

The Tigrane Tomb

This tomb was discovered in 1952 in Tigrane Pasha Street, known today as Port Said Street. Transported to this location and restored, this colorfully painted tomb bears a variety of Egyptian and Greek motifs which would have appealed to the diverse inhabitants of the cosmopolitan city. Moreover, three of the painted scenes include motifs which would in time merge into a new religious tradition in the city: Christianity. These include a trinity—here, the trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus—as well as the theme of death, resurrection, apotheosis, and the motif of the palm leaf.

Outside in the garden, several sarcophagi lie scattered, displaying the fine masonry and craftsmanship of the artisans of that ancient period. On the sides of these sarcophagi, visitors can see depictions of legendary figures and gods in a variety of forms and motifs.



KOM EL-SHOQAFa



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Kom el-Shoqafa

The Roman catacombs of Kom el-Shoqafa, or Mound of Shards, were accidentally discovered in 1900 when a donkey was suddenly swallowed by the earth below. Their Graeco-Roman style, often combined with Egyptian elements, is an example of the cultural fusion which occurred in the ancient city of Alexandria.

The catacombs reach a depth of 35 m and consist of three levels, although only two are accessible today. They date from the end of the first century CE and expand over three centuries into the vast labyrinth which exists today and which at its apex served as the final resting place for more than 300 bodies. Visitors descend a spiral staircase around the central shaft into which the bodies of the dead were lowered.

The Vestibule

The vestibule is a short passage linking the central shaft to the circular chamber known as the "rotunda". Remnants of alabaster flooring are visible and on either side are small semi-circular niches, each containing a bench and a shell-shaped vault.

The Rotunda

The central shaft that reaches down to the third level through the center of the rotunda is surrounded by six pillars joined by a low parapet. The rotunda leads the visitor down to the main burial chamber.

The Triclinium

The *triclinium*, or Roman dining hall, located off the rotunda, was used for meals and festivities in honor of the dead.

The Main Tomb

Returning to the central rotunda, visitors can turn left to visit the main burial chamber which displays the combination of styles and influences which makes this site so unique. The façade of the antechamber is in the Egyptian style with two columns and two pilasters supporting a pediment bearing a solar disc, representations of Horus, and two cobras. Inside the tomb, styles merge with two figures portrayed with an Egyptian style of body but Graeco-Roman facial features. The unidentified woman on the left and the man on the right exemplify the mixed traditions which characterized that period. The entrance to the tomb's central chamber is flanked on both sides with the Graeco-Roman bearded serpent or agathodaemon holding a *caduceus*, or winged staff, which is a symbol of Hermes. Above each is a shield decorated with the head of Medusa. There are three sarcophagi in the funeral chamber and the walls are decorated with relief carvings of Egyptian religious scenes.



The Loculi

The central rotunda also leads to a U-shaped antechamber lined with *loculi*, in which the dead were laid to rest. These stone shafts probably remained empty initially, however as the demand for tombs grew, they were occupied and more were dug out into the surrounding rock.

The Promotor's Box

Facing the entrance to the funerary area, six steps lead to the space, known as the Promotor's Box, which probably served as an entrance for the deceased while the living entered through the stairwell leading to this deepest level.

A complex labyrinth of tunnels also gives us a glimpse of how, over the centuries, grave robbers tunneled their way into the various chambers.



The Hall of Caracalla

Thus named, probably erroneously, on account of several horse skeletons discovered there, the Hall of Caracalla is illuminated by sunlight through rectangular funerary shafts once used to lower the dead into the tombs below. Here, clergy would perform ritual animal sacrifices. There is an altar, several sarcophagi, and rows of *loculi* in addition to two sarcophagi cut into the walls and decorated with painted Hellenistic scenes of the Resurrection of Osiris and the Judgment of Paris.

