

# Hunt for dino bones in museum with an app

It gives facts on parts of dinosaurs, allows visitors to take selfie with one

By **AUDREY TAN**

THE lair of three rare dinosaurs opens to the public today, after more than five years in the making.

Guests to the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum in Kent Ridge will not only get to see the genuine fossils of the three diplodocid sauropod dinosaur stars – Prince, Apollonia and Twinky – but also get the chance to “hunt” for bones.

But instead of a hammer and chisel, aspiring palaeontologists (fossil scientists) need only a mobile application called App-ollonia, a play on Apollonia’s name.

Developed by Singapore software firm mgg software, App-ollonia is free for download on iOS and Android devices.

Using the app, museum visitors must first “collect” four of Apollonia’s bones – its skull, fibula (lower leg bone), cervical vertebra (neck bone) and coracoid (a bone near the shoulder blade).

This is achieved by using the app’s camera function to scan the QR codes placed around the biodiversity gallery on the first floor of the museum. The QR codes show where the bones are hidden.

The app also provides interesting facts about a particular bone when a QR code is detected. For



Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum visitors can view fossils of three diplodocid sauropod dinosaurs – (from left) Twinky, Apollonia and Prince (behind) – and collect Apollonia’s bones using an app, App-ollonia. mgg software managing director Steven Tan (right) says the app helps make a visitor’s trip fun. PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

instance, those who “collect” the fibula will learn that it is the part of the skeleton from which palaeontologists take samples to determine a dinosaur’s age.

“This app helps make the experience fun and interactive, and gives visitors more information about the different parts of the dinosaur,” said mgg software man-

aging director Steven Tan, 49.

After all the bones are collected, visitors can scan a QR code in the museum’s brochure to watch Apollonia come to life. They can also take a selfie with a preloaded image of Apollonia.

“The dino app is a good souvenir that visitors can take home, and it’s free,” said museum re-

search associate Martyn Low, 33. “I remember just flipping through dinosaur books when I was young. This is fantastic – the dinosaur actually moves in front of you.”

The three dinosaurs, which were discovered in Wyoming in the United States, are a few of the largest creatures to roam the earth 150 million years ago. Apol-



lonia, the second largest of the trio at 24m long, was chosen as the app’s model because its skeleton has more bones than 12m-long Twinky, which was the first to arrive in Singapore. Apollonia arrived before 27m-long Prince.

The \$200,000 app was created for the museum pro-bono. Said Mr Tan: “I was very touched and impressed by the museum’s work to preserve natural history. So I decided that... we will also do our part to donate to our country.”

The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum is also launching its own website to give more details about the exhibits.

The website is still in the beta version, but is accessible at <http://lknhm.nus.edu.sg/webME>.

NUS Environmental Studies undergraduate Song Lin, 22, said: “The dino app seems like a good way to interact with lifeless artefacts.”

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