

EGYPT GUIDE

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ENTERING EGYPT

Visa can be obtained in advance in your home country or purchased for a normal sum at your entry airport. At the moment for British passport holder is \$25 per person. If you are staying in the main south Sinai region during your stay, a visa will not be required. If you are visiting The Gulf of Aqaba or St. Catherine's by entering over land, you will be granted a 14 day residency permit so will not require a visa.

CLIMATE

Daytime temperature will range from low 20 degrees centigrade in January to around 37 degree in the summer months. It is not a humid heat and the gentle sea breezes from the Red sea are one of the many attractions. Rainfall is unusual, although you may see a little in January and February.

LANGUAGES

Arabic is the main language but English and other major world languages are commonly spoken by major guides at attractions and tourist areas.

EATING OUT

Try great Egyptian dishes like falafel and Koshari (lentils, rice, tomato sauce). Then there is fowl mudammas (a dried fava bean stew) and ta'amiya (mashed broad beans and spices). A particular favourite is Koshari- a mouth-watering blend of pasta, fried onions, lentils, chick peas, chilli and garlic. And don't miss a real Arabic coffee. Drink plenty of water.

MONEY

The national currency is the Egyptian pound- often shown on price list as LE, divided into 100 plasters. ATM'S are easily available for changing currency. Shops, hotels and restaurants readily accept the usual credit cards. Although cash payments are usual in markets and smaller establishments. There is no limit to the amount of foreign currency you can take in or out of Egypt.

TIME & ELECTRICITY

Egypt is GMT+ 2 hours. Voltage is usually 220 volts with adopters readily available if you've forgotten ours. Normally it's a 2 pin adopters everywhere in Egypt.

BUSINESS HOURS & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Banks and government offices are usually open from 9 AM to 2 PM, except for Fridays, Saturdays and public holidays.

Shops usually open from about 10AM till 10 PM. Most people enjoy the sun and water during the day and go shopping after the sunset. Main fixed public holidays: JAN 7 (Coptic Christmas day), April 25 (Sinai liberation day), May 1; (Labour day), July 23rd (Revolution day), Oct. 6 (Armed forces day). There are also some variable dates which change each year because of Muslim calendar and the phases of the moon. Check Ramadhan start and end (Eid) when its end of fasting.

USEFUL NUMBERS

TOURIST POLICE- 126

FIRE SERVICE- 180

AMBULANCE- 123

FLYING HOSPITAL- 37766393/2

DIRECTORY ENQUIRIES- 140

CAIRO AIRPORT SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE- 19970

CAIRO:

The Pharaonic inheritance: Giza, Saqqara and the Egyptian Museum. In Egypt's capital, Africa's largest metropolis, and the urban centre of the Arab world, the attractions of this "mother of all cities" are endless. To be sure, each new comer must first make a pilgrimage to the Great Pyramids of Giza, the last

remaining ancient wonders of the world. A visit to the grave chambers deep inside the Pyramids, the solar Boat Museum, and the enlightening sound and light show in front of the Sphinx will provide an unforgettable glimpse of the unique culture of the Pharaohs'. The royal Necropolis of Saqqara proves to be no less astonishing. Back in Cairo's modern centre, a single visit may not do justice to the Egyptian Museum, filled with thousands of the most precious items from antiquity, in particular the legendary treasure of Tutankhamun.

Modern metropolis, Islamic and Old Cairo

Over 1,000-year-old, UNESCO has selected over 600 architectural monuments in Cairo's Islamic town as being worthy of particular protection, and inclusion in the list of world cultural heritage sites, including mosques like Sultan Hassan, Ibn Tulum or Al Azhar and the towering Citadel. Al Muizz road, strengthening for two kilometres between the ancient enormous city gates at Bab Al Futuh and Bab Zumaila, meanders past a particularly exquisite selection of ancient monuments, including mausoleums, mosques, schools caravanserais (ancient trader's hostels), fountain and bath houses.

A shopping adventure becomes a joy ride for the senses in the adjacent bazaars, particularly Khan el-Khalili, and the Tent makers market, Khayyamia, or even in markets further afield like Kerdassa and Fustat. Only a little further south, on the banks of the Nile, the district of Old Cairo looks back a nearly 2,000 years of history.

