



Egypt Honeymoon & Special Adventure Trip Notes

Highlights

- Pyramids & Sphinx at Giza
- Horse or camel ride near the Pyramids
- Treasures of the Egyptian Museum
- 3 days cruising the Nile
- Horse-drawn carriage ride to Karnak Temple
- Donkey ride to the Valley of the Kings



Factfile

Transfers Airport transfers upon arrival and departure.

Escorted Services of Egyptologists at all major sites. Services of representatives for all airport transfers, train station transfers and checking in at hotels.

Transport Private air-conditioned transport, 5 star Nile cruise boat, sleeper train, domestic flights: Luxor to Sharm el Sheikh

Activities Camel/horse ride at the Pyramids, felucca ride in Aswan, horse-drawn carriages in Luxor, donkey ride in Luxor.

Accommodation 5 nights comfortable hotels, 3 nights Nile cruise boat, 1 night sleeper train, 4 nights beach resort hotel.

Meals As per itinerary. B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner.

Entrance Fees Included for all sites listed as a part of the itinerary, except Edfu and Kom Ombo.

Itinerary

DAY 1 - CAIRO

Arrive at Cairo airport and transfer to the Sofitel Hotel, near the Pyramids. Upon arrival at Cairo International Airport, please look for our representative who will be holding an Imaginative Traveller sign. He should be waiting for you in the area immediately before you reach Customs and Immigration. Note: This itinerary has been designed to start on a Sunday to coincide with Nile Cruise departures. If you wish to start on another day, some changes to the itinerary may be required.

Cairo

When you arrive in Cairo you are thrown headlong into the hustle and bustle of this wonderful city. As you wander the streets your senses will be assaulted on all levels – an endless cacophony of noise with cars tooting, donkeys braying and the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer; the mix of smells like the aroma from cooking pots bubbling with fuul (a local dish that you will certainly sample); the delicious taste of mint tea as you sit in a shaded café to relax; and the endless river of life that you can watch roll past you – women haggling in the bazaars, men talking whilst enjoying a traditional shisha pipe, cars vying for space on the crowded roads, camels ambling serenely along and children playing in the back streets.

Sofitel Hotel

In the heart of Cairo and in the shadow the Pyramids, one of the ancient 7 wonders of the world, is the Sofitel. There is a brilliant pool overlooking the Pyramids and various restaurants offering different cuisines.

DAY 2 - CAIRO

Free morning. In the afternoon your private guide will take you to the Pyramids and Sphinx at Giza. Then take a sunset horse or camel ride among these ancient wonders. (BD)

The Pyramids & the Sphinx

The Pyramids have to be seen to be believed. Enormous majestic tombs rising out of the desert, towering above the modern city of Cairo, they are an incredible testament to the achievements of the Ancient Egyptians. Built over 5,000 years ago, the Pyramids are the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that are still standing.

You will explore the Pyramids and the Sphinx with your Egyptologist guide who can explain all the mysteries surrounding their creation – were they built by aliens or are they aligned to the stars? You will also have the opportunity to climb inside the Great Pyramid and see for yourself the burial chamber inside (not for the claustrophobic).

DAY 3 - CAIRO – ASWAN

Visit the famous Egyptian Museum. Free afternoon; perhaps visit the exotic Khan El Khalili bazaar. In the evening board the overnight sleeper train to Aswan. (BD)

Egyptian Museum

This museum houses the world's greatest collection of ancient Egyptian artefacts including many of the treasures discovered in the tombs of pharaohs, the amazing golden mask of Tutankhamun and a large number of mummies. To put it into perspective, if you spend just one minute at each exhibit it would take more than nine months to see everything. Your guide will take you through the museum, pointing out particular highlights and the information gained during this visit will help you appreciate the sights you will see as you travel through Egypt.

