



Egypt Explored: Across the Ages, from Alexandria to Abu Simbel 2021

23 NOV – 16 DEC 2021

Code: 22150

Tour Leaders **Lucia Gahlin**

Physical Ratings 

Join Egyptologist Lucia Gahlin on an epic journey through Egypt: from fabled Alexandria, through a land of Pharaohs, Christian monks, Islamic kings, up the Nile to Abu Simbel.

Overview

Featuring a rarely included and adventurous 4-day cruise up the Nile on a traditional Egyptian sailing boat (dahabeya) from Esna to Aswan

- Egyptologist [Lucia Gahlin](#) introduces the distinctive history and cultural landscapes of Egypt.
- Comprehensive visits to most of the major Pharaonic monuments of Egypt.
- Study of the great Islamic city of Cairo and a visit to its newly reopened Museum of Islamic Art.
- Exploration of the Graeco-Roman city of Alexandria.
- A drive through Middle Egypt providing the opportunity to explore the rarely-visited sites of Beni Hasan, Tuna el-Gebel, Amarna and Abydos.
- 4-day cruise up the Nile on a traditional Egyptian sailing boat (*dahabiya*) from Esna to Aswan, visiting sites such as Esna Temple, El- Kab and Gebel el-Silsila, not accessible on larger cruise boats.
- Tour all the temples saved by UNESCO from drowning in Lake Nasser including the stunning site of Abu Simbel.
- Visit archaeological sites only recently opened to visitors for the first time, including tombs at Saqqara.
- Visit the new Grand Egyptian Museum (official opening date permitting).
- Exclusive, private visits to the gloriously painted tombs of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens and of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, impressive tombs with restricted public access.
- Relax in the beautiful gardens of our hotels, notably the iconic Winter Palace in Luxor, and on the shores of Lake Nasser.
- Local dining in traditional Egyptian restaurants, and opportunities to explore spice-scented souks.

Testimonials

This tour provided an opportunity to be immersed in Egyptian culture and history, from the earliest civilisations to more recent Greco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic influences. The services of the passionate and knowledgeable Egyptologists were instrumental in making this one of the most satisfying and memorable tours I have experienced. Jill, Vic.

I've enjoyed all of the tours I have been on with ASA but this one was the crème de la crème. So many fascinating site visits, a wonderful four days cruising on the Nile, and excellent company. The tour was exciting and athletic but all the hard work of walking and climbing was worth every minute. It was a great feeling to return to our accommodation at the end of the day and to know I would be safe and well-fed. Kerry, VIC.

I have undertaken a number of ASA journeys and have always had wonderful experiences but Egypt Explored exceeded all my expectations. Jan, Vic.

This was a comprehensive, professional and well organised tour. The Egyptologist and the local guides were quite exceptional and their enthusiasm was contagious. I learned a lot, saw more than I had imagined and made friends along the way. Thank you ASA, it was a wonderful and memorable experience. Maria, NSW

24-day Cultural Tour of Egypt

Overnight Giza (4 nights) • Alexandria (2 nights) • Giza (1 night) • Minya (2 nights) • Asyut (1 night) Luxor (5 nights) • Luxor-Aswan Nile cruise on board a *dahabiya* (4 nights) • Aswan (2 night) • Abu Simbel (1 night) •

Cairo Airport (1 night)

Overview

From prehistory, Egypt has been a cradle of civilisation, given life by the annual flooding of the Nile. This golden land exercised enormous power and influence in the ancient world. Its successive dynasties of Pharaohs built vast monuments that have enthralled the world ever since. Egypt was, however, also a prize for ambitious conquerors, including the Levantine Hyksos, the Libyans, Nubians, Persians, Assyrians, and finally Alexander the Great, whose general Ptolemy established the Graeco-Egyptian Ptolemaic dynasty. Cleopatra, consort of Julius Caesar and later Mark Antony, was the last Ptolemy, defeated by Octavian at the Battle of Actium (31 BC). Egypt henceforth became the bread basket of the Roman Empire.

In 642 AD Byzantine Egypt was captured by Muslim armies who founded Fustat, a settlement next to which the Tunisian Shi'a Fatimid Dynasty (909 – 1171 AD) later established Cairo. Egypt became the centre of the Fatimid Empire, stretching from the Maghreb to Syria. Succeeding Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties also made Egypt their capital. Egyptian control of the profitable Red Sea spice trade embellished Muslim Cairo. In 1517 Egypt was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. Occupied by Napoleon (1798-1801), and by British forces from 1882, Egypt remained nominally Ottoman until World War I, only gaining full independence in 1956.

This tour explores the greatest eras of Egyptian history: three millennia of Pharaonic history illustrated by magnificent temples and tombs lining the Nile from Alexandria to Aswan, and Coptic and Islamic Egypt, of which the greatest expression is the bustling city of Cairo with its churches, mosques, and museums. We commence our Pharaonic exploration with the pyramids of Giza and Saqqara, and the extraordinary collections of the Egyptian Museum. We explore Alexandria on the Mediterranean Coast, before heading south to Middle Egypt, pausing in Cairo to visit arguably the best museum of Islamic Art in the world. In Middle Egypt we visit sites off the beaten track at Beni Hasan, Tuna el-Gebel, Amarna and Abydos. Travelling on south to Luxor, the site of ancient Thebes, we visit the temples of Karnak and Luxor on the east bank of the Nile and, on the west bank, the Valley of the Kings, and the Temple of Hatshepsut. From Luxor, we spend four days sailing on traditional *dahabiyas* up the Nile to Aswan, visiting temples including Edfu and Kom Ombo. From Aswan, we travel around Lake Nasser visiting Abu Simbel and little known sites including the Temple of Amada. We finish our tour with a final day exploring Coptic Cairo.

Leaders



Lucia Gahlin

Egyptologist and Honorary Research Associate at University College London's Institute of Archaeology. Lucia has worked at Tell el-Amarna, Egypt, and at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London. She has taught at several UK universities, and led tours to Egypt for over 25 years

Lucia Gahlin is an Egyptologist who has always been fascinated by the history and culture of Egypt and her neighbours. Over the last 25 years she has lectured at a number of different British universities, has worked at the archaeological site of Tell el-Amarna as the Small Finds Registrar, and has worked at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in London as Amarna Archaeological Research Data Administrator. She has been a consultant or contributor to a number of documentaries for the BBC and independent production companies (Discovery Channel, Channel 5, the History Channel US and Living TV). Her undergraduate teaching has been for the Universities of London, Bristol and Warwick, and her continuing education teaching has been for the Universities of Exeter, Bristol, Reading, Surrey, and London.

