



0. NIGHT at the MUSEUM 3: KEEPING the FACTS STRAIGHT - Story Preface

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"Night at the Museum 3: Secret of the Tomb" takes place at the British Museum in London. This photo, by Jon Sullivan of PDPhoto.org, depicts the front entrance to one of the world's greatest museums.

The last installment of "Night at the Museum" is called "The Secret of the Tomb." Recognizing that films are not documentaries, sometimes we have to step back from the big screen to sort-out fact from fiction.

At the request of the British Museum, where "Secret of the Tomb" takes place, we need to do a step-back for this movie.

First ... to be clear about what happened at Pompeii ... the ancient town (and its neighbor, Herculaneum) were destroyed by a pyroclastic flow from nearby Vesuvius. The town was buried by ash, which actually helped to preserve it.

Pompeii was not destroyed by lava. In fact, lava was not a factor at all in the town's destruction.

"Night at the Museum 3" has other factual inaccuracies. Filmed at the British Museum, in London, its directors and curators are keen to make sure that viewers of the film keep fact from fiction.

So ... we have this information from the British Museum:

*Not planning to adhere to the strict rules of accuracy like that of its subject matter, *Night at the Museum 3: Secret of the Tomb* has taken a few liberties which may mislead those planning a visit to the British Museum.*

The museum doesn't hold a triceratops skeleton. In fact, it contains no dinosaur skeletons as complete or impressive as the foreboding monster Ben Stiller's character faces.

In the film, two beautifully glazed porcelain ornaments, known as the Kakiemon elephants from 17th Century Japan, are portrayed as the size of real elephants. In reality, they are only 14 inches tall.

Although the museum boasts an incredible 120 human mummies, it does not hold the Egyptian pharaoh Ahkmenrah's tomb as scenes from the film would suggest. [Scholars tell us there is no evidence suggesting that a pharaoh named Ahkmenrah ever existed.]

British Museum directors have also been forced to remind visitors that it does not hold a "nine-headed demon snake cast in bronze." The monster was a feature of Chinese mythology, but the museum holds [no] such object.

Medieval period enthusiasts will be disappointed to hear that the museum holds nothing that could be attributed to Sir Lancelot—who the curators gently remind is a fictional character—after he makes an appearance in the film.

Nor does it have a "medieval gallery" through which Ben Stiller's character is chased by the museum's fictional triceratops.

While we're on the subject of *Triceratops* ... it's interesting to note something unexpected about this favorite prey of the gigantic *T. rex*. Despite the enormous size of this 5-ton creature, its brain was comparatively small. [Have a look!](#)

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