BIG THRILLS AT THE OREGON ZOO

Dino exhibit's lifelike ferocity

Chilling prehistoric roars reverberate over lush rain-forest canopies as the Oregon Zoo takes visitors back millions of years with its summer blockbuster exhibit, "Dinosaurs!" presented by Wells Fargo.

The outdoor experience opens Saturday and runs through Labor Day.

Zoo visitors follow a trail through an ancient rain forest, surrounded by life-size animatronic dinosaurs that roar, snarl and move with realistic ferocity. Along the way, massive footprints signal the proximity of the most fearsome prehistoric predator of all: Tyrannosaurus rex. The path also features activity stations with fossil digs, photo-opportunity spots and identification posts geared to all ages.

Among the 25 animatronic creatures on display, visitors discover a total of 14 species -- from the impressive brachiosaurus and the fierce T. rex, to the 2-foot-tall compsognathus and the flying pteranodon. Young visitors may prefer the slow-moving herbivore species, along with several animatronic baby dinosaurs and dinosaur egg nests.

Each of the dinosaurs is built on a steel frame and covered with intricately painted foam-rubber skin. State-of-the-art electronics and air pistons power the dinosaurs' grasping hands, menacing claws and gnashing teeth.

Strategically placed alternative paths lead parents with younger visitors to activity stations, where they learn what these giants ate, how they cared for their young, what their relationships to other animals were like, possible reasons they became extinct and more.

Admission is $4 plus regular zoo admission of $9.75 for adults, $8.25 for seniors and $6.75 for children. Infants 2 and under are free.

Chendra, the Asian elephant, welcomes 45-foot-long Tyrannosaurus rex to the Oregon Zoo's elephant yard.

Dinosaur Keeper Forrest Jonson bravely unloads a dangerous megalosaurus at the Oregon Zoo. Megalosaurus and many other dinosaurs will stalk zoo visitors when the summer-long exhibit opening Saturday.