Khan El Khalili

If you are looking for bargains or souvenirs this is the place to go. Walk through the narrow streets and alleyways of one of the oldest and biggest bazaars in the Middle East and soak up the amazing atmosphere; craftsmen and shopkeepers selling their wares, shining golden and silver souvenirs, row after row of shisha pipes and the scent

in the air of tobacco, teahouses and coffee shops. Before plunging in, why not spend a while at one of the teahouses with a mint tea and a shisha pipe.

DAY 4 - ASWAN

Early arrival in Aswan and private transfer to the Basma Hotel. Enjoy a free day to wander the market streets of Aswan. You may opt to visit the fascinating Nubian Museum or simply relax by the pool. (B)

Aswan

Aswan is a whole world away from Cairo - the pace of life is much slower and the town is small enough to explore on foot. In Aswan the Nile is at its most picturesque, with golden sand dunes running up to the water's edge and scores of white-sailed feluccas gliding around the islands. The bazaar runs the whole length of town and is crammed with shops and stalls selling everything imaginable - a great place to hone your haggling skills. To relax you can sit at one of the many cafés and enjoy a cup of sweet tea and a game of backgammon.

Basma Hotel

Basma Hotel is situated on Aswan's highest hill, offering commanding views over the River Nile and the vibrant city of Aswan. The interiors are designed with a rich collection of contemporary Egyptian artwork and set amongst Mediterranean style gardens. There is a wonderful swimming pool with beautiful views of the Nile. You can chill out at the lobby bar, the Nubian bar or the Garden terrace overlooking the Nile.

DAY 5 - ASWAN

In the morning there is the option to take a flight to Abu Simbel to see the magnificent monuments there (for further details, see the trip dossier). In the afternoon board your private felucca for a sunset cruise around the beautiful local islands and enjoy a romantic dinner on board. (BD)

Abu Simbel

The Temples at Abu Simbel are one of the highlights of any visit to Egypt and considered unmissable by many travellers. Deep in the heart of the desert, miles from the nearest habitation is a gigantic monolith out of which are carved four colossal statues – each one the seated figure of Ramses II, one of Ancient Egypt's greatest pharaohs. Built in the 13th century BC, the temples remained totally hidden by sand until 1813, and were almost destined to be submerged again, 150 years later, by the rising waters of Lake Nasser – a man-made lake formed after the building of the Aswan High Dam. Remarkably, a massive UNESCO project dismantled the entire temple and the cliff out of which it was carved, and reassembled it on higher ground, redirecting the magnificent stare of Ramses II across Lake Nasser's blue waters. It is still possible to see just how close they came to being submerged by the watermarks around the base of the statues.

Felucca

Imagine spending your afternoon lying on the deck of a traditional sailing craft, floating gently on the Nile around the picturesque Elephantine Islands. There is no sound but the wind in the sail, the occasional shouts of hello from children playing on the banks and the haunting call to prayer; there is nothing to do but relax and admire Nubian life on the islands. Later that evening you will moor and be served a wonderful traditional dinner under the stars.

DAY 6 - ASWAN – NILE CRUISE

At lunchtime today, board your 5 star deluxe Nile cruise boat. (BLD)

Nile Cruise Boat

There is nothing better in life than lying on the deck of your Nile cruise boat watching the last golden rays of the sun reflect on the water, with a cocktail in your hand and your partner beside you to share the same moment of magic. The banks of the Nile play host to a whole different way of life and during the day we enjoy fantastic views of the small villages along the Nile Valley, with palm trees nearly touching the sky and young kids playing on the banks of the river.

The Nile cruise boats we utilise are 5 star and come equipped with river-facing air-conditioned cabins, double beds and private bath. There is a large sundeck with swimming pool and covered terrace for you to enjoy time out of the sun. Inside is a lounge bar serving a wide selection of drinks throughout the day and there is fabulous restaurant serving up a mouth-watering selection of dishes, both Egyptian and Western. In the evening you can enjoy the disco or retire to one of the bars for a quiet drink. The atmosphere is informal and relaxed with an excellent level of service from the friendly on-board staff.

