

EXPLORE

worldwide

Egypt

Egyptian

Experience

Amended 20 May 2003. Valid from 01 May 2003 to 31 Dec 2003

CONNECTING TRAVEL FROM LONDON

23 days/22 nights Tour including Connecting Group Flights London-Cairo-London

Depart Saturday from London Heathrow Airport to join tour in Cairo (day 1 of itinerary). Please note that clients travelling on group flights with Olympic Airways will normally arrive early morning day 2.

Return Sunday from Cairo (day 23 of itinerary) and arrive London Heathrow the same day.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

23 days/22 nights Land Only Cairo back to Cairo

Join Cairo on Saturday (day 1)
End Cairo on Sunday (day 23)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Cairo. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **CAIRO** Half-day guided tour of Egyptian Museum, Pyramids & Sphinx
- * **ST CATHERINE'S** Visit monastery in the heart of Sinai
- * **DAHAB** Jeep safari and Red Sea swimming
- * **RAS MOHAMMED** 4WD safari and snorkelling over reefs
- * **LUXOR** Guided tour of Karnak Temple including 'calesh' between hotel and temple
- * **LUXOR** Half-day guided tour of Valley of the Kings and Hatshepsut Temple by donkey trek
- * **RIVERBOAT CRUISE** Cruise from Aswan to Luxor via temples of Edfu and Kom Ombo
- * **KHARGA** Visit Al Bagawat Necropolis
- * **DAKHLA** Visit Al Qasr
- * **FARAFRA** White Desert Jeep Safari

The antiquities of Egypt are amongst the oldest and most remarkable monuments in the world and a diversity of people have left their indelible mark on the country's history. This unique tour offers the best of Egypt. From the fortress like St Catherine's Monastery and the exotic marine life in Ras Mohammed N.P., to the wonders of the Valley of the Kings and the magnificent Temple of Karnak. Arriving in Aswan we board our Nile Riverboat and explore the ancient sites at Kom Ombo and Edfu. We then head out into the Western Desert to visit four of the major desert oases, where we are given a rare insight into the unique culture of these oases. All cabins aboard the Nile Riverboat have private en-suite facilities and are air conditioned. The facilities on board include a restaurant, bar, large sun deck and lounge area. The boat is chartered for the exclusive use of Explore groups. Note: For operational reasons we may on some departures spend 7 nights

aboard the riverboat rather than 3 nights. On these departures the train journey between Luxor and Aswan on Day 12 will not be necessary and accommodation in Luxor and Aswan on Days 10, 11, 12 and 13 will be aboard the riverboat on a full board basis rather than in hotels on bed and breakfast basis.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Note: While our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day route published below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Day 1. Saturday. Join tour Cairo
Arrive Cairo and check-in at hotel. **2 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 2. In Cairo

Cairo is situated mainly on the east bank of the Nile and is Africa's largest capital. We drive to Giza to see the Pyramids and Sphinx. The Great Pyramid of Cheops is the largest of the group (originally 145m high with a square base 232m). Second is the Pyramid of Chephren (136m high, width 210m), and third, Mykerinos, the smallest. The complex includes the Sphinx, a crouching lion with a human head carved from solid rock and the splendid Granite Temple. The pharaohs of the Old Kingdom began planning their pyramids (tombs) as soon as they assumed power. The Great Pyramid was built in 20-odd years in about 2600 BC, with only the simplest implements. We also visit the Egyptian Museum and contains the Tutankhamun Treasure, and the richest collection of pharaonic antiquities in the world.

Day 3. Drive to St Catherine's

This morning we drive via Suez and continue our journey into the Sinai through desert landscapes and a dramatic route through Wadi Fairan to St. Catherine's. Our hotel is situated below Jebel Musa (Mount Moses). **Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 4. Drive to Dahab

Well worth the effort is the pre-dawn ascent of Mount Sinai to witness the awesome sunrise, burning colour into the rocky desert. Afterwards we visit St. Catherine's Monastery, built in 342AD to mark the place where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Priceless books and manuscripts have been preserved within the fortress-like ramparts of the monastery which seems today an oasis of peace and calm, hemmed in by towering cliffs. Driving through spectacular mountain desert we arrive in Dahab, where you have the opportunity to relax, swim and snorkel in the Red Sea. **Overnight hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 5. 4WD to Ras Mohammed

