxellmuseum). Several times throughout the year, The Fryxell Geology Museum is open at night in conjunction with Augustana's John Deere Planetarium open houses.

Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — the unique people, businesses and trends — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and their three young children, and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer.

