



Suitcase Museum

Abdul Hafeez



Introduction

The bag of the Suitcase Museum contains some pieces and examples from the various departments of the Children’s Museum as well as adult museums in addition to explanatory panels, brochures, papers, drawing tools, working papers, books and instructions for teachers on how to use the bag. The contents of the suitcase thus prompts the slogan, “interactive education.” Through these interactive tools children, university students, and even adults or ordinary citizens (who normally are unable to go to museums) can learn about history, archeology, archaeological geology, and museum collections. They are able to gain an understanding of the various materials used in ancient times (such as stone tools), and through these materials the curiosity of the children and students may be awakened.

For these children and students, the word museum is often a mystery much like the talismans or other ancient objects whose meanings elude them. Thus, the role of the Suitcase Museum is to reach children in remote areas, either through a mobile museum, which is called the “museum car,” or through the “museum bag” which can be moved to the whereabouts of the children. By being introduced to the history of their home civilization, through the Suitcase Museum, children and adults alike will crave more knowledge and hopefully desire to visit museums.



The Suitcase Museum with various activities

The Museum Bag in the city of Benghazi

As the second largest city in Libya, the community of Benghazi has always aspired to establish its own museum for the purpose of displaying its ancient history. A history which goes back to the foundations of the city by the Greeks in the sixth century BC. The Suitcase Museum aims to satisfy this desire as best as possible. The goal of this program is to visit educational institutions and centers where children and youths gather in order to spread the culture of visiting museums and to introduce the Libyan cultural heritage.

Many educational institutions were visited in 2019 and the beginning of 2020. Around 55 workshops were offered in educational institutions and youth centers, as well as the scouts and guides in Benghazi. At times four to five workshops were offered per month. In these workshops the Museum Kit was used to engage students of various age groups, ranging from preschoolers to university students.



The Cultural Heritage and Awareness Program, made possible thanks to the “Museum Bag,” brings out the best in every student, helping children and youths to discover new talents and interests.

University students and teacher training program

Some university students were also trained, as the Museum Kit gained a major role in providing systematic service to students of the Department of Archeology. This training included registration methods and documenting museum collections.

The Museum Bag project also provides a training program for teachers, especially in the field of history and arts, directing them towards new ways to enrich the curricula of history and cultural heritage.



Program for people with special needs

A unique program has been set up for people with special needs, whereby the team was trained on signals in order to communicate. These special programs were conducted so that people with special needs would not feel embarrassed, be able to break their fear barriers, and to facilitate communication in a comforting and reassuring fashion.

Update: October 28, 2020

The Suitcase Museum program was introduced to the Tourist Police and the Protection of Antiquities Authority in the Kenzi resort in Sousse, where a workshop was organized entitled “The role of the museum bag in protecting cultural heritage.” Besides introducing the museum bag, talks were given on how to protect collections. In these talks the life cycle of an object (from its discovery until its arrival at the store, exhibition house, or museum) was discussed, as well as how to deal with the situation in which these Police are informed of an assault, obliteration, or theft of ancient objects, and the following legal procedures. The workshop was inaugurated with a speech by Colonel Fawzi Abdelounis, Director of the Tourist Police and Antiquities Protection Authority in the Eastern Province. Following this, two speeches were given: one by Major Ibrahim Shaat, Director of the Tourist Police in the Green Mountain and the other by Jamal Khairallah, Director of the Sousse Tourist Police Office. A spirit of cooperation was created with the Tourist Police Authority to conduct Suitcase Museum workshops in all cities of the Eastern Region. The Museum Bag will hopefully play a role in the protection of cultural heritage in these regions.



With great help from ASOR, the Museum Bag team in Benghazi prepared three museum bags: a bag for museum collections, a bag for archeological exploration, and a library bag.