

Egypt & The Eternal Nile

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Day 1 - Wednesday, 11/13 – The Adventure Begins.

Today you will arrive in Cairo, the capital of Egypt where you will be driven to the luxurious Marriott Mena House Hotel situated at the feet of the Great Pyramids of Giza. Once a royal place for the presidents of Egypt, the Mena House has for decades hosted many of the world's most famous dignitaries, celebrities, US presidents, and members of the royal families of Europe. This wonderful hotel is now your home base for your exploration of Cairo. Tonight you will attend our 'Welcome Dinner' at the exotic Mogul Room Restaurant.

Day 2 - Thursday, 11/14 - Saqqara & The Great Pyramids of Giza

This morning you will drive along the River Nile some 20 miles southwest to Memphis, the ancient city of the first Pharaohs. Established by Narmer, known by the Greeks as Menes, the world's first capital city was built some 3,100 years before the birth of Christ. After unifying the two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menes's reign was the first of some 32 Royal Dynasties lasting 3,000 years.

The Saqqara necropolis and the Step Pyramid of Djoser lie a short distance from the ruins

of Memphis. This earliest pyramid was the world's first building hewn from solid stone. Its creator, architect Imhotep, is mankind's first recorded genius. A master of architecture, medicine, mathematics and astronomy, Imhotep's fame reached its zenith when in the 6th century B. C. he was deemed a living god. The fact that the Great Pyramids remain standing today is a testament to his genius.

This evening you will venture to the Giza plateau on the west bank of the Nile. You will watch the sunset over the Great Pyramids of Egypt, the sole surviving members of the original Seven Wonders of the World. It is hard to imagine that the sun has painted the evening sky over these giants nearly two million times since they were created 50 centuries ago.

Tonight you will be taken to the sound and light show, which recounts the history of the pyramids and their guardian The Great Sphinx. After the show you can relax beside the fountains and gardens of your hotel as the stars fill the sky above the pyramids before you.

Day 3 - Friday, 11/15 - Cairo, Mother of the World

For centuries Cairo has been known as one of the world's most exotic and mysterious cities. In 1384 Ibn Khaldun, the great medieval Arab historian and traveler, exclaimed, "What one can imagine always surpasses what one sees, because of the scope of the imagination, except Cairo, because it surpasses anything one can imagine." These words still echo some 600 years later.

The dawn welcomes you as the smell of spiced teas, omelets, freshly squeezed juice and croissants are elegantly served as the morning light paints the Great Pyramid of Khufu in hues of red and gold. This morning you will explore the unimaginable pyramids atop the Giza Necropolis and Great Sphinx that guards this sacred complex.

Later today you will visit the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, which holds the fabulous treasure of the boy King Tutankhamen. The riches found within this young pharaoh's tomb tell of a life of opulent splendor rarely, if ever, matched in history. Tutankhamen's rediscovery by Englishman Howard Carter remains the most spectacular archaeological discovery the world has ever known.

The Antiquities Museum holds a vast collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts. Over 250,000 exhibits span the 5,000-year history of the world's first empire. Tonight we dine on a Nile cruise ship replete with music, dancing and a feast fit for the boy King himself.

Day 4 - Saturday, 11/16 - Old Cairo

After breakfast you will take in the sights and sounds of The Citadel with its distinctive Islamic style. Salah ad Din, the great Arab sultan who battled King Richard the Lion Heart of the third crusade, constructed the Citadel in 1176.

Next we enjoy a sumptuous lunch in the Khan el Khalili Bazaar, one of the world's oldest and most unique shopping districts. The smell of spices and coffee fill the air and silks, jewelry and all things imaginable are collected in an array of small shops. Some of these family owned businesses are a thousand years old. This is an excellent time to purchase something special from Egypt.

This afternoon you will board your flight to Upper Egypt and the ancient land of Nubia.

