

---

# 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. 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 he discovered the first dinosaurs to roam the supercontinent Pangaea some 230 million years ago, including dog-sized *Eoraptor* (“dawn raptor”) and *Eodromaeus* (“dawn runner”).

On expeditions to Asia, Sereno unveiled India's first predatory dinosaur skull, *Rajasaurus* (“princely reptile”). 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 centered on unearthing Africa's lost worlds of Jurassic and Cretaceous age, excavating more than 100 tons of fossils that brought to light a menagerie of new species. These include long-necked herbivores like *Nigersaurus* (“Niger reptile”) and bizarre huge-clawed, fish-eaters like *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 archaeological 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 is a National Geographic Explorer, subject of many documentaries, and author of several stories in *National Geographic* magazine. He 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.

---