Lucia has been successfully leading tours to Egypt for the last 25 years, for educational touring companies. Lucia is passionate about exploring and explaining the Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman, Coptic and Islamic sites of Egypt. Her lecturing style is considered enthusiastic and inspiring, as she brings the history and culture of Ancient Egypt to life. Lucia is author of popular books on Ancient Egyptian religion, such as *Egypt: gods, myths and religion*; and more academic chapters in books such as *The Egyptian World* edited by Toby Wilkinson. She has served as a Trustee of the UK's Egypt Exploration Society and is currently Chair of the Friends of the Petrie Museum and Co-Director of Bloomsbury Summer School at University College London, a provider of short courses on the Ancient World. She lives in England, but travels widely to lecture, including 3 lecture tours in Australia. Lucia joined ASA in 2019 as lecturer for our tour "Egypt Explored: Across the Ages, from Alexandria to Abu Simbel".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FyWRBEaVMk>

Combine this tour with

Tunisia: From Carthage to the Sahara 2021

2 NOV – 19 NOV 2021



Itinerary

The detailed itinerary provides an outline of the proposed daily program. Participants should note that the daily activities described in this itinerary may be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate changes in opening hours, road conditions, flight schedules etc. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents. Meals included in the tour price are indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B =breakfast, L=light lunch and D=dinner. Bottled water will also be provided daily during site excursions.

Giza, Cairo - 4 nights

Day 1: Tuesday 23 November, Arrive Cairo

- The Citadel
- Muhammad Ali Mosque

Participants taking ASA group flights will arrive in Cairo with Emirates Airline on flight EK927 at 10.25am. You will be met at the airport and transfer by private coach to your hotel in Giza. Participants not taking group flights should make their own way to our Giza hotel. After check-in there will be some time at leisure to rest after your flight.

This afternoon we commence our tour of Cairo with a visit to the citadel, which stands on a rocky promontory overlooking the city. The fortress-complex predominately dates from the medieval Ayyubid (1174 – 1250) and Mamluk (1250–1517) periods, while the Mohammad Ali mosque was built in the early 19th century amidst the defensive core of Islamic Cairo. The panoramic views from the citadel make this the ideal place to appreciate the topography of the city and analyse its urban development.

The Ayyubids were of Syrian Kurdish descent and their most important scion was Salah el-Din (Saladin) of Crusader fame. The Sunni Ayyubids replaced the Shia Fatamids as rulers of Egypt. It had been under Fatimid rule that Cairo was first established as the capital in the 10th century, from where the dynasty controlled its empire until the mid-12th century. Ayyubid rulers lived in the citadel which Salah el-Din had

built on a spur of the Mokhattam Hills. The Ayyubids imported numerous Turkish slave soldiers, known as Mamluks, who eventually usurped power in the mid-13th century. The Mamluks held power until Ottoman (Turkish) conquest in 1517. Khedive Ali Pasha was keen to emphasise his new dynasty's connections with – and independence from – Egypt's former masters, the Ottomans.

Within the citadel, we visit the Mohammad Ali Mosque which dominates the Cairo skyline. Begun by Mohammad Ali Pasha in 1830 and completed by Said Pasha in 1857, the mosque was built in a distinctly Ottoman architectural style to commemorate Ali Pasha's eldest son, who died in 1816. Ali Pasha demolished a complex of Ayyubid and Fatamid buildings to establish his own dynastic architectural presence on this summit of the Islamic centre of the city.

In the evening we dine together at our hotel. (Overnight Cairo) D

Day 2: Wednesday 24 November, Giza – Saqqara – Memphis – Giza

- Imhotep Museum
- Pyramid Complex of Djoser
- Pyramid of Unas (recently reopened)
- New Kingdom tombs of Horemheb, Maya (Tutankhamun's Treasurer) & Tia (all recently opened)
- 'Tomb of the Two Brothers': Niankhkhnun & Khnumhotep
- New Kingdom tombs: Maia (Tutankhamun's wet nurse) & Nemtyemes (both recently opened)
- Memphis
- Welcome Evening Dinner

We begin a morning of exploration at Saqqara with a visit to the Imhotep Museum, named after the architect of the site's best-known monument, the first (stepped) pyramid, indeed the first monumental stone building in Egypt, the Step Pyramid of Djoser. The museum is also dedicated to the memory of the French archaeologist Jean-Philippe Lauer (1902 – 2001) who devoted his life to excavating, reconstructing and better understanding the site of Saqqara. Saqqara was the main cemetery for Egypt's ancient capital, nearby Memphis, and one of Egypt's most significant dynastic sites. Saqqara was already the site of a necropolis during the Early Dynastic Period. We visit Egypt's first great stone funerary complex, the aforementioned Step Pyramid Complex of the Third Dynasty pharaoh, Djoser (c. 2667–2648 BC). The complex consists of a large rectangular enclosure with a stone stepped pyramid as its focus. It marked a transition from the early royal 'mastaba' tomb to the pyramid form, and from use of mud brick to stone, prompted by the desire to create more durable and therefore eternal, emblems of Egypt's rulers. The Old Kingdom nobility were buried nearby, in large *mastaba*-tombs – rectangular flat-topped tombs with slightly sloping sides, which look like giant benches – hence their name *mastaba*, (Arabic: 'bench').

Old Kingdom pharaonic funerary architecture developed because Egyptian concepts of the afterlife became ever more complex and the pharaohs promoted the belief that they were divine rulers, whose continuing existence after death demanded the construction of funerary complexes as resplendent as those they resided in during life. After Djoser's funerary complex we proceed to one of the later pyramids that contains the first inscriptions within a royal tomb. This is the pyramid of Unas (c. 2375-2345 BC), the last ruler of the 5th Dynasty. The inscriptions on its interior walls, known as the 'Pyramid Texts', are the earliest theological writings to survive from Ancient Egypt. The Pyramid of Unas has recently reopened after nearly 30 years of being closed to visitors.

Our investigation of some of the most important non-royal tombs at Saqqara includes the Old Kingdom joint tomb of Niankhkhnun and Khnumhotep, renowned for the unusually intimate manner in which the two men are represented. Might they have been lovers? We also explore the New Kingdom tombs of

Tutankhamun's general (who went on to rule Egypt), Horemheb (r. c. 1323 – 1295 BC), Tutankhamun's Treasurer, Maya, and Ramesses II's sister and her husband, Tia and Tia. These have been excavated since the 1970s by a joint Dutch-British team, and have only been open to visitors for a few years. We also visit a couple of the New Kingdom tombs recently excavated by the French, and only just opened to visitors – the tomb of Tutankhamun's wetnurse Maia, and the royal court official Nemtyemes.

We stop for lunch 5 minutes from the site at the Saqqara Palm Club, a restaurant nestled among the palm trees beneath the Saqqara desert plateau.

After lunch we visit the accessible part of ancient Memphis – an open-air museum with its colossal statue of Rameses II (c. 1279–1213 BC). Memphis, south of modern Cairo, was the capital of the first unified kingdom of Egypt, and was the main administrative centre of the pharaonic state until the founding of Alexandria.

This evening we enjoy our special Welcome Dinner. (Overnight Giza) BLD

Day 3: Thursday 25 November, Giza – Saqqara – Dahshur – Giza

- Tomb of Mereruka
- Tomb of Kagemni
- Tomb of Ankhmahor (recently opened)
- Tomb of Ptahhotep
- Tomb of Ti
- Serapeum (recently re-opened)
- Dahshur: Sneferu's Red and Bent Pyramids

Teti was the first pharaoh of the 6th-Dynasty (c. 2345–2323 BC), and is buried in Saqqara. This morning we return to Saqqara, a site so large and important it demands a second visit to do it justice. We begin with visits to some of the *mastaba* tombs of Teti's high officials, clustered in nearby rows, comprising a true 'city of the dead'. Mereruka and Kagemni each married a daughter of the king and climbed high on the social ladder of the Old Kingdom, both men becoming Vizier (Prime Minister). We see scenes of daily life in the superstructures of these *mastaba* tombs (the burial chambers are cut into the bedrock beneath these chapels and tend to be inaccessible). These scenes of hunting, fishing, animal husbandry, agriculture and food production are rich in detail, using art and inscription to magically provision the deceased for eternity. The tomb of Ankhmahor has only recently opened to visitors; it is perhaps best known for a relief that appears to represent a circumcision procedure. Both Ptahhotep and Ti were Overseers of 5th Dynasty royal solar temples, pyramids, and pyramid towns; their tombs are located closer to the Serapeum, the majestic burial place of the bulls believed to be the earthly manifestation of the god Apis worshiped in Memphis. These catacombs have fairly recently been re-opened after some 30 years of closure.