DAY 7 TO DAY 8 - NILE CRUISE

Take pleasure in the beautiful scenery of the Nile Valley from the privacy of your room overlooking the river, or whilst lazing by the pool on deck. You will have the opportunity to visit the riverside temples at Kom Ombo and Edfu. (BLD)

Kom Ombo

This beautiful temple is right on the edge of the Nile. It is lovely to wander around the temple with its exquisite relief carvings, as the sun shines over the Nile, colouring the stone a deep gold.

Edfu

Edfu is a magnificent temple dedicated to Horus, the falcon-headed God, and home of many ancient Egyptian legends. For centuries Edfu was almost completely covered with sand, which has protected the building from the elements and it remains one of the best preserved temples in Egypt. Reliefs carved into the temple walls depict Horus and other gods on a grand scale, black granite falcon statues stand over two meters tall and there are a myriad of secret passageways and hidden rooms.

DAY 9 - LUXOR

You have the option to rise early for an exhilarating balloon ride over the Valley of the Kings and the west bank of the Nile. Later visit tombs of the ancient Pharaohs before returning by donkey via the Colossi of Memnon. Transfer to the Sonesta Hotel. (B)

Luxor

There cannot be anywhere else in the world that has the same number of awe-inspiring attractions as the small town of Luxor. This was the capital of Egypt in ancient times (then known as Thebes) and there are an endless number of temples, tombs and museums that could keep even the most avid sightseer busy for a week. The two most impressive sights have to be the massive Karnak Temple complex and the Valley of the Kings.

Valley of the Kings

Arriving at the Valley of the Kings, there is not much to see above the ground. But corridors carved deep into the valley lead to burial chambers far underground. The walls of the tombs are covered in incredibly well preserved paintings depicting the gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt and complex hieroglyphics which your guide will help you decipher. You will visit three of the different tombs and will be given the chance to visit the tomb of Tutankhamun, the famous boy king, and spend some time exploring on your own.

Later you have the option to visit Deir El Medina, the workers village, where you can still see the remains of the houses where the tomb builders used to live. You also have the chance to visit the Valley of the Queens.

Balloon Ride

In Luxor you can take an optional balloon ride over the Valley of the Kings and the West Bank monuments - the perfect way to start the day, with a gorgeous sunrise and spectacular uninhibited views for miles. The ride takes about 50 minutes depending on conditions and you just need to remember to take your camera. Approximate cost is US\$125 per person.

Donkey Ride

You will be assigned a donkey and given a quick lesson in how to control them before you set off on the ride. You will be taken along quiet roads, with lovely views of the green fields leading to the edge of the Nile and the sheer cliffs of the desert beyond. We are not the only people up at this time and you will pass villagers on their own donkeys on their way to the fields.

Sonesta St George Hotel

In the heart of Luxor, you'll find the Sonesta St George overlooking the Nile River. All rooms are well equipped with a variety of restaurant outlets serving various cuisine, from Middle Eastern food, Italian food to Japanese cuisine. The hotel offers an enormous selection of drinks in the lobby bar, pool bar and the English lounge bar. The pool is amazing and the fitness club is well worth a visit.

DAY 10 - LUXOR – SHARM EL SHEIKH

This morning a private horse-drawn carriage takes you to Karnak Temple. Experience the wonders of this monument at your own pace with an Egyptologist. Scheduled afternoon flight to Sharm el Sheikh. On arrival you will be met and transferred to the Sofitel Sharm el Sheikh. (B)

Karnak Temple

You will reach Karnak in a romantic horse-drawn carriage that will take you along the banks of the Nile. The entrance consists of an avenue of lion statues leading up to the magnificent gates but even this will not prepare you for the sheer size of the temple when you get inside. It was built by many pharaohs over a period of 2,000 years, with each one trying to outdo his predecessor in architectural achievement. You could lose yourself inside but your Egyptologist will guide you to all the most impressive parts of the temple and give a full insight into the lives of the pharaohs who worshipped here.