Day 5 - Sunday, 11/17 – Aswan and The First Cataract

Today you rest in Aswan which is famous for its breathtaking panoramas highlighted by pastel hues of gold, rose, ebony and ivory. Here among the many rocky islands that create the famous First Cataract of the Nile you can watch the gentle silhouettes of the feluccas as they play in the wind as it comes off of the desert.

**Day 6 - Monday, 11/18 – The Temple of Ramses The Great at Abu Simbel**

This morning we make our journey across the Western Desert some 300 miles south to the ancient frontier of Nubia and the Temples of Abu Simbel built during the reign of Ramses The Great. The Temple of Ramses II, a massive stone facade measuring 115 feet wide and 98 feet high was considered by the Greeks to be one of the Great Wonders of the World. The sight of four mammoth seated images of Ramses rivals any structure on earth, even the Great Pyramids of Giza. This magnificent temple was constructed in a way that allowed the rays of rising sun to travel down a long hallway to the holy of holies where they would bathe a statue of the king and his beloved god Amun twice a year in honor of some great ancient event.

In 1964, Egypt with the aid of the Soviet Union set about to build the massive Aswan High Dam. This colossal earthen dam caused the Nile to back up and fill a vast valley some 500 miles long. The Temple of Ramses at Abu Simbel would be lost forever if it could not be saved from the rising waters, and a vast campaign of millions of international donations to UNESCO from nations all around the globe saved the temple.



Under the supervision of Polish archaeologist Kazimierz Michalowski, the entire temple complex was disassembled and moved in its entirety high above the newly created reservoir. The great task of cutting these massive temples into thousands of stone blocks weighing on average 20 tons each took over 5 years to accomplish. Successfully moving and reassembling the thousands of pieces remains today one of the greatest challenges of archaeological engineering ever attempted. This massive undertaking was so successful and exact, that the figures of King Ramses and the god Amun, deep within the temple still receive the rays of the rising sun on October 22nd and again on February 22nd exactly as they did in ancient times.

Day 7 - Tuesday, 11/19 – Aswan & The Moon Goddess

This morning we say goodbye to Abu Simbel as we make our way back to Aswan and the beautiful River Nile.



At noon you will board the Nile cruise ship Moon Goddess, your floating palace for the next 5 days. As the tranquility of Aswan works its magic you can browse through small shops and boutiques or stroll along the gardens of Elephantine Island. You might like to venture out on the Nile for a sail aboard a felucca to Kitchener's Island and Agha Khan.

Day 8 - Wednesday, 11/20 - The Unfinished Obelisk & The Temple of Isis, then The Nile Valley & The Temple of Kom Ombo

This morning we explore the Temple of Isis on the island of Philae and visit the ancient granite quarries and the massive Unfinished Obelisk of Hatshepsut.

After lunch we set sail down the beautiful River Nile. As we journey along the deep blue waters of this longest of all rivers, you will see fisherman and villages changed little since the days of the pharaohs. This evening we will stop for a few hours at the Temple of Kom Ombo and visit the museum of mummified crocodiles from ancient times.

Tonight the Moon Goddess will sail onward to the village of Edfu where we will rest for the night.



Day 9 - Thursday, 11/21 – Edfu & The Temple of Horus

This morning you will be taken by horse drawn carriage through the village of Edfu where you will tour the best-preserved and most complete temple in Egypt, the Temple of Horus. Dedicated to the falcon headed god, this temple is a veritable textbook of the ancient Horus mythology. Near-perfectly intact inscriptions decorate the exterior walls, pylon and courtyards. These inscriptions depict Horus's battle for good over evil, his marriage to the goddess Hathor and his struggle for balance and order in the cosmos. Later this morning we sail onward to Luxor.

Day 10 - Friday, 11/22 – Luxor & The Valley of the Kings & Queens

Lying peacefully on the east bank of the Nile, Luxor is where the New Kingdom pharaohs built their new capital and it was here where they proceeded to build the largest temple complex the world has ever known.

