



Ma'at Tours: Egypt 2012 Itinerary





MA'AT TOURS

EGYPT 2012

See our web-site <www.maats.com.au>

- Ma'at Tours are designed to be flexible and to allow *you* to dictate the pace and activities as much as possible. The itinerary enclosed is intended to be a 'draft' or 'working model' which will give you some idea of the kinds of activities we propose and an indication of time allocation. As such it is liable to change due to issues such as the desires of the majority of participants, local conditions within Egypt, weather, and day-to-day accessibility of sites.
- Ma'at Tours is unable to accept any liability for events outside our control such as: weather conditions; mechanical failure; security directives; & the official closure of sites. Should such problems occur we will propose alternative events or reschedule the itinerary in order to work around/overcome these. Participants will be kept fully informed and consulted should such issues arise.
- For all events you will be asked to pay for the following items:
 - 1) your portion of transport costs (eg. bus hire cost divided by the number of people travelling);
 - 2) your personal entry to sites/museums;
 - 3) your portion of any group tips (total group tips divided by the number of people for whom the 'common tip' was made); &
 - 4) incidental costs (eg. personal tips, food & drinks purchased).
- Should you not wish to join us on a scheduled and confirmed event, please give us 24 hours notice. Otherwise, if you decide not to come with the group, we would ask that you please pay your share of 'common costs' (eg. transport, food already purchased).



The 2012 Tour is currently scheduled to start on 31st Dec 2011, so Day 1 = Dec 31st etc

Ma'at Tours 2012 Itinerary

Day 1	International air travel to Egypt.
Day 2	Arrival in Cairo, transfer to Aswan. Sunset sail on the Nile and an evening meal by the river's edge.
Day 3	Sail the Nile, visit the ancient inscriptions at Sehel Island, a quiet walk in the souk, and an evening meal at a local restaurant.
Day 4	Sail to the West Bank and visit the Nobles' Tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa. Relax on Plantation Island. Sound and Light show at Philae in the early evening.
Day 5	Visits to the temples of Philae and Kalabsha on their respective islands.
Day 6	Visit Elephantine Island (Nubian villages, archaeological site of Abu, Aswan Museum) and get to meet the local people and share a meal with them.
Day 7	Abu Simbel: the Great Temples of Ramesses II and Hathor-Nefertari
Day 8	Visits to the Unfinished Obelisk and the Nubian Museum. Sail to the West Bank for camel rides to St Simeon's Monastery. Sunset BBQ at Shel-el.
Day 9	Rest Day.
Day 10	Bus to Luxor, with stops en route to visit the temples at Kom Ombo, Edfu and Esna. Arrive Luxor late afternoon.
Day 11	West Bank (I): the Colossi of Memnon, the Valley of the Kings, and the Temple of Seti I in the late afternoon.
Day 12	Luxor Museum (morning) and Luxor Temple (afternoon). Introduction to the Luxor souk.
Day 13	Karnak Temple. Some free time for shopping in the Luxor souk and a meal. Return for Sound and Light at Karnak in the evening.
Day 14	West Bank (II) Valley of the Queens, Deir el-Medina, and Medinat Habu.
Day 15	West Bank (III): Temple of Merneptah, Deir el Bahri (Temple of Hatshepsut), and the Ramesseum (Temple of Ramesses II).
Day 16	Free Day.
Day 17	Abydos (Temples of Seti I & Ramesses II).
Day 18	Early morning balloon flight. The tomb of Ankhtefi, and the temples of Montu at Tod and Hathor at Dendarah.
Day 19	West Bank (IV): A walk to the Tomb of Ay in the Western Valley. The Tombs of Roy & Shuroy, as well as the other Nobles Tombs (Rekhmire, Nakht, Menna, Sennefer & Ramose etc).
Day 20	Transfer from Luxor to Cairo. Visit to the Egyptian Museum(!). Introduction to Cairo.
Day 21	Pyramids (I): Meidum and Dashur pyramids.
Day 22	The Citadel and Islamic Cairo (including the Khan-al-Khalili Bazaar), and watch the al-Tannoura Heritage Dance troupe.
Day 23	Pyramids (II): Memphis & Saqqarah. Eat at a local Giza restaurant & then move to Sound & Light.
Day 24	Old & Coptic Cairo – the Souk-el-Fustat, the Coptic Museum, the Hanging Church, the Churches of Sts. Sergius & Bacchus, the City of the Dead (if time permits).
Day 25	Pyramids (III): Giza! The Great Pyramid of Khufu, Pyramids of Khafre & Menkaure, the Solar Boat Museum, Old Kingdom tombs, the Great Sphinx.
Day 26	Free Day.
Day 27	International flights ex-Cairo.
Day 28	Arrive Australia via Singapore or other destinations.