We stop once again for lunch at the most conveniently located restaurant – the Saqqara Palm Club.

After lunch we drive to the next royal cemetery south of Saqqara, to visit the pyramids of Khufu's father Sneferu (c. 2613 – 2589 BC), the first pharaoh of the 4th Dynasty. His architects and builders experimented with pyramid construction techniques until they achieved a transition from stepped to smooth-sided monuments. We see the culmination of this process at Dahshur in the form of the Red Pyramid, but we also witness problems encountered along the way, in the form of the so-called 'Bent Pyramid'. The smooth-sided pyramid brought with it a shift in the layout of Egyptian funerary complexes, from a North-South to West-East axis, reflecting an increasing solar influence in the religion. (Overnight Giza) BL

Day 4: Friday 26 November, Giza

- Pyramids of Giza
- The Sphinx
- Solar Boat Museum
- New Grand Egyptian Museum (if opened) or further exploration of Giza complex

We spend most of the day visiting the 4th Dynasty pyramids of Giza. These monumental structures, that have fascinated myriad visitors to Egypt most notably Alexander and Napoleon, were constructed for Khufu (Cheops: c. 2589–2566 BC), Khafra (Chephren: c. 2558 -2532 BC) and Menkaura (Mycerinus: c. 2532 – 2503). The Great Pyramid (of Khufu) is the only one of the seven wonders of the ancient world that still survives.

The Sphinx, alongside Khafra's Valley Temple, is the most compelling symbol of the transformation of a pharaoh from man to god. Our program also includes a visit to the Solar Boat Museum, which houses the funerary boat of Khufu, reconstructed in the 1950s from 1,224 pieces buried in a rectangular pit alongside the south face of the pyramid.

We break during our exploration of Giza to take lunch at Abu Shaqra restaurant, close to the Sphinx. If the spectacular, new Grand Egyptian Museum has opened by the advertised date, we will spend this afternoon exploring the purpose-built museum, containing an incredible array of artefacts brought here from the Egyptian National Museum on Tahir Square and other state collections across the country. If the opening date has been pushed back (not uncommon in Egypt) we will spend more time exploring the phenomenal array of buildings and monuments on the Giza plateau in greater detail. (Overnight Giza) BL

Alexandria - 2 nights

Day 5: Saturday 27 November, Giza – Cairo – Alexandria

- Egyptian Museum (including the Royal Mummies)

We begin our day in downtown Cairo with a visit to the Egyptian National Museum, located at the centre of modern Cairo in Tahrir Square (made famous by the 2011 revolution). This museum houses the most extensive and stunning collections of Pharaonic artefacts in the world. The lower floor of the museum contains monumental statuary from all over Egypt, with superb examples from every period, whilst the upper floors are dedicated to smaller items, including a magnificent collection of jewellery. Our visit includes a close scrutiny of royal mummies.

Following lunch at a traditional Egyptian restaurant we drive north to the great Graeco-Roman city of Alexandria. In the evening we dine together at our hotel. (Overnight Alexandria) BLD

Day 6: Sunday 28 November, Alexandria

- Roman Theatre and Villa of the Birds (Kom el Dikka)
- Pompey's Pilla (Serapeum)
- Kom el-Shawqafa
- Lunch: Grill House
- Qaytbay Fortress and ancient harbours of Alexandria

Alexandria was one of the greatest cities of the Hellenistic and Roman Mediterranean. In antiquity it was famed for its temples, theatres, library and museum, the great Pharos lighthouse – another of the seven wonders of the ancient world – its stadium, extensive palaces and villas, underground water supply and

fountains, as well as its extensive economic and residential quarter. Today, however, it is above all a city of the 19th century, a symbol of Egypt's integration into the European-dominated world economy after the opening of the Suez Canal under the British protectorate (1869).

The city was founded by Alexander the Great and became the capital of the country for 1000 years; it was also the cultural capital of the eastern Mediterranean. It was the centre of Egyptian (Coptic) Christianity and remains the seat of the Coptic patriarch. Little is exposed of the ancient city, which is buried beneath Islamic and European-style developments, and drowned beneath the sea. It is now Egypt's second largest city and a favourite summer resort for rich Cairenes. Nevertheless, throughout its history Alexandria has had a certain glamour that is still visible in the series of monuments we shall see.

Today we visit the theatre in the area known as Kom el Dikka. The 'theatre' is actually an *odeon*, dating to the 4th century AD with a seating capacity of 600. This site is also where we find the 'Villa of the Birds', a rich Alexandrian townhouse with the remains of a mosaic floor featuring birds, occupied from the beginning of the 2nd to the end of the 4th century AD. We next visit the site known as Pompey's Pilla. This red granite pillar marks the location of the Ptolemaic and Roman Temple of the Alexandrian deity Serapis. The pillar was actually erected by the Emperor Diocletian at the end of the 3rd century AD and probably supported a statue of the emperor. Another site we shall visit in this area is Kom el-Shawqafa, a subterranean system of catacombs which exhibit Egyptian, Greek and Roman elements in their decorative schema. On the peninsula between the east and west harbours stands the Mamluk fortress of Qaytbay, on the site once occupied by the renowned Pharos of Alexandria. (Overnight Alexandria) BL

Giza - 1 night

Day 7: Monday 29 November, Alexandria – Giza

- The National Museum of Alexandria
- New Library & Antiquities Museum (Bibliotheka Alexandrina)
- Lunch: Alexandria Fish Market
- Coptic Monastery (in Wadi Natrun)

This morning we visit the National Museum of Alexandria, which opened in 2003, with its rich collection of artefacts from the Delta region, and the New Library (the Bibliotheka Alexandrina), opened in 2000, with its small Antiquities Museum.

After lunch at the Alexandria Fish Market, we set out for our drive back to Cairo, stopping at a Coptic Monastery in Wadi Natrun. Wadi Natrun lies to the west of the Delta and is named after the local natron, a naturally occurring salt used by the ancient Egyptians in mummification and purification.

The Coptic Church is the Orthodox Christian Church in Egypt, based on the teachings of St Mark who brought Christianity to Egypt during the reign of the Emperor Nero in the 1st century AD. The word 'Copt' derives from the Greek word, *Aigyptos*, which in turn derived from one of the ancient Egyptian names for Memphis (*Hwt-ka-ptah*). Our word 'Egypt' derives from *Aigyptos*. Monasticism is said to have first developed in Egypt. It began there at the end of the 3rd century AD and flourished in the 4th century. By the end of the 4th century, there were hundreds of monasteries, and thousands of monks' cells and caves scattered throughout the Egyptian desert hills. (Overnight Giza) BLD

Minya - 2 nights

Day 8: Tuesday 30 November, Giza – Minya

- Museum of Islamic Art (MIA)

This morning we visit the newly reopened Museum of Islamic Art, which holds one of the finest collections of Islamic artefacts anywhere in the world. The museum includes exceptional examples of rare woodwork and plaster artefacts, as well as metal, glass and porcelain utensils, jewellery, weapons, wood and ivory objects, textiles and carpets.

