



# Enchanting Journeys

## Egypt

### THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



*Bridging the trade route between Africa and the Middle East, Egypt has long played an important role in history. Birthplace of one of the greatest civilisations known to man, Pharonic Egypt has left an indelible mark on modern day Egypt. Subsequent occupations by Alexander the Great, The Romans, Byzantium, Muslim Dynasties and the Ottoman Empire have all added character to what is now one of the world's most visited countries.*

*Egypt is the cradle of a deep-rooted civilization whose history goes back to more than 5 thousand years. It is the museum of history and the melting pot of the greatest civilizations throughout the ages. On its land, the Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Christian and Islamic Civilizations flourished. Every inch tells a tale or a legend and leaves a riddle that perplexes scientists and thinkers throughout time. In Egypt, there lie treasures which reveal everyday one letter of the alphabet of civilization and mysteries of human miracles in fields such as mummification and astronomy. In its land arts grew, sciences flourished and holy religions found a safe haven away from persecution, and received a warm embrace of monotheism until they took root and blessed the world with the light of faith.*

*Egypt is probably one of the world's oldest civilization & historical vacation spots, having emerged from the Nile Valley around 5,100 years ago. . Early Greeks, Romans and others went there just for fun, and to see the wonders of some of mankind's earliest triumphs. . For thousands of years, it has been the playground of emperors and kings, and we hope you will take the time to find out why*

*But Egypt is much more than Pyramids and monuments. It has much more to offer the modern traveller. The Red Sea with its warm blue waters, golden sandy beaches, and colourful marine life, boasts some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world. It is romantic cruises down the Nile on festive river boats, a night at the grand opera and it is a cultural experience like none you have ever experienced.*

*The desert oases of Siwa (site of the fabled Temple of the Oracle visited by Alexander the Great), Baharya and Farafra are beautiful, verdant green islands surrounded by some of the most stunning desert scenery to be found anywhere. Add to this the bustling, modern City of Cairo, with its mazy bazaars, fantastic restaurants and lively nightlife, and you have in Egypt the perfect tourist destination. It is a land bustling with life, sound, visual beauty and excitement. More than anything else, we want you to think of Egypt as fun.*

### **HISTORY**

*For centuries, Egypt has welcomed settlers from all around the world. Archaeological evidence suggests that over 250,000 years ago roaming hunter-gatherers inhabited Egypt, which at the time was rolling grassland. During the Palaeolithic period, around 25,000 BC, climatic changes turned Egypt into a desert. During this period a shift to primitive forms of cultivation occurred as communities began to settle in Middle Egypt and the Nile Delta. Soon these farmers were growing wheat, flax and weaving linen fabrics,*



as well as tending flocks. Gradually the primitive settlements became small tribal kingdoms, which eventually evolved into two loosely aligned kingdoms - one in the Nile valley (worshipping the god Horus) and the other in the Nile Delta (worshipping the god Seth). The two kingdoms vied for control over all the lands of Egypt, and in 3100 BC unification of Egypt, under the command of Menes, marked the beginning of the dynastic period of the Pharaohs.

At around 1517 AD, the Ottoman Turks were emerging as the main power in the region and were seeking to unify the Muslim world under one mighty empire. Forced to face the Turks in battle in 1516, near Aleppo in northern Syria, the Mamluke army was completely defeated and the following year the Turkish sultan Selim I entered Cairo. After the Turkish conquest, Egypt once again became just another far-flung province in a larger empire. Trading revenues and taxes went back to Constantinople and local administration was left to the Mamlukes, who retained considerable power in the form of local lords known as beys. In time the Turkish hold over Egypt weakened and by 1796 the Ottomans had been pushed back out of Egypt by the Mamlukes, only to be replaced two years later by a new world power, Napoleon and the French army.

In an attempt to disrupt commerce and weaken British control over India, the French decided to land its fleet at Alexandria in 1798. Napoleon's musket-armed forces quickly defeated the Mamlukes and took control of Cairo, proclaiming the liberation of Egypt and setting up a French style government. Less than a month later the British, under Admiral Nelson destroyed the exposed French fleet at the bay of Abu Qir and soon after the Ottomans sent an army to recapture Egypt, and with the aid of Britain forced the French to surrender in 1801. Under the Capitulation Agreement all the treasures gathered by the French were surrendered to the British, including the Rosetta stone (that depicted inscriptions in both Greek and Egyptian hieroglyphics), which now resides in the British Museum.

After the expulsion of the French, Mohammed Ali, an Ottoman army officer, forced his way to control over Egypt, and in 1805 was confirmed as Pasha by the Ottoman Empire. He promptly set about smashing the remaining Mamlukes power structure starting with the bloody massacre of nearly 500 beys after a feast at his citadel in Cairo. Although often barbaric in his actions, Mohammed Ali is widely credited with modernising Egypt. He introduced a public education system, large-scale cotton production, and built factories, railways and canals.

After his death in 1849 his successors continued with grand projects of social and industrial reform, the grandest of which was the construction of the Suez Canal, which opened to great international acclaim in 1869. To fund these ever more ambitious projects, Khedive Ismail (1863 - 1879) relied upon larger and larger loans from the British bankers. They advanced sums of money, and at such extortionately high interest rates, that Egypt could never hope to repay them, and this provided Britain with a convenient excuse in 1882 to announce that, until Egypt could repay its debts, it was taking control of the country.

The British allowed the heirs of Mohammed Ali to remain on the throne but to all intents and purposes power was in the hands of the British. Under the illusion of putting things in order and then leaving, the British soon tightened its control over Egypt and by 1917 had declared it a British protectorate. This action was precipitated by the outbreak of the First World War and Turkey, who still considered Egypt as a province of the Ottoman Empire, deciding to side with the Germans.

Following the war anti-British feeling increased, leading to riots in 1922 and, under King Farouk, the move to independence gathered pace. However, the outbreak of the Second World War halted Egypt's move to complete independence.

During World War II the deserts of Egypt played an important strategic role for the British against Rommel and his Afrika Korps, who almost reached Alexandria before being repulsed by the Eighth Army, under General Montgomery, at the battle of El-Alamein in October 1942. Throughout the war the Egyptians had



*seen the Germans as potential liberators from the British, and collaborators included future presidents Nasser and Sadat.*

*After the war anti-British riots resumed and the formation of Israel in 1948, with the resulting military defeat of the Arab forces, eventually led to revolution in 1952, in which a group of army officers, led by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, seized power, forcing King Farouk to abdicate.*

*In 1953 Egypt was declared a republic, and elections in 1956 confirmed Nasser as the country's first president. Almost immediately he forced the British once and for all to give up its attempts to control the Suez Canal - and subsequently nationalised the canal. He also secured finance for construction of the Aswan High Dam and to rearm the Egyptian army. Other communist style reforms were introduced, like the nationalisation of land and other private assets, and Nasser forged new and closer links with the Soviet Union.*

*Increasing anti-Israeli rhetoric and support for the Palestinians culminated in 1967 by Egypt moving troops into the UN controlled Sinai Peninsula; this triggered a pre-emptive strike by Israel, which wiped out the entire Egyptian air force in a surprise attack. The following Six Day War saw a humiliating defeat. Elsewhere in Egypt radical progress in education and health care and increases in land cultivation and power production from the Aswan Dam had to be tempered by an intolerant, heavily bureaucratic soviet style political system. Nasser's sudden death from a heart attack in 1970 came as a profound shock throughout the entire Arab world and his funeral procession in Cairo was the largest the country had ever seen.*

*Vice president Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser and was confirmed as president of Egypt in October 1970. His main objective was social reform and economic decentralisation, but this was soon overshadowed again by military developments. Allied with Jordan and Syria, Egypt launched an attack on the Israeli controlled Sinai Peninsula in October (the Yom Kippur War) 1973. Although defeated again, the Egyptians regained a strip of land east of the Suez Canal, and extensive post war changes were undertaken by the Sadat government. Political prisoners were released, press censorship lifted, and some political parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, were allowed.*

*Sadat's economic policies also helped to encourage foreign investment and reduce the state's role in the country's economy. These reforms and a general opening to the west, and in particular the US, culminated in the 1978 Camp David Agreement. Egypt recognised Israel's right to exist and in return the Israelis agreed to withdraw from the Sinai. This treaty did nothing to resolve the Palestinian issue and caused outrage in the Arab community, to such an extent that the Arab League Council withdrew its ambassadors from Egypt. At home the Islamic Brotherhood protested against growing economic problems and the Camp David Agreement and the subsequent clamp down by Sadat led, unsurprisingly, to his assassination by Islamic militants in October 1981.*

*Sadat's successor Hosni Mubarak, a former air force general and vice-president, carried out an obvious crackdown on suspected Islamic extremists, and managed to successfully balance home and foreign policies whilst still honouring the Israeli treaty. In 1990 the Arab League returned its headquarters to Cairo and for over a decade it seemed as if Mubarak had managed to keep the extremists under control.*

*However, this all changed in the early 1990s after a number of bomb and gun attacks against tourists. Another crackdown by the government succeeded in pushing the extremists back to their religious heartland of middle Egypt, but the 1997 Luxor massacre, in which 58 tourists were gunned down at the temple of Hatshepsut, provoked international condemnation and plummeting tourists figures. A partial recovery in tourist numbers was setback again in 2001 by the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks but today, 2004, tourist numbers are well on the way to complete recovery.*



*The social and economic situation in Egypt is still far from ideal and continuing bribery scandals, rising inflation, and widespread poverty will provide ample challenges for any future governments. However, the country's immensely rich history and numerous monuments continue to bring huge numbers of tourists and foreign currency into the country, and new projects such as the Toshka Project which aims to irrigate and bring into development a huge area to the west of the Nile in southern Egypt, give a positive look to the future.*

## **GOVERNMENT**

*Egypt has been a republic since 18 June 1953. Egypt has a Constitution that was adopted in 1971. It defines how the country is ruled.*

*There is a President elected every six years. A presidential nominee is chosen by a two-thirds majority vote of the People's Assembly, and then that nominee is elected by popular referendum. The People's Assembly is a part of the Egyptian government. 434 of the members are elected by the people, and 10 are appointed by the President. They approve new laws and budgets. The members of The People's Assembly are elected every 5 years.*

*The responsibility of ruling Egypt is shared by both a president and a prime minister. The Egyptian President holds a lot of power, because he supervises the formulation of laws and policies. He is also in charge of Egypt's Armed Forces (the military). The President, Muhammad Hosni Said Mubarak (Hosni Mubarak) was elected to office in 1981 and has been the President ever since. Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif was sworn into office in 2004. Because the President and Prime Minister share in running the country, this creates a system of checks and balances, keeping one ruling person or the other from getting too much power.*

*The Government is dependent on the political system of the country. The candidates from the political parties contest for election in the country, 50 percent of whom must be from the working class or farmers. The law of the country as stated in the constitution of country is interpreted and implemented under the judicial system of Egypt. Judicial duties are divided under several courts.*

*Parliament of Egypt is bicameral. The 2 houses are known as Upper Consultative Council and Lower People's Assembly. It is an integral part of the government and is in session for 8 months. Under special circumstances, the President of the Republic can call an additional session. Even though the powers of the Parliament have increased since the 1980 Amendments of the Constitution, the Parliament continues to lack the powers to balance the excessive powers of the President*

*The country is divided up into 27 governorates. A governorate is like a county or a small state. The governor is the head of the governorate, and is chosen by the President. It has its own local government, like a local city council. Each governorate manages its public utilities and provides services to the people.*

## **ECONOMY**

*In north eastern Egypt, the Nile Delta is where most Egyptian economic activity takes place. In the last 30 years, the government has reformed the highly centralized economy it inherited from President Gamal Abdel Nasser.*

*Since 1973 there has been a massive influx of foreign aid into Egypt. As a result there are new roads linking all areas of the country, villages up and down the Nile and in the deserts have been electrified, new schools, hospitals, and other services have sprung up by the dozen, telephone systems have undergone massive renovation and expansion, and the private sector has been encouraged to invest heavily in Egypt's future. The change in Egypt has been dramatic. Everything has improved.*



*During the 1990s, a series of International Monetary Fund arrangements, coupled with massive external debt relief resulting from Egypt's participation in the Gulf War coalition, helped Egypt improve its macroeconomic performance. The pace of structural reforms, including fiscal, monetary policies, privatization and new business legislations, helped Egypt to move towards a more market oriented economy and, since the turn of the new millennium, prompted increased foreign investment.*

*The reform program is still a work in progress and the government will need to continue its aggressive pursuit of reforms in order to sustain the spike in investment and growth and begin to improve economic conditions for the broader population. Egypt's export sectors, particularly gold and natural gas, have bright prospects.*

*Hard currency revenue is of major importance to the government. To that end visitors are encouraged to spend freely. The major source of income for the country as a whole has been the Suez Canal, oil and remittances from Egyptians working abroad. Domestically, tourism has become vitally important.*

*Agriculture now accounts for only 18% of the gross domestic product, industry for 30%, and services for 52%.*

*For the tourists there are dozens of new hotels and restaurants, monuments have been restored and their environments spruced up, tour guides are licensed, and retail shops are bursting with good quality products.*

## **EDUCATION**

*Egypt has the largest overall education system in the Middle East & North Africa and it has grown rapidly since the early 1990s. In recent years the Government of Egypt has accorded even greater priority in improving the education system.*

*With the help of World Bank and other multilateral organizations Egypt aims to increase access in early childhood care and education. The government is responsible for offering free education at all levels. The current overall expenditure on education is about 12.6 percent of GDP as of 2007.*

*The Ministry of education is also tackling with a number of issues: trying to move from a highly centralized system to offering more autonomy to individual institutions, thereby increasing accountability. The personnel management in the education also is being overhauled and teachers are being hired on merit with salaries attached to the performance.*

*The public education system in Egypt consists of three levels: the basic education stage for 4-14 years old: kindergarten for two years followed by primary school for six years and preparatory school for three years. Then, the secondary school stage is for three years, for ages 15 to 17, followed by the tertiary level. Education is made compulsory for 9 academic years between the ages of 6 and 14. Moreover, all levels of education are free in any government run schools.*

*Egypt has achieved the universal primary education targets and has also reduced the gender gap at all levels. Promotional examinations are held at all levels except in grades 3, 6 and 9 at the basic education level and the grades 11 and 12 in the secondary stage, which apply standardized regional or national exams.*

*The Ministry of Education is responsible for making decisions about the education system with the support of three Centers: the National Center of Curricula Development, the National Center for Education Research, and the National Center for Examinations and Educational Evaluation. Each center has its own focus in formulating education policies with other state level committees. Ministry of Higher Education supervises the higher education system.*



There is also a formal teacher's qualification track in place for basic and secondary education levels. The teachers are required to complete four years of pre-service courses at university to enter the teaching profession. Specifically with respect to teacher's professional development to raise mathematics, science and technology teaching standards, the Professional Academy for Teachers offer several programs. Local teachers also take part in the international professional training programs.

