

ARTS & THEATRE

Mummy, daddy and the kids: Atlanta exhibit features King Tut

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Mummies, death masks, dung beetles — even a coffin for a cat ... in many ways, Tutankhamun: The Golden King and the Great Pharaohs is an exhibit tailor-made for children. The blockbuster exhibit, at the Atlanta Civic Center through May, features more than 130 objects covering 2,000 years of Egyptian history. More than 50 of those objects, including jewelry, games and furniture, are from the tomb of the Boy King himself. Here are some tips on how to make the most of taking children to see the exhibit.

What to expect:

Plan to spend at least 90 minutes in the exhibit. Once you're in, there is no re-entry. So take a bathroom break before you start. The exhibit is generally less crowded on weekdays and first thing in the mornings.

There's also a 22-minute movie, "Egypt 3-D," that shows on the hour. You can watch the film before or after you see the exhibit. Movie tickets are an additional \$5.

Don't miss these objects:

The opening galleries of the exhibit are devoted to pharaohs other than King Tut. The stuff about the Boy King is saved till the end, in four galleries that correspond to the four rooms of his tomb, which was discovered by Howard Carter in 1922.

Among the many statues, carvings, furniture and jewelry are some objects with particular kid appeal:

The queen who became king: Not all of the rulers of Egypt were male. Hatshepsut was the most successful of a handful of female pharaohs. In a statue of Hatshepsut kneeling, the queen is shown wearing a false beard — because that's how the rulers of Egypt were usually presented.

The cat coffin: Cats were revered in Egypt, and when the pet cat of Crown Prince Thutmose died, she was buried in an elaborately carved limestone sarcophagus.

The cat's name, roughly translated from the hieroglyphics, is "Ta-miaut."

The colossal pharaoh: The first towering statue in the exhibit is of the pharaoh Akhenaten. Notice how he looks very different from the other statues, with his long face and eyes. That's because Akhenaten changed the way statues were carved, to go along with the way he tried to change Egypt's religion (It didn't take).

The golden death mask: The famous golden death mask of King Tut is no longer allowed to leave Egypt, but no less spectacular is the death mask of Psusennes, made almost entirely out of gold, inlaid with black and white glass.

King Tut's golden sandals: A pair of solid-gold flip-flops was intended for the king's use in the afterlife.

King Tut's golden fingers and toes: In the same display case as the sandals are a set of finger and toe stalls, which were placed on King Tut's mummy to protect his digits.

The colossal Tut: This statue of the boy king towers 10 feet tall. Be sure and look at it from the side as well as from the front.

The CT scans: In the final room of the exhibit are surreal images of the actual remains of Tut. Scientists recently used a CT scanner to make a 3D image from his mummy. They debunked the theory that Tut was murdered by a blow to the head. Instead, he most likely died from an infection after a serious leg injury.

Best loot from the gift shop:

Warning: The exhibit exits directly into the gift shop, so be prepared. Some noteworthy items:

King Tut hat: Shiny golden and black stripes, with sidepieces that hang down to the shoulders, just like the famous death mask. Get one for everybody in the family! \$34.95.

I Dig Treasures: Use tiny archeological tools to excavate Egyptian treasures from a miniature earthen pyramid. \$8.95 or \$32.95.

Kooky Pens: You know the ones, the big fat pens with the cartoon faces and the top knots of rubbery hair. The Egyptian versions include King Tut and a mummy. \$4.95.

Scarabs: To the Egyptians, the dung beetle, or scarab beetle, was a symbol of creation or rebirth. These colorful carved scarabs can be collected as is, or strung into jewelry. And c'mon, it's a dung beetle. Every 8-year-old boy needs one. \$4-\$5.95.

The snack bar:

The gift shop exits into the Cairo Café, which offers sandwiches, salads, cookies and drinks. Kid fare includes hot dogs (\$3.25), brownies (\$1.95) and bottled water for — brace yourself — \$2.65.

Special programs for kids:

The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University (presenter of the Tut exhibit) is offering several upcoming workshops for kids:

Feb. 22: "Shadowing Harry Burton," about the photographer who spent 10 years documenting the excavation of Tut's tomb. Kids will use large-format cameras to make their own photos in a similar environment.

March 8 and 14: "Divine Beasts," in which kids will draw and paint the Egyptian animals at Zoo Atlanta.

For details, and to register call (404) 727-4282 or visit www.carlos.emory.edu

Books to read

Mummies in the Morning by Mary Pope Osborne: The third book in the Magic Tree House series sends the time-traveling kids Jack and Annie to ancient Egypt, where they must help a ghost-queen on her journey to the Next Life. A nonfiction companion book, Mummies and Pyramids, gives lots more details on ancient Egyptian life and on King Tut. Ages 4-8.

Eyewitness Books: From the series that redefined what history and science books should look like, these slim volumes are heavy on photos, drawings and beautiful graphics, with solid, intriguing info presented in short, easily digestible bits. The series includes Ancient Egypt, Pyramid and Mummy. Ages 9-12.

Pyramid by David Macaulay: The author of Cathedral, City and the brand-new The Way We Work uses black-and-white drawings to illustrate the step-by-step construction of a pyramid. Ages 9-12.

Websites to visit

Kids can learn about several ancient cultures, including Egypt, at the Odyssey interactive websites set up by Emory's Carlos Museum, which houses one of the better collections of Egyptian artifacts in the Southeast. www.carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/

In conjunction with the King Tut exhibit, the Carlos Museum also offers "TUTorials," 17 downloadable lessons suitable for upper-middle and high school students. These use specific objects from the exhibit to teach about Egyptian culture. www.carlos.emory.edu/teacher-programs.

Tutankhamun: The Golden King

When: Daily from 9 a.m.-6 p.m., through May 25. Last ticket sold at 5 p.m.

Where: Atlanta Civic Center, 395 Piedmont Ave. NE.

How much: \$32.50 for adults, \$16.50 for ages 6-17, free for children 5 and under. Tickets are sold for a specific day and time. You'll be given a half-hour window to choose from; you may enter the exhibit any time during that half hour. Day-of tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Right now, there's a Family Four Pack special, \$46 for four tickets.

Contact: www.kingtut.org, www.carlos.emory.edu, or Ticketmaster, (866) 448-7849.