In the morning we explore the surrounding desert landscapes on a rugged jeep safari, exploring narrow canyons both on foot and by 4WD (some scrambling involved). We continue by 4WD to the most southerly point of the Sinai Peninsula, Ras Mohammed and our beach side camp in Ras Mohammed National Park. Even though it appears barren and hostile, the park has a great variety of permanent residents like birds, insects and small mammals. **Overnight camp with all meals. C.**

Day 6. In Ras Mohammed, ferry to Hurghada

Ras Mohammed is Egypt's first National Park and offers a huge variety of exotic marine life. Brightly coloured fish live on the coral reef, but it also attracts other types of marine life like tuna, barracuda and turtles, who come to the reef to feed. The beaches here offer great underwater activities; we include a snorkelling trip and also scuba equipment is available to

Dossier Ref. SCD

hire for qualified divers (optional - please bring your certification). In the late afternoon we board the catamaran for our crossing to Hurghada. **2 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 7. In Hurghada

We have a full day in Hurghada and you will have another chance to snorkel and swim over the colourful coral reefs. There is the opportunity to go on an optional boat trip (6 to 8 hrs). Alternatively you could visit the medieval port town of Al Quseir (optional). The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 led to the decline of Al Quseir's wheat export trade. The 16th century Ottoman fort once overlooked pious pilgrims departing for Mecca and today stands guard over a bustling harbour. A flavour of bedouin nomadic life still pervades the streets and the souk.

Day 8. Drive to Luxor

Leaving the Red Sea coast, we turn inland travelling over barren mountains to Luxor. Modern Luxor is a small town on the east bank of the Nile. Upon our arrival we shall witness the daily bustle of the town, where horse drawn carriages (caleshes) jostle with the motorised traffic. This afternoon we travel by calesh to visit the stupendous Temple of Amun at Karnak, built under the orders of successive pharaohs. Begun about 2000 BC, the most imposing structures include the 134 pillars of the Hypostyle Hall, carved all over with scenes of the king worshipping Amun. This vast temple was still being added to in Cleopatra's time (1st century BC). **4 nights hotel and breakfast. H+.**

Day 9. In Luxor

This morning we rise early to enjoy an adventurous donkey trek to the Valley of the Kings' exploring some of the more important sites, made famous in 1922 by the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun by Howard Carter (exhibits in the Egyptian Museum). We visit three tombs before continuing to see the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, with the fine carving of the 'Expedition to the Land of Punt', and the two famous Colossi of Memnon, representing Amenophis III.

Days 10 to 11. In Luxor

There's free time allowed in Luxor for you to enjoy the relaxed air of this riverside town and visit some more of the wonderful Pharaonic sites nearby. You may take optional trips to the Valley of the Queens, travel by calesh to nearby villages or even a balloon flight over the West Bank of the Nile. The opportunities to explore this fascinating town are endless, your tour leader will be able to advise you.

Day 12. Train to Aswan

We catch an afternoon train to Aswan, Egypt's most southerly city, traditionally regarded as the frontier post of Upper Egypt. Sited on the east bank, it stands just below the first Cataract and is the meeting point of Arab culture with Nubia and Black Africa. Aswan's bazaar area is stuffed with craftwork of a strong Sudanese style. **2 nights hotel with breakfast and 1 dinner. H+.**

Day 13. In Aswan; optional visit to Abu Simbel.

Today we have the chance to travel by bus or air to the fabulous rock-hewn temple of Abu Simbel, a major highlight of the tour. Cut into the rock face, this enormous structure was raised 61m to save it from inundation by the artificial lake created by the Aswan High Dam. The 20m high statues represent Ramses II, known as the Great Builder.

Day 14. Sail to Kom Ombo

This morning we suggest a camel trek through the desert to the abandoned Coptic Monastery of St. Simeon. Boarding our Nile Riverboat we sail

towards Luxor. We sail to the major settlement of Kom Ombo situated on the east bank of the Nile. Dating from the Ptolemaic period, the temple of Kom Ombo is unique in that it is dedicated to two gods. Both Horus and Sobek were worshipped; Sobek is the crocodile god – much needed at this spot as this stretch of the river was noted for crocodiles until early this century! **3 nights twin berth accommodation aboard Riverboat with all meals.**

Day 15. Sail to Esna

We continue downriver, seeing the intensive cultivation of the Nile Valley and small villages which depend upon the river for their livelihood. We sail to Edfu today, the largest Egyptian temple after Karnak, dating from the time of the Ptolemies (3rd-1st century BC). A sacred falcon-headed god guards the Temple of Horus, which is in almost perfect condition. The massive Pylon, or Gateway, is 79m wide by 35m high. The temple is unusual in that the roof is still intact. We then moor overnight at Esna and aim to go through the lock first thing in the morning.