Cairo is where all city lovers feel truly at home. It's an intense experience – you can go shopping at midnight and it's buzzing at 2 AM as it is at 2 PM. It's vast and mysterious with the world's most famous river, the Nile, following through it. It's home to the great Pyramid, the only remaining wonder of seven wonders of the world. It's where the 1001 stories of the Arabian nights were originally collected. It has ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and more medieval Islamic buildings than anywhere else in the world.

Though it is a world heritage Capital Cairo is also a modern city, home to around 20 million making it the fifth busiest city in the world. It has modern telecommunications, ATMS, an updated Airport and many huge new mall developments.

The Summer season lasts from around May until October, the cooler winter season is only Jacket wearing weather in December, January and perhaps

February. Despite high temperatures in summer it is always cool near the river. If the roads seem too busy you can always take the efficient and clean and very cheap subway rail service that connects up most corners of the city. There are also river ferries and romantic horse drawn cabs called Gorri.

The railway from Cairo to Alexandria was opened in 1854, the first railway in Africa, and the second oldest railway line in the world after those in the UK.

THE PYRAMIDS

Located just outside of the outskirts of Cairo on the esplanade known as the Giza Plateau, and standing like giant Stone hills that are visible from the Nile at dawn and sunset, seeing the Pyramids for real is one of the great experiences of life. When you approach the Great Pyramid from the car park it just gets larger and larger. You will marvel at the granite pavement in front so smooth despite being over 4000 years old.

Built around 2600 BC, in the fourth dynasty, the three Pyramids of Giza are believed to be elaborate Tombs for the three kings Cheops, Chephrem and Menkaure. It is throughout the Pyramids were built by a series of ramps up which the massive two and three ton rocks were carried. The mystery of what happened to the

ramps, however, remains within the Pyramids- recently robots have been used to explore tiny shafts within the gigantic structures.

The Mysterious Sphinx

If you choose to go at night and see the Son et Lumiere (sound & light show), you will understand the true mystique of the Sphinx and the Pyramids. Another great place to view the Pyramids while having a drink from the Bar of the Mena house Hotel.

The Sphinx is truly huge too, one of the largest statues in the world. Be sure to visit the Sphinx Temple in front which has a marvellous amount of stone masonry cut with beautiful precision-the overlapping corner pieces would be almost impossible to make these days, even with the most modern laser equipment. Thought by some to be even older than the Pyramids the Sphinx squats in stony silence and splendour in front of the Pyramids. The fact that the Sphinx is far more eroded than the Pyramids has inclined some experts to announce it as over 10,000 years old. Open 8 to 4 PM.

Sak Kara

A few kilometres south of the three main Pyramids lies the Pyramid of Sakkara. Here too, one may enter the passageways on which are painted the famous

'Pyramid texts' - wall after wall of exquisite hieroglyphic.

Islamic Cairo

Cairo is recognised as having the world's greatest collection of medieval Islamic buildings. These extend from the fortress of the Citadel down towards the bazaar area of Khan El Khalili and al Azhar Mosque and university. You can take your time strolling back through the past taking in such places as Mohamed Ali Mosque, the Mausoleum of Barquq and the Al-Ghuri complex of buildings which were featured in the famous drawings of traveller David Roberts.

Did you know?

Along the Mile you pass a narrow looking old bridge that heads east- this is actually the aqueduct built in 1508 AD to bring water. In 641 AD the Muslim Arabs conquered Egypt and established a tented capital at Fustat, which is now part of Old Cairo. In 969 AD the Muslim Fatimids of North Africa displaced the Abbasids, they then built a new capital called El Qahira- the sub duer-which is Cairo.

The Gayer Anderson Museum

To understand the rich culture of Islamic Cairo it is to understand the rich culture of Islamic Cairo, it is

necessary to visit one of the several restored houses of that period. There are rooms inspired by Persian and Syrian art and a deep well that is said to connect all over Cairo via secret passages.