### **GEOGRAPHY / LOCATION**

The ancient Egyptians thought of Egypt as being divided into two types of land, the 'black land' and the 'red land'. The 'black land' was the fertile land on the banks of the Nile. The ancient Egyptians used this land for growing their crops. This was the only land in ancient Egypt that could be farmed because a layer of rich, black silt was deposited there every year after the Nile flooded. The 'red land' was the barren desert that protected Egypt on two sides. These deserts separated ancient Egypt from neighbouring countries and invading armies. They also provided the ancient Egyptians with a source for precious metals & semi - precious stones. It occupies 3.3 percent of Africa's land mass, but 95 percent of the population inhabits only about five percent of their country, mostly along the banks of the Nile River.

The very existence of this country depends on the slender ribbon of the Nile, the world's longest river. The river runs through rainless Egypt from south to north, and irrigates the land like the blessed river that Muslims believe runs through the gardens of paradise. The Nile is more than 3,800 miles long, and for the last 1,600 miles of its course through the Sudan and Egypt, it has no tributaries. The Nile made the development of civilization along the valley possible and the construction of Aswan High Dam made it feasible to grow three crops a year. Egypt's main crops include cotton, on which its 19th-century wealth was based, rice, sugar cane, grains, and beans.

West of the Nile lies the Libyan Desert, a plateau scattered with huge, bizarre rock formations, sandy desert and fertile oasis. East of the Nile lies another barren plateau rising to a ridge of mountains in the east. The Sinai peninsula rises from coastal plains in the north to the high mountains around mounts Sinai and Catherine (2,642m) in the south.



Egypt, at the northeast corner of Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, is bordered on the west by Libya, on the south by the Sudan, and on the east by the Red Sea and Israel. It is nearly one and one-half times the size of Texas. Egypt is divided into two unequal, extremely arid regions by the landscape's dominant feature, the northward-flowing Nile River. The Nile starts 100 mi (161 km) south of the Mediterranean



and fans out to a sea front of 155 mi between the cities of Alexandria and Port Said. It has an area of 386,660 square miles - 1,001,450 square kilometres with a coastline of 2,450 km.

## **THE LAND**

### **Western Desert**

To ancient Egyptians, the west was the place of the dead, so it must have seemed appropriate that the threats to Egypt's security often came out of the Western Desert. The desert here is relatively flat with depressions that have created oases.

### **Eastern Desert**

Unlike the Western Desert, the narrow stretch of land between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea coast is mountainous. Its mountains rise to heights of 2,500 feet and are rich in gold and other minerals.

### **Holy Desert**

The Sinai Desert offers an even more dramatic landscape than the Eastern Desert. The Sacred Mt. Sinai is where Moses is said to have received the Ten Commandments.

### **Abu Simbel**

On the edge of the Nile, 768 miles south of Cairo, stands the Temple of Abu Simbel, the most colossal temple in all of Egypt, and one of the best preserved. Situated on the western bank of the river, it was carved out of the side of a sandstone rock cliff. It faces east to let the light of the rising sun penetrate the innermost sanctuary. The huge complex was built between 1300 and 1233 BC by one of the greatest pharaohs, Ramses II, and dedicated to the three principal gods of ancient Egypt. Four colossal statues of Ramses II in a seated position stand at the entrance, each more than 65 feet high. On the right and left of each statue are smaller statues of the royal family. From the facade to its innermost chamber, the temple measures 200 feet. The first room has a ceiling supported by eight columns faced with huge stones of Ramses II in the pose of the god Osiris. The ceiling and walls throughout the temple are beautifully decorated. The color in many places is still in excellent condition. In the centuries that followed, sands piled up around the temples until they were finally buried and forgotten. In 1813 the Swiss explorer Burckhardt rediscovered them. It was not, however, until the building of the Aswan Dam and the publicity to save the monuments of Nubia that an avalanche of visitors fell upon this spot. Upon the completion of the new Aswan Dam, Nile waters inundated the area between Aswan and the Sudan border. Many groups worked in this area, making important finds and dismantling and transporting monuments and temples to other locations. The most difficult of all these projects was saving the temples of Abu Simbel. The salvage project began in 1965, first by building a protective wall around them, then dismantling the temples. All 400,000 tons of stone were cut into sections that were crated and reassembled in the exact position as before at the top of the mountain cliff, ninety feet above the old site. The project was executed with such precision that only an inch by inch examination of the stones reveals the salvage work.

### **Abydos**

For centuries, Abydos was a place of pilgrimage, the tomb of Osiris was supposedly located in the area. It is situated on the site of the ancient city of This (Thinis), which was one of the earliest settlements of man in the Nile Valley. Tombs of the Pharaohs from the first Dynasty have been discovered here.

### **Aswan**

From its beginning, Aswan located about 600 miles south of Cairo was the gateway to the south and the trade route from Egypt to Central Africa. The city has long been a favorite winter resort because of its dry climate and beautiful location. The late Aga Khan maintained a villa here and asked to be buried there upon his death. Every year since the ancient times, the flooding of the Nile has been the Egyptians' main concern. The necessity to cope with the inundation led the ancient Egyptians to acquire mathematical, astronomical, and engineering knowledge far in advance of other civilizations. Planning for lean years during the years of plenty established law and order. With the building of the High Dam, the unpredictable



behavior of the Nile was a thing of the past. Aswan, Egypt's southernmost town, is totally different from the rest of the country. It feels more African and the majority of its inhabitants are Nubians, darker and taller than Upper Egyptians. They speak a different language and have different customs. Even in ancient times, this is where Egypt ended and Nubia began. Aswan's position made it an important market for caravans passing with gold, slaves, incense, and ivory.

### **Cairo**

Cairo, Egypt's capital and the largest city in Africa, has a population of 15 million people. It is the meeting place of Africa and Arabia, Europe and Asia. It has been the bank and the warehouse of east-west trade. Its strategic location made it the most convenient junction to ship goods from the East via the Red Sea. From there, products were carried overland the short distance to Cairo, where they were stored, bought, and sold. Finally, they were floated down the Nile to the Mediterranean and on to Europe. Few capitals in the world have quite the same all-encompassing position as does Cairo today. Almost nothing happens in Egypt that doesn't happen in Cairo. It is Egypt's economic, political, administrative, cultural, educational, entertainment, military, transportation and historical center. The great city has known many incarnations in its long history. The first is so ancient, historians do not know when it was started or by whom. Known simply as On in antiquity, but the Greeks called it Heliopolis, the city of the sun. It became the center of worship for Re, the sun god, reaching its peak around 2500 BC. For hundreds of years, On possessed the ancient world's most advanced university. After the rise of Thebes, however, it lost its pre-eminence. Still, it remained an important center of the empire. After the Persians under Cambyses razed Heliopolis to the ground in 525 BC, the city's history was broken for a thousand years. The Greeks followed the Persians, shifting the capital to Alexandria. From that point, Egypt was considered less a part of Africa and more a part of the Mediterranean community. At the same time, the reign of pharaohs ended and a European era began. A thousand years later, Arabs streaked across the desert to pitch their tents at what had then become known as Fustat, forerunner of modern Cairo. This signaled the end of Greek culture and the Christian era in the region, and the beginning of a new Arab and Islamic Egypt. Cairo continued to change and evolve over the following five centuries, expanding north along the Nile. But even after a thousand years, the city's greatest expansion has been in this century, and, more specifically, since World War II. Today Cairo stretches so far in each direction that the only place from which one can glimpse its great expanse is from the Tower of Cairo on the island of Gezira, in the middle of the Nile.

### **Dandera**

Dandera was the capital of the sixth district of Upper Egypt under the Ptolemies. Here, the Temple of Hathor, is one of the best-preserved monuments in Egypt, built in the 1st century BC near the end of the Ptolemaic rule. It was dedicated to Hathor, goddess of heaven, joy and love, and patron deity of Dandera. It took about 100 years to build, and some parts were never completed. The temple is elaborately decorated

### **Edfu**

Located about halfway to Aswan on the left bank, approximately 70 miles south of Luxor. The ancient Greeks called the site Apollonopolis, after Apollo (or Horus) whose representation here is in the form of an eagle. The Temple of Horus is practically intact and is one of the finest examples of Ptolemaic art in Egypt. Edfu was almost completely buried in the sand until the 1860's. It is the best preserved temple in Egypt, and in fact, the best preserved temple of the ancient world found anywhere. Its foundation was laid in 237 BC but the temple was not completed until two centuries later. Like all major temples, it is built upon hallowed ground

### **Esna**

Located about 30 miles south of Luxor, the Temple of Khnum is Ptolemaic in origin. From other evidence, however, it appears an earlier temple was constructed by Thutmose III (1500 BC) on the same site. The drawings in this temple were the last representations of a pharaoh found in Egypt. The temple here is well preserved and restored.





### **Kom Ombo**

Located about 105 miles south of Luxor, Kom Ombo is situated on a hill overlooking the Nile at a point where the river makes a wide bend to the west. In ancient times, it was a strategic location on the desert route to Nubia and Ethiopia. The principal deities of the ancient town were Harwar, a hawk-headed god and Sobek, represented in the form of a crocodile. The Temple of Kom Ombo is dedicated to the two deities, and is unlike any other monument in Egypt. To avoid offending either god, a twin temple was constructed, the left half dedicated to Hathor, the right half to Sobek.

### **Luxor**

The present day town of Luxor on the east bank of the Nile is situated 400 miles south of Cairo on the site of ancient Thebes, the capital of Egypt at its zenith during the Middle and New Kingdoms. The actual site of Thebes is said to have occupied all of the area between Luxor and Karnak. Today, the area contains ruins of the most gigantic monuments, statues, and temples in all Egypt. On the west bank of the Nile is the world-famous Valley of the Kings, burial grounds for the great pharaohs. In nearby cliffs are the Tombs of the Nobles. Interior walls and ceilings are painted with beautifully detailed scenes and inscriptions in colors so vivid they could have been applied yesterday.

### **Pyramids of Giza**

The three Pyramids of Giza are the last surviving of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The pyramids stand on a hill overlooking the Nile Valley. The city has grown out to almost meet them. Although there are some 80 pyramids in Egypt, the three at Giza are the most important and famous. The great pyramid of Cheops (Khufu) is first in both size and age, erected about 2690 BC, is. The Great Pyramid remains the most massive stone structure in the world. Its original height was 481 feet, and its base covers 13 acres. It consists of an estimated 2.5 million tons of stone put together without mortar with such precision that not even a razor blade can be passed between them. Each stone weighs an average of 2.5 tons. The interior contains several long empty corridors without decoration. Two openings pierce the entire structure and let in air from the outside. Cheops' son, Kheophren, built the second pyramid, slightly smaller in size, around 2650 BC. The third and smallest of the three was erected about 2600 BC, and named after Menkaru (Mycerinus).

### **The Sphinx**

Five hundred feet southeast of the Great Pyramid is the fascinating Sphinx, the first large, royal statue known in ancient Egypt and one of the world's most significant monuments. Most scholars believe that it dates back to about 2500BC, the time of the Fourth Dynasty. It portrays a recumbent lion with the head of a man. It was carved from natural rock. The body of the lion, the symbol of kingship, represented might. The Sphinx's human head symbolized intelligence. It has a total length of approximately 240 feet and is 66 feet tall at its highest point. The face alone measures 16.6 feet. The Sphinx faces east from where it was meant to watch the rising sun, the return of life, each day. The image represented by the Sphinx is generally accepted to be the son of King Cheops, Chephren depicted as Horus presenting offerings to Ra, the sun god. Sphinx is a Greek word, and was not originally used as the name of the statue. In the New Kingdom, around 1550BC, it was known as Hor-em-akht, 'Horus in the Horizon' or Bw-Hol, 'Place of Horus'. Horus, originally a sky god, whose eyes were the sun and the moon, was often depicted as a falcon-headed man, and was revered as the protector of Kings. In the New Kingdom, the Sphinx became a symbol of kingship and many kings of this period built temples and stelae in the area surrounding the statue. Amenhotep II built a mud-brick temple to the northeast of the Sphinx. Rameses II, one of the ancient kingdom's most prolific builders, constructed an altar of granite between its paws. Ancient tablets also show images of worshippers presenting burnt offerings to the Sphinx. The Sphinx once had a beard, pieces of which were found between the Sphinx's paws by the archaeologist Caviglia in 1816. These fragments represent only about 15 percent of the original beard. Caviglia donated some of the fragments to the Cairo Museum; others can now be seen in the British Museum in London. Mysteries and cryptic tales surrounding the Sphinx are numerous and legendary. One such apocryphal tale reported that a record of the lost city of Atlantis lies somewhere under the Sphinx's paws. Other believe a huge temple lies beneath the Sphinx itself. Stories of a tunnel stretching from the Sphinx to the pyramids have also



been negated. In 1978, two passages were in fact discovered, one behind the head and another on the tail. But far from leading to the pyramids, these tunnels led under the monument and were made during the past century by treasure-hunters.

