



Adventurous Egypt

joining nomads around the campfire

Tourcode: **SEO**

Groepsgrootte: **2-24**

Aantal dagen: **16**

Reisbeschrijving

Oases of Bahariyya, Farafra and Dakhla

On day 4 you will be heading for the hidden oases located in the Sahara, where modern life seems to have arrived only recently. In four days you will visit the oases of Bahariyya, Farafra and Dakhla. The Bedouin, dressed in brilliantly dyed clothes, are **extremely friendly and curious**. At the source of Al-Bishmu, you will experience your first **sunset in the desert**. Next day you continue into the desert along dazzling white sand dunes and freakish rock formations. You spend the night in the open and Bedouin will prepare your meal and, if you are lucky, give a song and dance performance.

Back to the Middle Ages

The following morning you will visit the small oasis of Farafra. Then **book a camel safari** and afterwards recover in a natural spring. The last oasis, Dakhla, is located in a remote region. The ancient village of Qsar brings you back to the Middle Ages with its narrow alleys and mud brick huts. The traditionally dressed locals do their best to make you feel welcome.

Ancient graves and obelisks

On day 8 you will head for Luxor. Visit the enormous **temples of Luxor and Karnak** and the pharaoh's city of the dead, containing as many as ten graves of Kings. On day 10 you travel to Aswan, Egypt's most southern city and located near the tropic of Cancer. The next two days you have time to **explore Aswan**, strategically built at the First Cataract (rapids) of the Nile. This particular part of the valley of the Nile has very beautiful rock formations and islands in the river overgrown with palm trees. There are numerous temples to be seen, as well as graves and obelisks, a colourful bazaar and a fantastic botanic garden. You can also visit the temples of Abu Simbel.

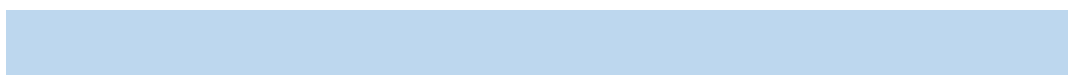
Hop on a felucca

Day 13: you hop on a felucca, a traditional sailing boat, which takes you along the Nile. You will eat and stay overnight aboard the ship and enjoy life along the **green shores of the Nile**. After the sailing trip, you have the option to pay a visit to the temples of Kom Ombo and Edfu before getting on the bus to Luxor.

Back to Cairo

You will travel back by (night) train to Cairo arriving early morning on day 15. You will have one day for last-minute souvenir hunting before your tour finishes on day 16.

Routekaart





Uitgebreide reisbeschrijving

Welkom

Welcome to Shoestring!

Shoestring is looking forward to welcoming you on one of our unforgettable journeys. Be well prepared, get informed about your destination and make sure you know which vaccinations or other medication you require. During the trip, be flexible and don't feel obliged to always stay with the group. Your guide will advise and assist you, but remember that he or she will have a lot on their mind to ensure that everything is running smoothly. We hope you have a fantastic time in this beautiful destination.

Before you travel

If your trip is unexpectedly cancelled, we will let you know at least three weeks prior to departure. Cancellations are very rare though, so go ahead and prepare yourself for your trip.

Moeilijkheidsgraad Informatie

This holiday is classified as Category B

The difficulty of our travels varies greatly. Added to this is the fact that travel difficulty is a very personal perception. To give an impression of the difficulty of a particular holiday we have developed a classification system.

Category A: Light travel, possible for anyone. Short distances, good hotels, and low travelling speed.

Category B: Feasible for anyone who prepares for the trip. Sometimes longer distances,



good hotels or camping facilities, some adventure nights, average travelling speed.

Category C: Feasible for anyone who prepares well and is flexible, but some parts of the journey are difficult, distances may be long or require a day's walk, there may be some basic facilities.

Category D: Reasonably difficult trip because of long travel distances, often-primitive facilities or tents, long walks.

Category E: Difficult trip. The traveller knows him/herself and is well prepared, he or she realises that the holiday can be demanding.

The 14-day Egypt Adventure is a **Category B** holiday. Any reasonably healthy individual can make it. In the summer the trip is considerably more difficult than during the rest of the year. Although in the cities we stay in simple medium-priced hotels, remember that you are travelling in a developing country with much lower living standards than you are used to at home. Also, roads may be temporarily blocked because of the weather or owing to their state of repair, in which case a detour is unavoidable. Some journeys are very long, e.g. the first and last days of the oasis trip and the return journey to Cairo on Day 13. A flexible and positive attitude is just as important as a good physical condition.

