



Photograph: Supplied/Australian Museum | The coffin of Ramses II

Ramses the Great's coffin confirmed to travel to Australia for exclusive Sydney exhibition this summer

In an extraordinary loan from Egypt, the ornate sarcophagus of the Pharaoh will be on display at the Australian Museum



Written by [Alannah Le Cross](#) Wednesday 25 October 2023



There has been lots of excitement building around [Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs](#), the blockbuster exhibition of Ancient Egyptian artefacts coming exclusively to Sydney this year. And the Australian Museum just dropped another announcement about the upcoming cultural event that is sure to level up the spectacle when it opens on November 18.

On October 24, it was revealed that the actual sarcophagus of Ramses II – one of the most impressive royal coffins from ancient Egypt ever to be discovered – will be travelling to Australia for the upcoming exhibition. Exclusive to the Australian Museum and on direct loan from Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, Ramses' coffin is rarely permitted to leave Egypt. Sydney will become only the second city in the world, after Paris, to showcase the extremely valuable artefact.



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Australian Museum Director and CEO, Kim McKay, said the sarcophagus will be the "star attraction" of the exhibition, and it will be "a wonderful opportunity for Australian audiences to see this rare, fragile artefact in real life".

McKay continues: "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."

Dating from the late Eighteenth Dynasty, the carved cedar coffin of Ramses II and its occupant was discovered in 1811 within the Royal Cache at Deir el-Bahari – an Egyptian archaeological site located on the west bank of the Nile River, opposite the city of Luxor and east of the Valley of the Kings. The recumbent king is represented as Osiris, one of the most important gods of ancient Egypt. Arms crossed on his chest, he holds two royal sceptres and wears the Nemes headdress decorated with the erect cobra and a false beard braided beneath his chin. A number of inscriptions can be found on the coffin – on its lid, two large cartouches recall his birth name of "Ramses, beloved of Amun" and throne name "Powerful is the Maat of Ra, he whom Ra has chosen".



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The coffin of Ramses II joins more than 180 priceless artefacts and ornate golden treasures in [Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs](#), including one-of-a-kind relics such as sarcophagi, animal mummies, magnificent jewellery, spectacular royal masks, exquisite amulets – many of which have never left Egypt before. All of the objects in the exhibition have come from museums and historical sites in Egypt and are on loan from Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities.

This exceptional loan is the result of a long-standing working relationship between McKay and Dr Zahi Hawass, the curator of [Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs](#) and the former head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, as well as the exhibition partners, Neon Global and World Heritage Exhibitions.

We reckon this remarkable addition certainly gives Sydney's Egyptian blockbuster show an edge over [Pharaoh](#), the other big Ancient Egypt exhibition heading to [Melbourne in 2024](#). (But that could just be our fierce inter-city rivalry – which runs as relentlessly as the River Nile – talking?)

Calling all amateur Egyptologists, we've rounded up everything else we know about [Ramses & the Gold of the Pharaohs](#) [over here](#).