The Gayer Anderson has a fantastic atmosphere- recognized by movie makers and was used as a set in James Bond's "The Spy who loved me". Open 8 to 4 PM

OLD CAIRO

With the advent of third Millennium, huge resources were applied and intensive efforts exerted in Egypt to finalise a major Urban and cultural project, namely the development of Old Cairo (Misral Qadeem) district also known as al Fustat. Historically, this was the site where the Arab Muslim Commander Amr ibn al'As pitched his camp after conquering Egypt in April 641 AD. This district now combines a variety of religious monuments establishments pertaining to the three heavenly messages: Islam, Christianity and Judaism, making up what can be called a multi-religious compound.

The multi-Religious Compound is a district that houses very old places of worship pertaining to the three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. It is built around the ruins of the old Roman Fortress and includes the following and more. Amr Ibn Al-Aas mosque, Coptic Church of St. George, Church of the

Virgin, The hanging church, St. Sergias church, the Coptic museum, Coptic cemetery, Ben Eger Synagogue and the remains of Fort Babylon. It was thus aptly named the “Multi Religious Compound” and the government has been displaying gigantic efforts to develop it since 1998.

MUSEUMS

The Museum of Modern Art

Located at the Cairo Opera Complex, the Museum of Modern Art depicts tokens of Egypt through the eyes of artists of this century. Hanging from the Museum’s walls are the works of well-known Egyptians and foreign artists who lived in Egypt. Most of the work dates from the beginning of the last century through to the present day.

Egyptian Museum

No visit to Egypt is complete without a visit to the world famous Egyptian Museum, with over 120,000 artefacts, the museum houses an unbelievable exhibit depicting ancient Egypt’s’ glorious reign. Mummies, sarcophagi, pottery, jewellery and of course Tutan Khamown’s treasures are all here. The boy king’s death mask discovered in his tomb is made of solid gold and

has been described as one of the most beautiful objects ever made.

Open daily: 0900-1900 except Fridays: 0900-1100 and 1330-1900.

Museum of Islamic Art:

Housing one of the world's greatest collections of Islamic Art is yet another incredible visual experience waiting for you in Cairo. As you enter from Port Said street you are immediately in a hall of exquisite treasures. Elsewhere there are fountains, mosaics, illuminated Korans, Carpets and incredibly fine carving work. Open: 0900- 1600

MAHMOUD KHALIL MUSEUM

This museum is one of Cairo's best, houses the finest collection of European art in the Middle East.

Open: 0930-1800

LANDMARKS

CAIRO TOWER

From its 187 meters the Cairo Tower offers the most amazing panoramic views of the Egyptian capital. It is best to go up the tower's circular observation deck in the late morning or late afternoon for the clearest view

of the city. You will find a restaurant at the top for refreshments with a view.

CAIRO SHOPPING

KHAN ALKHALILI

Situated to the west of the city, you approach through the great Square that houses Sayidna Hussain Mosque on one side and Al Azhar Mosque and University on the other.

The secret to the bazar is to just plunge in and see where you end up.

The Spice Market

At the back of Khan Alkhalili lies the incredible Spice Market, which is always worth a visit. A great buy is Saffron. Get the more expensive Iranian Saffron from the cheaper local variety.

MODERN CAIRO

SHOPPING IN MALLS

MALL OF ARABIA

Mall of Arabia is a one million Sq. meter project. Phase 1 of the mall includes all the needed facilities and stores you desire. There is also a spacious food court, a

cinema complex, a hyper market, and all the international and local brands in Egypt.

CITY STARS

The largest mall in Africa, city stars is the eastern side of Cairo in Nasr city. There are numerous cinemas showing films in both Arabic and English.

GENENA MALL

An ice skating rink, Cinema, bowling aisles, and arcade style theme park can keep children busy as you shop till you drop.

DANDY MALL

On the other side of Cairo from City Stars lies Dandy Mall, which houses a good array of shops including Carrefour hypermarkets.

MALL OF EGYPT

This is my favourite mall in Egypt. Mall of Egypt is the first shopping destinations of its kind in Egypt. The mall is owned and managed by MAJID ALFUTTAIM, the leading pioneer in shopping malls, retail and leisure across the Middle East and North Africa Region. It is located on Al Wahat Road in 6th October city. It has 6,500 car parking spaces with a gross leasable area of 165,000 Sq. meters which houses the best local & international retailers including an unparalleled high

end fashion offering of the world's most prestigious brand.