Character of the trip

This gateway to Africa combines the most impressive historical monuments with a lively population and a wonderful climate. You can wander around the bazaars of Cairo, the Nubian villages, the pyramids, the tombs of the pharaohs and the ancient temples, and on the date-covered banks of the Nile. But the most special part of the holiday is our adventure trip to the western oases. You can extend your holiday with a week's stay in Dahab on the Red Sea.

Wat is inclusief

Accommodation in hotels, tents and in the open air (2 nights in the desert and 1 night on a felucca); all breakfasts; transportation with AC (mini) bus only for transfers from hotel to hotel; train journey; desert tour including diner (2x) during camping overnights; felucca tour including lunch and diner; entrance fee White Desert; English speaking tour leader.

Wat is exclusief

International flights; all other meals; tips; visas; optional excursions; all other entrance fees; airport transfers; booking fee; travel insurance.

Let op

♦ You will generally travel with other UK clients. However, if less than 6 people book the tour on the UK website then your group may be combined with a Dutch, German, Italian or Spanish group. Your tour would still be conducted in English.

Dag-tot-dag schema

	Vervoer	Route	Overnachting
1.		Cairo	Cairo
2.		Cairo	Cairo
3.		Cairo	Cairo
4.		Cairo-Baharia Oasis	Baharia
5.		White Desert	White Desert



6.		Dakhla	Dakhla
7.		Kharga Oasis	Kharga
8.		Kharga Oasis-Luxor	Luxor
9.		Kharga Oasis-Luxor	Luxor
10.		Luxor-Aswan	Aswan
11.		Aswan	Aswan
12.		Aswan	Aswan
13.		Felucca	Felucca
14.		Luxor-Cairo	night train
15.		Cairo	Cairo
16.		Cairo	End of tour

Dag-tot-dag schema

Dag 1 - 3: Cairo

Here, you will stay in a simple medium-priced hotel in the city centre for three nights. The two entire days that you spend in this city are hardly enough to see the most important sights. To begin with, the pyramids of Saqqara and Gizeh are of course well worth a visit. Saqqara, the city of the dead, was built in the desert because the fertile Nile Valley was needed for agriculture. Kings and other important people were buried here. On the walls of the many tombs you will find beautiful decorations with scenes from everyday life. The tombs were marked with a mastaba, a building where offerings to the gods could be delivered. Royal tombs consisted of several mastabas on top of each other, forming a 'step pyramid'. The famous Step Pyramid of Zozer dating from the 27th century BC is a good example. Later pyramids were furnished with smooth walls, like the ones near Gizeh, which are among the Seven Wonders of the World. Ever since antiquity travellers have been amazed at the gigantic dimensions of the pyramids of Cheops, Chefren and Mycerynos. At the feet of these mighty buildings you will find the huge Sphinx. In the evenings it is interesting to experience the light show. A great way to explore the surroundings is on horseback. Or you can take a camel ride.

One of the absolute highlights of a visit to Cairo is the Egyptian National Museum, where the treasures of Tutankhamun and other pharaohs are on display. It is one of the most important museums in the world. Just as special is probably medieval Cairo with its citadel and immense, often accessible mosques and medressas. The churches of the Copts and Cairo's vast cemetery are extraordinary. Cairo also has the most beautiful bazaars in the world, the most important and biggest of which is Khan Al-Khalili. Then there is contemporary Cairo with its boulevards along the Nile and worldly restaurants, a watchtower overlooking the entire city and everything else that comes with a modern-day metropolis.

Dag 4: Cairo-Baharia Oasis

Desert and oasis trip. The contrast could be sharper. After the hustle and bustle of Cairo we take our own coach into the Sahara and travel to the western oases hidden in the Libyan Desert. Until recently, modern times had passed these places by. In four days we will visit the oases of Baharia, Farafra, Dakhla and Al-Kharga. The Bedouin are very friendly, curious and colourfully dressed. We will spend two nights under the starry sky and two nights in basic huts. Sanitation sometimes is no more than the village pump or a



spring in the oasis. Meals are prepared by Bedouin, who can easily be persuaded to sing and dance in the open air.

On the first day you will take a 5-hour trip (400 km) to a hot spring near the desert in Baharia, where you can swim. You will sleep in basic huts.

Dag 5: White Desert

The next day we will go some 180 km further and into the desert through blinding white sand dunes among rugged limestone formations. Here in the White Desert you'll enjoy the most spectacular sunset. After a magical night under the twinkling stars we travel to the oasis of Farafra with its many springs and then on to the remote oasis of Dakhla (c. 320 km).

Dag 6: Dakhla

Here in Dakhla, in the village of Al-Qasr, it feels as if the Middle Ages never ended in the narrow streets among the mud huts with the traditionally clad local population who are enjoying our visit as much as we are.