### **Preservation**

Countless men and women have come to study this magnificent structure including French scholars accompanying Napoleon's army in 1798, and Baraize in 1926. Baraize was the first to begin restoration work. He used cement to restore the head, and cleared away sand around the Sphinx. The most recent period of restoration began in 1953, continuing until the present day. The cement that was used in earlier attempts has now been found to be causing its own set of problems. The porous limestone of the statue allows the passage of air. But cement is non-porous and rigid and has caused changes in the basic proportions of the statue. A rising water table has presented another problem. Water evaporates, leaving salts behind that interact badly with the limestone, causing the rock to become powdery and to crumble. Pollution from the nearby city of Cairo, together with heat, wind, sand, and humidity are all agents in the monument's slow destruction. In 1982, stones were lost from the north paw and, in 1988, a large stone fell from the Sphinx's shoulder. From 1989 onwards, the restoration project entered a more enlightened phase, with more thought being given to the monument's long-term preservation in its original form. Many agencies and individuals are actively dedicated to the preservation of this renowned monument. The true origin and purpose of the Sphinx remains a mystery, and it is perhaps a puzzle that may never be fully solved. Despite its fundamental enigma, the image of the Sphinx remains as a touchstone to ancient Egypt.

### **CLIMATE**

Egyptian summers are hot and dry in most of the country and humid in the Delta and along the Mediterranean Coast. In recent years the humidity has spread to Cairo and the city swelters in August. There is a short spring and autumn and during the 50 days (khamseen) between the end of March and mid-May, dust storms can occur sporadically. Winters are mild with some rain, but usually there are bright, sunny days and cool nights. There is a short spring and fall.

Egypt has a desert climate with hot, dry summers and moderate winters. Difference in temperature in the day and night can be quite big. The hot summer starts in May while in November the mild winter starts. Rainfall is very sporadic and only falls in the north.

One of the sunniest countries in the world, Egypt averages 11 hours of sunshine a day in the summer (April to October - average temp. 21-28C [70-83°F]) and 8 hours a day in the winter (November to March - average temp. 13-20C [55-67°F]). An exception to this is the Mediterranean coast, which, although still warm, can experience periods of cloud and rain during the winter months. On the coast and in the Nile Delta during the spring months the Khamsin desert winds blow strong. The winters remain warm allowing pleasant travel all year round. Winters are mild with some rain, but usually there are bright, sunny days and cold nights.

There is very little rain at any time of year in Egypt, but there is a considerable variation in temperature during the year and also between night and day. The climate is less extreme on the Mediterranean coast, where it is always cooler than in the rest of the country. Rain is most common in January & February in Cairo and November-February in Aswan. March and April can bring the khamaseen, a strong hot wind that carries dust and sand from the Sahara Desert. Cairo, which is actually part of Lower Egypt because the Nile flows from south to north, is extremely hot from June to September, but is more bearable at night. It can be quite cold in winter months, often with rain around Christmas. The air is drier and hotter toward the south, which is Upper Egypt. Southern areas are hot even in winter, with surprisingly cold nights. The tourist season is traditionally from the end of November to February, but Cairo and even Luxor are quite chilly at that time. The best time is either May when the heat is still bearable, or October-November when the long, hot summer comes to an end.



Average Year-round Temperatures (max/min., in Fahrenheit)

Cairo	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rain (mm)	4	4	3	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	3	7
Sun (hrs)	7	8	9	10	10	12	12	11	10	9	8	7
Temp (Max)	19	21	24	28	32	35	35	35	33	30	26	21
Temp (Min)	9	9	12	14	18	20	22	22	20	18	14	10
Days of Rain*	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hum (%)	43	39	33	28	25	27	31	35	37	36	42	46

Luxor	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rain (mm)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Sun (hrs)	10	11	10	11	11	12	12	11	11	11	10	10
Temp (Max)	23	25	29	35	39	41	41	41	39	35	30	25
Temp (Min)	6	7	11	16	20	23	23	24	22	18	12	7
Days of Rain*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hum (%)	38	32	23	18	15	15	17	17	21	28	32	39

Bring light clothes for the daytime when temperatures are high and warm clothes for the night-time when temperature can plummet.

**FLORA & FAUNA**

The valley along the Nile is a highly cultivated landscape where date palms prevail. And of course the protected lotus and papyrus, symbols of Egypt, grow near the Nile. The most common animals are the many fish species in the Nile and the Red Sea and there are many bird species. In the deserts still live some wild animals.

Plants are those common in dry subtropical and tropical lands, such as papyrus. Egypt has no forests but does have date palm and citrus groves; eucalyptus and cypress have been introduced. Sheep, goats, and donkeys are found throughout the country, and camels are found in all the deserts. Egypt has some 300 types of birds, with about half of them being breeding species within the country. Wild animals are few, except for the hyena, jackal, lynx, mongoose, and wild boar, the last-named inhabiting the Nile Delta. The ibex may be found in the Sinai, and gazelles in the deserts. The Nile is adequately stocked with fish, but crocodiles have been reduced to a few along the shores of Lake Nasser. Reptiles include the horned viper and the hooded snake.

**POPULATION**

Population census has been known in Egypt since ancient times. The first census was carried out in 1882 and the total number of population at that time was 6.7 million. The government takes a census of the Egyptian population every ten years. The last census conducted in 1996 put the number of population at 59.3 million. The 2006 census is the thirteenth to be held. According to the 2006 census figures, the population, including those living abroad, is estimated to have reached 76.5 million.

More than 90% of the population is of Eastern-Hamitic origin but has been totally arabised. The largest minority is formed by the Nubians (about 6 million people) who mainly live in southern Egypt. There are also some small groups of Berbers and Bedouin nomads. A few million Egyptians live and Work in Kuwait, Iraq & Bahrain. Almost 34% of the population is younger than 15. The average life expectancy for



## Canadian Globetrotters

men is 67 years and 73 for women. 74 people per square kilometer when calculated for the whole country, but 1132 per km<sup>2</sup> inhabitable area.

### PEOPLE

*The Egyptians thought of themselves as the perfect people: not all white like these slaves from West Asia (modern Israel or Lebanon), and not all black like this visiting queen from Punt (modern Ethiopia)*

*Egyptian people lived halfway between places where people have lighter skin, like Germany, and places where people have darker skin, like East Africa. So Egyptians were not either white or black, but somewhere in between. Egyptian people were related to other Africans, but their language was related to the Semitic languages. Hebrew & Arabic.*

*The population is divided into four cultural groups consisting of Copts, Bedouins, Nubians and Egyptian peasants, or Fallahin, basically farmers living in villages.*

*Egypt is actually a wonderful and delightful mixture of traditions, with a socioeconomic structure which allows, more and more, a gradient of classes. But one must look, and feel with the heart in order to touch this essence of Egypt.*

*A considerable amount, if not majority, of Egypt's population now live in larger cities, mostly Cairo and Alexandria. In fact, these two cities dominate the vision of most foreigners. They are vitally important to Egypt's culture, but one should not neglect the many other moderately sized cities. And within these cities there is a virtual kaleidoscope of social stratas. There are doubtless the poor, the recent "fallahins" come to the city, and the lower echelons of what we will call the commercial or merchant class. They are evident, and plentiful. But these businessmen merge into the middle class, and then upper middle class. More than a few become wealthy. Some come from families who probably have ancient ties with trading, but others are those fallahins who have found what they came looking for in the city. Perhaps the poorest of these merchants, those who sell produce or bean meals in the streets might answer to the term fellahin but most would not fall within any of the traditional cultural groups. They have a million faces, and also as many professions and trades. They make gold jewelry and copper pots, rugs, they paint, build buildings and fine pottery. They sell groceries at the corner market. They trade in tractors and water pumps, they are butchers and bakers, taxi drivers, and secretaries. And these days many of these people are simply Egyptian, not Coptic, not Nubian, not Bedouin and certainly not the traditional Fallahin.*

*But what is equally missing from most travel guide descriptions of the Egyptian culture is a real feeling for the beauty of these marvelous cities. Here, one will find teenagers at McDonalds or Pizza Inn and making the local drag in their small Fiats. There, one will see brightly lit streets with multicolored lights strung from the buildings so as to celebrate a birthday or a wedding. One will find a continuous stream of blaring horns, as a population perpetually late for some meeting scrambles about the city. But one may admire this madness from an armchair next to his favorite coffee shop, where he may be overcome by a feeling of tranquillity. It is often a culture of the back streets of small neighborhoods, particularly at night, where the television has not dispatched social accord. The residents of these small neighborhoods within these monstrous cities know each other well, and look out for one another.*

*It is also a testament to the moral culture that in a city the size of Cairo, there is virtually no crime rate. Many westerners believe that this is due to stiff punishment, but the real reason is the population's loyalty to their religious faith. The virtual absence of drinking and drugs among the local population, prohibited by their Islamic law and enforced by their own piety, surely has much to do with this. When one ceases judging cultures purely from the standpoint of material wealth, and begins to see the humanistic success of the Egyptian culture, it is difficult for a person of any religious persuasion not to develop a deep respect for Islam.*



## **LANGUAGE**

Almost 98% of the population speaks Egyptian-Arabic, a dialect of the Modern Standard Arabic. It is also the most important Arabic spoken since Egypt produces most of the Arab films, tv-series and music. Almost everyone in the countries where Arabic is spoken can understand an Egyptian. There are some minorities which speak Nubian, Berber & Coptic.

The official language is Arabic, but English and French are very widely spoken, especially in tourist centers. Signs on major streets are usually in Arabic and Roman. It is a good idea to become familiar with numerals as it is often used for prices. English is taught in the schools and there is usually someone who is happy to practice with you.

## **RELIGION**

Muslim (mostly Sunni) 94% (official estimate), Coptic Christian and other 6% (official estimate).

Islam is the official religion of Egypt, but there is a large Coptic community and other Christian sects are represented in the country. There is also a small Jewish community. Islam is part of the Judaeo-Christian family of religions and was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in what is now Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The Copts, a large minority in Egypt, are a Christian sect which separated from the Byzantine and Latin church in the 5th century over a disagreement in religious doctrine. Copts founded the world's first monasteries, and the continuing monastic tradition is an important part of the Coptic faith.

Foreigners are free to attend any Coptic service. Non-Muslims can enter mosques listed as antiquities. Muslims may enter any mosque at any time free of charge. Listed below is a small selection of Christian services. Hours should be checked in the newspapers.

## **CULTURE**

We guarantee cultural differences between Western society and those of Africa and the Middle East. Throughout the continent, people possess attitudes toward time, business, politics, friendships, etc., that are very different from ours, and are governed by traditions, customs, and philosophies, some of which are thousands of years old. But this is all part of why we travel – to experience different cultures of the world. Observing simple rules of common courtesy as well as keeping a good attitude and your sense of humor will go a long way toward making your journey interesting and fun for all involved. Treat everyone as you would want to be treated. A little respect goes a long way.

Egypt is a Middle Eastern country and has Middle Eastern customs. Whether Muslim or Copt, the Egyptians are deeply religious and religious principles govern their daily lives. Combined with religious belief is commitment to the extended family. Each family member is responsible for the integrity of the family and for the behavior of other members, creating an environment that would be envied by many people in the West. Certainly, the result is that the city of Cairo is safer than any western metropolis.

Yet when westerners visit Egypt they are often apprehensive. Their views of Egyptians and Arabs, fomented by unkind and untrue media stories, often bear no relation to reality. Travelers are often surprised by their friendly, hospitable reception and take home with them good feelings about Egypt and its population.

Egyptians have been raised in a social environment steeped in Islam, a background that can color their decision-making in a way difficult for foreigners to understand. Yet it is precisely this training that makes Egyptians some of the most charming and helpful of hosts. By understanding the culture and with consideration for your hosts, you can be a welcome guest in Egypt.



