

Sydney's Huge 'Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs' Exhibition Will Feature the Sarcophagus of Ramses II

The royal coffin rarely leaves Egypt, but it has been given permission to travel Down Under to display at the Australian Museum.



By Sarah Ward OCTOBER 24, 2023

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How do you make a blockbuster ancient Egypt exhibition even bigger? At the Australian Museum's upcoming *Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs*, adding the royal coffin that provided the resting place for the showcase's namesake will do the trick. Already set to feature more than 181 rare artefacts and treasures, the Sydney event has now confirmed that the sarcophagus of Ramses II will also be on display Down Under — giving audiences a rare treat.

It isn't often that the coffin is permitted to leave Egypt; however, it will head to the Harbour City after also recently displaying at the exhibition's stop in Paris. When that happens, Sydney will become just the second city in the world outside of Egypt to show the 3000-plus-year-old item.



"The beautiful sarcophagus of Ramses II will be the star attraction in the *Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs* exhibition and is a wonderful opportunity for Australian audiences to see this rare, fragile artefact in real life," said Australian Museum Director and CEO Kim McKay AO.

"Ramses' coffin is a work of inestimable value and a powerful symbol of one of the greatest leaders of the ancient world. Egyptians worshipped their pharaohs, and their devotion to Ramses II can be seen through the craftsmanship of the coffin."

"The coffin of Ramses II was one of the most popular objects in *Ramses & The Gold of the Pharaohs* in Paris, so we anticipate Australian audiences will find this priceless artefact equally enthralling. Shown in Australia for the very first time, *Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs* and the extraordinary loan of the coffin direct from Egypt, highlights how dynamic international relationships develop across the globe," added World Heritage Exhibitions CEO John Norman.



This piece of history is carved from cedar, and discovered with the pharaoh's body more than two centuries ago, in 1811 within the Royal Cache at Deir el-Bahari.

If you need a reminder on your Egyptian history, Ramses II ruled over the country from 1279–1213 BCE. When Saturday, November 18 rolls around this year, a collection of items from the pharaoh's rule will gleam in Australia, as first announced back in 2021 — including animal mummies, royal masks, jewellery, amulets and other golden items from the ruler's tomb, plus now Ramses II's coffin.



Focusing on Egypt's third pharaoh from its 19th dynasty — a ruler also known as Ramses the Great, who enjoyed the second-longest reign of any pharaoh, and is considered a symbol of the country's prosperous ancient New Kingdom period — the overall showcase is set to be big. The Australian Museum has dubbed it the largest cultural collection Down Under in more than a decade, in fact. While the hefty number of objects featured is impressive, so is their rare status; some of the pieces included haven't ever left Egypt before.

Bringing a slice of history to Australia's shores, *Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs* will be filled with items from museums and historical sites in Egypt, which are being loaned to the exhibition by Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities. Also included: letting attendees enter two of the ruler's monuments — the Tomb of Queen Nefertari, and the temples of Abu Simbel — virtually.



World Heritage Exhibitions

Presented in partnership with World Heritage Exhibitions, Neon and the Houston Museum of Natural Science, with support by Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and also funding from the NSW Government's Create NSW Blockbusters Funding initiative, *Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs* heads to Australia after showing in Houston and San Francisco in the US, as well as its recent season until September in Paris.

Australia will also play host to another huge exhibition about ancient Egypt in 2024, with *Pharaoh* set to feature at Melbourne's NGV International from June.



Ramses the Great and the Gold of the Pharaohs will display at the Australian Museum, 1 William Street, Sydney, from Saturday, November 18, 2023–Sunday, May 19, 2024 — head to the exhibition's website for further details and tickets.

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