Dag 7: Kharga Oasis

The next day we continue some 290 km to the final oasis, Al-Kharga. It stretches out for 90 km and at the far end, in Baris, we will spend the night in the open air on mattresses (blankets and a wind shelter will be provided). You will have the chance to take an optional 2-hour bumpy ride on a camel.

* Dinner is included for both camping nights, not for the hotel nights.

Dag 8 - 9: Kharga Oasis-Luxor

We leave for Luxor, where we arrive early in the afternoon. The emptiness of the desert gives way to the lush, green Nile Valley. Luxor's ancient name is Thebes. East of the Nile you will find the huge temples of Luxor and Karnak. Karnak is an impressive temple complex dedicated to the god Amon. Every pharaoh made his mark by erecting obelisks and statues and adding new parts to the existing temples. At one time this temple was connected by an avenue of sphinxes to the temple of Luxor. This is a much smaller temple in the heart of the city. In the evenings the temples are enchantingly spotlit; in Karnak you may witness a light show. You can visit the temple of Karnak by bike or horse and cart, since it is situated just outside the village.

On the west bank of the Nile lies the Valley of Kings and Queens, the pharaohs' city of the dead with dozens of tombs. The tombs were carved out of the rocks and beautifully decorated with wall paintings (don't forget your torch). The workers and architects who created these works of art had their own village, Deir el-Medina, where you can visit their graves. Another impressive building on the west bank is the spectacular Deir el-Bahri (the temple of Hatshepsut). Hatshepsut proclaimed herself pharaoh and was the first woman to reign as monarch.

It is also very pleasant to just walk along the Nile, or have a meal in the beautiful Victorian Winter Palace, or go to one of the small eating-places where you can eat good food among the Egyptians at little cost. A short felucca trip to Banana Island (optional)



will give you a taste of life on the Nile. You will spend two nights in a comfortable medium-priced hotel with a swimming pool, which you are no doubt going to appreciate after four nights in the desert.

Dag 10 - 12: Luxor-Aswan

Early in the morning we set out for Aswan, the southernmost town of Egypt, close to the tropic of Cancer. The following days you have plenty of time to discover Aswan, with its old market and long Nile boulevard. The town is located strategically at the first cataract (rapids) of the Nile. Here, the valley is at its most beautiful because of the rocks and the palm-covered islands in the river. There are numerous temples, tombs and obelisks, a colourful bazaar, a beautiful botanical garden, and nearby there is also the immense Aswan Dam. The temple of Philae, built on an island in the Nile, makes an interesting excursion. The temple is dedicated to the goddess Isis. It is also worthwhile taking a walk through one of the Nubian villages on the other side of the river. You can also visit the temples of Abu Simbel, which at the time of writing are accessible by road and by air.

Dag 13: Felucca

In the morning we board a felucca, the traditional vessel in which the Egyptians have sailed the Nile since time immemorial. You will be floating and sailing upstream at a very relaxed speed and enjoying the spectacle of watching everyday life going on on the banks of the river. At night we will moor at an island. We will eat and sleep on board the felucca. Tonight's dinner is included in the holiday price.

Dag 14: Luxor-Cairo

When you wake up this morning you will notice we are already slowly heading for the Kom Ombo temple which you can visit. Kom Ombo is a remarkable double temple, built to honour two different gods: crocodile-god Sobek and Horus, with his falcon's head. Upon disembarking the felucca a bus is waiting for us to drive us to Luxor. En route there is a possibility to stop and visit the Edfu temple. In Luxor you will take the night train (with reserved seats) to Cairo.

Dag 15: Cairo

Early in the morning you will arrive in Cairo. Spend the last full day of your tour shopping for last souvenirs and to take in once more the Middle-Eastern ambiance.

Dag 16: Cairo

It is the last day of your tour but rather than being about 'Goodbye' your thought should be 'Go further'!

Visit your personal 'MyShoestring' page on our website. 'MyShoestring' is the perfect way to make contact with other travelers before and after your trip. You can read and create journals from trips and upload your photos onto the photo gallery. Visit my shoestring today.

When booking your tour, please check to see whether you need any post-tour nights, bearing in mind that accommodation for the night of the final day of the tour (day 16) is not included.



Landinformatie Egypt

Achtergrondinformatie

Celebrations and festivals

Visual art, music, dance, ballet and opera have always been an important part of life in Egypt. Until 1970 cultural life mainly centred around the world-famous opera house, but it was destroyed by fire in 1971. Today most cultural highlights take place in the new "opera house", the Centre for Culture and Education in Cairo. Here you can enjoy opera, dance and musical productions. The Centre also includes a number of exposition areas and an open-air theatre. Outside Cairo, however, there is good entertainment too. All across Egypt there are tea houses, pleasant bars, markets and enjoyable restaurants to visit.