### **Religious Limits**

*Devout Muslims do not drink alcohol though most do not object to others imbibing in reasonable amounts. If in doubt, ask. In addition to the prohibition on alcohol, the faithful do not use drugs or eat pork, which is considered unclean. Explicit sexual material - magazines, photos, tapes, or records - is illegal and subject to confiscation. Keep in mind that proselytizing is illegal in Egypt. Foreigners actively working to convert Egyptians have been asked to leave. Remember, almost all the Egyptians are either conservative devoted Moslems or Coptics. Whether Muslim or Copt, Egyptians are deeply religious and religious principles govern their daily lives. Combined with religious belief is commitment to the extended family. Each family member is responsible for the integrity of the family and for the behavior of other members.*

### **Moral Codes**

*In Egypt, there are hardly any restrictions on foreign women. Ticket lines, for example, are occasionally segregated. Women should line up with other women (especially since the lines are usually shorter). On buses, the driver may want you to be seated in the front with other women. On the metro lines, the first car is usually reserved for women. For men, speaking to an unknown Egyptian woman is a breach of etiquette. Take care in any liaisons you form because some families still follow ancient traditions.*

### **Social Mores**

*In general, Egyptians are most accommodating and they will go out of their way to help you and respond to any questions you have. Most Egyptians require little personal space and will stand within inches of you to talk. You will find that whenever you start talking with an Egyptian, you will inevitably draw a crowd, and often the Egyptians will start discussing among themselves over the correct answer to a question.*

*Egyptian men walk hand in hand down a street, but it is rare to see males and females touch in public. Physical contact between foreign couples is also frowned upon. If you want to feel at ease, don't kiss or embrace in the street. For men, speaking to an unknown Egyptian woman is a breach of etiquette.*

*Muslims are scrupulous about washing before prayer. They are just as scrupulous about eating and will only use their right hand, the left is reserved for cleaning themselves. Feet are also considered unclean, so when a Muslim enters a mosque he takes off his shoes and when he sits down facing someone, he makes sure the soles of his feet are not showing.*

### **Invitations**

*Egyptians, if offered anything, will refuse the first invitation which is customary. Therefore (unless you're dealing with Egyptians used to Western frankness) you should do the same. If the offer is from the heart and not just politeness, it will be repeated. If you're invited into a home, especially in small villages, and have to refuse, the householder will often press for a promise from you to visit in the future, usually for a meal. If you make such a promise, keep it, for having foreign guests is often considered a social coup. If you fail to arrive, your would-be host will be humiliated. To repay invitations, you may host a dinner in a restaurant, a common practice.*

*When Egyptians meet, they don't just say hello. Greetings are elaborate, and very often they will force one another to stop for tea. The farewells will be as elaborate as the greetings. Foreigners who take time to ask after people's health are always appreciated.*

### **Baksheesh**

*Please do not offer tips to professionals, businessmen, or others who would consider themselves your equals. You may seriously offend them by your act.*

### **Women**

*Before the famous Egyptian feminist Hoda Shaarawi deliberately removed hers in 1922, the veil was worn in public by all respectable middle-class and upper-class women, Muslim, Jew, or Christian. By*



1935, however, veils were a comparative rarity in Egypt, though they continued to be worn as an item of fashion in neighboring countries like Syria and Jordan for 30 more years and have remained obligatory in the Arabian Peninsula to this day. Nowadays in Egypt, some women still wear the veil demonstrating either modesty or Muslim piety. One reason this is favored by many young professional women, is that it tends to discourage male advances, physical or verbal.

From the 1930s onwards, Egyptian women began to enter into business and the professions. Thus by 1965, thanks in part to social changes affected in the course of the July Revolution, Egypt could boast a far higher proportion of women working as doctors, dentists, lawyers, professors, diplomats, or high officials than might have been found in the US or in any European country outside of Scandinavia.

### **Women Traveling Alone**

In Egypt, a woman traveling alone is generally safe, but she will be noticed, less in large cities than in the country. However, if problems do occur, seek help from the police or any shop nearby. Although you probably will never be accosted, take simple precautions as you would anywhere: don't walk in deserted areas alone. Although most invitations are innocent, don't accept them from strangers.

### **Clothing**

Throughout large parts of the Middle East and Western Asia, the Muslim faith is the predominant religion. The effects this can have on you, as you travel through these countries can be very limited, but as a matter of respect, we often advise on certain dress standards.

The choice at the end of the day is yours. Some people can find conforming to rigid dress codes very frustrating but local people do appreciate the fact that you have tried. For the small matter of covering up, either just wearing long trousers for men, a head-scarf or a full chador as in Iran for women, new doors can be opened and insights can be revealed.

Generally, when you travel in Muslim countries, you will be greeted with courtesy and respect no matter how you dress, within reason.

As western influence grows more and more, many of the younger generations are changing their social and dress customs. You will see short skirts in many capital cities of the Muslim world. Within the dress codes of the Muslim world are numerous religious and social issues that you the traveller do not need to fully understand, but you must be aware that the issue of dress is much more than just a matter of conforming. We still believe therefore, that as a matter of courtesy, to follow the dress code of the local people is the correct course.

The influx of western tourists has resulted in a more tolerant dress code. At many tourist sites and towns, T-shirts, tight tops and shorts are widely seen; this however does not mean that people do not take offence. In more rural areas away from the Nile delta and in the desert areas, such items of clothing will attract attention and notice and may be unwelcome. The style of dress sense you adopt will dictate to some degree how you will be treated.

Staff from our local offices will be able to advise you on appropriate dress. Rules are often more rigid in mosques and holy places. You will not be allowed to enter if you are not dressed appropriately.

In the main tourist areas people wear their standard western dress for hot conditions. In more rural areas, again, dressing far more conservatively is advisable (loose fitting clothing, with the optional headscarf



### **Visiting Mosques**

Major tourism mosques are open to the public unless services are in progress (the main service is on Friday at noon). Other mosques are not. Keep in mind that a mosque differs from a western church in that Christian churches are considered houses of God, while mosques are more a gathering place for the faithful of Islam. Unless otherwise posted, tickets to some that have been restored are sold by the caretaker for about LE 3-6. All visitors to mosques, mausoleums, and madrasas must remove their shoes. Most Muslims walk around in their stockings but those mosques that are major tourist attractions have canvas overshoes available; a tip of 50 PT to LE 1 is in order for the people who put them on for you. Women must cover bare arms and should also have a hat.

- Always dress conservatively, particularly women, and most importantly when visiting mosques (shorts are not allowed), churches, synagogues and bazaars.
- Egyptian women are very conservative and should not be touched without their consent. Public shows of intimacy are considered inappropriate and, except on the beach, you should try to dress conservatively wherever possible.
- Always use your right hand for communal eating and other social interaction as the left hand is reserved for toilet duties. If you have been invited into a local's house to dine, always remove your shoes before entering and wash your hands before eating.
- Although alcohol is widely available, it is still regarded as forbidden in the eyes of many Muslims and you should refrain from drinking in public.
- Be considerate when taking photographs. Always ask permission before taking pictures of people. It is against the law to photograph bridges, canals, railway stations, airports, government buildings, embassies, and military personnel and establishments. Signs are usually obvious. Try to avoid flash photography inside temples and around light-sensitive paintings or artwork. Flash photography is banned in most of the tombs.

### **CUISINE**

Egyptian food reflects the country's rich history and varied influences with elements modified from Greek, Turkish, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian cuisine. Simple dishes are created using naturally ripened fruits and vegetables, and seasoned with fresh spices. Food in the Upper Egypt region is closely linked to North African cuisine, and is spicier than that found in the north, but neither is especially hot. Bread is one of the mainstays of Egyptian diets. A pita-style bread is the most common and is prepared with refined white flour or with coarse, whole wheat. Aysh shams is bread of leavened dough allowed to rise in the sun, and plain aysh comes in thin French-style loaves.

Native beans are another staple for most Egyptians. Full beans can be boiled, with vegetables, and then mashed with onions, tomatoes, and spices. This mixture is often served with an egg for breakfast, without the egg for other meals. A similar sauce, cooked down into a paste, fills sandwiches sold on the street. Ful can also be soaked, minced, mixed with spices, formed into patties (called ta'miyya in Cairo and falaafil in Alexandria), and deep-fried. These patties, garnished with tomatoes, lettuce, and tihina sauce, are stuffed into aysh and sold on the street.

Molokhiyya is a green, leafy vegetable that is distinctively Egyptian, and is the basis for a traditional thick soup. Its leaves are chopped and stewed in chicken stock. It may be served with or without chicken, rabbit, or lamb in it. This soup can also be served with crushed bread or over rice. If you're served it straight, it's polite to dunk bread.

Ruzz (rice) and bread are the main ingredients in Egyptian main courses, which may be served either as lunch or dinner. For most Egyptians, meat is a luxury and is used only in small amounts. It is cooked with vegetables, and served with or over rice. But meat dishes, on the other hand, comprise most restaurant fare. Torly, a mixed-vegetable casserole or stew, is usually made with lamb, (only occasionally beef) and onions, potatoes, beans, and peas. Egyptian-style kebabs are made of chunks of lamb seasoned in





onion, marjoram, and lemon juice, and then roasted over an open fire. *Kufta* is ground lamb flavored with spices and onions and rolled into long narrow balls and roasted. It is often served with kebabs. Pork is considered unclean by Muslims, but is readily available in restaurants as is beef.

*Hamaam* (pigeons) are raised throughout Egypt and many consider them a national delicacy. They are stuffed with seasoned rice and grilled. They are small so diners often order several. The best dishes are usually served in small, local restaurants where you may have to give the cook a day's notice (a good sign), but beware - *hamaam* are occasionally served with their heads buried in the stuffing.

Egyptians serve both freshwater and salt water fish under the general term of *samak*. The best fish seem to be near the coasts (ocean variety) or in Aswan, where they are caught from Lake Nasser. As well as common bass and sole, offerings include *gambari* (shrimp), *calamari* (squid), *gandofli* (scallops), and *ti'baan* (eel). The latter, a white meat with a delicate salmon flavoring, can be bought on the street already deep-fried. Rice is often varied by cooking it with nuts, onions, vegetables, or small amounts of meat. *Bataatis* (potatoes) are usually fried but may also be boiled or stuffed. Egyptians stuff green vegetables with mixtures of rice. *Wara' enab*, for example, is boiled grape leaves filled with small amounts of spiced rice with or without ground meat. Westerners often know them by the Greek name of *dolmadas* or *dolmas*, but beware ordering them by that name; in Egypt, *doma* refers to a mixture of stuffed vegetables.

Native cheese, *gibna*, comes in two varieties: *gibna beida*, similar to feta, and *gibna rummy*, a sharp, hard, pale yellow cheese. These are normally used in salads and sandwiches. *Mish* is a spiced, dry cheese made into a paste and served as an *hors d'oeuvre*.

Egypt offers a wide variety of fresh fruits year-round, but since all are tree- or vine-ripened, only those in season appear in markets. In the winter, bananas, dates, and any of several varieties of oranges abound. Special treats are pink oranges with skin that looks like most oranges but the pulp is red and sweet. In summer, melon, peach, plum, and grapes are available. *Tin shawki* is a cactus fruit that appears in August or September.

Egyptian desserts of pastry or puddings are usually soaked with honey syrup. *Baklava* (filo dough, honey, and nuts) is one of the less sweet. *Fatir* are pancakes stuffed with everything from eggs to apricots. *Basbousa* is a sweet, is made of semolina pastry soaked in honey and topped with hazelnuts. *Umm ali*, named for Mamluk queen, is raisin cake soaked in milk and served hot. Egyptian rice pudding is called *mahallabiyya* and topped with pistachios. Egyptian ice cream runs closer to ice milk or sherbet than cream. Most restaurants and many homes serve fresh fruits for desserts

## SPORTS

Many of today's sports were practiced by the Ancient Egyptians, who set the rules and regulations for them. Inscriptions on monuments indicate that they practiced wrestling, weightlifting, long jump, swimming, rowing, shooting, fishing and athletics, as well as various kinds of ball games.

Ancient Egyptian kings, princes and statesmen were keen on attending sports competitions, which they encouraged and provided with the necessary equipment.

Drawings on pharaonic monuments tell us that several thousand years ago, the Egyptians had laid down basic rules for games, chosen a neutral referee, a uniform for players, and a means of announcing the winners by awarding them different collars.

Both winner and loser were met with ovation, the first for his superiority and the latter for his sporting spirit. The following is an expose of some ancient Egyptian sports:



## Canadian Globetrotters



Handball



Hockey



Gymnastics



Gymnastics



Boxing



Javelin Throw



Fishing



Equestrian Sports



High Jump



Marathon



Rowing



Archery



Weightlifting



Tug of Hoop



Tug of War

### **HEALTH & MEDICAL CARE**

As with any foreign travel, visitors should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters that are recommended depending on your personal health profile.

Currently, no vaccinations are necessary for entry into Egypt if you are arriving from North America. However, the Canadian & US governments recommend that you visit a Travel Clinic to discuss. If you have a medical condition, you should also share your travel plans with any doctors you are currently seeing for other medical reasons.

If, you are entering from cholera or yellow fever areas, inoculations against those diseases are mandatory. Your inoculation information must be displayed on an International Vaccination Certificate.

**Before visiting Egypt, you may need to get the following vaccinations and medications for vaccine-preventable diseases and other diseases you might be at risk for at your destination:** (Note: Your doctor or health-care provider will determine what you will need, depending on factors such as your health and immunization history, areas of the country you will be visiting, and planned activities.)