This morning we cross over to the west bank of the Theban acropolis where you will visit the famed Valleys of the Kings and Queens. It is here in 1922 that Howard Carter unearthed the tomb of the boy King Tutankhamen. The painted walls and ceilings of the valley's 63 tombs are still vivid after 40 centuries.



As recently as 1995 a gigantic tomb built for the 50 sons of Pharaoh Ramses the Great was discovered and has yet to be fully explored. Today after years of painstaking research, the most in over 100 years, it is now believed that there are yet several other undiscovered tombs to be found in the valley and one of these tombs is of a pharaoh of great significance. Perhaps the Valley of the Kings still holds wonderful treasures waiting to be discovered.

Day 11 – Saturday, 11/23 – Luxor

This morning we will disembark the Moon Goddess and transfer to the Winter Palace Hotel. In the evening we will visit the grandest temple in all of ancient Egypt, Karnak for a night to be remembered.

Day 12 – Sunday, 11/24 – Luxor - Dendera / Abydos / Hatshepsut Temple

Arising with the dawn, today we will devote the day to the exploration of two of ancient Egypt's most unique temples, The Temple of Hathor at Dendera and the vast ancient city complex of Abydos.

Dendera's Hathor Temple's beauty is unequaled in the intricacy of its hieroglyphic reliefs depicting sacred offerings to the goddess decorating every inch of the large hypostyle hall supported by 24 giant "hathoric" columns. On the architrave of each pillar is a spectacular frieze divided in half with the head of the goddess Hathor and the other half the falcon head of her spouse Horus. The entire structure is a 3 dimensional storybook of solid stone depicting the birth and death of the sun and its all important rebirth each day through the celestial body of the sky goddess Nut, who's depicted here covered in waves of the celestial ocean and decorated with zodiac symbols and stars.

A few hours north of Dendera we will explore the vast ruins of the ancient capital of Abydos, old by even Egyptian standards. Here lie the graves of Egypt's very first pharaohs and within the Great Temple of Seti I, there is a wall unlike any other found in all of ancient Egypt. Inscribed on this wall are the names of all of the pharaohs who reigned before Seti the Great. Among the list of kings spanning the many centuries is the cartouche of the young King Tut. This singular relief surviving only here throughout the ages was the driving force for Howard Carter's belief that there was one lost pharaoh still hidden within the Valley of the Kings. If it were not for this wall of records, the boy King's spectacular treasure would most probably still lie buried and forgotten.



Day 13 – Monday, 11/25 – Rest Day and Luxor Temple Farewell Party

Today is a day of rest and reflection. Over the last few weeks you will have explored ancient temples and tombs and sailed upon the longest river in the world. You've been close enough to the mummies of the ancient pharaohs to almost hear the sounds of their voices from ancient evenings by the Nile. You've been serenaded by the sounds of the Arabian nights as you listened to stories of ancient days by campfire light. Tonight we say farewell with an evening of new friends, great food, fine music, and of course a star filled sky reflecting on the tranquil Nile.

**Day 14 – Tuesday 11/26 – Morning Flight to Cairo and Departure to USA**

This morning Egyptair will fly you to Cairo and your journey home. For those who are ending your stay with us, we say Ma 'as salama, (Goodbye) until we meet again.

Photographer & Guide – Charles Ellenberger
Cairo Program Director – Mohamed Mostafa
Egyptologist – Ayman Badr

Alexandria Extension

Day 14 – Tuesday 11/26 – Luxor to Cairo and Onward to Alexandria

This morning Egyptair will fly you to Cairo, from where you will begin your journey to the Nile Delta and the great Hellenistic city of Alexandria.



Founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, this spectacular city was the capital of the great warrior kings empire and home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Great Lighthouse of Alexandria. Alexander's capital was for 1000 years one of the world's most influential and cultural cites second only to Rome. Ancient Alexandria was home to The Great Library that contained the largest repository of knowledge in the ancient world. Tragically the library burned in 48 B.C. when Julius Caesar while laying siege to the city, burned the Egyptian fleet lying in the harbor and accidentally burned the great library. Estimated to have over a half a million manuscripts this so called accident is considered on of the greatest cultural catastrophes of the ancient world.