Day 16. Sail to Luxor

Early in the morning we pass through the lock in the dam at Esna, which was built in 1906 to regulate the Nile floodwaters. Then we continue to Luxor, aiming to arrive in the early afternoon, to leave some time for further sightseeing or souvenir shopping

Day 17. Drive to Kharga Oasis

Today we enter the Western Desert, part of the Great Sahara, a desolate and terrifying void that seems the very negation of everything. The oases in this area have supported civilisation for a very long time. Christian in its early history, the Western Desert then fell to the Muslims and the Berbers. Finally, in the 11th century, it became part of Egypt. The first of the four major oases we visit is Kharga. It is about 125 miles long by 12-30 miles wide, and its main wealth comes from date palms. One of the best preserved Christian necropoli in the world is found at Al Bagawat, situated on a hill just outside Kharga. This morning we visit several of its 263 mud-brick tombs, dating back to the 4th-6th centuries. Close by the town are the remains of a temple of the Persian period, practically unique in Egypt, called the Temple of Hibis. **Overnight Camping with dinner and breakfast. C.**

Day 18. Drive to Dakhla Oasis

This morning we continue westward along a surfaced road towards Dakhla, bordered on one side by the impressive sandstone mountain of Jebel Abu Tartur. On arrival in Dakhla we have the chance to trek on camels across the desert to our first camp under the spectacular desert stars. **Overnight camping with dinner and breakfast. C.**

Day 19. Drive to Farafra Oasis

During our time in Dakhla we visit the unusual mud-brick Islamic village of Al Qasr. We wander the ramshackle streets, a living museum of crumbling mosques, pottery workshops, basket weavers and blacksmiths. Continuing north, we drive to Farafra Oasis. The scenery is very changeable, from undulating hills and sand dunes to wide open plains and sparse vegetation. As we approach Farafra the terrain becomes a white limestone 'moonscape'. Farafra is the smallest of the four major oases, yet it is mentioned in the inscriptions of Ramses II at Ancient Thebes (Luxor). **Overnight hotel with dinner and breakfast. H.**

Day 20. In Farafra Oasis

We enjoy a leisurely morning in Farafra Oasis, wandering the backstreets and soaking up the easy-going ambience of this remote town, poised at the eastern edge of the Great Sand Sea. Later in the afternoon we strike out by 4WD to explore the extraordinary and

spectacular geology of the White Desert. The desert is best seen at dawn and dusk, so we sleep out amidst the ghostly outcrops and absorb the surreal atmosphere of this unique place. **Overnight camping with all camp meals. C.**

Day 21. Drive to Cairo via Bahariya Oasis

Returning by 4WD to the road, we continue by bus to Bahariya Oasis, past isolated springs and across a wind-eroded sandstone plain. The environs of Bahariya have many sites of geological and archaeological interest, including the Valley of the Golden Mummies. Later, we leave behind the whitewashed, mud-brick houses we drive through groves of dates, olives and sweet lemons before climbing the steep escarpment surrounding the oasis. We continue through the desert passing close to the Giza Pyramids before arriving back in the capital. **2 nights hotel with breakfast. H+.**

Day 22. In Cairo

A full day in Cairo to enjoy some of the sites of the capital not visited at the start of the tour. Among the options available is a visit to the wonderful mosques and the Citadel of Islamic Cairo. Alternatively the impressive Step Pyramid complex of Saqqara, named after the Memphitic god of the dead Sokkar, lying a few kilometres south of the city, is well worth a visit in conjunction with the Red and Bent Pyramids at Dashur.

Day 23. Sunday. Tour ends Cairo

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature, such as laundry.

Local Payment

Payable in **Sterling or U.S.dollars travellers cheques or cash** to Explore tour leader on arrival in Cairo.

Camera and Video Fees: Some sites have an additional camera charge of up to £2 per site. Video filming fees can be as much as £20 at some sites, so budget accordingly.