We take our lunch in a restaurant in the beautiful Al Azhar Park. Opened in 2005, these beautiful gardens are reminiscent of historical Islamic landscapes, and afford fabulous views over the city, and across to the Mohammed Ali Mosque we visited on the first day of our tour.

In the afternoon we travel approximately 270kms south to Minya, located on the western bank of the Nile River. Dubbed the 'Bride of Upper Egypt' for its beauty and strategic location in Middle Egypt linking the north and the south, approximately 50% of its residents are Coptic Christians. (Overnight Minya) BLD

Day 9: Wednesday 1 December, Minya – Beni Hasan – Tuna el-Gebel – Minya

- Rock-cut tombs of Beni Hasan
- City of the Dead: Tuna el-Gebel

This morning we cross the bridge in Minya and drive approximately 20kms south on the east bank of the Nile, in order to climb the many steps cut in the limestone desert escarpment, up to the row of Middle Kingdom tombs. The view over the surrounding area is breathtaking and in itself worth the climb, but a visit to Beni Hasan also allows us to visit the rock-cut tombs of regional governors dating to a fascinating period of ancient Egyptian history not yet experienced on this tour. The painted scenes on the walls of these tombs provide us with an array of evidence for daily life in ancient Egypt, but perhaps most interestingly, they are a crucial historical source for the end of the difficult, politically fragmented First Intermediate Period, and the return to stable, centralised control in the Middle Kingdom. Of the four tombs we are able to visit at this site, the tombs of Khety and Baqet date to the Eleventh Dynasty, and those of Khnumhotep and Amenemhat date to the Twelfth Dynasty.

After a packed lunch we explore the multi-period site of Tuna el-Gebel, located just into the desert on the west bank of the Nile. Here we find an Eighteenth Dynasty 'Boundary Stela' of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, cut high in the desert cliff, commemorating the foundation of their new capital city at Amarna on the other side of the river. But Tuna el-Gebel is best known for being the cemetery for High Priests of the local god Thoth, and for the sacred ibises and baboons associated with the cult of this god of the moon, wisdom and the scribal profession, so we focus our visit on the tomb of the High Priest of Thoth, Petosiris (which dates to c300 BC and displays an interesting mix of Hellenistic and Egyptian artistic styles in the relief decoration), and the meandering catacombs with their simple pottery ibis coffins, and mummified baboons. These votive animal mummies, buried close to what would have been the most important temple to Thoth (now ruined), date mostly from the Seventh Century BC to the First Century AD. (Overnight Minya) BLD

Asyut - 1 night

Day 10: Thursday 2 December, Minya – Amarna – Asyut

- Amarna: ancient city of Akhetaten

We spend today conducting a comprehensive investigation of the archaeological site of Amarna, approximately 50 kms south of Minya, to the east of the Nile. Here we find the scant mud brick remains of a

once great city, built by the so-called 'heretic king' Akhenaten (c. 1352-1336 BC), the pharaoh who changed the state religion from the traditional polytheism to a form of a monotheism, and who changed the iconography of Egyptian kingship to express his unique ideology.

Our exploration of this large site takes us to the mud brick remains of the 'Small Aten Temple', one of Akhenaten's temples to his one god, the sun god Aten; and to the 'North Palace', a palace of the royal women. In addition to the mud brick remains of temples, palaces, houses, and administrative buildings, we experience the realm of the dead at Amarna – the tombs of noblemen of the day, cut high in the desert escarpment; and the royal tomb used for the burial of the pharaoh himself, his mother and one of his daughters, the princess Meketaten. The wall of these tombs are carved in sunk relief, providing us with evidence for the exceptional style of art of this period, and a very different emphasis in the decoration of elite tombs – only during this brief reign does the royal family feature on the walls of nobles' tombs, rather than the important officials themselves. Our visit to Amarna takes us to the heart of Akhenaten's and Nefertiti's empire, their capital city, built on a virgin site dedicated to the one solar god. We learn of the foundation of this city from the inscription and imagery on the 'Boundary Stelae' cut into the desert cliffs around this ancient city.

We take a break during the day to eat our packed lunch in the site rest house, with a view across the desert towards the northern tombs of the nobles.

We leave Amarna to drive approximately 100 kms south to Asyut, home to one of the largest universities in Egypt. (Overnight Asyut) BLD

Luxor - 5 nights

Day 11: Friday 3 December, Asyut – Abydos – Luxor

- Temple of Seti I at Abydos

Early this morning we depart Asyut and travel approximately 200kms south to visit the magnificent Temple of King Seti I, the most impressive of the various temples constructed at Abydos during the pharaonic period. These monuments dating from the Old Kingdom through to the New Kingdom, all relate to the cult of Osiris, god of rejuvenation and the Afterlife, whose burial was believed to be at Abydos. His legendary tomb actually belongs to one of Egypt's first dynasty kings, all of whom were buried at this site. In the Middle Kingdom Abydos became a place of national pilgrimage, particularly during the Festival of Osiris. In the New Kingdom the great warrior king Seti I and his son Ramesses II built large temples to Osiris and a host of other deities, but also to commemorate the cult of divine kingship. The temple of Seti is the best preserved with much of its original colour. Its reliefs depict the ceremonies associated with Osiris and the other gods and goddesses of Egypt, and the temple's architecture is unique with seven sanctuaries to the pharaoh and Egypt's major deities.

In the afternoon we continue our drive to Luxor, a vibrant town nestled on the east bank of the Nile, a town so rich in archaeology it serves as an open-air museum, often referred to by its ancient Greek name Thebes. (Overnight Luxor) BLD

Day 12: Saturday 4 December, Luxor

- Temple Precinct of Amun, Karnak
- Luxor Museum
- Lunch: Sofra

- Luxor Temple
- Optional visit to a jewellers, the Souk and Aboudi Bookshop

This morning we visit the main temple precinct of Amun at Karnak, nearly 3km to the north of Luxor Temple. Recent excavations have revealed almost the entire length of the sphinx-lined processional way between the two temples. This afternoon we will see the Opet Festival reliefs at Luxor Temple, in which the cult statues of the gods Amun and Mut were shown being processed in boat-shaped shrines, from their sanctuaries at Karnak to their 'Southern Residence' at Luxor Temple. The temple precinct at Karnak is the largest religious enclosure in the world. Most of the buildings we visit there today were erected during the New Kingdom, but later rulers added to this temple complex. The monumental approach to this temple from the river is lined with fantastic ram-headed sphinxes. This avenue connected the precinct to the quay from which the god's barge was launched to transfer him either to Luxor Temple or to the west bank of the Nile. Amun's consort Mut and their child Khonsu were also worshipped at Karnak and the enclosures and temples within the precinct served as a stage for the rituals and festivals centred on this 'Theban Triad' of gods.

