



SANCTUARY
RETREATS

Your holiday guide to

EGYPT

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EGYPT HOLIDAY GUIDE



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Your holiday guide to

EGYPT

EGYPT

The country's ancient past is still alive in its majestic monuments and relics, while the complexity of modern Egypt entrances any visitor.

The ancient Egyptians were one of the most impressive civilisations the world has seen, but other ethnicities have shaped this country too, making Egypt a unique mix of the Arabian and Islamic with the Mediterranean.

This rich history has created a tapestry of cultural and archaeological treasures unmatched anywhere - so much so that the country is home to one third of the world's antiquities.

From the majestic Pyramids still standing proudly - to the mighty Nile flowing through the heart of Egypt, the stark Sahara Desert and the pristine beaches of the Red Sea, this is a destination not to be missed.

In ancient times, the country was known as Kemet, or the black land, due to the alluvial soil which was deposited during the annual inundation of the River Nile.

This yearly event gave Egypt its fertile land that enabled it to expand along the length of the river, especially in the Delta where many various crops were, and still are, harvested.

Egypt covers an area of approximately 1,001,450km² (386,662 miles²) and is bordered by Israel and the Gaza Strip in the north-east; the Red Sea in the east; Sudan in the south; Libya in the west; and the Mediterranean Sea in the north.

It is the 3rd most populous country in Africa and the most populous in the Middle-East with the majority of its estimated 80 million people living on, or near, the banks of the River Nile.

Only 5.5% of the total land area is actually used by the population, the area that borders the River Nile as well as a few oases, the other 94.5% being uninhabitable desert.

The Nile River

The Nile was the lifeline of ancient Egyptian civilisation and today the banks of the river are dotted with ancient tombs and temples.



The River Nile is nowadays regarded as the longest river in the world and it enters Egypt from Sudan and flows north for about 1,545km (960 miles) until it exits into the Mediterranean Sea. From the Sudanese border to Cairo, the River Nile flows through a narrow cliff lined valley, which, south of Edfu, is hardly more than 3km (2 miles) wide.

From Edfu to Cairo, it is about 7.5km (4.6 miles) in width, with most of the arable land lying on the western side.

Just north of Cairo the valley merges with the Delta before the River Nile joins with the Mediterranean Sea.

Lying 420 miles south of Cairo, Luxor is the most dramatic historical site in Egypt - and is often referred to as the world's greatest open air museum. Luxor is the modern day name for Thebes, the ancient capital city of the New Kingdom Pharaohs. Today, Luxor is home to more than half of Egyptian antiquities and is a must-see destination for any visitor to Egypt.

Aswan is the "Jewel of the Nile". Pink and grey granite thrusts upward through the Nubian sandstone, forming

mountains, cliffs and jagged outcrops. The Nile runs clear and cold here, and endless waves of golden sand swirl against its banks.





GETTING INTO EGYPT

Please note this is a guide only – please check with your nearest Egyptian Embassy for up to date information.

All visitors are required to carry a passport that is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay.

There should be sufficient blank pages for entry stamps upon arrival.

Visas are normally obtainable at the airport upon arrival, but some nationalities may need a pre-arrival visa.

Please note that passport holders are responsible for obtaining the required documentation applicable for entry.

TIME ZONE

Egypt standard time is GMT + 2 hours

STAYING HEALTHY

No vaccinations are currently needed for visitors to Egypt, unless arriving from countries where yellow fever is endemic. Drink plenty of water when staying outside during the day. Take care from the sun, which can often feel cooler than it really is due to the cool coastal breezes and lack of humidity. Short-term dehydration can cause various unpleasant symptoms including fever, headache and nausea. Fortunately these disappear rather quickly after a long drink. We recommend that you drink as much water as possible while on tour. You should not drink tap water and avoid ice in your drink unless it is made from mineral water.

Please advise Sanctuary Retreats of any special dietary requirements/allergies at least 6 weeks prior to the beginning of your journey. Every effort will be made to comply with your request. Travellers with physical disabilities and those who require frequent or on-going medical attention should advise us of their health situation at the time of booking (or at the time such a situation occurs should this be after the reservation is made.) We recommend that you take out comprehensive travel insurance to cover you in the event of a medical emergency.

TIPPING

You are travelling on an independent itinerary and the cost of your program does not include gratuities. Tipping is a very personal matter and should only be considered when our staff have gone above and beyond for you. Should you feel you would like to acknowledge their service, the below serves as a rough guide. An amount equivalent to the below scale is in US dollars, per person per day.

Local Guides & Egyptologists

- USD25 per day, for 1-7 people in a group
- USD15 per day, for 8-15 people in a group
- USD10 per day, for 16 or more people in a group

Tour Coordinators & Drivers

- USD14 per day, for 1-7 people in a group
- USD10 per day, for 8-15 people in a group
- USD7 per day, for 16 or more people in a group

Taxis

- Taxi drivers don't expect tips, but it's polite to round up the fare.

Restaurants

- A service charge is often added to the bill. If not, a typical gratuity would be equal to 10% of the total bill.

MONEY

Banks: Banking hours are normally 9am till 2pm, Sunday through Thursday, closed on Fridays and Saturdays. Currency exchange houses can be found in most major cities. Most major hotels will exchange major foreign currencies at the same rate as banks.

Currency: Currency is the Egyptian Pound (L.E.) but US dollars are often accepted at tourist sites.