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: Meals other than those included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveller. You should calculate for buying 13 dinners & 16 lunches.

	UK	Egypt
Coffee/Tea	£STG0.70	£STG0.40
Soft drink	0.80	0.60
Bottle of water	0.70	0.50
Beer	1.00	1.50
2 Course Meal*	7.50	3.00
3 Course Meal**	15.00	5.00
Bottle of wine	7.00	7.00

Note: £STG = UK Sterling, not Egyptian pounds

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant

**Typical food in a simple reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant will depend on the number of participants

Tippling: Some local staff will look to members of the group for recognition of particular services provided. You should allow £22 for tipping. Your tour leader will account for any organised tipping.

Other Sightseeing

The following tours and excursions are usually available and may be booked and paid for through the tour leader during your trip. Estimated costs are provided in £STG (ie. UK sterling, not Egyptian pounds), but the final cost will depend on the number of participants.

DAHAB Snorkelling on coral reefs £4.00

HURGHADA Boat to coral reefs £8.00

LUXOR Balloon flight £90.00; Valley of the Queens £11.00; Sound/Light at Karnak £7.00; Villages calesh ride £3.00; Tutankhamun's Tomb £7.00

ASWAN Camel trek to St. Simeon's Monastery £6.50; Philae Temple £6.00; Dinner in Nubian Village £5.00

ABU SIMBEL Excursion from Aswan by bus £25.00 or by air £70.00

DAKHLA Camel trek £12.00

BAHARIYA Golden Mummies £5.00

CAIRO Saqqara & Dashur Pyramids £8.00

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

Winter in Egypt is cool and dry, Nov-Mar average day temperature 18°C. During Summer Apr-Oct around 32°C, but can rise to 40°C. Rainfall is negligible except in the Delta region. Winter nights are very cold in the desert.

Visa Requirements

A single entry tourist visa for Egypt is required by all nationalities. Visas can be obtained from the consular office, your travel agent or through Explore Visa Service. Egyptian visas are also available on arrival for British passport holders and some other nationalities – please check with your consular office or your booking agent.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Malaria, Typhoid, Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis and Polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria.

Special Note: Visa and Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information booklet**', available after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of luggage and a daysac. Total allowance: **44lbs/20kgs.**

Clothing: Pack essentially for '**Hot Conditions**'. You should wear loose fitting trousers on the donkey trek around the Valley of the Kings and for ladies a sports bra may be useful. Pack as for '**All Tours**' from **November to March** as night temperatures on the river and in the desert drop dramatically and warm clothing will be needed (**particularly in December**). We recommend some woollen gloves and a hat at this time.

Please note: Egypt is a Muslim country and you should dress with respect for the local customs especially in the Western Desert. Brief shorts or skirts should be avoided in the towns and you should cover your head when entering a mosque.

Footwear: Lightweight trainers and sandals. You may wish to bring walking boots or shoes for the Mt Sinai ascent

Equipment: Bring a small torch, a sleeping bag (2-season bag from April to October; a 3-season bag in November and March; a 4-season bag from December to February), insect repellent and a water bottle. You may also wish to bring your own snorkelling gear. Sleeping mats are provided on the Desert Oases extension but you may wish to bring your own for additional comfort/insulation.

Note: Qualified scuba divers wishing to dive should bring their diving certificate.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : The following key is intended as a guide to the type of accommodation listed for each night stop. We stress that standards may vary and reserve the right to make changes as necessary without warning.

Hotels / Pensions / Lodges

H+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, normally with private facilities. Local grading 2/3/4 star.

H : Usually twin bedded rooms, sometimes 3-4 bedded rooms may have to be used. Normally with shared facilities. Local grading 1/2/3 star.

Local Style Accommodation

L+ : Usually twin bedded rooms, may be some 3-4 bedded. Normally shared facilities.

L : Could be twin bedded but more usually multiple share or dorm style sleeping arrangements. Normally shared facilities.

Camping – under canvas or bivouac

C+ : Designated campsite, usually with fixed WC/shower. Sometimes with fixed pre-erected tents.

C : Natural/Rough/Wild/Bush Camp. Limited or no facilities. Temporary WC. Usually need to pitch own tents.

TO BOOK PLEASE CALL 01252 760000 • FAX 01252 760001 • www.exploreworldwide.com

Explore Worldwide, 1 Frederick St, Aldershot, Hants, GU11 1LQ.