Next we visit the Luxor Museum, one of the finest museums in Egypt with its artistic display of objects from the Theban region. Here we see the famous statue of Thutmose III (c. 1479 – 1425 BC) discovered under a courtyard in Karnak Temple in 1904, and other works, including the perfect quartzite statue of Amenhotep III (c. 1390 – 1352 BC), found in 1989 under the solar court at Luxor Temple.

Lunch is at Sofra close to Luxor Temple. *Sofra* is Arabic for 'dining table', but also for 'generosity' and 'hospitality'. This restaurant occupies a 1930s Egyptian townhouse that retains its traditional character.

Luxor Temple lies parallel to the river on the east bank of the Nile. It was regarded as the southern residence of the god Amun, who by the New Kingdom (c. 1550 – 1069 BC) had been merged with the more ancient and important sun god of Heliopolis, Ra, to become Amun-Ra. Luxor was home to local rulers during Egypt's politically fragmented Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650 – 1550 BC). They drove out the foreign rulers (the Hyksos) from the Delta, and went on to rule a united Egypt as the Eighteenth Dynasty, a particularly splendid period of Egyptian history, when pharaohs were buried for the first time in the Valley of the Kings, and Egypt controlled an empire that took in Nubia, and Syria-Palestine. The wealth flooding into Egypt through trade, conquest, and efficient exploitation of resources, resulted in much temple building, and particularly at Luxor which became the country's religious centre, focused on the cult of Amun-Ra. Most of what we see today at Luxor Temple was built by Amenhotep III with some additions by Ramesses II. Here we see reliefs of the great Opet Festival of Amun dating to the reign of Amenhotep III's grandson Tutankhamen (c. 1336–1327 BC), and the 'Chamber of the Divine King' converted into a chapel of the Imperial cult during the Roman Period. A Christian basilica was built in this temple, on top of which a mosque was later built. This mosque of the Muslim saint Abu el-Haggag continues in use to this day. So the expanse of time over which this site has been a place of worship is vast.

A must-visit bookshop for anyone interested in Egypt, ancient or modern, and the souk with its array of spices, jewellery and all manner of gifts, are both located within easy walking distance of our hotel.
(Overnight Luxor) BL

Day 13: Sunday 5 December, Luxor's West Bank

- Colossi of Memnon
- Valley of the Kings (with special opening of Seti I's Tomb)
- Lunch: Africa
- Temple of Hatshepsut, Deir el-Bahri

After breakfast we depart our hotel and cross the Nile by boat to visit sites on the west bank of the river where the Pharaonic necropolis was located during the New Kingdom. As we travel from the Nile to the Valley of the Kings we will pass the Colossi of Memnon, two huge seated figures, which once flanked the entrance to the memorial temple of Amenhotep III (c. 1390 – 1352 BC). When it was built, this would have been the largest of the New Kingdom temples on the west bank, but within about 150 years it had been destroyed. We will gaze up at the colossal seated statues of Amenhotep III, which were left standing in front of what is now an active archaeological site. The Greeks identified these colossal statues with Memnon, son of Aurora.

From the Colossi we continue to the Valley of the Kings, the necropolis of the pharaohs and some other important individuals of the New Kingdom. We enter a selection of the decorated underground burial complexes, which present us with a completely different style of funerary structure to the Old Kingdom pyramids we visited in the North of Egypt. Most of these New Kingdom royal tombs cut into the limestone bedrock are decorated with murals, which chart the progress of a pharaoh into the afterlife, the gods he would meet and the ceremonies he would undergo. The largest of these tombs is the one quarried out of the bedrock and decorated for the Nineteenth Dynasty pharaoh Seti I, whose temple we visit at Abydos. Nine of its eleven rooms are beautifully decorated; of particular note is the painted astronomical ceiling in the burial chamber. Visitor numbers to this tomb are restricted, but our group has special access to this most impressive of tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

Lunch will be served on the roof terrace at Africa, a local Egyptian restaurant with views overlooking the Nile, towards Luxor Temple on the other side of the river.

After lunch on the roof terrace at Africa, a local Egyptian restaurant with views overlooking the Nile towards Luxor Temple on the other side of the river, we visit the memorial temple of the pharaoh Hatshepsut (c. 1473 – 1458 BC), a three-tiered architectural masterpiece built into the cliff overlooking the flat valley stretching back to the Nile, and located on a direct axis with Karnak Temple on the other side of the river. Deir el-Bahri has been majorly reconstructed by Polish archaeologists working there since the 1960s, but the reliefs are original, and they provide us with evidence for the great achievements of this female pharaoh, particularly in trading expeditions and the transportation of obelisks from the granite quarries in Aswan. This temple is also significant for its scenes of the divine birth of Hatshepsut. (Overnight Luxor) BL

Day 14: Monday 6 December, Luxor's West Bank

- Valley of the Queens (with a special opening of Nefertari's tomb)
- Deir el-Medina
- Lunch: Nur el-Qurna
- Ramesseum

Our third day in Luxor sees us crossing over to the west bank by boat to visit still more of the sites responsible for this town's designation as 'the world's greatest open-air museum'. We begin the day by visiting the counterpart to the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens, where we visit the decorated rock cut tomb of a queen, and of two princes, all dating to the time of Ramesses III (c. 1184–1153 BC) whose temple we will be visiting at Medinet Habu. The colours in the painted scenes on the walls of these tombs are particularly vivid, but not nearly as vivid as those in the most breathtaking of all ancient tombs, the tomb of Queen Nefertari, wife of Ramesses II whose temple, now known as the Ramesseum, we will be visiting this afternoon. Since the Getty Conservation Institute restored the walls of this tomb (1986-1992), visitor numbers have been restricted, but we have a special permission for an exclusive visit.

At Deir el-Medina we find the remains of a town inhabited by the artists and craftsmen responsible for

quarrying out and decorating the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens and Tomb of the Nobles. These men lived here with their families during the New Kingdom and left behind all manner of archaeological evidence and written records, particularly on flakes of limestone (*ostraca*) informing us of their daily life, both at home, and working in the tombs. They also created small but brightly decorated tombs for themselves and their families, a couple of which we will be able to climb down inside, to enjoy the vibrant painted scenes on the walls of the rock-cut burial chambers. The people of Deir el-Medina had lived not only alongside their burial ground, but alongside shrines to local gods, such as the deified pharaoh Amenhotep I (r.1526 – 1506 BC), and other deities of particular relevance to this community, such as Ptah, patron of craftsmen. Much later, during the reign of Ptolemy IV (r. 221 – 204 BC), a small stone temple surrounded by a large mud brick wall was built in the area of the New Kingdom shrines just to the north of the ancient town. This temple is dedicated to Hathor, the goddess we have already met at Dendera. We take time to explore this temple, including the 'Weighing of the Heart' scene carved in one of the chambers.