Aswan Days

Tour Days 1 & 2 – International air travel, arrival in Cairo, transfer to Aswan.

- On your arrival in Cairo we will be on hand to greet you at the International Airport. We will then transfer for our flight to Aswan in Upper Egypt.
- Unlike most other tour organisers we start our tour in Aswan, not Cairo. Aswan is a quiet, modern, very friendly, small city right on the bank of the Nile in southern Upper Egypt. Not only is it a wonderful place to relax and recover from your journey, it is also a great city in which to slowly become accustomed to *the Egyptian way of doing things* - without the rush, hassle and noise of Cairo! The scenery at Aswan is truly breathtaking. That's not to say that there is not much to do in Aswan - just see the rest of the itinerary for our 'Aswan Days'. As the locals say, "Welcome in Aswan! Welcome in Egypt!"
- On arrival in Aswan it is a 20 minute journey from the airport to the hotel – the Philae Hotel – on the bank of the Nile overlooking Elephantine Island – what a view! You will have the chance to have a light lunch and quickly refresh yourself. In the late afternoon we will regroup for a quiet, relaxed sailing on the Nile before an evening meal in a restaurant on the river's edge.

Tour Day 3 – Sail the Nile, visit the ancient inscriptions at Sehel Island, a quiet walk in the souk, and an evening meal at a local restaurant.

- International travel can be very tiring, so this day is a 'recovery day' - lots to see and do, but at a gentle pace. We sail in a traditional felucca boat to the Island of Sehel in the heart of the First Cataract, rounding palm-dotted islands, through whirling waters and past the red/yellow sands of the Sahara Desert falling into the blue waters of the Nile. On Sehel we visit some of the hundreds of ancient inscriptions of the isle. The hand-made beads of Sehel are famous - maybe you would like to buy some for yourself or a friend?
- Having sailed back to Aswan there is time for a rest at the hotel before regrouping for a shared evening meal in a local restaurant and a quiet walk around the main points of interest in Aswan town - including its exotic souk.



Tour Day 4 – Visit to Nobles' Tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa. Relax on Plantation Island, if time permits. Sound and Light show at Philae in the early evening.

- The West Bank at Aswan is dominated by a huge hill topped by an Islamic dome - Qubbet el-Hawa (*The Dome of the Winds*). The hill itself is honeycombed with dozens of tombs dating to the Old, Middle and New Kingdom Periods. We sail across the Nile and explore our first tombs in Egypt! Mike has undertaken extensive work at this site over many years and published some of the monuments here, so let him guide you through the maze of ancient burials and explain the Egyptians' views on life and death.

- Plantation Island (Kitchener's Island) is a beautiful botanical garden. If time permits, we sail from the West Bank to Plantation Island for a relaxing stroll and enjoy amazing views of the Nile and desert.
- In the early evening we set off to see the Sound and Light Show at Philae Temple – a wonderful experience and a magical introduction to the temple site, which we will visit during the daytime on Day 5.

Tour Day 5 – Visits to the temples of Philae and Kalabsha on their respective islands.