Mall of Egypt's family leisure services include Ski Egypt-Africa's first indoor Skiing slope, a 21 multi-screen VOX cinemas and a magic planet Family entertainment. Carrefour; 0900 till midnight. Thur- Fri: 9-1 am.

SPA & WELLNESS

Egypt has been known for its Spa experiences at least since the time of Cleopatra and her famous beauty routine bathing in milk. Try some of Cairo's modern update on this traditional experience.

HILTON PYRAMID SPA:

Guests will feel transformed into Egyptian gods if only for the duration of the treatment. Indulge in a hydro thermal pool to release your neck and back tensions before taking a massage. The facilities also include a Sauna, Jacuzzi and steam room.

JW MARRIOTT HOTEL

The menders Thai Spa takes its inspiration from techniques developed in the Far East but was locally sourced health and beauty products adding to the allure. The Spa boasts a wide range of sophisticated health and beauty treatments including hydro therapy, exfoliation and body wraps.

CAIRO OPERA HOUSE

www.cairoopera.org

RED SEA & SINAI

Broadly speaking, tourist areas of Egypt can be divided into the Nile Valley, the Deserts and Oases and the Red Sea and Sinai region. Travelling between these areas is very easy and it's quite simple to book a holiday which combines very different experiences in one trip. It's no surprise that the Red Sea and Sinai is now one of the most popular and fastest growing tourism destinations of the world. As well as the peaceful sun and sand holiday, there's a huge range of activities on hand including world-famous diving desert trips, climbing, golf and national parks to name a few!

Geography:

Sinai Peninsula consists of an area of some 61,000 Sq. Kilometres. The Red Sea itself, dotted with coral reefs, has a rich maritime history which stretches back to the times of the Pharaohs. You can take the chance to pamper at El Gouna, or taste one of the aquatic sports at Hurghada, to explore the peaceful diving sites of Marsa Alam or even to enjoy the sun in Taba or relax in Nuweiba, not to forget Sharm el-Sheikh famous for its night life and Daheb for its tranquillity. Egypt has

taken to golf in a big way and resorts like Ain Sukhna, El Gouna, Hurghada, Sharm El-Sheikh, Taba which have fabulous courses to enjoy. There are many chances to enjoy the wide open spaces of Sinai, whether a trip to go camping under the stars, or a day trip to enjoy camel trekking, mountain biking or a jeep trip through sand dunes and mountains.

THE RED SEA COAST

The eastern Red Sea Coast of Egypt is caressed by the warm waters of the Gulf of Suez, which leads to the Suez Canal. Egypt's gateway to Europe. The area stretches from the Suez, which leads to the Suez Canal and south along the Gulf of Suez coast, along 1500 km where recent international tourist developments have sprung up around areas already popular with Egyptians.

Known as the premier destination for scuba diving enthusiasts for some years, the Red Sea area is fast becoming a haven for tourists looking for beach holidays, as well as vibrant and activity-rich holidays in guaranteed sunshine, and on some of the purest, most unspoilt beaches in the world.

Airports have been built along the Red Sea Riviera allowing convenient and easy flights to and from the area to anywhere in the world.

Diving and snorkelling among a rich and varied undersea world of sea life and breath-taking coral reefs

are a must, and the resorts have purpose built dive centres, run by qualified, knowledgeable and experienced diving instructors.

Ismailia offers lakeside walks and historical attractions while further south, El Gouna, a complete luxury complex where everything is there to fit anybody's needs. Hurghada is the area's most well-known established resort, bringing scuba enthusiasts from all over the world. Marsa Alam is well known for its unspoiled nature with rich possibilities for fun and leisure activities. Port Ghalib is a marina with shops, restaurants and cafes, where luxury yachts sail in and out along with the diving vessels. Others like Safaga, have water with the therapeutic effects. Many other desert excursions are easily accessible and can be arranged with your hotel.