After a local lunch in the garden of a restaurant nestled under trees at the western end of Amenhotep III's ruined temple behind the Colossi of Memnon, we head to the romantic ruins of Ramesses II's memorial temple, known today as the Ramesseum. Here we see the fallen colossus of this mighty pharaoh, and scenes carved in relief of the Battle of Qadesh (c. 1274 BC) that the Egyptians fought against the Hittites in year 5 of Ramesses II's reign. Ramesses claimed this battle as a great victory, but the truth seems to have been somewhat different! (Overnight Luxor) BL

Day 15: Tuesday 7 December, Luxor's West Bank

- Tombs of the Nobles: Ramose, Userhet, Khaemhet, Rekhmire, Sennefer
- Lunch: Africa
- Temple of Medinet Habu

We cross the Nile to Luxor's west bank by boat, like the ancient Egyptians who followed processional routes between the temples on the east bank and the tombs and temples on the west bank. On Luxor's west bank we first visit a group of New Kingdom rock-cut Tombs of the Nobles. These private tombs vividly illustrate aspects of daily life in Egypt, and provide us with evidence for the ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning an afterlife. Rekhmire was a Vizier under 'the Napoleon of Egypt', Thutmose III (c.1479 – 1425 BC). A lengthy inscription in his tomb outlines all the duties expected of the Vizier – an Ancient Egyptian job description for the Prime Minister. Ramose was Vizier under Amenhotep III and IV. Of particular interest is the scene of Amenhotep IV (who went on to become Akhenaten) (c. 1352 – 1336 BC) represented in the conventional style of his father Amenhotep III, opposite another representation of him in the unusual style we associate with the Amarna Period. So within the one tomb we can trace the transition from one style of art to the other. When we enter the rock-cut decorated chambers of the tombs of Rekhmire, Ramose, Userhet and Khaemhet, we are actually visiting the funerary chapels of the tombs, just as we visited the funerary chapels in the superstructures of the Old Kingdom *mastabas* in the North. In the case of Sennefer, we actually visit his burial chamber, and unusually it is elaborately decorated, with a noteworthy ceiling painted with vines laden with bunches of grapes.

We take lunch once again on the roof terrace overlooking the Nile at the local restaurant, Africa, and then visit Medinet Habu, the best preserved of the great temples erected on the west bank by the New Kingdom rulers, in which they were venerated as manifestations of the god Amun on earth, and in which offerings were made to ensure their eternal life. This was the temple built by the Twentieth Dynasty pharaoh Rameses III (c.1184 – 1153 BC), whose palace remains we will also visit within the massive mudbrick outer enclosure wall of the temple. Among the many scenes carved in relief on the walls of this temple is the only recorded pharaonic sea battle – against the so-called 'Sea Peoples'. (Overnight Luxor) BL

Dahabiya Cruise - 4 nights

Day 16: Wednesday 8 December, Luxor – Esna – El Hegz

- Esna Temple
- Board our *dahabiya* and set sail

This morning we drive south to Esna. We visit the temple in the heart of this busy modern town. In order to reach the ancient floor-level of the temple, we must descend a long staircase from modern street-level, showing that the modern town sits on the many strata of a settlement mound (*te//l*). The temple is dedicated to the ram-headed creator god of the south, Khnum, whom we shall meet again in Aswan. During the Graeco-Roman Period this place was called in Greek, *Latopolis*, after the *Lates* fish which were held sacred there and were buried in a cemetery west of the town. The Ptolemaic inner part of this temple is mostly lost, and what we are able to visit dates mostly to the Roman Period. The hypostyle hall (its roof supported by rows of columns with composite floral capitals characteristic of the period) is in fact the last major temple built in Egypt, and is decorated with reliefs from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

We board our *dahabiya* for lunch and an afternoon of gentle sailing. And so we begin our river voyage south, mooring over night close to the village of El Hegz, where we dine onboard. (Overnight aboard a *dahabiya*) BLD

Day 17: Thursday 9 December, El Hegz – El Kab – Edfu – Gebel el-Silsila

- Tombs of El Kab
- Temple of Horus, Edfu

We continue sailing today on our peaceful *dahabiya* cruise, with two sites to visit before we moor for the night at Gebel el-Silsila. El Kab is a large, multi-period site, occupied from the Predynastic Period (ended 3100 BC), with the vulture goddess Nekhbet, a protective goddess of kingship, as its patron deity. We walk past the great mud brick enclosure wall of the ancient town to visit a row of rock-cut tombs just within the desert on the eastern side of the river. These tombs are from the period of the New Kingdom and are decorated in painted raised relief. Perhaps the most famous of these is the tomb of Ahmose, Son of Abana, who was a Chief of Sailors in the late Seventeenth-early Eighteenth Dynasties. There is an extremely important inscription on one wall of his tomb which gives us considerable detail of the Theban military expeditions north to overcome the Hyksos in their Delta capital at Avaris during the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650-1550 BC), and to expel them from Egypt, thereby reuniting Egypt under one pharaoh (Ahmose) at the beginning of the New Kingdom.

The Temple of Horus at Edfu was constructed in the 3rd century BC during the Ptolemaic Period. It is a huge and remarkably complete temple, elaborately decorated throughout, preserving valuable information on the foundation of Egyptian temples, the rituals that took place daily in the temples, and the regular festivals, such as the Festival of the Beautiful Meeting, when the cult statue of Hathor of Dendera was transported by boat to visit Horus of Edfu. The ambulatory around the temple is decorated with scenes expressing the mythology of kingship – the triumph of Horus over his uncle Seth (represented mostly as a tiny hippopotamus!).

We dine this evening onboard our *dahabiya*. (Overnight on *dahabiya*) BLD

Day 18: Friday 10 December, Gebel el-Silsila – el Gerdiab

- Ancient quarry and shrines, Gebel el-Silsila

Continuing our leisurely cruise south, we moor to visit further sites. Silsila Gorge is one of the narrowest points in the Nile Valley. A little to the north of here, the geology of the Nile Valley has changed – northern limestone of the Nile Valley has given way to sandstone, which then extends south far into Sudan. This site was used as a sandstone quarry from at least the Eighteenth Dynasty through to Graeco-Roman times. The blocks for important sandstone temples we have already visited – such as Karnak, Luxor Temple, Medinet Habu, and the Ramesseum – were quarried here on both sides of the river. We visit the quarries on the west bank, coming across various rock-cut shrines, the largest and best preserved of which is the rock-cut chapel (or *speos*) of Horemheb (c. 1323 – 1295 BC), now thought to have originally been built by Hatshepsut, dedicated to a number of deities including Amun-Ra; the crocodile god Sobek; the triad of Elephantine, Khnum, Satet, and Anuket; the god of the Nile flood Hapi; and the hippopotamus goddess Taweret.

We moor for the night close to the village of El Gerdiab, and dine onboard our *dahabiya*. (Overnight on *dahabiya*) BLD

Day 19: Saturday 11 December, El Gerdiab – Kom Ombo – Aswan

- Temple of Sobek and Horus the Elder, Kom Ombo

This morning we moor at Kom Ombo to visit the picturesque Graeco-Roman Period riverside temple of the crocodile god Sobek and Haroeris, or Horus the Elder. The temple plan is unusual – its dedication to two gods necessitated the division of the interior into eastern and western halves that mirror each other. We find evidence for oracular consultation here, and a wall relief that has been interpreted by some as an illustration of medical implements. A small site museum has recently opened here displaying embalmed crocodiles and other ancient evidence for the local cult of the crocodile god.

From Kom Ombo we enjoy a tranquil cruise to Aswan. The granite cataract at Aswan turned the pre-dam river into non-navigable rapids, and created Egypt's natural southern frontier. It was also the gateway to trade routes south into sub-Saharan Africa. As such it was a land of garrisons and passing merchants where the cultures of Egypt and Nubia blended and overlapped.