Islamic holidays

Since the Islamic calendar is moon-based, religious holidays are on different days every year. In 2010 the three-day Festival of Sacrifice begins on 8 December. Ramadan (the month of fasting) can be annoying for tourists, because many restaurants are closed; eating, drinking and smoking in public are not appreciated. Tourists will be cared and cooked for, however. It goes without saying that you should not provoke people by eating right under their noses.

Ramadan

From 11 August until 9 September 2010 it is Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. During the oasis trip, in Luxor or Dahab, you will hardly notice it, but in Cairo you will see that life follows a different pattern. In the morning it is much quieter than usual and many shops are closed. This is the ideal time to visit the pyramids, the Egyptian Museum and the Sphinx. Suddenly, between 3 pm and 5 pm the traffic gets going: everybody is on their way to or from the hundreds of mosques in the city. Afterwards, the Egyptians have breakfast – around 6 pm. All the shops open up and the markets get busy, often until the small hours of the night. During Ramadan it is best to do interesting things in the morning and evening while taking a rest in the afternoon. Your Egyptian travel guides will be able to offer helpful suggestions.

Communications

Sorry, this information is not available at this moment. Please check back later.

Cultural differences and habits

In many ways Europeans behave differently from Egyptians. We will give you some hints to avoid the biggest misunderstandings. To begin with, travellers are expected to dress modestly. Clothing should cover the shoulders, while skirts and trousers should reach to the knees. Covering their hair may help women avoid attracting unwanted attention. Topless sunbathing on Dahab beach is really out of the question.

If you want to go into a mosque you are welcome to do so, but your arms and legs must be covered and you will have wear something on your head. Women should cover their



hair. You leave your footwear at the entrance to the place of worship. Women are often only admitted to part of the mosque. During religious ceremonies Westerners are not permitted to enter.

If you are invited into someone's home, always take off your shoes before entering. It is polite to offer a little present to your host. Never eat with your left hand, which is used to wash the backside.

Bargaining: When buying things or services it is usually necessary to bargain in order to reach a reasonable price. This goes for retail prices, taxi fares, et cetera. When you want to purchase valuable souvenirs, in particular, you should take plenty of time – preferably several days. An indicative opening price for expensive goods is three times the price that the seller really wants. This is not true for gold, silver and gems, though, because their margins are much smaller. It is important for you to realise that the retailer will first try to estimate how much he can ask. Sometimes the asking price is outlandishly high. In such cases, do not start negotiating but simply walk away. It is also important to know that as long as you have not mentioned a price you can get out of the bargaining process much easier than after you have started bidding. The pressure to buy may be increased ruthlessly, but remember that these traders are among the better actors of Egypt. Whatever emotion they put on, be sure to come out of the transaction with the result you had in mind. Two more things are important when bargaining. If you find something really beautiful, do not show it but try to come across as indifferent, almost disinterested. Secondly, you will avoid many problems by first asking yourself how much the object concerned is worth in your opinion. Try to reach that price rather than to knock it down to the lowest price at any cost.

Donations and presents: Sometimes during our trips we visit a school or some other institution. In such cases blackboard chalk, notebooks and pens are welcome gifts. As you will experience, people sometimes want something from you. Remember that in Egypt too the principle holds true: "One good turn deserves another." When someone has done something for you (washed your clothes, posed for a picture), it is perfectly normal – apart from money – to give them a pen or a T-shirt in return. Souvenirs may also be exchanged for clothes, but remember that no one can buy a bread for a T-shirt.

Nature and the environment

To protect the environment we ask you to stick to these rules:

- * Do not throw waste, paper or cigarette ends (fire hazard) from the coach.
- * Never pick coral from the sea. Unfortunately, coral and shells are being sold by souvenir traders. In this way tourism is increasingly harmful to the environment, so please do not buy them. Moreover it is illegal to import them into Europe.

In general

Always remember that you are a guest in a country where other conventions are observed. They are not strange, you are the one that is different.

Food and drinks

Meals during your holiday: Most meals are not included in the travel price. This gives you the opportunity to eat where and with whom you like. Breakfast, however, is always included. Generally you will eat in small groups in restaurants serving local specialties. Your travel guides can always suggest good places to eat, but it is of course also nice to



discover them by yourself. In restaurants with local customers meals are generally of high quality and not too expensive. Last year travellers spent some GBP 6.50 to 8.00 per day on meals.

