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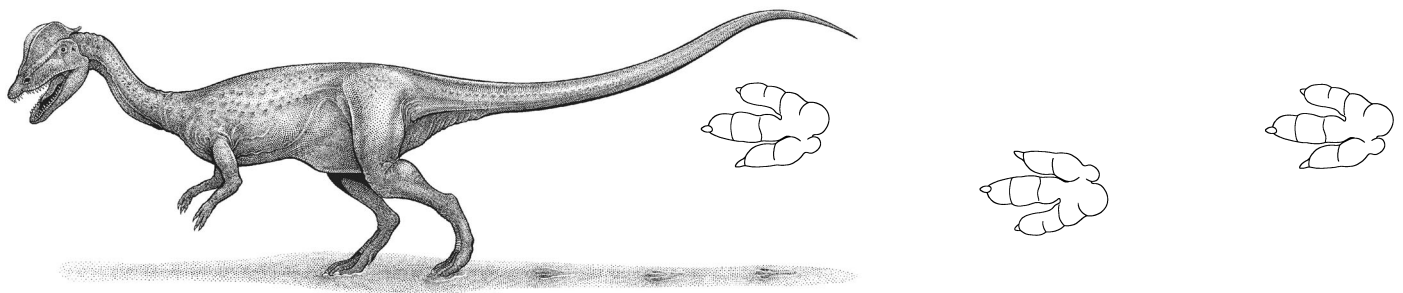
# St. George Dinosaur Tracksite

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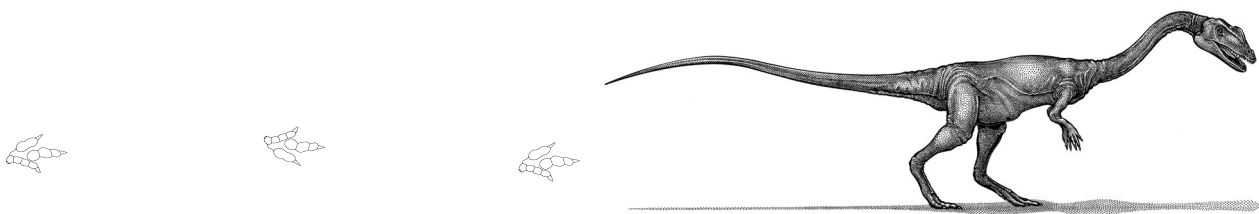
This world-class dinosaur tracksite was discovered in February 2000 about one mile east of downtown St. George in southwestern Utah. Over 1,000 tracks have been discovered so far within a 10-acre area. The tracks were discovered by Sheldon Johnson while leveling land on his Riverside Drive property. As he began moving large blocks of sandstone, he discovered bumps on their undersides that he recognized as dinosaur tracks. The tracks proved to be nearly perfectly preserved casts of footprints of some of the oldest Jurassic dinosaurs in Utah.

This stunning tracksite includes details of claw marks, dew claws, foot pads, and skin impressions. In one trackway, a tail drag is evident. Ancient crocodile tracks, mud cracks, and diamond-shaped salt casts are also preserved at this site. Nearby, fossil plants and fish have been found.

Most of the three-toed prints are 13 to 18 inches long (track name *Eubrontes*) and were made by a large, meat-eating dinosaur. These dinosaurs could grow as large as 19 feet long and 6½ feet tall and weigh 900 pounds. Other tracks include those of a slender, meat-eating dinosaur with prints 4 to 8 inches long (track name *Grallator*).



*The larger dinosaur is thought to be similar to the Dilophosaurus.*



*The smaller dinosaur may be similar to the Megapnosaurus.*

## **Ancient lake environment**

These dinosaurs were congregating on the shores of a lake about 200 million years ago (Early Jurassic time). The lake, with large fish that the dinosaurs probably ate, and its shore with edible plants, must have been a good habitat for these dinosaurs as several episodes of track making are evident.

## **How the tracks formed and were preserved**

During times when the water levels dropped on the shallow lake shores, the animals walked in the mud along the shore, leaving footprints that then filled in with silt and sand – all of which later hardened into stone. Thus, many of the tracks are preserved as bumps (natural casts) instead of impressions. The track casts are mostly found on the

underside of a sandstone layer that overlies the mudstone in which the tracks were formed. The sandstone and mudstone are both in a rock unit called the Moenave Formation.

## Current Status

This valuable scientific and educational site is now protected from the elements (with a shelter) and preserved, thanks to the Johnson family with help from others. The family donated the tracks to the city of St. George in order to continue the site's preservation status and accessibility to the public and scientists. Future plans include building a climate-controlled shelter and a museum. As of August, 2002, more than 400,000 people from every state and over 80 nations have visited the site.

Currently, the site is open every day, although hours vary. For information, call the St. George Leisure Services at 435-634-5860, or the Washington Travel and Convention Bureau at 435-634-5747.



*Close view of the large dinosaur's track cast.*



*A trackway cast.*