- This morning we travel some 15k south of Aswan to Shellal and catch a motor boat for the short ride to New Philae Island (actually Agilikia Island, the original Philae Island is now beneath the waters of the Nile). Known as the 'Pearl of Egypt', the Philae complex was commenced quite late in Egyptian history - the earliest structure dates to the reign of Taharqa, a Nubian pharaoh (c.690 BCE).
- The main temple complex - built to honour Isis, mother of Horus - was constructed and enlarged by numerous Ptolemaic rulers. The isle also boasts architectural structures built by the Roman emperors Augustus, Trajan and Diocletian.
- Allow us to quietly lead you through this fascinating complex before you set out on your own to explore these magnificent ruins at leisure. Bring some packed lunch or grab a bite to eat from the café on the island as we still have lots to see and do!
- We take another boat to Kalabsha. Like Philae, this temple and its surrounding ruins were moved by UNESCO to save them from the floodwaters of Lake Nasser. The main temple was built to the Nubian fertility and sun god Marul (Mandulis) during the rule of Emperor Augustus (earlier temples had been built on the site and we can see some of their ruins re-erected on Elephantine Island).
- Other structures we will visit in the area of 'New' Kalabsha include: the Kiosk of Qirtasi; the amazing Temple of Beit al-Wali built by Ramesses II (which includes scenes of the pharaoh and his sons campaigning in Nubia, and the tribute which the local tribes bring to pharaoh); and the newly re-erected Temple from Girf Husayn built by Setau, the Viceroy of Kush, for Ramesses II.
- The Kalabsha complex is rarely visited by tourists, and on past tours we have been lucky enough to have had the whole site completely to ourselves!



Tour Day 6 – Visit Elephantine Island (Nubian villages, archaeological site of Abu, Aswan Museum) and get to meet the local people and share a meal with them

- Mike is writing a major book on the island's history, has published several papers on his finds there, and presented many lectures on this fascinating isle - let us show you around a place that has become very special to us.
- At the southern end of the island lies the Aswan Museum and an extensive archaeological site. Having toured the Museum (if open) we will set off to explore the ruins of the ancient city of Abu.
- Highlights of the tour of Abu city will include: the Temples of Satis, Khnum and Pepinakht-Heqaib; a small step-pyramid; a study of the layers of the city from Old Kingdom to Roman times; and an examination of its fortifications, and the famous Nilometers.

- Elephantine Island has been inhabited for over 5000 years and its modern owners - Kenuzi Nubians - are a proud people with their own unique culture and traditions. Let Mike explain these to you as we wander around the two local villages on the island and get to meet some of their inhabitants.
- In the afternoon we will share a traditional Nubian meal in a mud-brick, Nubian home in Sîou Village. We guarantee that this is not some fabricated tourist show but a real, traditional feast prepared by some of the women in the village that we know very well. The village women will have been busy cooking while we have been touring the island, and they will serve our banquet in the courtyard of a *real* home. Many of our past participants have said that this was one of the great highlights of their trip!

Tour Day 7 – Abu Simbel: the Great Temples of Ramesses II and Hathor-Nefertari.

- We have some free time in the morning before boarding the bus that will take us - as part of a convoy - across the desert to Abu Simbel. The unrelenting sand and rockscape is unforgettable.
- Once at the site, with the breeze blowing from Lake Nasser, you will be overwhelmed by your first glimpse of the colossal statues of Ramesses. The beautiful and recently refurbished temples of Ramesses II and Hathor-Nefertari will haunt your dreams for the rest of your stay, and long beyond.
- The façade of the Great Temple is decorated with four colossal seated statues of Ramesses II, each over 20 metres tall. Explore the spectacular halls, courts and storerooms of the mighty temple. Beside the Great Temple is that which Ramesses built to the goddess Hathor, and his wife Nefertari. While not as large as the Great Temple, the Hathor Temple is nevertheless breathtaking, both architecturally and artistically. Inside you will marvel at the beauty of the reliefs. Both the temples at Abu Simbel were moved to safety from the rising waters of Lake Nasser by UNESCO in the 1960's. They now stand surrounded by man-made hills, 65 metres higher than their original location.
- After our visit to Abu Simbel it's a long return journey north to Aswan across the Sahara, with a snack on board our bus. Having chatted or snoozed away the kilometres of sandscapes (don't miss the sunset across the desert) it's back to Aswan and the Nile - a welcome sight!



Tour Day 8 – Visits to the Unfinished Obelisk and the Nubian Museum. Sail to the West Bank for camel rides to St Simeon’s Monastery. Spectacular beachside buffet at Shellal at sunset.