Both sea and culture can be enjoyed by combining your time on the Red Sea Riviera with visits to key sites in the south of Egypt like Luxor, Aswan and Abu Simbel. Local flights are available and road trips offer stunning scenery with, for example, Luxor only about 4.5 hours from Hurghada by car.

HURGHADA

Hurghada was once a quiet fishing village, but over the last twenty years it has become the leading seashore

resort on the Red Sea. Holiday villages and hotels provide aquatic sport facilities for sail boarders, yachtsmen, Scuba beaches on which to relax before adventuring beneath the Red Sea to seek out underwater treasures. Hurghada has become an international centre for aquatic sports such as windsurfing, sailing, deep Sea fishing, swimming, but above all for some of the most spectacular diving and snorkelling in the whole world. The underwater gardens are amazing with a range of rare fish and coral reefs. If you are a diving enthusiast, or someone who would love to see what diving has to offer, Hurghada has simply the finest diving you will find. It really is paradise for anyone with appreciation of the underwater world.

Hurghada is well-served by beautiful hotels, where guests can enjoy Spa facilities, massages and beautiful beaches from which sailing, windsurfing, deep Sea fishing, kitesurfing, pedal boats and water skiing are available. For those who would rather view the undersea beauty without getting wet, glass bottomed boat trip is a great way to see the sights. Restaurants range from those serving traditional Arabic food to chains familiar to western visitors, including Hard Rock café.

Around Hurghada:

Operators arrange tours in which, after safety tests and orientation, they lead you on a mid-afternoon ride

over the desert sands to a Bedouin village, where you will learn about their life, heritage and traditions, before riding a camel in the desert and then taking in the amazing sunset view with a barbecue dinner entertained by traditional Bedouin music before you ride back to your hotel under the desert stars. These visits to Bedouin village can also be taken in four-wheel drive vehicles for those who would prefer someone else to do the driving.

SINDBAD, THE SUBMARINE

With diving and snorkelling so popular, it is interesting to find yet new ways to enjoy the undersea views. How about two hours discovering the wonderful marine life of the Red Sea by submarine? Hurghada is home to Sindbad, a submarine which carries 44 passengers and has a crew of two pilots who take their guests for a wonderful trip beneath the sea to a depth up to 22 meters where many coral reefs and colourful fish can be found.

Hotels

Top hotels from 5-star world famous brands to 1 star hotel can be found in Hurghada at good rates with entertainment at night for kids inside the hotel.

PORT GHALIB

Close to Marsa Alam International airport, and so very easily reachable straight from the plane is Port Ghalib, a beautiful port with its own legend and now a thriving marina and tourist town.

Port Ghalib is located five minutes from Marsa Alam international Airport and 2.5 hours by road from the valley of the Kings.

MARSA ALAM

About 220 km south of Hurghada, Marsa Alam is among the fastest growing holiday resorts on the Red Sea Riviera and is popular with wind surfers, scuba divers, snorkelling and beach loving sun seekers.

SINAI

It is a huge area, stretching from Sharm el Sheikh in the south to ElArish at its northern tip on the Mediterranean.

SHARM EL SHEIKH & NA'AMA BAY

The area consists of downtown Sharm el Maya, busy Na'ama Bay and Sharks' Bay further up the coast. Sharm el sheikh is the most popular resort in south Sinai and a perfect base from which to explore the region's stunning coast line and rugged interior.

It is the superb diving which has given the waters around here their worldwide reputation, and it is

frequently voted as the best diving site in the world by the experts who know these things. Because of this, the range and quality of dive sites, boats and professional instructors are superb. Try snorkelling or scuba diving you'll be in very safe hands and like many people, may find a hobby which lasts a life time. Take a camel trek into the desert to visit Bedouin villages, mystical oases and the mangrove forests of Nabq. Or stay in Sharm, sample world-class international cuisine at one of the restaurants on the beach and dance the night away at the resort's discos and night clubs. Whether you are flying direct to Sharm or via a large airport like Cairo, you'll find that connections work really well for the large number of Sharm lovers from all over the world.

A regular ferry service runs between Sharm and Hurghada and this gives you a great chance to see another great Red Sea resort and perhaps continue further into Egypt. Sharm el sheikh tourist office phone no. 0693664721.