To have the most benefit, see a health-care provider at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for your vaccines to take effect and to start taking medicine to prevent malaria, if you need it. Even if you have less than 4 weeks before you leave, you should still see a health-care provider for needed vaccines,



*anti-malaria drugs and other medications and information about how to protect yourself from illness and injury while traveling.*

*If your travel plans will take you to more than one country during a single trip, be sure to let your health-care provider know so that you can receive the appropriate vaccinations and information for all of your destinations. Long-term travelers, such as those who plan to work or study abroad, may also need additional vaccinations as required by their employer or school.*

*Routine vaccines are recommended even if you do not travel. Although childhood diseases, such as measles, rarely occur in the United States, they are still common in many parts of the world. A traveler who is not vaccinated would be at risk for infection.*

*Updated vaccinations for tetanus with diphtheria, Gamma globulin Hepatitis A, and inactivated polio are recommended. If traveling to rural Nile Delta areas, antimalarial precautions are also suggested. Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary and are subject to change. You must consult your GP on current vaccinations needed for your destination.*

*The Nile is a habitat of a certain parasite named "Bilharzia" or "Shistosoma". One of the stages of its life cycle may be transmitted to human through direct drinking or swimming in the Nile, particularly near the shore, and causes a serious chronic disease. One can enjoy the legend by drinking a small gulp of tap water, which initially comes from the Nile after purification.*

*Malaria is not a problem in Egypt, although it is on the increase throughout the world. Rabies, however, is endemic. Stay away from stray dogs around monuments. Rabies can be contracted not only from a bite, but from saliva of the sick animal contacting an open wound. It is fatal if not treated in time.*

### **Drinking Water**

*Piped-in water is usually safe to drink because it is filtered and chlorinated. However, the chlorination could cause mild abdominal upsets, so if you're prone to stomach problems, it may be wise to drink bottled water, which is readily available. Mineral water is available everywhere, and a one liter bottle is around 1.50 L.E. (less than 50 cents). Risk of dehydration due to the heat is possible so do drink plenty of fluids but avoid very cold drinks during the heat of the day, and wait until after sunset to consume alcoholic drinks.*

### **Food**

*A certain amount of caution should be exercised in Egypt. Although food in Egypt is generally safe, mild stomach upsets and traveler's diarrhea (TD) do occur, as they will in any foreign country. Visitors usually adjust to the differences in climate and diet in a few days if they rest, stick to plain food, and drink plenty of fresh lime juice and mineral water.*

*In hotels, restaurants, and aboard cruise ships, foods are usually well prepared, but, as a general rule in international travel, it's best to eat only foods that have been well cooked and fruits that can be peeled. Generally speaking, avoid salads and raw vegetables. All restaurants licensed to serve food are strictly supervised by the health authorities. However, one should be aware that certain types of traditional food (especially if invited to a house in the countryside) are of a high fatty component. Over consumption of those might lead to diarrhea.*

*Smoking "sheesha" is fairly popular among low classes, and has recently become a fashion to be served in touristic places for fun. Though the amount of tobacco-like material at such places is usually very mild, one has to keep in mind that he is smoking without a filter. Never forget to use a disposable plastic mouthpiece.*



Overall, Egyptian food is very tasty so eat and enjoy. Hopefully, your visit will be fulfilled without any trouble. In case of any mis-happening, always remember that a guest in Egypt is treated like a V.I.P. People are always very happy when asked for help, and even volunteer to.

### **Hospitals**

All hotels have references for medical services and some have a doctor on call 24 hours a day. All Egyptian doctors speak good English. Embassies can also be consulted. The Red Crescent is the symbol of medical services in Egypt equivalent to the Red Cross seen in many countries. It designates hospitals, ambulances, and other medical services.

*Medical Emergencies in Egypt :* Travelers are always worried about medical emergencies they might face in a foreign country. Such worry is always exaggerated when the destination is to a non-Western country. These are usually exaggerated by a false image some people have in their mind about Egypt. Apart from the historical background of medicine during the ancient and middle ages, medical practice in Egypt has always enjoyed a good reputation in the modern era. Numerous physicians graduating from Egyptian faculties of medicine have a high standard of knowledge worldwide. Students from all over the Arab countries and Africa come to learn medicine, on both under and postgraduate levels. One of the best examples of Egyptian physicians is Sir Magdy Yacoub, the famous cardiac surgeon who graduated from Cairo University. Sir Magdy is currently practicing in UK, and was the first non-British to be knighted by the Queen of England.

The major worry of a visitor is his need for hospitalization in case of an accident or emergency. Modern hospitals are abundant all over the country, both in governmental and private sectors. Governmental hospitals in general and university hospitals in particular, enjoy a high standard of modern equipment and efficient staff members. On the other hand, numerous private practices are not inferior, with some of them quite near to Western standards. These are also supported by the vast clinical and academic experience of university staff members, who work there as part-timers. In deserted places where medical facilities might be lagging; a major medical emergency is supported by the government. Frequently victims are transported from the scene of a major accident by helicopter to highly specialized centers in Cairo.

Hospitalization in most general hospitals, particularly in emergencies, are free of charge. However, a visitor is always advised to seek a private one, which are still strictly supervised by the health authorities. Hospital charges vary according to different standards, but in general the cost is much less than one would expect at home. It is illegal for a private hospital to reject or transfer any emergency case for financial reasons. Once a patient is admitted to a private hospital in Egypt, a professor or consultant is immediately assigned to handle the case. The physician is fully responsible for his patient throughout the hospital stay, and is also responsible for coordination with any other colleague of different specialty, if needed. The choice of the hospital and the consultant in charge might be confusing to a visitor. It is advised to leave this choice to the hotel physician. Most hotels have a resident junior doctor, or at least quick access to several consultants, who can be reached any time through mobile (cellular) phones. Also, embassies usually have contracts with physicians. Contacting the embassy is advised, as its personnel might also review the hospital charges. In less severe conditions, when a guest needs medical attention beyond the capacity of the hotel physician, he would be directed to private clinics or polyclinics. Almost all physicians run private practices off office hours. Sometimes an appointment is required beforehand, but usually the physician would be very considerate. Consultation fees are variable, with the most expensive being for university staff members. A professor would charge between 100-150 L.E. (1 \$US = 3.4 L.E. average) in Cairo. Consultants and specialists (ministry of health physicians) charge less, and prices are less in other cities. Another source to seek consultation are hospitals. A visitor is advised to avoid public ones, and head for the private.

Another aspect for a visitor would be his medication, whether regular or incidental ones. Since most international pharmaceutical companies have offices in Egypt practically no drug is unavailable.



However, a visitor is always advised to carry on him any medicine he regularly uses. Owing to the variability of trade names between different countries, one should not expect his medicine to be labeled the same as he uses it back home. A record of the generic name of the drug is sometimes required. Since most commonly needed medication (as heart medicine and Insulin) have the same trade name worldwide, the problem is rarely encountered. However, some anti-hypertensives might have different names. A qualified pharmacist is always available in his pharmacy (drug store) for help, with no extra fees for this service. All drugs have fixed prices by the government. One only pays what is labeled on the box. There are no custom restrictions for medication. Moreover, on the occasion of unexpected consumption or loss of the drug, a visitor can enjoy one of the pitfalls of the system. Drugs are available in pharmacies without the strict need of a prescription, except in hypnotics and narcotics. Pharmacies are abundant everywhere. They are easily spotted by the sign of a red crescent, sometimes with a red cross inside.

There are good hospitals in Cairo and Alexandria. However, they operate on a cash basis and patients cannot use foreign medical insurance plans. Many hospitals do accept credit cards. Some hospitals are:  
\* The Egyptian telephone structure is expanding and some phone numbers have been changed. Please contact the Information (140) for the updated numbers.

- **Anglo-American Hospital Zohoreya**, next to the Cairo Tower, Zamalek. Tel: 341-8630
- **As Salam International Hospital**, Corniche el Nil, Maadi. Tel: 363-8050, 363-4196, 363-8424, 363-8764
- **Arab Contractors Hospital Autostrade**, Nasr City. Tel: 828-907, 832-534, 838-642, 833-501, 833-408
- **Italian Hospital**, Abbassia. Tel: 821-433
- **Nile Badrawi Hospital**, Corniche el Nil, Maadi. Tel: 3638688, 363-8167/8.
- **Al Salam Hospital**, 3 Syria, Mohandeseen. Tel: 346-7062/3.

### **Pharmacies**

Pharmacies in Egypt are open from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM, and sell many drugs over the counter that require prescriptions in the U.S. The majority of Egyptian doctors speak English. The sun is hot year-round so use a high-factor suntan lotion and wear a hat and sunglasses. Take antiseptic cream for cuts as flies can spread infections. Take insect repellent as mosquitoes can make life a misery and may carry malaria.

Pharmacies are usually open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and are staffed by competent professional. Both locally made and imported medication is subsidized by the government and is inexpensive. Some medication requiring prescriptions abroad is sold over the counter in Egypt. In Cairo, each neighborhood should have a 24 -hour pharmacy. Below are a few of the 24-hour pharmacies in Cairo:  
\* The Egyptian telephone structure is expanding and some phone numbers have been changed. Please contact the Information (140) for the updated numbers.

- Attaba: **Attaba Pharmacy**, 17 Midan Attaba. Tel: 2910-831
- Central Cairo: **Isaaf Pharmacy**, 3 26th July. Tel: 2743369; **Seif Pharmacy**, Qasr el Aini. Tel: 2354-2678.
- Maadi: **As Salam International Hospital**, Maadi Corniche. Tel: 2842-188; **Esam Pharmacy**, 101 Road 9. Tel: 2350-4126; **Mishriki Pharmacy**, 81 Road 153. Tel:2350-3333.
- Zamalek: **Zamalek Pharmacy**, 3 Shagaret el Dorr, Zamalek. Tel:2 340-2406.

### **Health and Travel Insurance**

We strongly suggest that you acquire travel insurance before any international travel. Government funded medical insurance is not always valid outside Canada. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas, may face extreme difficulties.



Do not rely on your provincial health plan to cover all expenses if you get sick or are injured while abroad. It may cover nothing or only a portion of the costs. Understand the terms of your supplementary insurance policy. Some credit cards offer their holders health and travel insurance. Do not assume the card alone provides adequate coverage. Carry details of your insurance with you. Also, tell your travel agent, a friend or relative, and/or travelling companion how to contact your insurer. Get a detailed invoice from the doctor or hospital before you return to Canada. Always submit original receipts for any medical services or prescriptions received abroad. Most insurance companies will not accept copies or faxes.

Canceling a scheduled trip abroad could cost you money. Before cancelling a scheduled trip, you should discuss the matter with your travel agent, your travel insurer, or the airline. **The decision to travel is the sole responsibility of the traveller.**

**Note:** Please be sure to take a sufficient supply of required prescription medicine with you and any over-the-counter items you feel necessary. Medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage for Customs inspections. It is best that you have any paperwork from your own doctor if you may need it on your travels, including prescription information

### **PASSPORT / VISA**

When you arrive in Egypt, you'll be required to present a return ticket and a Passport valid for at least six months from date of departure and, containing at least two blank pages. Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas. You should also be in possession of sufficient funds for the stay.

Canadians can usually obtain their 30 day Visas on arrival in Cairo airport (our Rep will assist you on your arrival – cost approx. US\$ 15.00 per person – to be paid in hard currency – i.e. US Dollars), though the Egyptian authorities will not give official confirmation of this. If you are in any doubt, or for peace of mind, we advise you to obtain your visa before leaving your home country.

The visa obtained abroad is valid for a stay of up to 3 months and can be either single or multiple entry. The cost of visas issued in advance varies with nationality.

A notice stamped in passports on entry into Egypt says "registration within 7 days" but arrivals in Cairo should in fact be registered within 48 hours, either at the nearest police station or at the Mugama'a. Visitors need re-registration at each new city visited for the sake of the tourists' safety. Hotels perform this service routinely, but visitors staying in private houses, must make other arrangements to be registered. Their hosts may be held responsible for failure to do so.

Canadians travelling in the Middle East are advised that their passports could come under increased scrutiny by immigration authorities, and the authenticity of their passports could be questioned due to incidents of possible misuse. Canadians experiencing problems are encouraged to contact the nearest Canadian government office or Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada in Ottawa for advice and assistance.

Canadians contemplating onward travel to Lebanon and/or Syria from Egypt should bear in mind that Canadians have been denied entry into these countries because their passports bore: (a) an Israeli visa; (b) an Israeli border stamp; or (c) an Egyptian or Jordanian border stamp issued by an office bordering Israel (such a stamp would indicate the traveller entered from Israel).

Other types of visas can be obtained at major ports of entry. It is recommended that travellers obtain their visa from an Egyptian embassy or consulate before arrival to avoid the possibility of being refused entry or experiencing lengthy delays upon arrival. Canadians who intend to stay for more than one month, and who have obtained a visa from an Egyptian embassy abroad, should be aware that, upon arrival at the



airport, a 30-day visa will be stamped in their passport regardless of the visa previously granted. You are responsible for renewing this visa every 30 days, or a fine will be levied.

### **Customs**

The visitor is permitted to enter the country with 250 grams of tobacco, or 50 cigars, one liter of alcohol and personal affects. Animals must have a veterinary certificate attesting to their good health and a valid rabies certificate.

Cairo International Airport is one of the few airports that has a duty free shop upon arrival and departure.

Persons traveling with expensive electronic equipment such as cameras, video cameras, or computers may be required to list these items in their passports to ensure that they will be exported upon departure. Such equipment should be for personal use and should be listed (model and serial number) and checked upon arrival and departure, in which case no duty will be collected.

### **Porter Service**

Most international airports in Egypt are equipped with baggage trolleys available free of charge. There are also porters with larger trolleys to service individuals and groups.

### **On Departure**

Travelers are free to buy and export Egyptian goods. There are restrictions on certain items that are not permitted to leave the country. Under no circumstances are antiquities, either ancient Egyptian or Islamic, permitted to be exported. Nor are precious jewels, carpets, paintings or other works older than 100 years. There is no **Departure Tax** at this time.

When exiting Egypt, all travellers must show proof of an entry stamp in their passport at the point of departure. Without proof of entry, an exit stamp cannot be obtained and travellers will be denied exit. All Canadians who have entered the country with a Canadian passport and have obtained a new passport while in Egypt must present the new passport to the Egyptian immigration authorities at Mugamma, Tahrir Square, Cairo, to ensure that an entry stamp is transferred into the new passport.

It is prohibited to export any antiquity or any item older than 100 years without a licence. For further information regarding customs requirements, contact the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Ottawa.

### **Please note:**

Remember to carry with you in a safe place photocopies of all important documents in the event your passport or other documents are lost or stolen. Also, it's a good idea to have a passport photo with you. As a tourist, you will need to produce your passport when booking in at hotels, changing money or travelers' checks and prove your identity whenever requested by a policeman.

### **TIME**

You may be hoping for a vacation where time stands still. Egypt time is EST + 7 hours, which is two hours ahead of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time). The flight time to Cairo from New York (East Coast) is approximately 14 hours, 35 minutes, plus whatever layover time you may have in Europe.