Drinking: You cannot drink tap water. On the Egyptian roundtrips there is plenty of mineral water and soft drinks for sale. Ice cubes are often made from tap water; it is not recommended to use them. Hot drinks like tea or carcadee (hibiscus tea) usually go down better in warm countries than ice-cold drinks. Alcoholic drinks are relatively expensive.

Landscape

Egypt is sometimes described as the gateway to Africa. The surface of the Arab Republic of Egypt is 1 million sq km (about four times the size of the UK). Egypt borders the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Red Sea to the east, which is divided into the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez by the Sinai Peninsula. It borders Sudan to the South and Libya to the west. Thanks to the mighty River Nile, Egypt enjoys three harvests per year. In the valley of the Nile crops like corn, cotton, clover and sugarcane are grown. North of Cairo the Nile turns into a 200 km wide delta leading into the Mediterranean. The fertile Nile Valley runs through the endless sand and rocks of the Libyan Desert to the west and the Arab Desert to the east. These natural barriers helped the culture of the pharaohs to remain intact for around 3000 years. As much as 95% of the land surface is made up of desert. There are several oases that enable the subsistence of small settlements in the desert.

Plant life

The most characteristic and ubiquitous tree is the date palm. On the banks of the Nile you will find banana plantations as well as 100 different kinds of grass. Unfortunately the papyrus reeds, which used to grow everywhere, are no longer found in the wild. Traditionally, papyrus was processed to be used as writing paper. The many papyrus museums in Cairo, where the process is explained in detail, are very interesting and well worth a visit.

Animal life

Egypt has a rich population of around 430 species of birds that come and go all year round. About one third actually breed in Egypt, while the overwhelming majority migrate between Europe and Africa through Egypt. There are various kinds of herons, pelicans, storks, cranes and flamingos. The big game that once lived in the desert has unfortunately disappeared. You will now often find camels, donkeys and water buffalos there. The Red Sea is the home of many brightly-coloured tropical fish, reef sharks, dolphins, turtles, rays and beautifully shaped coral. The Red Sea is a paradise for scuba-divers and skin-divers alike and is widely known as one of the most stunning underwater sites in the world.

Population

Egypt covers a relatively small area, yet is home to some 78 million people. About half of the population is under 18 years old. Outside the metropolis of Cairo life is lived in the towns and villages along the Nile or on the islands in the river. The Nile Valley is one of the most densely populated regions in the world. Almost a quarter of the population lives in and around the capital Cairo and there is a continuous drift from the country to the cities. The population is a mixture with origins in the Middle East, Africa and around the



Mediterranean. Anthropologists distinguish three main groups. The first consists of the descendants of the Hamito-Semitic race that has lived in the Nile Delta for thousands of years. This ethnic group includes the Berbers, who populate the western desert and speak their own language. The second group are the Bedouin who are desert-dwelling, Arab nomads. You will mainly see them in the Sinai desert. The third ethnic group is the Nubian race, mainly living in the south of Egypt. You will mostly find them around Aswan and Kom Ombo. They are the original population of southern Egypt and Sudan and have partly held on to their own culture, including the exciting music. The Egyptians are traders. During the pharaonic period they already had contacts and commercial exchanges with other peoples. Around 330 BC Alexander the Great established the city of Alexandria, which marked the beginning of Hellenism, a blend of Greek and Oriental cultures. Romans and Byzantines left their traces here around the beginning of the Christian era. During the Middle Ages the area was ruled by the Arab caliphs of the Omayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid and Mamluks. Between 1882 and 1952 Egypt was part of the immense British Empire. There are traces of all of these influences in Egypt's incredibly rich culture, which you will see at first hand on this tour.

Religion

Islam is the dominant religion in Egypt; 90% of the Egyptians are Muslim. Some 7% of the population are members of the (Christian) Coptic Church.

Islam

"La ilaha illa Allah. Muhammadu rasulu Allah" (There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is His prophet). This is the testimony of faith, or shahada, whose recitation is the first and foremost of the five pillars of Islam, Egypt's state religion. The word "islam" literally translates as "submission to the will of God." Five times a day the faithful must kneel down in prayer and say the shahada. Before praying they wash their faces, feet and arms. The ritual of prayer, or salat, is the second pillar of Islam. The times for salat are announced from the minaret. The other three pillars of Islam are the obligations to give alms to the poor (zakat), to fast during the holy month of Ramadan (saum) and to undertake the haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. The five pillars are mentioned in the Koran, the holy scripture of Islam, written down by the prophet Mohammed in the 6th century.