The night life in Na'ama bay is rightly famous and is mainly located in the busy shopping and market area. There is a great mix of traditional and modern proper traditional coffee shops and stalls sit happily by new comers like Starbucks, Hard rock Café, and Mc Donald's.

There is a big choice for the clubbers and Sharm won serious credibility in their eyes with the arrival of the

famous Pacha Venue. One very popular trip is a jeep safari to the coloured Canyon. Even the overnight stays have a range of choices! You can do it the simple way in a genuine Bedouin tent or sleep literally under the stars or take dinner the Bedouin way. If luxury is your thing, you can enjoy the experience in effectively a five-star tent!

Did you know?

Sharm has built a reputation as one of the most popular conference venues in the world. The business world has also been quick to understand its big advantages, and many companies choose to hold conferences here with some time off in the sunshine for hard working staff afterwards!

The Sharm area has also become a real magnet for golfers. Fine golf courses up to international standards at Maritime Jolie Ville and of course guaranteed sunshine.

TABA & TABA HEIGHTS

200 KM FROM SHARM EL SHEIKH

The Taba region really came to worldwide attention in the 1970's when it became a magnet for back packers looking to enjoy the simple happy lifestyle. The small (and modern) downtown area of Taba Heights is worth a visit for an evening stroll around a few restaurants and shops with live outdoor entertainment of the

available. Most of the larger hotels run a free shuttle service. Many people see Taba as the ideal family destination. Several airlines fly to Taba, but if you would like to really absorb the scale and beauty of the surrounding country, consider flying in to Sharm and driving 200 km.

The Taba Heights Golf course has the largest championship hole in Egypt. The 14th is 640 yards and is a challenge to the very best golfers in the world and perhaps you too. Even if you are not up to championship standard yet, the club offers driving ranges and high quality coaching whether you are a total beginner or more experienced.

MOUNT SINAI & ST. CATHERINES MONASTERY

These two attractions, and their surrounding majestic mountains sum up the magic and diversity of the Sinai Region. The traditional Mount Sinai is actually the name of a collection of peaks, sometimes called the Holy Mountains. At its southern end is Mount Musa (the mountain of Moses), traditionally believed to be the place where Moses communicated with God and received the Ten Commandments. Mount Catherine which at over 2500 meters high, is also the highest mountain in Egypt. If you are planning to climb these mountains be sure that you are in a reasonable state of fitness as the climbs are long and tiring. The shortest route (but the steepest) known as Siket Sayidna Musa,

is a stairway consisting of 3750 steps, known as the steps of Penitence. It takes about two and half hours to make the climb and there are little stalls along the way where climbers can buy food and water. The longer route (El Bashait) may be climbed at night, either on foot or on the back of a camel. Many people prefer to climb during darkness, its partly to avoid the heat of the day, but mainly to be at the summit in time to see the glorious sunrise beneath them.

A typical trip would involve leaving Sharm el Sheikh in the evening and driving for about 2 hours to the foot of Mount Sinai. After the climb and a rest to watch that beautiful daybreak, it's time to descent and take them chance to visit St. Catherine Monastery.

This stunning Holy Place was constructed by order of the Roman Emperor Justinian between 527 and 565 CE. It is built around the site believed to be the place where Moses saw the Burning Bush in the famous Biblical Passage. The works of Art contained with the Monastery are amazing and priceless. They include Arab mosaics Greek and Russian icons, European oil paintings and many other religious artefacts. Famously, it also has one of the greatest collections of illuminated manuscripts in the world, second only to the Vatican. These are almost 5,000 values in a huge range of world's languages. Always check opening times before a visit to St. Catherine's as it does have some days when it is closed.

DESERTS & OASES

The first thing that you have to remember is that you really are talking about huge stretches of land here. That's a staggering total of over 270,000 Sq. miles or over 700,000 Sq. Kilometres. There are six large natural oases with contrasts in features and scenery: Fayoum, Baheriya, Siwa, Fafra, Dhakla and Kharga. Anyway exploring the desert is unforgettable adventure you'll never regret. Just make sure you'll be accompanied by experienced guide, plenty of water, food and good 4x4.

