

# King Tut and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs : Exhibition: London

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

It's amazing to think how the story of a boy king, who ruled for only about a decade thousands of years ago, still attracts the interest of millions of people, but that's exactly what's happened with Tutankhamun.

Known more fondly these days as King Tut, which may have something to do with a struggle to spell his full name, an exhibition of the wonders found with him in his final resting place is once again touring the world.

When the exhibit first went on tour in the 1970s, the exhibition set records for the numbers of people who passed through the doors at various venues around the world to see it. It was last in London at the British Museum in 1972 - the year I was born - so when I heard it would be returning to the city, I figured this could be our once in a lifetime opportunity to see it.

The exhibition is made up of 11 galleries and, as soon as you arrive, you know this is going to be something special. The first room you come to is just like a pre-show at a Disney attraction, with a video introduction narrated by Omar Sharif. As this 90-second presentation ends the doors slide open and you enter the world of [Tutankhamun and the Age of the Golden Pharaohs](#). The name really sums up what you'll see, as it's not just about King Tut. The first gallery you visit explains about Ancient Egypt and gives you some background to Tutankhamun, including his family tree. You learn about the 18th Dynasty of rulers and Egypt as a country, which at that time, was a huge empire.

Then you find out about their beliefs. It was fascinating to learn about all the gods they worshiped. One piece that caught my eye in here was the winged cobra figure that protected King Amenhotep II, with wings outstretched, as if ready to catch him should he fall. The colors on this - bright blues, greens and reds - didn't seem to date 3,000 years, they looked so vibrant.

Then it was time to learn more about death, burial and the afterlife, including the amazing gilded coffin of Lady Tjuya, before discovering the world that Tutankhamun inherited. It was one that his father changed considerably, as he tried to convince his people to believe in only one god - the sun. It fell to King Tut to restore convention when he

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took the throne.

When he ascended the throne he was just nine years old. It's in the next gallery that fact is brought home to you, via the tiny ebony and ivory chair that he used to sit in. Your first thought is that this is a child's chair and then you realize that's exactly what it is, except this child was also a ruler of an entire country at such a tender age. This room is also home to golden items everywhere you look, whether solid gold or gilded wood. It came as no surprise that one of the scientists who found the tomb exclaimed that everything inside was gold.

From here, it's on to perhaps one of the highlights, Tut's tiny gold coffinette - from his burial chamber and this just whets your appetite for more, with five golden items that were all wrapped in the linen of the mummy, including an elaborate head-dress. This pictured a cobra and a vulture, both designed to protect the King in the afterlife.

The finishing part brings you bang up to date with the science of Tut, examining the mystery of how he died so suddenly aged around 19. There's still no definite conclusion to that, with research continuing to this day to try and solve the riddle.

In every gallery you visit, there are superb explanations about everything you're seeing and unusually, there are normally at least two versions of this written out, one on top of the cabinets, so you don't have to wait for someone to move out of the way. It's also worth keeping in mind that you walk all the way around the exhibit cases, allowing you to view them from the front, side and behind, which gives many of the items a totally different perspective. In particular, the pectoral of gold, a cross worn by Tutankhamun on his chest, appeared stunning enough from the front view. Walk around the back of it though and you see a completely different design, just as intricately made. The detail that went into this piece is breathtaking.

That was really the overall feel we came away with from this exhibition. Every piece you saw just had so much detail on it. Many items had lines and lines of hieroglyphics that couldn't have been more than quarter of an inch tall. Often, you would stand there and as you looked at the item, you would see more detail, with the heads of animals suddenly appearing to you in the design of everyday items such as jewelry boxes and tables.

We kept stopping to discuss how long each must have taken to create and what tools they must have used. One thing's for sure, we must have better quality tools today, but somehow you just can't imagine us creating anything as detailed in our modern world.

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It's a fascinating step back three thousand years to an era when countless hours were spent creating jewels fit for a King in his afterlife. When you emerge from this exhibition, you feel very privileged to have witnessed these beautiful things. This may well be a once in a lifetime opportunity to see this, so if you get the chance, be sure to take it up.

Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs is open at the O2 Dome in London from now until August 30, 2008. Its next stop will be in Dallas, Texas, where the exhibition will open on October 3, 2008. For more information visit <http://www.kingtut.org>

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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