

Press release
British Museum to reopen
27 August.
Free tickets available to
book from 12 August

Press images: <https://bit.ly/3gFv8RK>

Under embargo until 09.00 Friday 7th August

- The British Museum will reopen to visitors on Thursday 27 August 2020.
- Visitors will need to pre-book a free ticket, with reduced numbers to ensure physical distancing and a safe and welcoming environment.
- A new one-way route round the Ground Floor galleries will allow visitors access to many thousands of objects from ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and Assyria, before exploring Africa, Mexico, North America and the Enlightenment Gallery. More galleries will reopen later in September.
- The postponed special exhibitions *Tantra: enlightenment to revolution* and The Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate* will reopen later in the Autumn. And the display of *Edmund de Waal's library of exile* has been extended.
- Grayson Perry's *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman* returns to the Museum nine years after being the centrepiece of his major exhibition of the same name at the Museum.

Hartwig Fischer, Director of the British Museum said *"I am delighted to announce that the British Museum will reopen its doors in time for the summer Bank Holiday weekend. Visitors are our lifeblood, and we have missed them greatly. It will be wonderful to welcome them back and I do hope that local, London-wide and UK audiences will take this opportunity to discover, or re-discover, the Museum, exploring some of the most popular galleries in what will be a much quieter environment. And we are looking forward to welcoming back our international visitors as well in due course.*

The British Museum's extraordinary collection is a unique place to learn about the shared and complex history of humankind, with its many achievements and challenges, conflicts and innovations. It demonstrates humanity's ability to endure and create even in precarious times. It will inspire us as we embark on this new chapter in the story of the Museum, and the world."

Tickets will be available to book online or over the phone from 10am on Wednesday 12th August (www.britishmuseum.org, or 020 7323 8181). The Museum will open 10am – 3pm on the 27th and 28th of August, moving to 10am – 5pm from Saturday 29th August.

The majority of the ground floor galleries will be available, allowing an intimate exploration of some of the Museum's most iconic highlights including the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon Sculptures, Hoa Hakananai'a, the Assyrian reliefs, the Benin Bronzes, the Aztec double-headed

serpent, the Akan Drum and the Discobolus. The tour will allow visitors to take in over 9,000 objects.

The Museum is taking a phased approach to reopening to be sure we can accommodate visitors safely and securely. We will be keeping safety measures under review and will adjust them as we learn how they work in practice and as Government guidance evolves. We plan to reopen some of the upper floor galleries from Monday 21st September.

New dates are today confirmed for the Museum's postponed spring exhibitions *Tantra: enlightenment to revolution* and The Citi exhibition *Arctic: culture and climate*. *Tantra* will open from 24 September 2020 (closing 24 January 2021) and *Arctic* on 22 October 2020 (closing 21 February 2021). Both exhibitions will have extended runs to ensure more people can see them whilst following social distancing guidelines. We have also been able to extend the display of Edmund de Waal's *library of exile* in Room 2 giving visitors a chance to see this thoughtful and reflective work before the books it includes are donated to the world-renowned library of the University of Mosul in Iraq which is being rebuilt after it suffered extensive damage under Daesh.

The Museum will have been closed for 163 days, the longest peacetime closure in its 261-year history. We have been working very hard behind the scenes to prepare for reopening. The collection – which numbers 8 million objects – is housed in a splendid, yet complex, building and it has taken time to bring historic infrastructure back into service. The collection itself is fragile and varied, with objects such as the Lewis Chess pieces or the Nimrud Ivories made of materials that are especially vulnerable to fluctuations in temperature or relative humidity. The presence of visitors plays an important part in keeping that humidity stable and we need to be careful as the objects reacclimatise during this first phase of reopening.

British Museum Trustee and Turner Prize-winning artist, Grayson Perry, has agreed to lend his work, *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman*, originally created for his British Museum exhibition of the same name in 2011. The *Tomb* is an elaborate, richly decorated cast-iron coffin-ship – a vessel weighted with the freight of Perry's imagination and an eloquent testament to the countless unnamed skilled individuals – men and women - who have made the beautiful wonders of history found in the British Museum today. We hope to display the work in Room 17, next to the Nereid Monument from western Turkey, built around 390BC.

Richard Lambert, Chair of the Museum's Trustees, said "It is wonderful news that the Museum will start to reopen in August. The pandemic has of course had a huge impact on us all. We, like many others in the heritage and arts sector, face an extremely challenging financial situation. The Trustees would like to thank the Government for the additional financial support that will help us and the sector to navigate this difficult period. And we just can't wait to reopen our doors."

Notes to Editors

Schools:

The Museum will be unable to accommodate schools visits immediately upon reopening. But, as teachers and pupils return to start the new school year, [the Samsung Digital Discovery Centre](#) at the British Museum will be offering free Virtual Visits to schools across the UK. Schools can still experience the world-class collection and expert staff via a learning session broadcast directly into their classroom. Virtual Visits have been created with the curriculum needs of schools in mind and are designed around the realities of classroom technology. New sessions on ancient Egypt and ancient Greece are in development to add to the existing sessions on prehistoric Britain, Roman Britain and the Indus Valley.

The British Museum around the UK

The British Museum is committed to working in partnership with institutions across the country, with an extensive network of over 150 museums that we regularly collaborate with through the Museum's National Programmes, sharing the collection, skills and knowledge. As the Museum reopens, National Programme activity will recommence, in the first instance with the reopening of the British Museum touring exhibition *Nordic by nature: modern design and prints* at Kirkleatham Museum in Redcar. We are supporting our other partners in the coming months, including the extension of touring exhibitions *Ancient Iraq: new discoveries* in Newcastle's Great North Museum and *Pushing paper: contemporary drawing from 1970 to now* at Swansea's Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. The UK's museum sector is extraordinarily rich and varied and the British Museum will endeavour to contribute to its development in the future.

International activity

The British Museum shares its rich and diverse collection of more than 8 million objects with audiences around the globe through its extensive programme of touring exhibitions. In Spain, two exhibitions, *An Age of Luxury: From the Assyrians to Alexander the Great* and *Pharaoh: King of Egypt*, reopened in June after lockdown at the La Caixa Forums in Zaragoza and Tarragona respectively. In Canada, *Egyptian Mummies: Exploring Ancient Lives. New Discoveries* has been rescheduled and will now open in early Autumn at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. New dates have been agreed for future exhibitions in Belgium, the USA, Spain and Australia. The Museum's Iraq Scheme, supported by the government's Cultural Protection Fund, will continue to train Iraqi archaeologists in the latest techniques, while the Endangered Material Knowledge Programme, funded by Arcadia, supports research projects and communities across the world to preserve skills and cultural traditions.



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