We dine onboard this evening. (Overnight on *dahabiya* in Aswan) BLD

Aswan - 2 nights

Day 20: Sunday 12 December, Aswan

- Unfinished Obelisk and Quarries
- High Dam
- Kalabsha Temple
- Qertassi Kiosk
- Beit al-Wali Temple
- Temple of Isis, Philae

Today we spend a full day exploring the Aswan area, and boat trips to sites located on islands. Aswan is where the ancient Egyptians quarried the pink and grey granite they favoured for obelisks, statuary, sarcophagi etc. This morning we get a sense of the cataract, and visit a quarry where we look for evidence of ancient quarrying techniques and marvel at the size of the New Kingdom 'Unfinished Obelisk', some 42m long and weighing over 1000 tons, that remains in situ, semi-quarried from the bedrock. The small souk at

this site presents another good shopping opportunity.

In order better to understand the significance of the region, and the UNESCO campaign to save the monuments of Nubia in the 1960s, we visit the High Dam and discuss the affects it has had on modern Egypt and its ancient monuments.

On the northern shore of Lake Nasser we next board another boat to take us the short distance to New Kalabsha Island, one of the islands in Lake Nasser, the vast man-made lake created south of the High Dam. A number of different monuments saved from the rising water of Lake Nasser have been relocated to this island, so today it serves as an Open Air Museum. Monuments here include Kalabsha Temple, a Roman kiosk from Qertassi, and the Beit el-Wali Temple. The Kalabsha Temple is the largest free-standing Nubian temple. This sandstone temple was built for the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus (r. 27 BC – 14 AD). It was dedicated to the divine triad, Osiris, Isis and Horus-Mandulis (the Egyptian deity Horus syncretised with the Nubian sun deity Mandulis; in fact, this is the Greek name derived from the Nubian name Merul). The temple was later reused as a Coptic church.

The Qertassi Kiosk, with its Hathor-headed columns, originally stood at the entrance to an ancient sandstone quarry, on high ground overlooking the Nile, and was a landmark seen from miles around, probably dating to the Ptolemaic Period.

Beit el-Wali is a small rock-cut (*speos*) temple. It is the earliest of the Nubian temples built by the 19th dynasty pharaoh Rameses II (r. 1279 – 1213 BC), and was dedicated to the great Theban deity Amun-Ra, as well as local gods of the Aswan area (Khnum, Satet and Anuket), and Nubian deities.

Following lunch at a local restaurant, we drive on to the southern side of the early 20th-century British Dam in order to board a boat to take the short journey across the reservoir formed between the British Dam and the 1960s High Dam to the temple complex that was once located on the flooded Philae Island, and was dismantled and relocated to the higher Agilka Island. To 19th century travellers, the Philae temple was 'the pearl of the Nile' and despite its relocation, it is still today the archetypal romantic ruined temple thanks to its idyllic location. It is a Ptolemaic and early Roman Period temple dedicated to the goddess Isis, with a small temple to Hathor alongside, a *mammisi* (divine birth house) unusually situated within the temple and, most celebrated by early travellers, the Kiosk of Trajan. Because of its remote location Philae seems to have served as a centre for pagan worship well into the Christian era. It is also the site of the latest known hieroglyphic inscription (394 AD) and the latest demotic inscription, a *graffito* (452 AD). The site was finally abandoned during the reign of Justinian the Great (c.535 AD).

We dine together this evening in a restaurant at the top of the Movenpick Tower on Elephantine Island with spectacular views over Aswan which is lit up at night. (Overnight Aswan) BLD

Day 21: Monday 13 December, Aswan

- Tombs of the Nobles, Qubbet el-Hawa (including those of Harkhuf, Sarenput I & II)
- Elephantine Island: temples of Khnum and Satet
- Lunch: Makka
- Nubian Museum

We continue to visit sites by boat today – on the west bank, and on an island. In the morning we cross the Nile to the West, the 'Land of the Dead', to visit several rock cut tombs set high in the desert hillside. We visit tombs of governors of this area dating to the Old and Middle Kingdoms. The tomb of Harkhuf, Overseer of Foreign Troops during the Sixth dynasty reign of Pepi II (c. 2278 -2184 BC), is of particular

interest as it is inscribed with a copy of a letter sent by Pepi II as a boy-king to Harkhuf asking him to bring a pygmy back from his trading expedition to Sudan to dance for him in the palace.

We shall then visit Elephantine Island, site of the ancient town of Abu (meaning 'elephant' and 'ivory' in Ancient Egyptian), Aswan's predecessor, where we see the remains of this trading entrepot and garrison town, and its temples, including the remains of the Temple of Khnum, the ram-headed creator god associated with the Nile and the cataract, and the temples of his consort Satet, reconstructed by the German Archaeological Institute. Here we visit the best preserved example of a Nileometer used to measure the annual flood levels. We will note the mud brick tombs of the mummified rams associated with the cult of Khnum, as we shall go on to see at least one of these rams on display in the Nubian Museum this afternoon. We will also come across a Middle Kingdom cult shrine of Heqa-ib, a deified Old Kingdom governor of Elephantine, whose tomb we will have noted earlier this morning at Qubbet el-Hawa.

Today's program concludes with a visit to the Nubian Museum, an archaeological and ethnographic museum tracing the history and culture of ancient and modern Nubia. (Overnight Aswan) BL

Abu Simbel - 1 night

Day 22: Tuesday 14 December, Aswan – Abu Simbel

- Time at leisure in Abu Simbel
- Sound and Light Show, Abu Simbel

Today we drive along the western shore of Lake Nasser to Abu Simbel. We will take lunch boxes with us. We shall arrive in Abu Simbel in the mid-afternoon where there will be some time to relax and enjoy the facilities of the hotel. In the evening we attend the Sound and Light Show; the laser lighting of the Abu Simbel temple is stunning. (Overnight Abu Simbel) BLD

Cairo Airport - 1 night

Day 23: Wednesday 15 December, Abu Simbel – Cairo

- Temple of Ramesses II, Abu Simbel
- Temple of Nefertari, Abu Simbel
- Midday flight from Abu Simbel to Cairo
- Farewell Evening Meal

Abu Simbel has become one of Egypt's most famous sites, which probably has as much to do with the drama of its dismantling and re-construction in advance of the rising waters of Lake Nasser, as with its remote and stunning location. Here we visit two temples constructed by Ramesses II, which were moved to this site in 1966-1968. The relocation, which preserved the alignment of the temples and re-inserted them into the artificial hills at their new location, was a major engineering feat, as remarkable as the original construction of the temples themselves. The larger temple is in fact very carefully aligned in its new location so that twice each year (February 21st and October 21st) the rising sun illuminates the sanctuary at its rear, shining upon the seated gods. The larger of the two temples is dedicated to Amun-Ra, Ra-Horakhty, Ptah, and the deified Rameses II (c. 1279 – 1213 BC), whose four great *colossi* spring out from the cliff face, dominating the temple façade. The smaller temple is dedicated to the goddess Hathor and Ramesses's wife, Nefertari (d. c. 1250 BC).

