



From blings to kings: museums show off city



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Paris is known for the Louvre. New York City is home to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Los Angeles has the Getty Center. And though Las Vegas doesn't seem like a place concerned with preserving historic relics, the city is actually home to several unique museums and exhibits. Many of them provide a chance to absorb some the city's compelling — and sometimes bizarre — history.

From museums that present the treasures of several different “kings” to vintage neon signs, the atomic bomb and old-school pinball memorabilia, these are definitely not your average collections ... but then again, Vegas isn't an average kind of town.

The King's Ransom Museum



Courtesy of The King's Ransom Museum

Elvis Presley may be gone, but his legacy lives on at [The King's Ransom Museum](#) inside the Imperial Palace. Through April, Elvis fans can enjoy rare collectibles worth more than \$2 million, all of which come with an interesting tale.

“It's not just the items, but the story behind each piece,” said Bud Glass, co-owner of the King's Ransom Museum. “It's kind of like a time machine.”

For instance, after Elvis tied his scarf around a 5-year-old girl's neck at a concert, two teenage girls tried to grab it, almost choking her. "Elvis saw it and stopped the show cold," Glass said. "He brought her up on stage and took a jeweled emerald necklace from around his neck, kissed her on the cheek and said, 'No one is going to take this from you.'"

Glass searched for the girl for two decades and finally found her three years ago. The necklace is now part of the exhibit.

Owners Glass and Russ Howe said Las Vegas is the perfect fit for their collection. "Elvis did something to this town that's magical," Glass said. "It was naturally a great place to bring Elvis."

Items on display include costumes and suits from Elvis' singing and acting careers, as well as martial arts uniforms, including one of his favorite karate medallions from the '70s. Glass said it doesn't matter that the medallion doesn't have any intrinsic value. "It could have been out of a Cracker Jack box, but if Elvis wore it, it's worth something," said Glass.

The museum also has some of Elvis' prized possessions, including his 1977 Lincoln Continental, the last car he ever purchased.



Courtesy of The King's Ransom Museum

But this museum showcases more than the glitz and glamour of Elvis. It exhibits his personal side. You'll see his earliest known signature from a 1947 junior high library check-out card for "English Fairy Tales" and his bedspread from his Graceland home. There's even a Mylanta bottle and lip balm on display.

“Everyone knows the legend, but not many people know the man,” said Glass.

Glass’ favorite item is the Bible found on Elvis’ nightstand the night he passed away. “Elvis was a very spiritual person,” he said. “When you read [his] underlined passages, it gives you kind of an idea on some of the things that really hit home to Elvis.”

Jimmy Velvet, longtime friend of Elvis and curator of the museum, shares stories and signs autographs at the museum. Referred to as the “Godfather of Elvis exhibits” by Glass, Velvet opened up his first museum across from Graceland in June 1978. Velvet said fans would line up just to see the 21 pieces he had at the time.

Velvet also shares funny tales from their teenage years. “He liked to play football on skates,” he said, laughing. “Talk about getting banged up! He was just fun, just so much fun.”

There aren’t many chances to see these kinds of unique items on display, according to Glass. “[It’s] totally different from anything at Graceland. It’s a fantastic opportunity for people to see a little glimpse of the man behind the image.”