When it is Noon in Cairo, it is : 05:00 am in Toronto and 003:30 pm in New Delhi. Banks, offices, and often stores close for public holidays as well as for religious holidays.

### **Banks**

8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. daily, closed Friday, Saturday, and most holidays. Banks in the airport and some major hotels in Cairo are open 24 hours.



### **Business**

8 a.m. to 4-5 p.m., closed Friday and most holidays, and some are also closed on Saturday. Many grocery stores and gas stations are open 24- hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Government offices**

8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, closed Friday and most holidays.

### **Shops**

10 a.m. to 9 p.m. in winter, and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. in summer. Many shops are closed on Sunday. The Khan al-Khalili bazaar is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, but closed on Sunday.

### **Museums**

Museums are generally open daily 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; other sites are usually open at the same time

## **MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Newspapers & Magazines**

Although there are plenty of Arabic language newspapers, the two most important are Al Ahram and Al Akhbar. Al Ahram, "The Pyramids", was established in 1875, making it the oldest newspaper in Egypt. Published daily, it also has a UK edition and a new English language edition. Al Ahram Weekly. Al Akhbar, "The News", established in 1952, it also has a weekly edition.

The Egyptian Gazette, established in 1880, is the oldest foreign language newspaper still in operation in Egypt. In the past decade several new English language newspapers have emerged including the Middle East Times, published weekly, the Arab World, which caters more to news of Arabia, and the newly created Al Ahram Weekly.

In French there is Le Progress Egyptian and Le Journal d'Egypte. In Greek, Pharos and in Armenian, Arev. Hosts of foreign language newsletters serve the foreign residents in Egypt: the British Community Association News for the British community; Helioscope, serving the residents of Heliopolis; the Maadi Messenger for foreigners in Maadi, Papyrus for the German community.

English-language magazines include Arab Press Review, a biweekly political magazine, Business Monthly, featuring business news, Cairo's a monthly what's on, Cairo Today, a monthly general interest magazine, Places in Egypt, designed for tourists, and Prism, a literary quarterly.

### **Postal Services**

The Central Post Office at Midan al Ataba in Cairo (tel: 912-356) is open 24 hours a day except Friday and occasional holiday. All other post offices are open from 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. daily, except Fridays. Mailboxes found on street corners and in front of post offices are red for regular Egyptian mail, blue for overseas airmail letters and green for Cairo and express mail within Cairo. Allow 5 days for air mail post to Europe, 8-10 days to America. We suggest you send mail from a main post office or a five-star hotel that should also sell stamps. Make the letter look as uninteresting as possible, avoiding inserting photographs or other items.

### **Internet**

There are Internet cafes in the main cities, including Cairo, Alexandria, Dahab and Luxor. Tourists can also access the Internet in hotels.

### **Telephone & Fax**

Most 5-star hotels offer direct dial service in your room and via the telephone operator in the hotel. The Central Telephone and Telegraph Offices (8 Adli; Midan Tahrir; 26 Ramses) are open 24 hours a day,





as are many branch exchanges. Others are open from 7 a.m.-10 p.m. daily. Fax services are available from the Business Centers dotted around the city. Several of the major hotels in Cairo have introduced fax facilities; check with the hotel concerned before traveling.

Local telephone calls can be made from hotels, kiosks and phone boxes. International calls can be made from Telephone & Telegraph (TT) offices that are open 24 hours. TT offices send faxes cheaper than hotels.

To dial a city in Canada or United States from Egypt :

- Dial the prefix for international calls: **00**
- Dial North America country code: **1**
- Dial the 10 digit telephone number of the person / place you are calling

To dial a city in Egypt from Canada or United States :

- Dial the prefix for international calls: **011**
- Dial Egypt country code: **20**
- Dial the city code : **2** for Cairo
- Dial the 7 or 8 digit telephone number of the person / place you are calling

City Codes	
Cairo	2
Aswan	97
Luxor	95

If you have an AT&T Calling Card it is possible to charge a call from Egypt to the United States to a US account. You may place a call with a New York operator by dialing 356 - 0200. You must supply both the American number and the number of your AT&T account. Sprint offers the same service. Contact Sprint for the needed numbers.

**Mobile Phones :** Mobile telephone service in Egypt is available through the local GSM 900 networks. The prepaid Egypt SIM card provides a simple, convenient, and affordable way for any traveler to make and receive those all-important calls while in Egypt. All incoming calls while in Egypt are FREE, regardless of where they originate. Pay the local rate for local calls and use a cellular phone in Egypt like you do at home. And unlike home, your Egypt SIM card and cell phone service is prepaid so there is no need for a contract.

It's also a trouble-free ticket to using the same options that the Egyptians themselves use - the local Egyptian cell phone system. The SIM chip, combined with an unlocked GSM World cell phone, helps you keep the lines of communication open without being burdened by high international roaming surcharges applicable when you use your "home" SIM card abroad.

If you bring an unlocked GSM phone operating at 900 MHz (or quad-band world phone) you can buy a prepaid SIM card. If you do not have your own international cell phone, you can easily rent one.

Emergency Contacts	
Police - Regular	122
Police - Tourist	126
Ambulance	123
Fire	180
Telephone Assistance	140 / 141
Weather	684 9852 // 684 9853
Tourist Information	391 3454
Cairo International Airport	265 2029 // 265 2222



## **CURRENCY**

The unit of currency in Egypt is the Egyptian Pound (L.E.). 1 E£ = 100 Piastres (pt). Bank notes are issued in increments of : 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 1. Piastres coins are in the denomination of 2 Piastres, 10 Piastres, 20 Piastres, 25 Piastres.

US \$1 equals approximately E£ 6.2 but the rate of exchange changes almost daily, and visitors are advised to wait until they arrive in Egypt to exchange their money. This will ensure they receive the most up-to-date rate. Exchange rates are determined by the Swiss Stock Exchange.

Local banks deal with foreign currency and travellers cheques. There is always a shortage of small change, which is useful for tipping, so try to keep hold of it if you can. Money can be changed at any bank, exchange offices, Amex or Thomas Cook offices, or most hotels. Foreign exchange offices are usually open throughout the day. Main brand traveller's cheques are widely accepted but may entail a small service charge, usually per cheque. Canadian currency and traveller's cheques are not widely accepted worldwide.

ATM's are common and accept all major credit/debit cards. Credit cards are also widely accepted, with Visa and MasterCard being the most popular. Cash advances are also available at banks and exchange kiosks. No black market exists in Egypt. Travelers' checks are accepted in banks and hotels, and more places are accepting major credit cards. Cashpoints will usually dispense in the local currency. If you are traveling to non- tourist areas, make sure you have enough local currency with you. You will likely get a better rate of exchange if you wait until you get to Egypt. Make sure you have some US dollars for the airport on the way home!

It is now possible to purchase Egyptian currency abroad, however, only a maximum of 100 Egyptian pounds may be carried into or out of Egypt. We recommend that you take mainly traveler's checks, along with some cash dollars in small denominations. Verify with your financial institution whether your bank card can be used with ABMs abroad. Some countries use chip and/or personal identification number (PIN) technology for credit cards. Check with your bank to find out if your credit card will be accepted abroad.

Credit cards and debit cards should be used with caution due to the potential for fraud and other criminal activity. ABMs should be used during business hours inside a bank, supermarket, or large commercial building. Leave copies of your card numbers with a family member in case of emergency.

Always keep your exchange receipts. Do not exchange money with any of the many people who will offer to do so on the street. Beware of those, too, who will try to escort you to a shop. If you go, you will be subjected to a very sophisticated, genteel, hard sell.

## **ELECTRICITY**

The electrical voltage in Egypt is 220 volts AC, 50 Hz AC and plugs are two prong rounded. Some electronic equipment have switches to allow you to change the power input type. For these, a simple wall adapter is all that is required. However, other electronic devices do not have such switches and in this case, you not only need a wall adapter, but also a power converter.. Many hotel rooms also have outlets that permit using American electric shavers without adapters and transformers, but it is better to bring a non-electric razor as well. They might also provide Adapters but you should bring one to be on the safe side.

## **WHAT TO PACK**

Egypt is a sophisticated and modern country, and most anything that you need may be purchased in Egypt. But providing that you do not wish to purchase such things as shoes in Egypt, and that other items



may be difficult to find, or very expensive, we have compiled a checklist of some of the more important items you may wish to carry with you. This list may seem rudimentary for the seasoned traveler, but for many making a first time trip to Egypt, it may prevent problems.

### **Contending with Sun and Heat -**

#### **Hats and other covering :**

Large brimmed hats that provide not only a head covering but also a certain amount of shade will come in very handy in the hot Egyptian sun. In addition, women will be more acceptable when touring old churches and mosques if they are wearing some sort of head covering. In addition, scarves or other apparel should be taken along to cover shoulders and arms, and again, or not only important for visiting religious sites, but also to keep the sun off during treks. In very hot weather, a cloth hat or scarf that can be soaked will also help keep your head cool.

**"Squeeze Breeze":** this is a water bottle with a sprayer and a battery-operated fan attached, which is available in Wal-Mart.

#### **Sun block :**

While sun blocks may be purchased in Egypt, you might prefer to bring your own favorite brand, but do bring it. We have often, and I wish to emphasize, very often, seen tourists with painful sunburns after a days worth of sightseeing. **Sunglasses:** Another item that may be purchased in Egypt are sunglasses, but again, many people will prefer to bring their own. There will be many times that tourists find themselves in a blaring, sand and desert landscape and there is nothing better than a good pair of sunglasses, with the highest UV rating you can find.

#### **Canteen or water holder :**

Staying hydrated will mean the difference between a comfortable tour and one that might end with trouble. Most people quickly learn to carry a water bottle with them, and bottled water is easily accessible. However, lugging around a water bottle in your hand can be tiresome. It is much better to bring along either a canteen, or some other utensil that will allow you to carry the water bottle on your waist or around your shoulder. Fanny packs or backpacks with holders for water bottles, and for women, even a shoulder bag type of purse will make this more convenient.

#### **Very good, comfortable walking shoes :**

This is probably one of the first things most people will tell you to bring to Egypt. Most tourists will be doing a considerable amount of walking, and shoes should not be just comfortable, but comfortable to walk long distances. Unlike leather shoes for mountain walks and such, it is also preferable for walking shoes to be breathable and perhaps made of a lightweight nylon or similar fabric. "Tennis shoes" or other sporting type of shoes are good for this. Also, keep in mind that there are a lot of steps in Egypt.

#### **Medication :**

Of course, bring your prescription medicine. It will usually be available in Egyptian drug stores, but it may be called a different name. There is no problem with bringing prescription medication into Egypt. However, it is also more convenient to bring your favorite non-prescription medications along. Though you may find such medication in Egypt, such as heart burn medication and pain capsules, you may have problems finding your favorite brands. In addition, many tourists who are a part of an organized tour will be staying in large hotels, which may lack a complete inventory of such medication, and trekking out to find a variety of over the counter medications may be inconvenient. Don't forget your Imodium. While no one wants to get Tut's Trot or Mummy's Tummy, it may be handy to have some Imodium or other anti-diarrheic with you. The most common bottled water brand, Baraka, contains a little magnesium and therefore may act as a mild laxative. Another brand to try is Siwa bottled water.



**Camera :**

Most people are not going to forget to bring their cameras on an Egyptian tour. However, a couple of things should be pointed out. First, while you may take pictures as you like from the outside of most monuments, many require that you do not use a flash when taking pictures inside. If you intend to take pictures inside tombs, for example, you will need to bring high-speed film. Most people use ASA 800 film, which they push to 1600. For the most part, this requires a good 35 mm SLR camera. In addition, monuments in Egypt are truly monumental, and tourists will often be disappointed with regular lenses. If possible, a good wide-angle lens will be nice to bring along. A video camera will also provide you with nice souvenir footage of your trip, however, keep in mind that filming inside many of the museums, monuments and tombs is prohibited.

**Travel Alarm :**

Sure, most hotels will give you a wakeup call, but for many, don't count on it. A travel alarm is perhaps less important on an organized tour, as you will have people taking care of you. But particularly for the independent traveler, a travel alarm will come in very handy. It will help make sure that you wake up when you wish in Egypt.

**Guide Books :**

Do invest in an Egyptian Guide book, such as the "Lonely Planet" or "Rough Guide" or any number of other good guides. While you may be on a guided tour, such a book will give you time to orient yourself both before and after the actual tours to various locations. In addition, foreign printed guidebooks may be somewhat more expensive in Egypt, even though they are available. You may also wish to look around once in Egypt for other guidebooks.

**An Extra Bag :**

A bag, preferably soft, which can be crunched up and carried into Egypt in another bag will be handy for most people. The bag will then be used to carry back souvenirs. Alternatively, many business people or guests of Egyptians often bring presents into Egypt, and once emptied, the bag is used to bring souvenirs back. Again, bags may be easily purchased in Egypt, but are likely to be less expensive if you buy it at home and bring it to Egypt.

**Sewing Kits :**

Some of the larger hotels, as well as some of the better-equipped smaller hotels (the Longchamps) may supply a sewing kit in your room. But don't count on this. Most Egyptian tours are relatively long, and it is not unusual to loose a button here or there climbing through tombs and pyramids.

**Alcoholic Beverages :**

There are good suitable beers and wines in Egypt that are highly affordable, and it is not necessary to bring in such items unless you have a very acute taste for a particular brand. However, harder alcoholic beverages such as whiskies and bourbons are maybe extremely difficult to find, and extremely expensive when you do. You may bring in up to two liters of liquor, and you may buy additional liquor at a reasonable price at the tax-free shop prior to leaving the airport. To give you an indication of why you should do this, it is not uncommon to pay as much or more than \$13.00 for a single shot of Jack Daniels, a well-known US bourbon.

