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History Comes Alive at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science

by Sandy Bornstein / Apr 06, 2018 /

My love of history has inspired countless trips to museums around the world. It's a wonderful treat when I only have to drive a half an hour to visit a spectacular event. **While traveling exhibits include only a small portion of a museum's collection, they allow a wider audience to become exposed to an important topic.**

Jewish history comes alive at the [Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science](#). This traveling show is perfect for individuals who are unable to make a trip to Israel. The show provides an introduction to Jewish history with an emphasis on the biblical period. **It takes visitors back and forth in time as they learn about how the oldest existing copies of the Hebrew scrolls were discovered, the preservation of the scrolls, life in the Dead Sea region, and important events from the present to biblical times.**



Masada

After getting a taste of ancient Israelite history, some may be encouraged to visit Israel at a future date. **Keep in mind that the displays only showcase a tiny sampling of what can found at the Israel Museum or at the 30,000 known Israeli archeological sites.** It should be noted that the artifacts in the exhibit came from the collections of the **Israel National Treasures** and that the **Israel Antiquities Authority created the traveling show.**

I'm fortunate to have visited Israel several times. On my last trip, I stopped near the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered from 1947-1956. If the vessels housing the scrolls had not been discovered by accident, these fragile segments from ancient parchment scrolls dating from 150 B.C.E. to 70 C.E. may have remained hidden forever.



Vessels from Dead Sea Scroll exhibit

If you're a history buff, especially one who enjoys ancient Israelite history, **plan a summer trip to Denver**. It is definitely worth a visit. Tickets to this special exhibit are available online until the exhibit's closing on September 3, 2018. According to one of the museum's curators, it is not known if there will be another traveling show in North America anytime soon.

Helpful Tips: To avoid being disappointed, it is highly recommended that you purchase tickets in advance. If time allows, consider paying a little more to watch the IMAX movie about Jerusalem. Unless you have a media pass, photos are not allowed. The number of people allowed inside the exhibit is regulated. However, if the maximum number of tickets is sold, there will be lines. If you're in a hurry or are traveling with impatient young children, it may not be possible to enjoy the exhibit. Be aware that there is a gift shop when you exit the exhibit.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS EXHIBIT

Desert Orientation Video

Visitors are introduced to the exhibit by watching a 5-minute video that is presented on four oversized screens. As images are projected onto the screens, an actor provides a brief overview of different parts of Jewish history substantiated by archeological findings, along with a few facts about the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the vessels stored in 11 caves near Qumran.



Caves Near Qumran Dead Sea Region

This room sets the stage for what follows.

The Journey Begins—Timeline from 2018 CE to 1,200 BCE



The Journey Begins Time Line Exhibit

On the left side of the room, a line forms to view an artifact timeline that starts in 2018 and goes back to 1,200 BCE. The signage identifies the different eras and describes the artifacts.



Fossilized fruits and seeds and vessels from 1st century BCE to 1st Century CE

On the right side of the room, a video displays how foreign rulers from biblical times to the present continually conquered the region.

Replica of Four Room Ancient Israelite House

Take a look at the ancient Israelite stone walled home from the Iron Age (1,200-550 BCE). Houses during this era had a main courtyard that permitted access to all of the rooms in the house. Authentic artifacts are found in the model home along with stones from excavated homes from this era.

Birth of a Nation

Along one wall, artifacts illustrate ancient Israelite life from before the monarchy until the time of the destruction

of the First Temple in 586 BCE. The exhibit focuses on how the monarchy helped ancient Israel become a nation. Each object has a corresponding sign that provides background information. A short video summarizes key aspects of this part of the exhibit.

Scrolls Room

In the center of the room, people walk around a large circular exhibit to look through a transparent protective cover at the ten fragile fragments of actual Dead Sea Scrolls. Each scroll has a description, an English translation, and an enlarged copy.

This is the first time that the Tohorot (Purities) fragment is being exhibited. The other fragments come from a variety of texts—biblical and non-biblical—and are written in Hebrew, Paleo-Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.



Tohorot Dead Sea Scroll Fragment

Midway through the six-month exhibit, these 10 texts will be replaced with an entirely different selection.

The curved perimeter walls resemble Jerusalem's Western Wall. Displays of additional artifacts are mounted on these decorative walls. By examining ancient pottery, coins, footwear, ossuaries, textiles, inscriptions, and other objects, one can draw conclusions about how these people lived. Most will be astounded by the overall quality of the artifacts.



Dead Sea Scroll Room

Masada and the Ten Commandments

If you want to learn about Masada or the Ten Commandments, this would be a great place to get an overview.

In the left corner, I recommend sitting down on one of the benches to watch a short video with footage from the time of the discovery of the scrolls. Viewers will see how the initial handlers were clueless about the importance of their rare find and how dramatically preservation techniques have changed since the 1940s.

Several of the 350 volunteers who work daily in DMHS' traveling exhibits are accessible in each room to answer questions. These individuals received extensive training before the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit opened. Don't hesitate to ask questions.



Measuring Cup and tray from 1st Century BCE to 70 CE

IMAX THEATER—JERUSALEM

This National Geographic film intertwines the words and images of three young women— Jewish, Muslim and Christian. Having visited Jerusalem numerous times, I'm not sure all of the words accurately reflect the real dynamics of living in the Old City. Nevertheless, the 3D images capture its essence.

WHAT TO SEE IN DENVER

Denver

For a mid-sized city, Denver packs in a variety of popular attractions which include the Denver Art Museum, the Denver Botanic Gardens, the United States Mint, the Colorado State Capitol building, the Denver Zoo, and the Molly Brown House Museum. Baseball fans can catch a game at Coors Field, while theater and concertgoers can reserve tickets at Red Rocks Park and Amphitheater in Morrison or the Denver Center for Performing Arts in Denver.



Denver Botanic Gardens

The downtown area offers lodging options that meet a wide range of budgets. Keep in mind that some of the hotels located in the business district offer reduced rates on the weekends. If you're traveling with children, check out suite rates. If it is a quiet weekend, you might be pleasantly surprised.

Mountains

Nature lovers and adventure seekers can take I-70 west to get a taste of mountain life in Summit County—Dillon, Frisco, Silverthorne, or Keystone, or possibly drive a bit further to Vail. Along the way, they might consider taking a memorable drive on the Mount Evans Scenic Byway (the highest paved road in North America) and/or getting a taste of the Wild West at the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave. A second option is to head northwest and pass through Boulder on the way to Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park. A rental car or a guided trip would be required for these options.



Mount Evans Scenic Byway

Whether you come for a weekend getaway or for a week or longer, Denver and its neighboring mountain destinations are spectacular places to explore in the summertime. It would be ideal if you could combine a trip to Colorado with a half or full day visit to the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. Yes, the rest of the museum has many spectacular permanent exhibits. To help plan the best trip possible, check out [VisitDenver](#).



Buffalo Bill Museum

Sandy Bornstein has visited more than 40 countries and lived as an international teacher in Bangalore, India. Sandy's award-winning book, [May This Be the Best Year of Your Life](#), is a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Sandy writes about Jewish culture and history, historical sites, family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences.

Sandy Bornstein received a complimentary visit to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science including tickets to the exhibit, the IMAX theater, and a curated tour of the exhibit by Michele Koons, curator of archeology and Maura O'Neal, the Communications and Media Relations Manager.

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