- We set off today for the nearby granite quarries which made Aswan famous in ancient times – indeed many of the major statues and architectural elements we will see later in Luxor and Cairo came from here. Mike will explain the ancient quarrying methods to you and we will have time to wander around the so-called Unfinished Obelisk – a New Kingdom ‘skyscraper’ that would have been 42m high and stood in Karnak Temple if it had not broken while being cut.
- Opened in 1997, the Nubian Museum is one of the most modern and well-designed museums in Egypt. It boasts 7000sqm of museum buildings and 43000sqm of outdoor exhibits set in lovely gardens. Many masterpieces from other museums in Egypt were brought to Aswan for display here, along with statues from Elephantine Island. Displays are arranged chronologically and are explained in detail via information boards. Explore the history of Nubia from most ancient times, through the ages of the Pharaohs, Greeks and Romans, from pagan to Christian and Muslim religious traditions, and enjoy the folk-culture panoramas.
- In the afternoon we sail to the West Bank at the foot of the Mausoleum of the Aga Khan. While the Mausoleum is closed until further notice, camel-drivers make a camp at the bank and will take you for a ride to the so-called Monastery of St. Simeon. Originally built as the monastery of a local saint - Apa Aaron - in the 7th Century, the complex was continually inhabited and expanded until it was closed in 1173. Take part in an exploration and compete to find the different elements of the complex.
- After our camel ride, we return to the East bank for a short drive to beautiful Shellal where we enjoy sunset views of the Temple of Philae as we partake of a spectacular buffet.



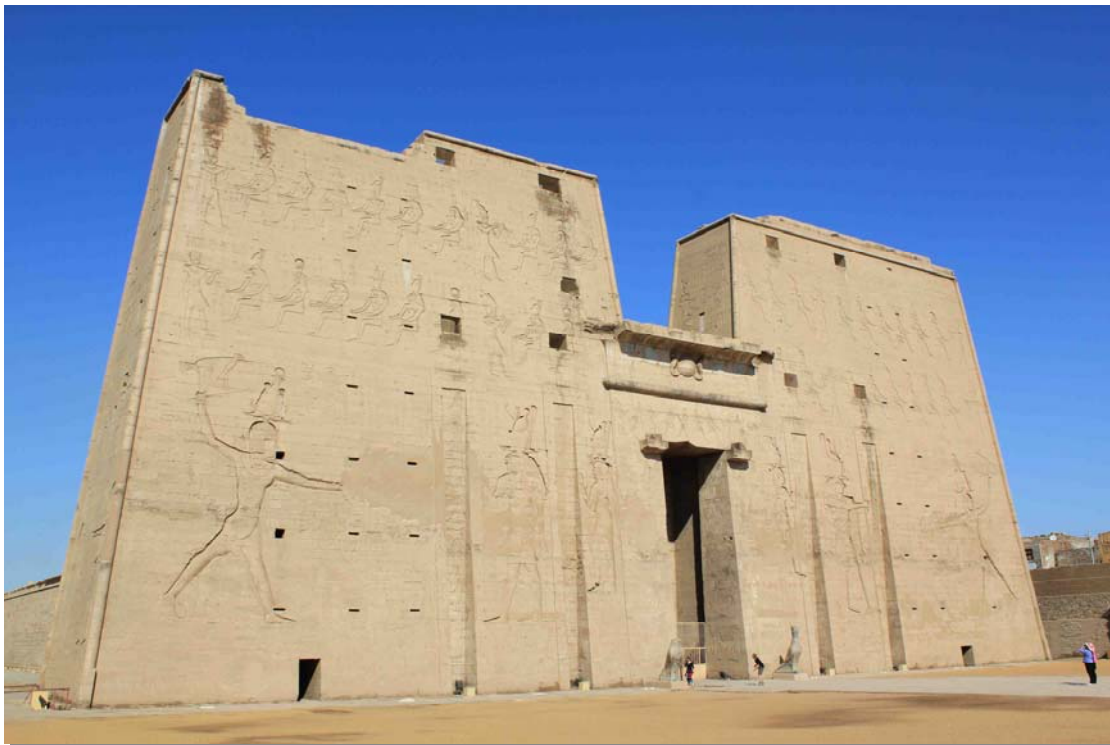
Tour Day 9 – Rest Day.

- Today we have a rest day: a chance to sleep-in and do whatever you like. Please let us know if you would like us to arrange any transport or activities for you, or if you would like some ideas about how to spend the day, depending on your personal needs.
- In the late afternoon we will regroup to cross to Elephantine Island for a farewell Nubian meal.

