

# MUSEUM PIECE

*Our specialists discuss some fascinating museums covering a plethora of subjects from the harrowing to the amusing.*

## Turban Museum, India

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In the pink city of Jaipur, the Surabhi Turban Museum has the world's largest collection of this most Indian of headwear. The uninitiated traveller may not notice the difference between one turban and another, but each Rajasthani man's turban reveals his caste, what he does for a living and where he comes from. A visit to this museum can be combined with a meal at the affiliated heritage restaurant, where the waiters can show you how to tie a turban, which they make look a lot easier than it actually is!

**Beatrice Bowen:** 01993 838 313

## Archaeological Museum, Chile

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In 1957 a Jesuit priest called Gustavo Le Paige opened a museum in San Pedro, in which he housed the findings from his studies of the archaeology of the Atacama Desert. Besides the mummies and textiles there is a collection of Inca gold, local lithics and metalwork as well as a collection that details the use of mind-altering substances by the local Shaman. A collection of photographs dating back over more recent decades, detailing many lost traditions, brings the visitor right up to date.

**Jonathan Goldsmith:** 01993 838 609

## Tuol Sleng museum, Cambodia

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The Tuol Sleng museum in Phnom Penh was a school used by the Khmer Rouge to interrogate, torture and kill up to 20,000 people. Only seven lived to tell the tale. Today, Tuol Sleng has been preserved as a tribute to those who lost their lives and remains exactly as the invading Vietnamese forces found it. There are pictures of the prisoners on the walls along with paintings by an artist who was one of the few survivors. A visit to Tuol Sleng is a harrowing experience but I believe it gives an insight into the modern history of the Khmer and illustrates why these warm and friendly people are so eager to look towards the future.

**Nick Payton:** 01993 838 116



Robben Island

## The Livingstone Museum, Zambia

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One of the most intriguing museums in Africa is the small Livingstone Museum in Livingstone, Zambia. The pale cream building is surrounded by jacaranda trees and stepping into the cool interior you enter another world. The highlights include a superb ethnography and art gallery with crafts and musical instruments relating to the different Zambian cultures. There is a gallery tracing the origins of the Bantu people, development of British colonial rule and the attainment of independence. Finally, there is an extensive library, and of course, a not insignificant collection of David Livingstone memorabilia.

**Cate MacKenzie:** 01993 838 507

## Aboriginal Cultures Gallery, South Australia

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With over 3,000 items on display, the Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery showcases the largest collection of Australian Aboriginal artifacts and archival material in the world. You will discover the richness of Aboriginal culture through themes, technologies, regional case studies and other special features arranged throughout the gallery's two floors with innovative displays and interactive multimedia.

**Jenny Bouquet:** 01993 838 809

## Robben Island, South Africa

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Not strictly a museum, the former prison of Robben Island is a moving place to visit - tours are led by former inmates so there can be no better insight into what life behind bars was like. However, there is more to Robben Island than the cells: you are also driven round the island to see the former staff village, to spot some of the local wildlife including springbok and penguins, and to enjoy fantastic views back towards Cape Town and Table Mountain.

**Sarah McGuinness:** 01993 838 418

## National Palace Museum, Taiwan

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The National Palace Museum houses over 750,000 items in the world's largest collection of Chinese artifacts. Only 15,000 are shown at one time, which means it takes more than a decade to exhibit the whole collection. There is bronze, jade, porcelain and magnificent works of art from the Neolithic age right up to the end of the final Qing dynasty. That this collection came to be here is also remarkable - the defeated Kuomintang fled to Taiwan from the Communists in 1949, taking with them the many thousands of crates that had been transferred back and forth across China during the Japanese invasion and subsequent civil war.

**Chris Moore:** 01993 838 213



▲ Turban Museum, India

National Palace Museum, Taiwan ▼