History of Islam

Islam is the youngest of world religions with its era starting in 622 AD, when Mohammed undertook the hizra, the flight from Mecca to Medina. While Christianity and Judaism spread from the Middle East in a westerly direction, the nomadic inhabitants of the Saudi peninsula had remained polytheistic. The bitter struggle for survival in the merciless desert climate led to a ruthless culture in which tribal chiefs had absolute power over life and death and women and slaves were personal possessions. At the age of 40 Mohammed had a vision of the radiant archangel Gabriel imparting on him the teaching of God. From that moment he began to preach the new creed. The prophet radically turned away from contemporary culture by making Allah the highest authority, preaching the fundamental equality of men and women and giving the latter the right of inheritance. Converted slaves were redeemed by his followers. By establishing the umma, the unity of all the faithful, the prophet broke through the highly tribal loyalties of his fellow men. After eleven years of preaching the prophet was chased out of his own city of Mecca. Islam spread after his death in 632. His visions and teachings were then put into writing and collected in the Koran, which was completed twenty years after Mohammed's death. Within two centuries all of the Middle East and North Africa had been introduced to



the new religion. The prophet's visions were equivalent to the word of God and his teachings became an important source of authority (the hadith). A number of commandments and prohibitions were bundled into the sharia, or Islamic law. These regulations are reflected to some extent in Egypt's legal system and ethics. An important aspect of the sharia is the categorisation of human actions: compulsory actions (fard), e.g. washing before prayers; recommended actions (sunna), e.g. circumcision, objectionable actions (makruh), e.g. alcohol consumption, and strictly forbidden actions (haram), e.g. incest, stealing, adultery or revolt against one's parents. The concept of halal indicates that food is in accordance with the Koran. For example, animals should be killed ritually and eating pork is forbidden.

In many ways Islam is related to Christianity and Judaism. It is not just the Koran that Muslims consider a holy book. The Bible is important in this religion too. Abraham (Ibrahim) and Jesus (the prophet Isa) are regarded as important prophets. There is a last judgement, there is heaven and hell, there are devils and angels. They do not, however, have a Messiah and the prophet Mohammed was the most important and ultimate messenger of God.

Essentially, all Muslims may act as imam, the minister who leads the faithful in prayer. The muezzin, who calls the Muslims to prayer five times a day, is not a professional clergyman either. The most important contrast between churches and mosques, apart from architectural differences, is the absence of images of humans, gods and animals in Islamic places of worship. The decorations are composed of Koran texts, geometrical patterns and plant motifs only. The imitation of creation is blasphemous.

The Coptic Church

The word Copt derives from Greek "Aigyptos", which in turn is derived from "Hikapath", one of the names of Memphis, the first capital of ancient Egypt. The Coptic faith is based on the teachings of Saint Mark the Evangelist. He brought Christianity to Egypt during the rule of the Roman emperor Nero in the first century AD, a few years after the crucifixion of Christ. The proud Coptic community has its own, well-defined position in contemporary Egyptian society, respected by both the government and Islam. Among the 78 million Egyptians there are some 10 million Copts. Every day they get together in thousands of Coptic churches in order to pray and profess their faith. Their cultural, spiritual and historical treasures can be found across the country. This religion is alive even in the most remote and inaccessible oases such as Kharga in the deep south. Contrary to Christians, the Copts practise fasting as often as 210 days per year. When fasting they are not allowed to consume animal products and they may not eat or drink anything at all from sunrise to sunset.

Weather and climate

Climate: Egypt has a hot and dry desert climate, with cold nights in the winter and very high temperatures from May to September (often over 40 degrees Celsius). Rainfall is extremely rare. In December and January the nights in the desert can be quite cold. The Egyptian Spring begins in February. During the summer months people are generally only active in the evening and at night and spend the daytime having long siestas. If you stick to this rhythm, you will not find the summer hard to endure. But don't forget to drink enough and stay out of the sun during the hottest hours of the day.

Best time to travel: Egypt lends itself to a visit all year around. However, the best months to go are February, March, October, November and December.



Praktische informatie

Arrival information

On your first day in Egypt, take it easy. Take time to adapt. The change of climate, culture and food can have quite an impact. Traders can be pretty persistent, particularly in the larger cities. Stay calm, but be firm if you are not interested in buying something. Let the country sink in. Enjoy yourself.

Customs & regulations

A visa is required for Egypt (British passport holders). Shoestring do not arrange this so please contact the Egyptian embassy via the following link:
<http://www.egypt.embassyhomepage.com>.

Electricity

Egypt has a 220 V, 50 Hz AC power supply; European plugs can be used. There are sometimes power failures, so keep a torch at hand.

