

Jurassic Fact File

Allosaurus

This dinosaur is a close relative of one of the most famous of them all – *Tyrannosaurus rex* – and like him, it was a large two-legged carnivorous beast.

Predatory body plan

Allosaurus had a massive body which was heavily muscled, and the two front legs were equipped with sharp 15cm long talons for ripping flesh. The big serrated teeth were held in a skull that was over a metre long, but strangely delicate. It is possible that the skull had ‘hinges’ in the jaws – like those of modern snakes – that would have allowed *Allosaurus* to swallow larger chunks of prey than other dinosaurs. The skulls of *Allosaurus* have another strange feature – they have bony lumps on the top, and thin ridges above the eyes. They might have used these to signal to each other, or to help recognise individuals.

Hunting and social behaviour

Most skeletons of *Allosaurus* have been found in North America, and it is by far the most common predator of its time. It may be that some of these dinosaurs lived together in family groups, helping each other by hunting in packs to bring down some of the enormous herbivores of the day, such as *Brachiosaurus*. Other *Allosaurus* skeletons have been found amongst the remains of *Stegosaurus* – was this their favourite meal?