

# Nanhai One

Underwater | South China Sea, China | sank about 1100s CE | Grades 3-5

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Nanhai One was lifted from the sea in one piece inside a giant steel box, mud and all.*

## Read the story

About 800 years ago, during the Song dynasty, a wooden merchant ship about 30 meters long set out from China loaded with goods for foreign markets. It sank off the coast of Guangdong, perhaps in a storm.

In 1987, a team searching for another wreck pulled up pottery and found Nanhai One, which means South Sea Number One. Instead of digging underwater, Chinese archaeologists decided to lift the entire ship.

In 2007, they lowered a huge steel box around the ship and its surrounding mud, then lifted all of it, weighing thousands of tonnes, onto a barge. It was moved into a giant pool inside a museum, where archaeologists could dig it out slowly, like on land.

### How it ended

The ship sank long ago and was covered by mud, which protected its wood and cargo. It was found in 1987, raised in 2007, and is now being studied and displayed.

## Key words

- merchant ship: a ship that carries goods to trade
- Song dynasty: a period of Chinese rule from 960 to 1279 CE
- excavation: careful digging to find and study things from the past

## Wow facts

- The whole ship was lifted from the sea in a steel box in 2007.
- Archaeologists found more than 180,000 objects, including about 160,000 pieces of porcelain.
- Thousands of copper coins and iron pots were stacked in the hold.

## Talk about it

1. Why might archaeologists choose to lift a whole ship instead of digging underwater?

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2. What do the goods on this ship tell us about what people wanted to buy long ago?

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## Try this

Draw a map of Nanhai One as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

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## Quick quiz

*Circle the best answer.*

**1. How was Nanhai One raised?**

- A. In a giant steel box
- B. Piece by piece by hand
- C. With balloons only
- D. It floated up on its own

**2. Which Chinese dynasty is the ship from?**

- A. Song
- B. Qin
- C. Ming
- D. Han

**3. What was most of the cargo?**

- A. Porcelain
- B. Cars
- C. Paper
- D. Glass marbles

## Go further

Open [ruinscape.live/nanhai-one/](https://ruinscape.live/nanhai-one/) for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

## **Answer key (for teachers)**

1. A. A huge steel box lifted the ship and its mud together.
2. A. It is a Song dynasty merchant ship.
3. A. About 160,000 pieces of porcelain were found.