Health

The following health information is a general text that applies to all our Middle Eastern holidays (Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Syria, Jordan). Travellers to the Middle East who pay attention to hygiene and skincare don't usually run into health problems, apart from some harmless intestinal complaints.

Food and drink: Tap water is unfit for human consumption; you should drink mineral water instead. In small eating-places it is better not to eat fruit or salads that have been prepared beforehand. In the cities, it is best to eat in busy restaurants. Do not eat ice cream, except in expensive restaurants. Do wash your hands thoroughly before eating, even if you are only having a snack.

Sunshine and heat: Sunburn is a frequent cause of health problems. The sun is fierce. From May to September in particular, temperatures can rise to over 40 degrees Celsius. Sunburn and sun/heat stroke can affect you far more quickly than you might think. You should therefore avoid the sun during the hottest hours of the day, always wear a hat and good sunglasses when you are walking, and use a good suntan lotion when sunbathing. We recommend that you buy the latter at home where the choice of products is greater and prices are lower. At high temperatures the body's need for water increases very rapidly, as does its need for salt. Make sure you drink enough and, when the heat is extreme, you will simply have to take it very easy during the hottest hours of the day.

Prickly heat: Prickly heat is an inflammation of the pores caused by excessive perspiration. It is common and harmless, but very annoying. The skin grows red and irritated in places. Places where skin chafes, such as armpits and thighs, are particularly susceptible. The symptoms will decrease when you take a cold shower – without using soap – a few times a day and dry yourself off well. Talcum powder on the affected spots may also help. When it is hot and damp, do not sleep under a sheet but wear a cotton T-shirt. If you are still in pain, the best thing to do is take an air-conditioned room for a couple of nights.



Diarrhea: Next to sunburn, the most common health problem is diarrhea. Travellers are often hit by it after they have been on holiday for only a few days. In most cases it is an utterly innocuous ailment caused by the change of diet, the heat or harmless bacteria against which the body will soon develop defences. The main risk is dehydration, especially in children. This occurs when the body loses more fluid, salt and sugars than it receives. The result is a feeling of listlessness and weakness. It can be prevented by drinking a solution of water and ORS. It is sold in bags at the pharmacies and contains all the minerals and sugars that are evacuated with diarrhea. Instead of this solution you can also take noncarbonated soft drinks or heavily salted broth. For many people, cola has a constipating effect in the first stages of diarrhea. When the diarrhea is accompanied by high fever, bloody defecation or nauseousness, it is sensible to consult a physician. If the diarrhea lasts for more than a few days without the afore-mentioned symptoms or when you have to travel, you may wish to take Imodium or Diacure which stop all bowel movement completely for several hours.

Doctors, pharmacies and drugs: Doctors and pharmacists are generally well-trained and trustworthy. When it comes to dispensing drugs, however, they tend to aim a canon at a mosquito. Always ask explicitly whether the medicines you are getting are really necessary. Almost all medicines are available without a prescription. When buying medicine be sure to check the best-before date. A small basic medical kit might include the following items: plasters, bandages, cotton wool, scissors, a thermometer, iodine, painkillers, malaria tablets, ORS bags, Imodium or Diacure, an insect repellent like DEET and an anti-itch relief stick or cream. Do not forget to include earplugs to protect against the high level of noise sometimes produced in the cities until well into the night.

Medical passport: If you are on prescription medicine, bring an extra supply to keep separately so that you will always have a backup supply. Ask your pharmacy to draw up a medical passport for you. This includes names of the substances and the exact composition of the medication that you use. Keep this document and your medication in your hand luggage. If you have a chronic illness, ask your GP for a written explanation of your disease and its treatment (in English).

Vaccinations: The information below was given by the healthcare authorities at the time of writing. This information may change. Moreover, your needs depend on whether you have had previous vaccinations, whether you are allergic to certain medicines, if you are pregnant, how old you are, and so on. ALWAYS contact your GP or another healthcare authority for advice. The complete vaccination package includes DTP, hepatitis A and – optionally – abdominal typhoid. There are no compulsory vaccinations, except for those who have been to regions with yellow fever or cholera within two weeks before arrival in the Middle East. Ask your medical insurance company if the cost of vaccinations is covered. **Malaria:** In Jordan, Morocco, Turkey and Egypt you do not have to take malaria tablets. The only place in Egypt where malaria occurs is the al-Faiyum oasis, which you are not visiting.

Some additional recommendations for an enjoyable stay

Allow your body and mind some time to adapt to the new time zone and location. Avoid stress, do not plan to do too much at once. At least take it easy on the first day. It is a good habit to get up early; in hot climates the morning temperature is often the most agreeable. Besides, the people in the countries you visit are also used to rising early. When you adapt to their rhythm you will make the most of your trip. Once you are well-rested you will be able to deal with all the new experiences and will have the energy to



participate in more activities.

