

EGYPT

CAIRO - LUXOR - NILE CRUISE - ASWAN - ABU SIMBEL - CAIRO



ITINERARY:

12 nights/13 days

Day 1

Arrival at Cairo - Welcome to the land of the Pharaohs! Our ground handlers will greet and help you at Cairo International Airport (Arrival formalities) before transporting you to Villa Belle Epoque. The latter is considered Cairo's 'best' boutique hotel and is set in a quieter residential area (3 nights).

Day 2

Pyramids and Cairo Sightseeing.

After meeting our guide we head for a day on the Giza plateau to see the Pyramids of Cheops, Chephren, and Mykerinus, as well as the Sphinx and Valley Temple facing it. Lunch at Giza. Late afternoon return to our hotel.

Day 3

City Tour (The Egyptian Museum + Citadel + Christian & Islamic Old Cairo + Khan El Khalili).

Full-day tour of some of the city's best historic and cultural sites. We head for Cairo's famed Egyptian Museum, where we shall cover the highlights. Then on to Saladin's Cairo Citadel, at the heart of the medieval city. The ramparts afford great city views and we visit the alabaster Muhammad Ali mosque within the walls. We then head for Christian Coptic Cairo - among the most important locations for Christians in Egypt - and continue to Islamic Cairo, where we stroll through the vibrant Khan El Khalil bazaar before returning to our hotel.

Day 4

Fly to Luxor - Visit Valley of the Queens, Temple of Seti, Ramesses Temple.

Check out of Villa Belle Epoque and on to Cairo Airport for our early morning flight to Luxor. On arrival we head for the West Bank and the Valley of the Kings, the Temple of Hatshepsut, and the Colossi of Memnon. In the Valley of the Kings we have 'cherry picked' our tomb visits and have paid

to visit the best preserved and decorated ones (Which can be accessed changes, on a rotation basis, every 6 months). We shall then check-in at Marsam Hotel (2 nights), the oldest guest house on the West Bank of Luxor, built in 1918 as a 'dig house' for the University of Chicago. Howard Carter, the British archaeologist and Egyptologist who, in November 1922, discovered the intact tomb of the 18th Dynasty Pharaoh Tutankhamun, lodged and had his office here. Located in the village of Qurna, Marsam Hotel sits among ancient pharaonic temples and tombs and it overlooks the open fields of its own organic farm, the produce from which is served in their restaurant.

Day 5

Day Trip Dendara Temple

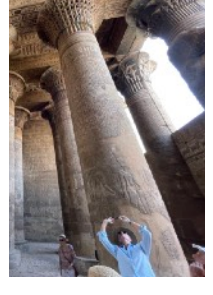
After breakfast we depart for a day trip to Dendara (1h 15 minutes drive) to see The Dendara Temple Complex, one of the best preserved in Egypt. It is located about 60 km north of Luxor, on the west bank of the Nile River. The Temple Complex is dedicated to the goddess Hathor, the goddess of love, beauty, music, dance, fertility and pleasure. After our visit we return to Marsam Hotel for our second night in Luxor

Day 6

Luxor and Karnak Temples

Transfer to Esna - Embarkation - Visit Temple of Khnum.

Accompanied by our guide, we head to the East Bank to visit Karnak Temple, dedicated to the God Amon, his wife Mut and their son Khonsu. Karnak is considered one of the greatest examples of temple architecture in the world, its scale is awe-inspiring. We continue by visiting the Temple of Luxor, started by Amunhotep III during the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom and completed by Ramesses II during the 19th Dynasty.



We then drive to Esna, 33 miles south of Luxor, to embark on our 'Dahabiya' (Traditional, timber Nile cruise boats) and meet the crew. Esna is best known for the small but wonderfully preserved Temple of Khnum, which we visit on foot. Sediment from millennia of Nile floods had completely buried the temple, thus preserving its vibrant colours. It now sits 9 meters below street level.

Day 7

El Kab and Edfu - El Kab, on the East Bank of the Nile, was once the capital of Upper Egypt and is still home to the Temple of Nekhbet, as well as a row of fascinating decorated tombs carved into the slope of the mountains. Upon docking, we shall set off on a beautiful walk through a small fishermen's village to visit the necropolis. In the afternoon, the boat will arrive at Edfu, home to the Greco-Roman temple dedicated to the god Horus. This is among the best preserved of all Egyptian temples. On our return our boat will set sail for a beautiful island.

Day 8

Sail and swim - This is a day devoted to the river.

Immediately after an optional morning stroll through lush mango and date orchards we shall set sail. In the afternoon, we stop at an island for a swim in the Nile. At some point you will be able to witness and sample the preparation of the local coffee with ginger, traditionally offered to visiting guests.

Day 9

Gebel Silsileh - Here the Nile flows between two mountain ranges and is at its narrowest. We may be the only visitors at this fascinating site as large Nile cruisers are not allowed to stop here. We visit the small Temple of Horemheb and walk through the sandstone quarries where ancient Egyptians cut stone for many of their most famous temples. We then set sail to a picturesque riverbank where we shall stop for lunch and swimming.

Day 10

Kom Ombo - This morning we sail to the town and Temple of Kom Ombo. The temple was built during the Ptolemaic period on the site of an older temple and at one of the most beautiful locations, on a bend on the river. It was dedicated to Sobek, the crocodile-headed god. After enjoying the temple we visit the new Crocodile Museum, which contains many mummified crocodiles,

attesting to the importance the creature played in this region in ancient times.

Day 11

ASWAN - Visit the High Dam, the Temple of Philae & the Unfinished Obelisk.

Awake to the beautiful sight of the desert closing in on the river at Aswan Bridge. This morning our cruise comes to an end. After disembarking we start our day visits: the world famous High Dam; the stunning Philae Temple, devoted to the two goddesses Isis and Hathor; and the Unfinished Obelisk, the largest known ancient obelisk, located in the northern region of the granite quarries.

We then head for a leisurely afternoon at our hotel, the world renowned Old Cataract Hotel, Aswan (1 night).

Day 12

Abu Simbel by flight – fly back to Cairo.

Check out and morning flight to Abu Simbel. The site is one of the most important in Egypt, with the great Sun Temple of Ramesses II and the Temple of Queen Nefertari. It was ancient Egypt's southern border and is only 20km from the present day frontier with Sudan. Both temples were discovered in 1813 almost completely buried under the sand. In 1960, with the rising waters as a result of the Aswan Dam, the Egyptian government and UNESCO moved the temples to a higher site, a truly great and international engineering feat. Ramesses II built the temple mostly for propaganda to honour himself, as attested by the famous great mural inside it depicting his armies vanquishing his enemies at the Battle of Kadesh. To the north of his own temple Ramesses built the Nefertari Temple for his wife Queen Nefertari, favourite among his 200 wives and concubines. After the visit we fly back to Aswan and on to Cairo (Same aircraft, no need to deplane). We spend our last night at the comfortable Le Meridien, Cairo Airport (1 night).

Day 13

Transfer to the airport terminals for your departures home (Most international flights depart quite early, hence our staying at the airport on the last trip night). Our ground handlers will help you through the airport formalities.