Following a packed lunch we take a midday flight from Abu Simbel back to Cairo. Tonight we stay at a hotel close to the Cairo Airport. This evening we enjoy a Farewell Dinner in our hotel in downtown

Cairo. (Overnight Cairo) BLD

Day 24: Thursday 16 December, Depart Cairo

- The Mu'allaqa Church (the 'Hanging Church')
- Coptic Museum
- Light lunch at the hotel
- Group transfer for participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight

Our tour concludes with a visit to the heart of Coptic Cairo. The 'Hanging (*Mu'allaqa* in Arabic) Church' takes its name from its location on top of the southern tower gate of the Roman Babylon fortress with its nave suspended above the passage below. It is one of the oldest Coptic churches in Egypt, and is dedicated to St Mary. It was probably built in the Seventh Century AD, but an earlier church on this site is thought to date back to the Third Century AD. The Coptic Museum next door to the Hanging Church is a treasure trove of objects relating to Coptic history and culture going back to the 2nd century, including icons, manuscripts, sculptures, textiles and frescoes.

We return to our hotel for lunch and to freshen up before commencing our journey home. Participants returning to Australia on the group flights will be transferred to Cairo Airport after lunch. You are scheduled to depart on Emirates flight EK924 at 1905hrs. BL

Accommodation

24-day Cultural Tour of Egypt

Hotels are rated 3-5-star locally and are comfortable and conveniently situated. All rooms have en suite bathroom. Several hotels have swimming pools.

Note: in order to have the rare privilege of being able to visit the sites in Middle Egypt, it is necessary to stay in hotels that aren't geared up for tourists; when visiting the sites in Middle Egypt we really are off the beaten track. The hotels in Middle Egypt (Minya & Asyut) are of basic, 3-star standard.

Single rooms may be requested – and are subject to availability and payment of the Single Supplement. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

- Giza, Cairo (4 nights): 5-star Marriott Mena House Hotel – overlooking the Great Pyramid of Giza, surrounded by 40 acres of landscaped gardens. www.marriott.com
- Alexandria (2 nights): 5-star Helnan Palestine Hotel – a modern hotel set in 350 acres of gardens overlooking a Mediterranean cove. www.helnan.com
- Giza, Cairo (1 night): 5-star Le Méridien Pyramids Hotel & Spa– overlooking the Great Pyramid of Giza, surrounded by 40 acres of landscaped gardens. www.marriott.com
- Minya (2 nights): 3-star MG Nefertiti Hotel – a basic, modern hotel in the city centre offering rooms with scenic views over the Nile (best available). [facebook page](#)
- Asyut (1 night): 3-star El Watania Palace Hotel – a basic, modern hotel in the city centre (best available). Website: Arabic only.
- Luxor (5 nights): 4-star Sofitel Pavillon Winter Luxor – overlooking tropical gardens and located 100m from the Luxor Temple. www.sofitel.com
- Luxor-Aswan Nile Cruise by dahabiyas (4 nights): on board the Africa and Africa Queen. *Dahabiyas* are wind-blown vessels so you can experience the beauty of the Nile at a leisurely pace as those adventurous explorers did during the early 19th century. We will only use tug boats when there is insufficient wind for sail. The ships also have onboard generators to provide you with all your electrical needs. nilesailing.com
- Aswan (2 night): 5-star Mövenpick Resort Aswan – located on Elephantine Island in the middle of the Nile River. www.movenpick.com
- Abu Simbel (1 night): 4-star Seti Abu Simbel Lake Resort – located only a 10-minute walk from the Grand Temple of Ramesses II, with views of Lake Nasser. www.setifirst.com
- Cairo Airport (1 night): 5-star Le Méridien Cairo Airport – linked to Cairo International Airport Terminal 3 by a pedestrian bridge. www.marriott.com

Note: *Hotels are subject to change. In this instance a hotel of similar standard will be provided.*

Single Supplement

Option A

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double/twin room for single occupancy throughout the tour. There are a limited number of cabins available for single use on the *dahabiyas*. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Option B

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double/twin room for single occupancy at all the hotels. However, accommodation will be in twin-share cabins on the *dahabiyas*. People wishing to take this supplement are advised to book well in advance.



Dahabiya, Egypt Nile Cruise

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 September 2020

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only

AUD \$TBA Single Supplement Option A: Single accommodation throughout the tour

AUD \$TBA Single Supplement Option B: Single accommodation at all hotels; twin-share cabin on the Dahabiya

For competitive Economy, Business or First Class airfares and/or group airfares please contact ASA for further information.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3-5-star hotels; 4-night on board *dahabiyas* sailing from Esna to Aswan
- All meals indicated in the tour itinerary, where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals include mineral water & tea/coffee
- 2 x 500ml bottle mineral water per person per day for excursions
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage at hotels and airports
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Tour Handbook
- Entrance fees to museums and monuments
- National guide in Egypt
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Cairo, Abu Simbel-Cairo, Cairo-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Egyptian Visa (purchased on arrival at Cairo airport)



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 24-day Cultural Tour of Egypt involves:

- Extensive walking on rough ground at archaeological sites and some walking through narrow streets and busy markets.
- Travelling long distances by coach.
- Regular early morning starts (8:00 or 8.30am).
- 3- to 5-star hotels with nine accommodation changes; 4 nights on *dahabiyas* cruise.
- In order to have the rare privilege of being able to visit the sites in Middle Egypt, it is necessary to stay in hotels that aren't geared up for tourists; when visiting the sites in Middle Egypt we really are off the beaten track. The hotels in Middle Egypt (Minya & Asyut) are of basic, 3-star standard.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel portage includes 1 piece of luggage per person.
- Risk of gastric ailments (you should consult your doctor about medication before departure).

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether

this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the Booking Conditions on the last page of this tour itinerary.

Practical Information

Prior to departure tour members will receive practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers: www.smartraveller.gov.au

Booking Conditions

Making a Tentative Reservation before the tour price has been published

ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD \$100.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD \$400.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of AUD \$500.00 is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD \$100.00 per person deposit, less a \$33.00 service fee (including GST).

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities without assistance or support:

- walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains

- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15-20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication

Single Supplement

Option A

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double/twin room for single occupancy throughout the tour. There are a limited number of cabins available for single use on the *dahabiyas*. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Option B

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double/twin room for single occupancy at all the hotels. However, accommodation will be in twin-share cabins on the *dahabiyas*. People wishing to take this supplement are advised to book well in advance.



Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

Booking before the tour price is available

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$100.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$400.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of \$500.00 AUD is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$100.00 per person deposit, less a \$33.00 service fee (including GST).

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr Mrs Ms Miss Dr Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth ____ / ____ / ____ GENDER Male Female

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: a twin-bedded room a double-bedded room a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: on my own with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish poultry red meat dairy products

eggs pork nuts

Other _____

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence Postal Mail Email Address _____

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour.

ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section.

As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities *without assistance or support*:-

- walk & stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature _____

Dated _____

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1

Name of Traveller 2

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$

 (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate): Cheque Direct Debit (see below) Credit Card (see below)

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No.

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard & Visa 2%
American Express 2%

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number

Expiry Date

 Security Code (CVC)

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ)

Cardholders Name

Cardholders Billing Address

Postcode

State

 Country

Phone

Email

Cardholders Signature