Tour Day 10 – Bus trip to Luxor stopping at the temples at Kom Ombo, Edfu and Esna.

- Leaving Aswan by bus we head north for 190 km to Luxor, stopping at various sites en route.
- The Temple of Kom Ombo was built during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods and is in fact a dual temple dedicated to the crocodile god Sobek, and the falcon god Horus-the-Elder. The temple boasts dual architectural arrangements and the complex includes interesting storage chambers, a sacred well and small chapels. The colours in some parts of the ceiling decorations are amazingly well-preserved.

- The Temple of Horus at Edfu was begun around 237 BCE and completed some 200 years later. It is dedicated to the god Horus, the ruler of the world after whom all pharaohs modelled themselves. The temple is in an exceptional state of preservation and you will wonder at the huge pylons (36m high), giant statues of the god, and seemingly endless courts and halls. Within the sanctuary you can still see the *naos*, which housed the god's statue and a reconstruction of one of the divine barques used to carry it in ceremonies.
- The Temple of Khnum at Esna (ancient Ta-senet) is currently seldom visited but contains some wonderfully coloured floral capitals and interesting reliefs of many Roman emperors including: Trajan; Septimius Severus; Caracalla; and Antoninus Pius. The last named is Emperor Decius (249 CE), making the structure one of the latest major temples. Its decorative elements (which are currently being magnificently restored) include cryptographic hymns to the god Khnum, one written almost completely with hieroglyphics of rams (his sacred animal).
- On arrival in Luxor we check into the spacious Flats in Luxor set in a rural area on the West Bank.



Tour Day 11 – West Bank (I): the ‘Colossi of Memnon’, the Valley of the Kings, and Luxor Temple in the evening.

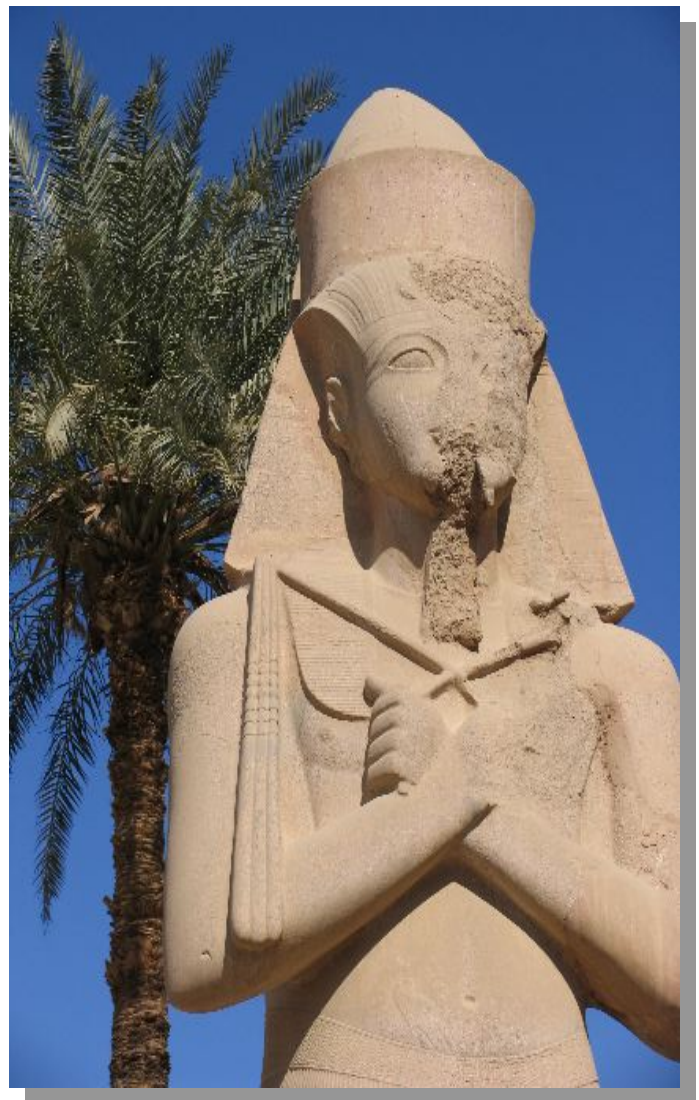
- This is really going to be a day to remember – the Colossi of Memnon, the Valley of the Kings and the temple of Seti I.
- We start our tour of the West Bank at the so-called Colossi of Memnon – two 18m high seated statues of Amenhotep III which once flanked the entrance to his now-vanished temple. We will explain the fascinating story of the ‘singing statue’.
- On to the Valley of the Kings. While we cannot guarantee which royal tombs will be open for inspection, we aim to guide you around as many as we can: Ramesses I; Tuthmosis III; Tawsert/Sethnakt; Siptah; Merenptah; Seti II; Ramesses V/VI, & IV... usually at least eight tombs are open! Please note that the Tomb of Tutankhamun may be closed.
- Mike and our guide, Abdul, will be on hand to explain in detail the architectural, artistic and politico-religious meaning and development of the various royal tombs we visit, and to answer all your individual questions.
- Our final stop today is at the seldom-visited Temple of Seti I. Despite damage, the reliefs of the temple are masterful.

