



MUSEUM NOTES

BY PATRICIA ANN JORDAN

Greetings I am excited readers, to share with you pre-viewing *Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia*, at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. This enlightening history exhibition opened to the public August 31. As one of the preview panelists from Ethiopia stressed, "Africa doesn't always get to tell its story...it is usually distorted...this exhibition tells Ethiopia's story."

On loan from the National Museum in Addis Ababa, Dinkenesh (I was fascinated by her Ethiopian name — Amharic for "beautiful one") is better known worldwide as Lucy. The remains of this 3.2 million-year-old hominid fossil validate Ethiopia as the "Cradle of Mankind." With 40 percent of her skeleton intact, it remains the oldest and most complete adult human ancestor fully retrieved from African soil.

Lucy was discovered in 1974 by paleo-anthropologist Donald Johanson in the Afar region of Ethiopia, near Hadar. She appeared so tiny when I looked at her remains — just about three feet tall. I was told she probably weighed approximately 30 pounds.

When viewing this two-fold exhibition, which runs through April 2008, I was able to see artifacts from a 2,500 historic period of

Ethiopia starting with Aksum, the first ancient civilization to mint its own coins; the people who created the spectacular rock-hewn, underground churches of Lalibela (named after the last king of the Zagwe dynasty) in the 13th century A.D; and ending with Emperor Haile Selassie.

You may have heard that Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee and, where it is said the Ark of the Covenant rests. This exhibition opened my eyes to more about Ethiopia, For example, its different faiths and religion. Judaism, Christianity, Islam and a number of traditional indigenous beliefs have peacefully coexisted for millennia. Ethiopia's rich heritage came alive with artifacts, including fossils, historical manuscripts, paintings, coins, musical instruments, and

implements of daily use, religious artifacts and more.

A goal of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian is to encourage tourism. Their hope is that exhibition attendees will develop an interest in Ethiopia and visit. Houston, likewise, is encouraging tourists. Several hotels are offering special Lucy packages. Granduca Luxury Residential Hotel, which opened September 2006, has a package including breakfast for two in Deerfields; complimentary

shuttle transportation to and from the "Houston Museum of Natural Science" and two-mile radius of the hotel plus complimentary valet parking. I recommend!

Four Seasons Downtown Houston also has a hotel package. In addition, their spa features a 60-minute Lucy Body Wrap which I experienced. The treatment consists of a body brush exfoliation intended to smooth and soften the skin while diminishing fine lines and imperfections over the entire body. Then Becki, my spa technician who developed the wrap treatment, gave me a Frankincense Aromatherapy Scalp & Neck Massage to aid in relaxation while I was wrapped in a gold body wrap to allow the anti-aging and slimming benefits of the products to penetrate the skin. I was pampered like a queen.

You can find other hotels which offer Lucy

packages by going to www.visithoustontexas.com and clicking on special offers.

If you can make it happen, please go and discover a dynasty of emperors, believed by Ethiopians to represent a direct, unbroken line of descendants of the Queen of Sheba and the biblical King Solomon.

Turns out these are not just African-American's ancestors but all of mankind's ancestors. A good thing!

Until next time, be well and be informed!

For more information on the Lucy exhibition: www.hmns.org or (713) 639-4629. To find out more about the Lucy Wrap: (713) 652-6219. www.granducahouston.com

