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# PAUL SERENO

## Paleontologist, Archaeologist, Explorer

Professor, University of Chicago  
Associate Professor, University of Niamey  
National Geographic Explorer

“I see my science as *adventure with a purpose.*”

[Paul Sereno](#) grew up in Naperville, a suburb of Chicago, and studied art and biology as an undergraduate at Northern Illinois University. A behind-the-scenes tour at the American Museum of Natural History in New York opened his eyes to a life of travel, adventure, science and art . . . and an entrée into public engagement that could make a difference to others.

Sereno earned a doctorate from Columbia University studying dinosaur fossils in far-flung collections in Asia and in 1987 joined the faculty of the University of Chicago, where he founded the [Fossil Lab](#).

Discoverer of dinosaurs on five continents and leader of dozens of expeditions, Sereno’s field work began in the foothills of the Andes in Argentina, where his team discovered the first dinosaurs to roam the supercontinent Pangaea some 230 million years ago, including dog-sized *Eoraptor* ("dawn raptor") and *Eodromaesus* ("dawn runner").

Later, on expeditions to Asia, Sereno unveiled the India's first predatory dinosaur skull, *Rajasaurus* (“princely reptile”). In a remote corner of the Gobi Desert in Inner Mongolia, he discovered a herd of ornithomimid dinosaurs that died in their tracks, mired in mud 90 million years ago.

Starting in the early 1990's, Sereno's expeditions began to focus on Africa's lost worlds of Jurassic and Cretaceous age. On intrepid expeditions into the heart of the Sahara, Sereno’s teams excavated more than 100 tons of fossils, bringing to light a menagerie of new species including long-necked herbivores like *Nigersaurus* (“Niger reptile”), meat-eaters like *Afrovenator* (“African hunter”) and *Rugops* (“rough face”), and bizarre huge-clawed, fish-eaters *Suchomimus* (“crocodile mimic”) and a scimitar-crested species of *Spinosaurus* ("spined reptile"). Other discoveries include a pterosaur (winged reptile) with a 15-foot wingspan and skulls and skeletons of the world's largest crocodylian, the 35-foot-long “SuperCroc” (*Sarcosuchus*).

In 2000 Sereno discovered the remarkable archeological site Gobero in the Sahara. Predating the pyramids at a time of the “Green Sahara,” the inhabitants thrived on perch and shellfish while avoiding resident crocodiles, hippos and elephants. He excavated more than 100 burials, among them one with intertwined skeletons of a mother and two children dubbed the “Stone Age Embrace.”

Sereno founded [Scitopia Chicago](#), a novel science center on the south side of the city, and [NigerHeritage](#), an international foundation supporting scholarship in archaeology and paleontology and the development of museums in Niger.

The author of stories in *National Geographic* and *Natural History* and the subject of many documentaries, Sereno’s recognition includes *Chicago Tribune's* Teacher of the Year award (1993), *Chicago* magazine’s Chicagoan of the Year (1996), *Newsweek's* The Century Club (1997), *People's* 50 Most Beautiful People (1997), *Esquire's* 100 Best People in the World (1997), Boston Museum of Science’s Walker Prize for extraordinary contributions in paleontology (1997), Columbia University’s University Medal for Excellence (1999), the Roy Chapman Andrews Society’s Distinguished Explorer (2009), and the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (2009).

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