Tour Day 12 – Luxor Museum (morning) and Luxor Temple (afternoon)

- This morning we make our way to Luxor's small but famous museum. In regard to its layout, lighting, labelling and pieces on display this is one of the finest museums in all of Egypt.
- Take your time to marvel at some of Tutankhamun's funerary goods (including a head of the goddess Hathor, whose temple we will visit on Day 17); a beautiful statue of Tuthmosis III; reconstructed elements of Akhenaten's temples; statues of Akhenaten himself that will intrigue you; alabaster statues of Amenhotep III and the crocodile god Sobek, and Seti I; and exquisite statues discovered in the ruins of Luxor Temple in 1989.
- Visit the Museum's new wing, dedicated to Egypt's ancient technology. In addition to weapons of war and writing instruments the wing includes wonderful statuary and the mummies of King Ahmose and another, possibly of Ramesses I.
- After our visit to the Luxor Museum we will regroup for lunch before we explore Luxor Temple: a truly majestic temple constructed under Amenhotep III and Ramesses II.

Tour Day 13 – Karnak Temple during the day, and return for Sound and Light in the evening.

- Karnak! The largest religious complex on the planet. Forget all you have come to expect in regard to scale and space, and be astonished by the Temples of Amun-Ra and his divine wife, Mut and their son, Khonsu.
- Where to start, and what does it all mean? We will be on hand to show you through the labyrinth and explain the purpose, meaning and history of the amazing ruins of Karnak.
- Many visitors walk right past one of the treasures of Karnak - its Open Air Museum. We will introduce you to some of the architectural wonders which were re-used as fill by later generations of Egyptian architects but which have been re-erected in all their glory in this Museum.
- Enter the Great Hypostyle Hall built by Seti I, father of Ramesses the Great - over 6000 sqm, 134 columns - the 12 which flank the processional way are 23m tall - words, facts and figures can never do justice to the experience that is Karnak. We also plan to visit the small Temple of Ptah that lies within the Karnak complex and contains a wonderful statue of the lioness-goddess Sekhmet.
- Having explored the temples by day and enjoyed some free time on the East Bank, we return to Karnak in the evening for the Sound and Light Show where we wander through the illuminated halls to a seating pavilion by the Sacred Lake and listen to words from ancient Egypt while the pylons, obelisks and ruins before us turn from blue to gold to red and back again as a slight breeze blows from the Nile across the wonders of Karnak.