DAY 11 TO DAY 13 - SHARM EL SHEIKH

Three days at leisure. Go snorkelling or diving in the famous Red Sea, take a jeep safari to spectacular canyons and mountains, or alternatively ride a camel or horse in the Sinai Desert. (B)

The Sofitel Sharm El Sheikh

The Sofitel Sharm el Sheikh is located on its own sweeping private beach offering superb panoramic views of Naama Bay. From this beautiful base any number of options are available to you; excursions into the desert, kayaking Naama Bay, a game of tennis, unwinding on the gorgeous beach or scuba diving in the warm waters of the Red Sea.

Sharm El Sheikh

Sharm el Sheikh is situated on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, with the Red Sea on one side and the mountains of Mount Sinai on the other. Known as the jewel of the Sinai this Red Sea resort is the perfect place to spend a few days unwinding, and to experience some of the best diving and snorkelling in the world.

DAY 14 - SHARM EL SHEIKH

Departure day. Transfer to international airport. (B)

Supplementary Information

Staffing

Throughout the tour you will be provided with all the assistance that you will need. Representatives will meet you at the airport on arrival and will drop you off and pick you up from train stations and airports during the course of the tour. These representatives will be able to answer any questions that you might have about your tour. In addition you will be provided with professional Egyptologists to guide you around all the major sites.

Hotels

We have selected an excellent range of international standard hotels so that you can be confident that your evening's will be spent in comfort. Whilst each hotel retains its own character, they all offer superb service and international standards of cuisine.

All of the hotels that we have listed in the itinerary will be booked subject to availability. If we are unable to secure

a booking at the selected hotel we will suggest a suitable alternative.

Transport

Road - All road transport will be in privately chartered air-conditioned vehicles.

Sleeper Train - Although the Egyptian Railway system is limited, an efficient sleeper train service operates between Cairo and Aswan. You will travel first class; all carriages have air conditioned / heated cabins which sleep two people and contain a luggage rack and a wash basin. Communal western style toilets are located at the end of each carriage. Dinner and breakfast are "airline style" meals and will be served in your compartment. There is a Club Car located in the middle of the train where you can go for a drink after dinner in the evenings.

Visas

You will need a single entry Egyptian visa for this holiday. This is available on arrival for US\$15 for most nationalities and is not included in your holiday. You should contact your local Egyptian Embassy or Consulate for the specific requirements for your nationality.

Travel Insurance

Fully Comprehensive travel insurance is compulsory for all travellers. We recommend that you take out insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, baggage loss or damage, medical expenses, emergency travel, repatriation and personal accident, before you leave home. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully insured to financially safeguard against unforeseen circumstances.

Money

The monetary unit in Egypt is the Egyptian Pound (LE), which is divided into 100 piastres.

- Approximate exchange rates (as at April 2009) are as follows:
1 Pound Sterling: 8.3 LE
1 US Dollar: 5.67 LE
1 Euro: 7.5 LE

XE.com is a useful site for currency conversion. There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency that a visitor may bring into Egypt, however very large sums should be declared on arrival.

During your stay in Egypt, you will notice a general lack of small change. We therefore recommend maintaining a small supply of coins and small denomination notes (e.g. 1 & 5 LE notes).

Banks and ATMs can be found almost everywhere in Egypt. Credit cards are accepted in most shops, restaurants and hotels (with the exception of American Express cards which are not widely accepted). We recommend that you take either US\$, Euros or GB£ currency. Travellers' cheques are not widely used and can be difficult to change.

Entrance fees

Entrance fees are included for all sites listed as part of the itinerary apart from Edfu (US\$7) and Kom Ombo (US\$5). Egypt also has a wealth of other historical sites and museums that you may be interested in visiting. Some of the most popular extras are listed here.

Royal Mummies in the Egyptian Museum - US\$18.

The Tomb of King Tutankhamun - US\$15.

Entering the Great Pyramid at Giza - US\$18 (there is a limit of 150 visitors per day)

Please note: The Tomb of Queen Nefertari, located in the Valley of the Queens, was closed on January 1st 2003 by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities. This is to allow restoration work to take place on paintings on the walls of the tomb. It will not be possible to visit it again until further notice.