**Cigarette :**

Egyptians smoke, and cigarettes are not expensive in Egypt. However, you will find only a limited variety of cigarettes for the most part. For example, Marlboro Lights are readily available, but not 100s. In fact, not very many "long" cigarettes are. Further, while you can purchase "American" cigarettes for a price in some of the better hotels, usually you are getting an Egyptian manufactured cigarette that is somewhat harsher than the "American" variety. Just because you are buying Marlboro does not make it the same Marlboro that you would buy in the US, for example.



Finally, bring along a humor and a good attitude. For many, and even those who have done extensive traveling in the US or Europe, Egypt will be very different. You will often find attitudes more "laid back", time less important and even some of the Egyptians selling their wares or their services at tourism sites annoying. Egypt is a place where you learn to let the smaller problems you might encounter roll off your shoulders, and simply enjoy this, the oldest of all civilizations.

A generic list of items you might want to carry :

- Tissues
- Wet wipes
- Hand sanitizer gel
- Sun screen
- Bug repellent
- Aspirin
- Diarreha tablets
- Band aids
- Breath mints
- Gum
- Hair spray
- Safety pins
- Small screwdriver & screws for fixing sunglasses
- Note pad
- Pens
- Stamps
- Small change
- Telephone card
- Map of Cairo
- Business cards

### **SHOPPING**

Egypt is a wonderland of shopping opportunities. Of course, there are the famous bazaars such as the Khan el-Khalili, but then there are also thousands of unusual stores scattered about the country, and especially in Cairo, though some products are better purchased perhaps from the locale from which they are produced, such as alabaster in Luxor. However, Cairo provides a huge variety of everything from antiques to fine clothing and especially jewellery.

In some shops, you must haggle while in others the price will be set. Which type of store provides the best possible deals depends both on the shop itself and the haggling ability of the buyer and seller. Frequently though some of the best deals at the best consistent quality is found in stores with fixed prices. For example, one might haggle over a mother-of-pearl box in the Khan el-Khalili and wind up paying a fairly low price but for an inferior product, while in a fixed price shop, one might end up paying more, but for a far superior mother-of-pearl box.

In Egyptian Markets Haggling has become an art form in Egypt. Many tourists would rather do anything than haggle over the price of a gold cartouche while on holiday in Egypt. But, from the local point of view, haggling is expected, sometimes encouraged, as a way of communication and human contact. It is also legal in Egypt to haggle, bargain and ask for a discount.

As with any type of negotiation, there is a protocol to haggling, and many ways to make sure you don't pay over the odds. But the basic skill is to have some inside knowledge about the value of what you are buying and put a limit of what you are prepared to pay. Always look at the price tag, as the maximum required, not the minimum. Then set a minimum price and negotiate for some medium price in between.



*Haggling is effective if you are buying high value items, such as gold and jewellery, but with low value goods it is not worthwhile the time and effort; it becomes more or less a social gesture. If you pay with cash, not a credit card, you should have more leverage for getting a good discount. Shops in Egypt prefer cash. Paying with dollars sometimes helps secure a bargain.*

*There used to be a golden rule of offering half the asking price, but that rule has grown unreliable over the years, as the asking price could be treble the real value or just a fraction above. If you want to obtain a bargain, be prepared to invest some time and have a rough idea what the item is worth. Ask some local friends (not necessarily your tour guides) how much would they pay for such an item, and then allow a fraction above that as a margin for being a tourist.*

*Make eye contact only with a vendor if you wish to stop and look. Once you are drawn into a shop, be ready to bargain. In small retail shops, prices are fixed and usually written in Arabic, so try to become familiar with numerals. Department stores also have fixed prices and usually accept credit cards.*

### **Handicrafts**

*Egypt has been famous for its handicrafts, but unfortunately the overall quality has deteriorated and many products are now made to be sold cheaply. The main crafts to look for are carved woodwork, mother-of-pearl inlay work, pottery, alabaster, glass, and the obligatory painted papyrus. Most of antiquities offered to tourists are fakes, which is just as well because genuine articles require a license from the Department of Antiquities for exportation. Carpets are not an Egyptian specialty, but camelhair rugs are cheap and colorful. Gold jewellery and silver Bedouin jewellery are available. International clothing chains have recently opened up shops in Cairo and sell good quality, cotton clothes made in Egypt. Appliqué work, traditional Egyptian clothes, cotton sheets & towels are all available. Spices, incense, perfumes, glass, wood, ceramics and leather are some of the favorite buys. Cairo has been known for its brass and copper works for years. Brass trays of all sizes can be purchased. The more popular are the larger ones with small wooden stands that are used as table.*

### **TIPPING**

*Tipping is not compulsory, nor are there fixed amounts, however, the following is a general guideline to assist you.*

*Below you find amounts for suggested tipping while in Egypt if you are not travelling in a group, but still doing all the "usual things". Please note that the amounts suggested are meant pr. couple not pr. person if travelling two or three persons together. If you are a single traveller, you can give less than the suggested amounts. Bear in mind that tipping often makes the experience a little easier and that most tips mean a lot, even though the recipient may look disappointed. If recipient comments in a rude manner that your tip was too low, take back your money at once (or as mentioned elsewhere, you have 2 options, pretend to take it back to give a higher amount and "teach" the person a lesson or smile a firm no, say it was enough and continue to enjoy what you are in Egypt for - to enjoy!*

*Always tip as discreetly as possible. It may not seem so, but very few are proud about the fact that they need your tips. On the other hand, few will make you feel guilty about what you gave. Remember that a tip is given of your own volition. Your pocket, circumstances, outlook towards "outstanding" service and feelings of "charity" all play non-trivial roles. Be happy giving, giving generously or not giving. Don't let someone tell you what is appropriate - without your consent!*

*All hotel taxes and service charges have been included in the cost of your tour, so unless someone provides you with extra service such as room service, you need not tip. Always check your bill first to see if a service charge has been automatically added.*

*Everyone seems to want something from you, and while this is annoying, please understand that is very much a part of the culture. Maintaining a good humor about this aspect of travel is essential to your*



enjoyment of the trip. So you might as well get used to paying something if someone makes your life easier. Indeed, this type of bribery is often necessary just to get something done. But do resist giving money to people who haven't done anything

In Egypt, you are a *khawaga* (foreigner) and, therefore, rich. As such you are supposed to have *baksheesh* (literally: share wealth) for everyone. Obviously, you tip a waiter, porter or taxi driver, but the guard who opens a tomb or switches on the light "especially for you" will also expect a tip. Children whose picture you take and even people who didn't do anything at all will ask for money. Alms for the poor are called *baksheesh*, too.

A general note about whether to tip taxi drivers, *caleche* men, *felucca* men etc: You have to decide if the agreed price is so high that tips are included or if you want to reward with a little extra, say if traffic was real bad or something like that.

**An exception to tipping -- please do not offer tips to professionals, businessmen, or others who would consider themselves your equal. You may seriously offend them by your act.**

- General tipping in restaurants (if service and food was good): around 10 % on the pretax total. Most customers will find a service charge on their receipt, but please note that this goes to the restaurant and not to the waiter.
- Handling of 1 piece of baggage is included. This includes porter's tips at airports, hotels, and lodges and camps. If you wish to give an extra gratuity to hotel or lodge porters, we suggest \$1 for all baggage brought to your room.
- Driver taking you to hotel from airport upon arrival: 10 - 30 LE (in Red Sea destinations, you can still be relatively generous with 10-20 LE)
- Luggage man at hotel: 3-5 LE per bag both in and out
- Housekeeping: 5-10 LE per night
- Waiter / waitress at hotel restaurant at hotel: 5-10 LE per meal
- Waiter on the Cruise: 50 LE once if on a weeklong cruise. Less if cruise is shorter. You will most likely have the same waiter for the whole cruise. Of course, if your waiter does not provide a good service, you should reconsider how much you prefer to tip.
- Driver taking you sightseeing for full day: 50 LE (Full days are usually only in Cairo)
- Guide taking you sightseeing for full day: 80-100 LE (Full days are usually only in Cairo)
- Driver taking you sightseeing for half day: 25 LE
- Guide taking you sightseeing for half day: 40-50 LE
- Waiter at a restaurant during sightseeing: 5-10 LE
- Feluccaman taking you sailing for one hour: 10 LE (if the agreed price for the trip does not include tips)
- Guards around the sites: 1-2 LE



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- "Groundskeeper" in mosques (the man handing you shoe-covers, showing you special things etc): 1-5 LE
- Boat staff on Nile cruise / Lake Nasser cruise including reception: 10 LE per person per night, leave in envelope in reception by the end. Write your cabin number on the envelope. It will be divided among all staff. Highest ranking staff gets the most, lowest ranking the least. It is the system, but if you feel like rewarding a member of staff with a little extra, do it very discreetly, or he will be forced to share with the others.
- Horsemen in Edfu: Max. 10 LE for roundtrip to temple and back (if the agreed price does not include tips)
- Men or women at restrooms handing out toilet paper: 50 PT - 1 LE. And if restroom is unacceptably nasty, don't tip!
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- Egyptian staff on day-boats Red Sea destinations: 10-20 LE per person on tour (not per staff on boat). Often there is a box set out at the end for tips. Usually foreign staff like dive-masters, snorkel instructors etc does not expect to be tipped. So check how many Egyptian staff members are on board and tip according to that.
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- Kids or young adults helping with camels, horses or donkeys, provided they are "employees" at the stables: 5-10 LE after trip.
- If you travel in a group and your tourleader or guide suggests that he or she collect an amount for tips for the whole trip, then this amount should not exceed 350 LE per person for 10-15 days, including guides and all other things listed above. But do expect to use at least that (300-350 LE, 70-75 \$) in tips if you are on a trip where a cruise, guides and lots of tours are included, a little less if you do not have a guide. Do not tip guides excessive amounts. It gives them a bad name and is not always well-earned.

## GETTING AROUND

### On Foot

Alexandria and Cairo are crowded cities, and walking in the streets is generally not very pleasant. Walking in Luxor and Aswan, however, is a pleasure. These towns are not crowded and there is a pleasant country atmosphere. Hiking as a pastime is not popular in Egypt and should not be under-taken in remote areas without a local guide. That said, there are interesting hikes and local people may be willing to act as guides in the Eastern Desert, Sinai and the Oases.

### Private Transport

#### Taxi

If you did not have a chance to be on a taxi in New York City or Rome, take an Egyptian taxi for one of the experiences of your life. Taxi drivers seem to need to fill every empty space of the road. All taxis have orange license plates and are identified by a number on the driver's license and identify number attached to the dashboard. Sharing a taxi is not unusual. For the tourist, it is more expensive but easier to





get a taxi from a hotel where they line up and where you can fix the price beforehand. But if you find yourself in need of a taxi on the street, be aggressive. Stand on the road, wave your right hand and yell your destination to all taxis. A taxi will stop for you.

Official prices are stricked and meters should be used. If that did not happen, take the car number ( which listed beside the meter) and report it to the police. It is preferable to ask the driver if his meter is working or not. Most taxi drivers are honest, but few try to cheat unwary foreigners. At your destination, pay the fare in exact change. No tip is expected like other b International cities. Taxi drivers are friendly, many speak English, some are college graduates moonlighting to supplement their income, and most are very eager to be hired by the day. If you plan to visit a number of sites and wish the driver to wait for you, this can be done. Taxis in Luxor, Aswan, Hurghada, Esaphagas and Sinai are easier to find (they line up at all hotels) but for the distance traveled they are more expensive than those in Cairo.

Official Cairo taxis are predominantly white (previously black & white) and Alexandria taxis are black and orange. There are also Peugeot taxis in a variety of colors and sizes, but they all have an emblem and number painted on the driver's door. Fees are the same as the limousine service.

Cairo's city streets teem with black-and-white taxis (usually Fiats or Ladas) so hailing a cab is never a problem. Simply stand at the side of the road and at the sight of an approaching taxi point one hand towards the road. The taxi driver will slowly cruise past you. As he does, yell out a district or landmark near your destination (eg. "Al-Azhar") and if the driver is inclined to head there he will stop for you.

Solo males should sit in the front seat next to the driver. It is customary for solo females to sit in the back seat. Once inside, name your specific destination. Only tourists discuss price at this point, as to do so ensures that the driver will spend the entire trip haggling for a high fare. If the driver insists on knowing how much you will pay, name your price. If he, or in the rare case, she, doesn't like it you can get out and find another cab.

It seems many cab drivers spend the entire trip assessing their passenger's appearance, age, sex, nationality and Arabic skills to calculate an expected fare. Thus it is important to have an idea of what is a fair price (see below). To avoid any hassles, pay the driver the fare upon exiting the taxi and then walk away in the opposite direction. Make sure you always keep plenty of 1-pound and 50-piaster notes (aka. "amm fare") so as not to have to ask the driver for change. Showing any hesitancy or requesting change during this process will encourage the driver to demand more.

If you follow these instructions and the driver protests vehemently, he is either exceptionally determined to gouge you, or you have genuinely underpaid him (usually a matter of 50 piastres or so). If you are certain he is trying to gouge you, threaten to take the matter to the tourist police, something all cabbies fear, and he will usually back down. Keep in mind that many factors affect rates such as traffic, number of passengers, luggage, time of day, remoteness of destination.

However, please note that the majority of taxi drivers are polite, shy and satisfied with what they get, providing the fare offered is close to reasonable.

It is common for taxis to pick up extra passengers heading in the same direction, so don't be alarmed if you soon find yourself sharing the ride.

Problems with taxi drivers are extremely rare, but if one should occur, note the vehicle's number on the side doors that is written in Arabic and Latin numerals. While anyone can drive a taxi (and many cabbies let their cousins and friends play driver for a day), the number can help police track down the cab, and in turn its driver.