CRUISE

Aromatic alternative for adventures is the overnight journey on board a Felucca, a traditional sailing boat, from Aswan down the Nile to Edfu and /or Esna. Another of Egypt's natural attractions is the opportunity to take a Cruise on lake Nasser aboard a selection of cruise ships, some of which pamper the traveller in utmost luxury.

THE NILE VALLEY

One such road trip begins with a drive west across the dramatic Sinai Desert before going through the Suez Canal tunnel to reach Cairo. Don't miss the Egyptian Museum right in the centre, with one of the best collections in the world including the shining gold of

Tutankhamun. Every life should include a visit to the Pyramids and the sphinx, just outside the city. See the Nile at night (many good dinner cruises available) and browse through the Khan el Khalili market.

Perhaps one of the most popular ways to really enjoy in all that is special about Egypt is to take a Nile cruise. It gives you comfortable accommodation with a good quality cabin, a restaurant and usually a sun deck and small swimming pool.

Most start from Aswan and take a few days to make their way North to Luxor before their return. Also cruises from Aswan to Abu Simbel. It is also possible (usually by air) to take a trip towards Egypt's southern border to visit Lake Nasser and the incredible temples of Abu Simbel.

BEDOUIN LIFE & LORE IN THE DESERT

The Bedouin are the traditional nomadic tent dwellers of the Arabian and Egyptian deserts. There is a tribal culture reflected in the saying, "My brother and I against my cousin. My cousin and I against the world." The Bedouin of Arabia were the first converts to Islam and spread it throughout North Africa as far as Spain in the 7th Century.

The traditional justice system of the Bedouin is a court attended by all the elders of the tribe and other tribes if there is an intertribal dispute. In Egypt, amongst the

Red Sea tribes, this would be held in the presence of a small boat hanging from a tree. The boat symbolizes transitory stature on Earth and how we are duty bound to move.

Until the early 19th century the Bedouin controlled the deserts of Egypt and the Egyptians controlled the fertile Nile valley and Delta. The Bedouin consider themselves Arabs with their origin being the triangle from Syria to Iraq down to Saudi Arabia.

THE BEDOUIN NOW

When you travel with Bedouin don't expect a cup of coffee or tea when you stop. First they will unload the camels and then they will make them comfortable and feed them. Only then they will make camp and food for themselves and anyone travelling with them.

BEDOUIN TRAVEL TIPS

If you carry water bottle wrap it in a cloth and wet the cloth every so often. Do this in the early morning when the water is still very cold and it will remain cold in the heat of the day.

Instead of tying complex knots simply untwist the strands of the rope and past the end through making a loop. You can add a stop knot if you like. Stand your kettle in front of the fire so that the wind blows the flames all round the kettles sides as well as the bottom.

Wind can be strong at night and a flapping tent can be annoying or even blow down. The Bedouin use the saddles and jerry cans to build a kind of enclosure about knee height or may be a little more. When you lie down behind it you are completely out of the wind. Always make some kind of reassuring noise when you are around camels. It does not matter if it's humming, clicking or quiet singing or whispering the reassurance is the thing.

FINDING DIRECTION

Bedouin are reputedly brilliant at finding their way in the desert and they are but there is no magic to it, just extreme familiarity. They know that the wind is usually from the North west and that dunes align with that prevailing wind. They know that the sun, in winter at midday, is in the South. These cliff edges that can run the lengthy north/south western Desert road.

BEDOUIIN COOKING

Bedouin can be great cooks. Two favourite dishes are sound baked bread and fried dates. To make the bread you mix a dough of flour, salt, a little sugar and water. This you roll out flat. You then scoop away the embers of the fire and lay the bread in the sand. The cover with sand at embers. After ten minutes turn the bread

and cook the other side. Adjust the time depending on the thickness of the bread and how many embers you have. Though you may imagine the sand will stick it does not. Carefully brush with your hand and you will have a marvellous loaf of bread.

DO'S & DON'T'S

In summer you can expect to last less than three days without water, in winter much longer, probably a week. It is the very lack of water that makes the desert a dangerous place to make a mistake.

