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24 hours in: Cairo

King Tut's treasure may be London-bound, but the best place to see it is in its home...

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Room with a (pyramid) view

08.00: You could be forgiven for thinking that you have not quite woken up, as you breakfast in the dining room at Mena House Oberoi (00 20 2 377 3222; oberoi hotels.com), Pyramids Road, Giza. Its picture windows look directly at the Great Pyramid of Cheops. Be sure to insist on a room in the Palace Wing, for its shabby-chic glory. Doubles start at \$225 (£125) per night.

Tutankhamun's 1,700 treasures

09.30: Assuming you've already seen the pyramids, the next compulsory stop is The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities (00 20 2 377 3222; egyptian museum.gov.eg). It would take months to do justice to its 120,000 objects, but most come to see Tutankhamun's treasures, which number more than 1,700 and include his dazzling solid-gold funerary mask. The creepy Mummy Room is also a must.

The maze of Khan el-Khalili

12.30: Hail a taxi. You will inevitably find yourself in a Lada that has seen better days, but it's a cultural education in itself. Just make sure you agree a price before you get in. Your destination is the heart of Islamic Cairo: the maze of Khan el-Khalili.

Kofta for lunch, then the bazaar

13.00: Stop for lunch at Naguib Mahfouz Café, named after Egypt's celebrated writer, which forms part of the Khan el-Khalili Restaurant (00 20 2 590 3788), 5 Sekket al-Badistan. Here you can order a kofta with some freshly baked bread and hummus. Finish off with a mint tea at Fishawi's Café, opened in 1773. Spend the afternoon wandering in the bazaar. Duck down side streets to the spice, perfume and gold souks that are always thronged.

Craftwork to inspire designers

18.00: Visit the Alef Gallery (00 20 2 735 3690; alefgallery.com) at 14 Mohamed Anis Street in Zamalek, where you can buy decorative items and fabrics made by Egyptian craftsmen and used by shoe designer Christian Louboutin among others.

Stuffed pigeons on the Nile

20.00: Zamalek on Gezira Island in the middle of the Nile is one of Cairo's trendiest quarters. Abou El Sid (00 20 2 735 9640; deyafa.net), 157 26th July Street, serves upmarket interpretations of traditional Egyptian dishes such as molokheya (a soupy stew) as well as the house speciality of stuffed pigeon.

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