Abu Simbel

The Temples at Abu Simbel are considered by many to be a highlight of a trip to Egypt. The easiest way to get to

the temples is by a domestic flight from Aswan, which takes approximately 45 minutes. On arrival there is a complimentary return bus transfer to the site. Entrance fees are US\$15 and must be paid on arrival at the site.

The cost of the flight varies considerably but current prices range from £75 to £150; please check with your booking agent for the latest information. We would be pleased to add the excursion to Aby Simbel to a 'gift list' so that friends and family are able to contribute to the cost. Please discuss this with your booking agent.

Tipping

Tipping is a way of life in Egypt and a tip will be expected by everyone who provides you with a service. We will issue you with detailed guidelines on arrival in Egypt but to give an idea of the kind of amounts that you should expect to pay we have given a few guidelines here;

Porters, waiters and hotel staff will appreciate a few Egyptian pounds each time they provide you with a service.

Guides should be tipped approximately 45LE (US\$6) per couple for a half day tour

Driver should be tipped approximately 20LE (US\$3) per half day.

You can increase this amount for particularly excellent service and reduce it if you are not happy with the service provided.

Voltage and Plug Sockets

The voltage in Egypt is 220 Volts.

Sockets are of the European two pronged round pin variety.

Meals & Drinks

Meals are included as listed in the itinerary.

B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner.

Approximate costs for meals and snacks not included are shown below:

Simple snack: US\$3

Light meal: US\$6-12

Fancy restaurant: US\$25-35

Tea and coffee are always provided with breakfast. All other drinks (i.e. bottled water, soft drinks) are at your own expense.

Approximate costs for drinks bought in a shop in the street are shown below. Note: Prices in restaurants, hotels, and cruise boats can be as much as double those specified.

1l of water: US\$1

30cl bottle of soft drink: US\$1

50cl bottle of beer: US\$3-5

It is not recommended that you drink the local tap water in Egypt. Bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available throughout the country.

Local Transport

Taxis are the most effective method of local transport, and recommended for all journeys within a city. In Egypt taxi meters are for show only and you will find yourself engaging in a bit of haggling with the driver to agree upon the fare you will pay. This can be fun, but it is a good idea to find out, from your hotel receptionist, approximately how much the fare should be for the journey you propose. You will probably have to accept that you will pay more than the Egyptians do.

Note: Taxis at hotels tend to charge more than those you can hail in the street but hotel taxi drivers usually speak English.

Clothing

As a general guideline, clothing should be lightweight, loose fitting, hard-wearing and easily washed. In Egypt's hot summer months, cotton clothing is much more comfortable than man-made materials like nylon. However, during the winter it can be cold, particularly in Cairo and in the evenings on the Nile.

You should bear in mind that Egypt has conservative attitudes towards dress, particularly in remote areas. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women. The issue is not nearly of such importance in 'touristy' areas, such as the Pyramids and the Red Sea coast, where you can be just about as casual as you like.

Make sure you bring lots of clothing that covers shoulders and knees and also more than one outfit which covers your legs to your ankles and your arms past the elbows. A sarong is an invaluable item to carry as it can be used to instantly cover any exposed areas (i.e. head, legs).

Culture Ramadan

Whilst it is possible to travel to Egypt during the holy month of Ramadan (and in fact, many people specifically choose to do so as there is a fantastic atmosphere in the evenings) this will have an effect on your holiday. Whilst it is possible to eat in tourist restaurants during the day, most local restaurants will be closed. Alcohol is generally not served at all during this time.

In 2009, Ramadan will start around the 21st August and last for 30 days.

In 2010, Ramadan will start around the 11th August and last for 30 days.

Begging

Begging is a way of life in the Middle East. Ultimately donations are a traveller's personal choice, however in line with initiatives and government policy in many of our destinations, our recommendation is NOT to give money, pens, gifts or sweets as this encourages a begging mentality and is largely ineffective. If you do want to help it is probably better to give to a recognized charity. If you choose not to give, simply say no with a smile and keep on walking. If you learn nothing else of the local language, learn to say 'no thank you'!