Where you hail your cab does make a difference. The myriad of taxi drivers relaxing on their hoods in front of Cairo's five-star hotels can afford to rest. They usually charge double, sometimes triple, the going rate and even Egyptians are made to pay this rate. Walk 100 yards from the hotel and stand by a busy street and the prices plummet. Other notorious places include fancy restaurants, high-class malls, theatres and sporting clubs. The airport is a special case.

While LE20 is a reasonable fair from the airport to downtown, only those with exceptionally good bargaining skills will ever get a cabbie to agree to less than LE25. Drivers often start the haggling at LE50, depending on the time of day and number of tourists present. Note that upon leaving the airport your taxi driver should pay the nominal parking fare, though foreign passengers are required to sign out.

Beware of the big Peugeot 504 'service' taxis. While these extra roomy cabs are great if you have a large group or lots of luggage, they also charge twice the going rate and adamantly demand LE10 for short hops.

Lastly, treat your driver with a bit of respect. Cairo's streets are known for their maniacal drivers (and not just the taxi drivers), whimsical traffic rules and chronic congestion. Imagine driving these streets eight hours a day, plus holding a second job as many cab drivers do. Given all this, the city's cabbies are incredibly well tempered.

## **Public Transport**

### **The Cairo Metro**

Cairo's underground metro system, the first of its kind in Africa and the Middle East, is a blessing to this city of 16 million people. Every day, the metro funnels an estimated 2.5 million commuters off the crowded streets (you'd hardly notice the difference) below ground and moving from station to station.

There are two metro lines in operation. One runs from El-Marg southward to Helwan, an industrial enclave 30km south of Cairo, while the other runs from populous Shoubra el-Kheima southwest to Cairo University, and will soon continue on to Giza. Construction is currently underway on a third line from Imbaba to Al-Azhar, and the government has given the green light to extending existing lines to reach Moneib and the airport. When all lines are complete, Cairo's metro project will be at par with other world-class metro systems.

No graffiti, no litter, no smoking- New York subway users visiting Cairo are in for a big treat. The metro system runs efficiently. It is without doubt the quickest and cheapest way to transverse the city, costing just 50 piasters (15 cents) for up to 9 stations, and less than a pound (35 cents) from one end to the other. There are also nominal discounts for reusable tickets for 10 journeys or more. The front car of every train is reserved for women.

Metro tickets can be purchased at any of the kiosks in the station.. The kiosks are one of the best places in Cairo to make change, but some of the employees are a little uptight about accepting torn or taped banknotes. Even a 25-piaster note with a barely discernible tear in one corner will be turned away. Assuming you get a ticket, feed it into the turnstyle upon entering, and hang onto it until exiting.

The metro operates daily from about 5:30 am to half past midnight. Intervals between trains varies throughout the day, but waits are never more than 15 minutes. Breakdowns are infrequent, but trains sometimes linger at stations for no apparent reason. Delays are also caused by riders holding the doors open for friends behind them, sometimes far far behind them.

The two metro lines vary slightly. The older French-built line running from El-Marg to Helwan has 32 stops, its downtown stations being underground while the rest are on the surface. The underground platforms are comfortably warm in the winter and stuffy, humid and hot in the summer when the only breezes come from passing trains.



In Cairo the metro system is identified by circular signs with a big red M. The system runs north-south with over 30 stops from Heliopolis to Helwan through the heart of the city. Additional routes, planned east and west, are currently under construction. Some important stations :

- **Sadat** - the main junction : Ground zero downtown, this station is under Midan Tahrir and just minutes from the Egyptian Museum, Nile Hilton, American University and Nile Corniche. Its tunnels double as a pedestrian underpass. This is where the two metro lines meet.
- **Sayeda Zeinab** : This station further south is a useful departure point because it is within walking distance of the ninth century Mosque of Ibn Tulun, one of the oldest Islamic structure preserved in Cairo, and a further walk will take energetic tourists to the Citadel, Al-Refa'i Mosque.
- **Mar Girgis** : This stop for the Coptic Museum, the churches and monasteries of Old (Coptic) Cairo and the Synagogue of Ben Ezra.
- **El-Maadi** : Good for visits to this affluent suburb, but most of the district requires a car. However, the fifth century Church of the Holy Virgin is only a 15 minute walk from the station.
- **Helwan** : This is the last stop. Once a health resort of some renown with curative sulphur springs the suburb has now become an industrial area.
- **Mubarak Station** : Cairo Railway Station itself is worth a visit. The building is of historical interest being the first terminal in the Middle East; it was built in the reign of Khedive Ismail in 1851. Round the corner is the little-known Railway Museum. It is a two-story building that dates back to 1933 and covers transportation in Egypt from ancient to modern times.
- **Mohamed Naguib Station** : Exit here for Abdin Palace which was built in the reign of Khedive Ismail between 1863 and 1879, taken over by the government after the 1952 Revolution and recently converted into a national museum.
- **Opera (Gezira) station** : Exit this station for the Opera House. There is an Opera ticket counter in the subway and one exit leads directly into the Opera House garden which is adorned with statues of Egyptian celebrities in the field of culture.
- **Dokki** : The station to exit for the newly-opened Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum in Giza Street

### **Rail**

The Egyptian State Railway is a government-owned system founded in 1851 which services the entire Nile Valley down to Aswan, the Red Sea cities of Suez and Port Said, the Delta and Northern Coast cities of Alexandria (two stops) and Mersa Matruh. There are at least half a dozen through trains a day on major routes. Fares are inexpensive, but unless one is traveling with a tour, tickets must be purchased at the main railway stations (in Cairo at the Ramses Station at Midan Ramses).

There is one privately-owned train operating in Egypt, the Wagon Lits sleeper with first, second and third class compartments. The train travels overnight from Cairo to Aswan and back again, leaving Cairo at around 7 in the evenings and arriving in Aswan at 9 the following morning. Bookings are one week in advance through a travel agent or from Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits Egypte, 9 Sh Menes, Heliopolis, Tel: 290-8802/4; 48 Sh Giza, Giza, Tel: 348-7354, 349-2365.



### **Bus**

*Air- conditioned buses link most parts of Egypt to Cairo and Alexandria. Seats may be reserved up to two days in advance. There is also a fleet of cheaper non-air-conditioned buses. Although bus times may change without notice, departures are so frequent that schedule changes are not a problem.*

*The principle carrier to Aswan and Luxor is the Upper Egyptian Bus Company, 4 Yussef Abbas, MN. Tel: 260-9304, 260-9297/8. Departures are from 45 al Azhar and the terminal at Midan Ahmed Helmi. Two buses a day complete the run to Aswan, departing early morning and arriving in the evening. To Alexandria the main carriers are the West Delta Bus Company, Super Jet, and the Federal Arab Land Transport Company, which leave from behind the Hilton.*

### **Car Rental**

*Driving a car in Egypt allows a great deal of freedom. Streets are congested in the cities, especially Cairo, but highways throughout the country are not.*

*Car rental agencies exist at most major hotels. Foreigners must have an International Driver's License and be at least 25 years of age to rent a car in Egypt. Some agencies offer 4x4s, with or without driver, for desert travel. You will need your passport, driver's license, and a prepayment. Credit cards are accepted.*

### **SECURITY**

*As with travel to any destination, common sense should be the prevailing guide to avoid problems. In major cities in Egypt as elsewhere,*

*Crime in Egypt is nearly nonexistent, and violence is usually limited to family feuds. However, in tourism areas some pickpockets and petty thieves may exist, so be careful and remember that the ever helpful tourism police are usually nearby.*

*Women must be cautious, especially in out-lying areas. Stay completely away from drugs and leave yours at home. Unescorted women are vulnerable to sexual harassment and verbal abuse. Women should be confident when walking in the streets, and not react to verbal obscenities. In public places, there is often a section reserved for women. Cairo is generally safer than most European capitals, but tourists are considered wealthy and some Egyptians cannot resist the temptation.*

*We advise you check your local consular advice for up to date security information before you travel. Egypt is a calm and generally trouble free country for travellers at the present time. Tensions there can rise suddenly however following changes in the whole Middle Eastern situation. There have been some terrorist attacks on some tourist sites in recent years but the Egyptian authorities have increased security precautions and asserted their intent to prevent any further incidents. You may be escorted by Egyptian police on some journeys and in some areas. Please bear with the authorities as these escorts are for your benefit.*

*Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visa, if required. Make sure that you also fill in the emergency information page of your passport.*

*The most vital precaution to remember is simply to use common sense and be aware of your surroundings. You wouldn't leave your bags on a bench in Chicago or Los Angeles, so don't do it in Egypt.*

- *Familiarize yourself with the local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, while in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws.*



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- *Make photocopies of the first few pages of your passport, air ticket and other important travel documents. These should obviously be in safe-keeping separate from the originals and will help towards expediting replacement in case of loss or theft. This will aid in replacement if your passport is lost or stolen. Leave one copy at home with friends or relatives. Carry the other with you in a separate place from your passport.*
- *Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home so that you can be contacted in case of emergency.*
- *It is strongly suggested that visitors not walk alone at night. While violent incidents in Egypt are rare, purse snatching, pick-pocketing and petty thefts are not uncommon. Aggressive panhandling is common.*
- *Petty theft and pick pocketing can be common in crowded areas. It is particularly a concern on inner-city bus systems and street markets, which can be crowded and jostling.*
- *Being particularly careful and aware of your surroundings can help to deter such activity. Holding purses close to your body, keeping wallets in front pockets, and handling large sums of cash discretely are a few simple precautions every traveler can take. Avoid dressing in conspicuously expensive clothes or wearing eye-catching jewellery as well.*
- *Do not accept packages from strangers. Don't walk alone in apparently deserted areas, especially in and around the cities. It is preferable and usually more enjoyable to walk with company or in groups.*
- *Don't leave valuables in a hotel room. Most of them offer safety deposit lock services.*
- *Be certain that you have adequate insurance coverage.*
- *If you plan on renting a car, be aware of locals offering to "guard" your car against vandalism in exchange for money. If you encounter that situation, try to find somewhere else to park because the supposed guard can even become your vandal if you refuse their services. Further, only travel in taxis that are clearly marked and beware any drivers offering to show you the "real Egypt".*
- *Don't walk alone in apparently deserted areas, especially in and around the cities. It is preferable and usually more enjoyable to walk with company or in groups.*
- *Don't carry large sums of cash in your purse or pocket.*
- *Be certain that you have adequate insurance coverage.*
- *Always keep your exchange receipts. Do not exchange money with any of the many people who will offer to do so on the street. Beware of those, too, who will try to escort you to a shop. If you go, you will be subjected to a very sophisticated, genteel, hard sell.*
- *Scams : A few well established scams exist: "Friendly" locals inviting tourists to a restaurant; the tourist will be charged two to three times the normal price, and the spoils split between the establishment and the "friend". Short-changing in bars or taxis.*
- *When taking a taxi, ask someone familiar with the system what the approximate fare should be, as many drivers will try to set an artificially high fare before departing. If in doubt, insist that they use the meter.*



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- *Credit card scams are common. Do not let your credit card out of your hands, and watch as the salesperson passes the card in the machine. If anything seems strange, DO NOT SIGN ! Merchants in small shops may take your card to an adjacent bank counter and use it to take out a cash advance. Look closely at your receipts.*

*Prior to departure, you should register online with the nearest Canadian government Foreign Affairs Dept. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency abroad, such as a natural disaster or civil unrest, or inform you of a family emergency at home. Registration can be done on-line or by contacting a Canadian government office abroad. For more information, see our FAQs on Registration of Canadians Abroad Please visit <http://www.voyage.gc.ca/main/sos/rocapage-en.asp>*

*In case required, you can obtain consular assistance and further consular information at the following address:*

*Egypt - CAIRO,  
Embassy of Canada  
Address: 26 Kamel El Shenawy Street, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt  
Postal Address: P.O. Box 1667, Cairo, Egypt,  
Tel.: 20 (2) 2791-8700  
Fax: 20 (2) 2791-8860  
E-Mail: [cairo-cs@international.gc.ca](mailto:cairo-cs@international.gc.ca)  
Internet: <http://www.egypt.gc.ca>*

*For emergency assistance, call the Embassy of Canada in Cairo (20 (2) 2791 8700), or, after hours, the Emergency Operations Centre in Ottawa at 613-996-8885.*

### **HANDY ARABIC WORDS / PHRASES**

*Some common Arabic words & phrases, which might be handy, though not essential as almost everybody you come across will speak English*

<i>Hello / Goodbye</i>	<i>sa-eeda</i>
<i>How are you?</i>	<i>ahlan-wa-sahlan</i>
<i>Please</i>	<i>minfadlak</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>shukron</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>aywa</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>Good</i>	<i>kuwayyis</i>
<i>Bad</i>	<i>battal</i>
<i>Possible</i>	<i>mumkin</i>
<i>Impossible</i>	<i>mish mumkin</i>
<i>Never mind</i>	<i>ma-lesh</i>
<i>Enough / Stop</i>	<i>bass</i>
<i>I don't want any</i>	<i>ana mish eis</i>
<i>None</i>	<i>mafish</i>
<i>Go away</i>	<i>emshee</i>
<i>To the right</i>	<i>yamein</i>
<i>To the left</i>	<i>shemal</i>
<i>Straight ahead</i>	<i>ala-tool</i>
<i>Near</i>	<i>urrayib</i>
<i>Far</i>	<i>bi-eed</i>
<i>Now</i>	<i>dilwaatee</i>



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Please visit the “**Egypt**” page on [www.enchantingjourneys.org](http://www.enchantingjourneys.org) to access our offerings.

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