Credit Cards: Major credit cards such as MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted at major restaurants, almost all hotels, and many shops. American Express is less common but is still normally accepted at major hotels. Diners Club Cards are hardly known in Egypt.



TALK THE TALK

The national language in Egypt is Arabic. However, tourists will rarely find a problem communicating as English is widely spoken in hotels and shops, with French a close second, and most staff members in tourist areas also speak German and/or Italian.

Useful phrases

<i>Hello</i>	<i>Ahlan</i>
<i>How are you?</i>	<i>Ezayak</i>
<i>I am fine</i>	<i>Ana Kowayes</i>
<i>I am not fine</i>	<i>Ana msh kowayes</i>
<i>Thank you</i>	<i>Shok-ran</i>
<i>Beautiful</i>	<i>Gameel</i>
<i>Goodbye</i>	<i>Maa salaama</i>





WEATHER

Throughout Egypt, days are commonly warm or hot, and nights are cool. Egypt has only two seasons: a mild winter from November to April and a hot summer from May to October. The only differences between the seasons are variations in daytime temperatures and changes in prevailing winds. In the coastal regions, temperatures range between an average minimum of 14°C in winter and an average maximum of 30°C in summer.

Temperatures vary widely in the inland desert areas, especially in summer, when they may range from 7°C at night to 43°C during the day. During winter, temperatures in the desert fluctuate less dramatically, but they can be as low as 0°C at night and as high as 18°C during the day.

Throughout the Delta and the northern Nile Valley, there are occasional winter cold spells accompanied by light frost and even snow. Egypt receives fewer than eighty millimetres of precipitation annually in most areas. Most rain falls along the coast.

A phenomenon of Egypt's climate is the hot spring wind that blows across the country. The winds, known as the khamsin, usually arrive in April but occasionally occur in March and May. The winds reach high velocities and carry great quantities of sand and dust. These sandstorms, often accompanied by winds of up to 140km an hour, can cause temperatures to rise as much as 20°C in two hours.



SOUVENIRS

Shopping in Egypt can be relaxed and leisurely, at high-class souvenir stores and hotel outlets, or part of an authentic and bargain wielding experience at local bazaars and souks. For the latter, the world famous Khan El Khalili bazaar is not to be missed, where gold and silver cartouches, carved alabaster, exquisite wooden pieces and intricately embroidered galabeyas can be brought for fabulous prices. A healthy amount of bargaining is expected and contributes to the fun of shopping in Egypt.

WHAT TO PACK

Egypt is generally a hot country, so light cotton clothing is advisable for the warmer months (April to September) and a light jacket for the evenings during the cooler months (October to March).

- Blouses/shirts with long sleeves to protect you from the sun. Short sleeves are also fine.
- Cotton t-shirts and tops
- Personal toiletries, sun screen, lip balm and insect repellent
- Hat, sunglasses and prescription glasses
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Camera

PHOTOGRAPHY

When taking a photograph of locals, it is customary to ask for permission. If you plan to travel with digital photographic and/or video equipment, make certain to pack the specific charging apparatus for each piece of equipment (as well as the appropriate socket plug adaptor and voltage converter if required).



LOCAL FOOD & DRINK

An important part of the traveling experience is to savour the many culinary local delights. All over Egypt, and especially in Cairo, you will find an enormous range of high-class restaurants serving international cuisine.

For those who adore hearty fare, then look no further than Egyptian cuisine. With a plethora of spices and herbs, Egyptian food is a feast not just for the palette, but also for the eyes. From sauce laden stews, to succulent grills, to delicate salads, Egyptian food is a combination of Middle Eastern, Turkish and Mediterranean influences that feature much of the local ingredients on offer in the country.

For meat lovers, try tagjin lahma (meat casserole/tajin) or the wonderful Sharkasia Chicken (Circassian chicken on a bed of rice, covered in rich and creamy walnut sauce).

Egyptians also have a sweet tooth, so be sure to indulge in national favourites, like Om Ali (bread and butter pudding with nuts and cream), or Konafa (shredded filo dough cooked in butter and syrup).

No Egyptian meal is complete without a fragrant glass of mint tea – and drink it like an Egyptian, very hot and very sweet! Egyptian beverages are varied and cater to many different tastes. The fruit juices are rich and indulgent, with mango, lemon, sugarcane and guava being firm favourites. Traditional drinks have been around for hundreds of years and have become an art form. Amongst the most popular is Karkade, a rich, sweet infusion of the dark red hibiscus flower, usually enjoyed cold but which can also be served hot. In addition to juices and traditional drinks, Egypt's wines have also improved dramatically over the past years and visitors should try the locally produced wines and beers during their stay.

RELIGION & ETIQUETTE

Egypt is a Middle Eastern country where both the Muslim majority and the Christian minority are fairly conservative. It's a country most accustomed to tourists, and for sightseeing in popular areas such as the Pyramids or the main sights of Upper Egypt, shorts and T-shirts are fine. However, you should allow for a more conservative dress code when walking in central Cairo and other cities, and especially in rural areas. When visiting mosques, churches or synagogues, casual, comfortable clothing covering knees and elbows is best, in order to respect the local culture. Around the pool at your hotel or on a cruise, low necklines, sleeveless shirts, or shorts can be comfortably worn; and at the beach in the Red Sea resorts, feel free to dress in your usual beachwear.



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