Do take care of the environment and make sure you leave the campsite as you find it. Take two or more vehicles when making a long trip into the desert which means any trip where you will be more than 25 km from a road it is advised you take two vehicles.

Checkout the guide

When hiring a guide with vehicles see how he loads the can? Does he store the fuel next to food? Is the vehicle itself dirty and in need of attention? Are the tyres worn and inappropriate? Thankfully poor guides are rare.

The desert is recognised by all as a serious place to have a breakdown and almost all guides go well prepared.

Ask to see the camels first on a camel journey. Do they look reasonably healthy? Do they have humps or are they skinny and emaciated? Next ask to mount a camel if it is your intention to ever ride. Many camel travellers never ride they simply walk alongside the beasts and see if the guide holds down the neck until you have mounted properly. Most accidents with camels happen when mounting or dismounting. When the camel suddenly bucks and throws its load you oft. If a guide is attentive at the moments he knows. Plan on drinking between 1 and 3 litres of water a day in winter in addition to any tea, coffee or soup. Drink in long bursts when you are cool early morning and early evening and lunch being best.

Don't

Wear trainers for walking, the sand will get inside the lining and make the shoe too tight. They also let too much sand in going down dunes. Sandals and boots are better.

LUXOR

Sacred places bound to catch the eye

El Uqsur, as modern day Luxor was originally known, is the ancient capital of Thabes, which together with the extensive necropolis on the opposite bank of the river, forms a focal point of ancient Egyptian culture. The central Luxor Temple complex presents itself is a 260-

mile long sequence of grandiose gates, courtyards and columned halls. More breath-taking still is the 40-hectare temple district of Karnak. For over 1700 years, well into the Roman times, Karnak was extended by almost every ruler. Also recommended are the various museums for mummification and archaeology.

Worthwhile day trips from Luxor include the temples of Dandara and Abydos in the north, Esna to the south or eastwards to the Red Sea.

Virtually every tomb features jaw dropping painted scenes revealing the Egyptians' reverence for their god's and a fundamental belief in the afterlife. A cruise offers a laid back way to tick off the important temples and sights but navigating the Nile in this way is a remarkable experience on its own right. Ploughing through there biblical waters offers views of villages little changed by time and kids playing on the river bank.

ASWAN: NUBIAN CHARM

Aswan home to the Nubian people and one of the first civilisations to establish homes along the Nile. Another short boat ride away is the striking Philae Temple, dedicated to the goddess Isis, and there's the colonial charm of the Sofitel Legend Old Cataract hotel, where Agatha Christie penned many of her novels.

Aswan Egypt's southernmost city, once the gate to inner Africa and today the last port of call for all river

cruises, is today particularly famous for its two dams. Further sites not to be missed include the temple of Beit el-Walli and kalabasha, the Nubian museum and the Nilometer on Elephantine Island. But the Nile is the centre of attention in Aswan and a romantic Felluca ride by the light of the setting sun. Perhaps including a walk through the botanical gardens Island (kitchener's), or on the western shore, a walk up to Agha Khan's mausoleum, or on the rock graves and the ruins of St. Sineon's Monetary, is not to be missed.

ALEXANDRIA & THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST

The venerable old port city of Alexandria, on the northwest edge of Nile Delta, was established as a commercial capital and centre of Hellenistic learning in the days of the ptolemies. The harbour entrance, once the site of the legendary lighthouse of Pharos, attracts attention today due to the Ottoman Citadel of Qaitbey.

SECURITY

The stringent security measures offered by escorted tour companies are another strong selling point. These include docking areas secured by police 24/7, plus a strict boarding pass system and metal detectors are everywhere in all hotels and shopping malls and cruise ships. On a government level, a security guard will accompany groups of more than 10 and remain on the

coach at all times, plus the main tourist sights are heavily policed.

ON DEPARTURE

You may buy and export Egyptian goods but it is strictly forbidden to trade in or export antiques.

Hopes are high that a major new billion-dollar attraction, the Grand Egyptian Museum, will put Cairo firmly back on the tourist map. Slated to open this year, the impressive modernist glass construction is being hailed as the largest archaeological museum in the world.

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