Info for people at home

Ensure that those at home know which country you are in and how long you are planning to stay away. You may like to fix a date when you will contact them again. Making telephone calls from Egypt is easy, except during the days when you are staying in the desert. Provide those who are picking you up from the airport with your flight times and numbers. Shoestring will not provide flight and/or travel information, hotel names and telephone numbers to third parties. Any information on delays may be retrieved via the airport information number.

Contact data

In case of an emergency it is important for us to have details of someone we can contact on your behalf. You have entered a contact name on the booking form. It may be that this person is on holiday during your trip. If so, enter a second person so that we are sure to be able to get in touch with somebody.

Luggage and clothing

Do not bring too much luggage. Clothes, for example, can always be bought locally at little cost. As a rule, we do not think you will need more than 12 kg of luggage. It should preferably be packed in an overnight bag or a frameless backpack. Solid suitcases are hard to stow away on the bus or on board a ferry. Bring a pair of good worn-in walking shoes and a pair of sandals. That is all your feet will need. Summer clothes, plus a sweater on cool nights, is sufficient from April to October. In the winter the evenings, nights and mornings can be cold, especially in Cairo and in the desert. Bring a warm sweater and a raincoat. Good sunglasses are best bought at home; they are expensive in Egypt. For women it is important to wear shirts that cover the shoulders and trousers that reach to the knees. There are tourists who expose more flesh, but out of respect for the local people it is important not to dress too provocatively. Not covering up may also mean that you are refused entry into temples. It is recommended that you wear various layers of clothing. Other useful items to pack include: sunglasses, suntan lotion, toiletries, a basic medical kit, sun hat or headscarf, photo or film equipment and an adequate amount of film, spare batteries, torch, pocket knife (not allowed in your hand luggage during the flight), lighter, a small amount of non-perishable snacks and sweets, alarm clock, stationery, books, passport, copies of passport, visa and travel insurance, your airline ticket, your travel insurance card with the emergency number, a diary with important addresses and phone numbers, a good travel guide. Other important items are: a sleeping mat for the desert trip, with or without sheet or sleeping bag and a towel. You might also want to bring a battery-powered reading lamp. A mosquito net will not be necessary.

Money and currency

The amount of spending money suggested is the minimum required to pay for your meals, drinks, optional excursions, entrance fees, airport taxes and tips. The amount you actually need is of course dependent on your own spending pattern; that is why souvenirs are not included.

Photography



Not all types of camera batteries are on sale. Therefore be sure to have batteries that will last the entire holiday. People do not always like being photographed. When in doubt it is better to ask first. Sometimes they will say no. Every now and then they will ask for money. When visiting official tourist sites with a video camera, be prepared to pay high additional fees for using your camera. For taking photographs an extra ticket is also often required, but this is considerably cheaper than it is for a video camera. At a number of sites you are not allowed to take a camera; you must hand it in at a special reception desk. Using flashlight is always prohibited.

Safety

Parts of Egypt are dominated by Islamic fundamentalists. Over the past decade there have been a number of incidents in which tourists were targeted. Since the army and police surveillance is considerable we think it is safe to travel to the country, although we cannot give any security warrants. We will adapt our holidays should the security situation require us to do so. Pickpocketing is rife in the big cities, so mind your things when walking through crowded streets or riding on a bus. Egyptian men often pay western women a lot of attention. Even though they are a small minority, this can be very annoying and sometimes outright threatening. In general we recommend that women do not walk alone in Cairo, but rather always stay with at least one other person. Should you still be harassed, do not be angry. It is much more effective to ask how they would like it if western men made the same kinds of remarks to their wives, daughters and sisters. Do not leave money or valuables lying around in your room. Hotel staff may be trusted in principle, but their wages are low and you would not want to tempt them.

Time difference

The time in Egypt is GMT + 2 hours.

Tipping

In hotels and during the felucca trip, attendants will expect a tip for bringing your luggage or other small services. With the exception of the most expensive hotels, wages in the Egyptian tourist industry are abominable and tips are a necessary part of their income. When you stay in the same place for a couple of days, it is a good idea to give your tip at the first occasion. This can have a very positive effect on further services. A tip of 50p is sufficient. Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped. Negotiate the fare in advance. The coach driver and his assistant will expect a tip if their performance has been to your satisfaction. As a rule a total of GBP 8 per traveller to be shared between driver and assistant is the right amount. GBP 0.80 per day per traveller is a reasonable tip for the English-speaking travel guide.

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