Haggling

Haggling is also a way of life in the Middle East. In the shops there is no fixed price so the shop keeper will start with a high price which you are then expected to haggle down until you reach a fair price. Haggling should always be relaxed and can be a lot of fun – you will find most shop owners are very friendly and will probably invite you in for a cup of tea to break the ice before the haggling starts.

Safety Most people find that Egypt is a very friendly and hospitable country and feel quite comfortable wandering around alone during the day. However, as with any country you are not familiar with (and in particular in large cities such as Cairo), it is recommended that you exercise more caution at night and generally take taxis rather than walk.

Local Food & Drink

Food

In Egypt the basic diet centres on pulses such as fava beans, chick peas and lentils. Meat dishes will usually be served with rice or pasta and a garnish of green salad. Bread (usually of the flat, Middle Eastern variety) is ideal for the great variety of dips featured in Egyptian cuisine.

Drinks

The Egyptians are great tea drinkers. If you don't normally take sugar, make sure you mention this to your host. Coffee is served Turkish style - very strong and sweet. There is also a wide selection of fruit juices, determined by the season, served in local kiosks.

Although Egypt is a Muslim country, most of the hotels we use do serve alcoholic drinks (although during Ramadan, many hotels will close their bars). In more up-market hotels, imported beers and spirits are available, but can be expensive. Locally produced spirits and wine are not particularly good however the local beer "Stella" (not Artois!) is quite good.

Vegetarians

Although meat is often not the main feature of a meal, it can be found in many dishes, even if only as a stock. Therefore, if you are a vegetarian, whilst it will be possible to accommodate you, you may experience a distinct lack of variety in the food available at meal times.

Communications

Email

Internet cafes can now be found everywhere in Egypt. The cost for an hour is approx US\$3 (more in hotels).

Phone

The Egyptian phone system is fairly good. A 3 minute call (to the UK) will cost approx. US\$8 from a hotel and approx. US\$5 from a telephone centre or with a pre paid phone card which you can buy from any shop in the market.

Post

The postal service is good and stamps are available everywhere. An overseas stamp will cost approx. US\$0.5.

Video Cameras

If you are taking a video camera into Egypt you should declare it upon entry to the country. Regulations concerning the use of video cameras in Egypt are much stricter than for the use of still cameras. At almost every historical site you will have to purchase a special permit if you wish to use your video camera. These permits can often be very expensive (US\$25-30) and at some sites the use of video cameras is not permitted at all. If the main reason for bringing a video camera is to film historical sites you should budget accordingly for this.

Weather Temperatures in Egypt are generally high, with most of the country enjoying a dry, desert, climate. There are, however, noticeable differences in temperature between the north and the south.

In Upper Egypt (Luxor & Aswan) and on the Red Sea coast, you should be able to count on reasonable daytime temperatures throughout the year. In Cairo and the Nile Delta, however, winter temperatures can be cool, even cold. If you are travelling between November and March you should expect temperatures to fall considerably at night on the Nile.

Suggested Reading

The Egypt Blue Guide (Michelin / Guide Bleu)

The Middle East (IC Publications)

Any novels by Naguib Mahfouz - Egypt's Nobel Prize winning author

Contact Details

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General information

Price includes:

- Staffing as shown in the 'Factfinder'
- Accommodation, meals, transportation, and sightseeing excursions as per itinerary.

Price does not include:

- Visa costs
- Border Taxes
- Excursion to Abu Simbel
- Drinks, tips, laundry and other items of a personal nature.
- International flights
- Meals other than those listed

Are You Ready To Go?

Before you travel it is essential that you read all of the following documents which you can obtain from your booking agent:

- Trip Notes (this document)
- Egypt Country Dossier
- Pre-Departure Information

The itinerary and supplementary information has been compiled with care and provided in good faith. However it may be subject to change, and does not form part of a contract between the client and The Imaginative Traveller.