In 2002 near the site of the old library UNESCO and the Egyptian Government built a modern masterpiece commemorating the original library. The Bibliotheca Alexandria is a modern functioning library housing a vast collection of books, art and a museum. The architecture of the new library is considered a modern day wonder in its own right.



Bibliotheca of Alexandria

Day 15 – Wednesday 11/27 – The Catacombs & Museums

Today we will explore the unique Catacombs of Kom El Shoqafa, with tombs unlike any found in Egypt. A short distance away is the National Museum of Alexandria with its vast collection of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman antiquities. This evening you'll dine on the great harbor overlooking the sea.

Day 16 – Thursday 11/28 – The Possible Tomb of Cleopatra

Twenty miles west of Alexandria along the shore of the Mediterranean we'll find the Temple of Abusir, known by the Romans as Taposiris. In the last few years, there has been a great amount of excitement by the heads of the Egyptian Antiquities Department concerning this site. The temple is believed to hold the tomb of Cleopatra VII that has been lost to history for over 1000 years. Archeological evidence from a dig within the temple complex suggests that this may be the famous queen's long lost tomb. History and Hollywood has immortalized Cleopatra's remarkable life and her tragic death by suicide with her lover Marc Antony. Finding the tomb and mummy of the last pharaoh of Egypt would be one of archeology's most astounding discoveries.

Another fascinating fact about this famous city is the legend that somewhere hidden beneath the city streets of modern Alexandria is the great crystal sarcophagus of none other than Alexander the Great. In June of 323 B.C. Alexander died mysteriously at the young age of 32 of still unknown reasons. What is known is that he did die in the city of Babylon after returning from battles in his conquest of India. Against the wishes of the great king's mother Olympias, and his top general, Alexander's body was taken to Egypt by his faithful general Ptolemy in accordance to the great man's last wishes. Alexander's body was placed in a massive mobile shroud and taken on a yearlong funeral procession to his beloved new capital of Alexandria.

History records that while on his deathbed, Alexander summoned his generals and told them his three last wishes. His first wish was that the best doctors should carry his coffin. His second wish was that the wealth he had accumulated, the gold, precious stones, and vast treasure, should be scattered along the road of the procession to his final burial site. Lastly, he wished for his hands to be let loose, hanging from outside of the coffin for all to see. One of his generals perplexed by these unusual requests, kissed Alexander's hands and asked him to explain them. The dying king said I want the best doctors to carry my coffin to demonstrate that, in the face of death, even the best doctors in the world have no power to heal. I want the road to my tomb to be covered with my treasure so that everybody sees that material wealth acquired on earth stays on earth. Finally, I want my hands to swing in the wind, so that people will understand that we come to this world empty handed and we leave this world empty handed after the most precious treasure of all is exhausted, and that treasure is TIME.

The legend says that he paused for a few minutes and then whispered to them that TIME is our most precious treasure, because it is limited. We can produce more wealth, but we cannot produce more time. When we give someone out time, we actually give a portion of our life that we will never take back. Our time is our life. Then he is reported to have said, "May you have plenty of TIME and may you have the wisdom to give it away."

For hundreds of years Alexander's body lay in state in a crystal sarcophagus in a small temple in the center of the city where it was afforded the respect given a god. It is recorded that Julius Caesar wept when he knelt before the coffin of the great king in 50 B.C. Many of history's greatest kings and Roman Emperors were said to have visited the grave where they would bring great offerings and place their swords on the great crystal sarcophagus in tribute to the greatest general the world had ever known. It was believed the country that housed the body of Alexander the Great would never fall.

Day 17 – Friday 11/29 – Cairo and Home

This morning Egyptair will take you back to Cairo and your journey home.