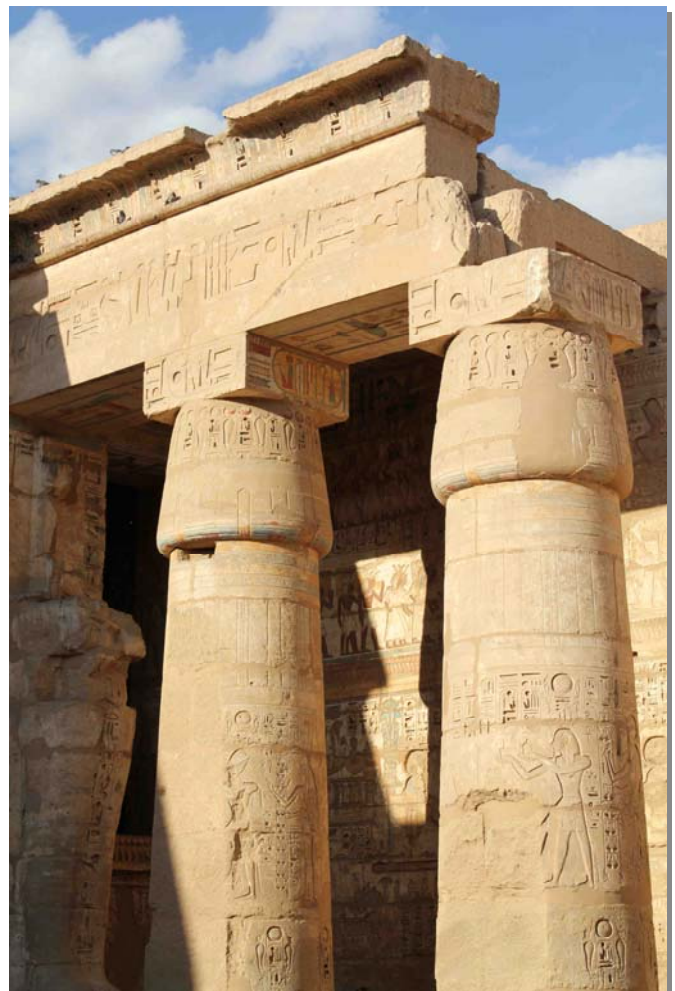


Tour Day 14 – West Bank (II) Valley of the Queens, Workers' village at Deir el-Medina, and Medinat Habu.

- Today we visit the Valley of the Queens and the tombs of Prince Amun-her-Khoppershef, Queen Titi, and Prince Khamwaset.
- We next travel to the Workers' village, Deir-el-Medina. Between the Valleys of the Kings and the Queens lies Deir el-Medina - a village purpose-built to house the workmen who created the royal tombs and their families. We have time to wander through the ancient alleyways and see their houses, visit some of their tombs (the Tombs of Aneuka & Sennedjem) and a visit to the wonderful Ptolemaic Temple of Hathor and Ma'at nearby is a must.
- After a refreshing glass of tea and a meal at the local Maratonga restaurant it's off to the great Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III at Medinat Habu - a complex second only in size to Karnak. Within the complex we will see: the Syrian Gate (a copy of an Asiatic fortress); a temple to Amun built by Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III; the ruins of Ramesses III's palace; and the temple itself. You will be amazed by the surviving colour on the ceilings of the court, and the reliefs showing the pharaoh hunting wild bulls in a swamp and overcoming his foreign enemies.

Tour Day 15 – West Bank (III): Temple of Merenptah, Deir el Bahri (Temple of Hatshepsut), and the Ramesseum (Temple of Ramesses II).

- The ruins of the Temple of Merenptah (Ramesses II's son and successor) are rarely visited but well worth investigating. This site includes a small museum and some magazines in which are displayed some of the blocks of stone he 'borrowed' from Amenhotep III's temple. The reliefs are some of the best 18th Dynasty art in Egypt.
- At Deir el-Bahri we visit the astonishing temple of Hatshepsut - arguably the most beautiful matching of architecture and natural setting in the world. The temple rises in steps towards the sheer cliff-face. In addition to viewing the reliefs of the porticoes we will investigate the Chapels of Hathor and Anubis.
- Lunch is at the Ramesseum Resthouse, run by the grandson of one of Howard Carter's workers.
- The next mortuary temple we visit is that of Ramesses the Great, the so-called Ramesseum. In addition to its interesting reliefs, courts and halls, the Ramesseum is also the home of the great fallen statue that inspired Shelley's *Ozymandias*. The temple is surrounded by huge storage rooms which once held grain and oil.



Tour Day 16 – Rest Day.

- After the schedule we have been keeping, it's time for a rest day. Take things quietly, or set off to explore some more – it's up to you.
- We can suggest many activities for those who would like some ideas: visit Howard Carter's house; horse riding through the cane-fields; more shopping(!); a day-trip out of Luxor; sit around the swimming pool; re-visiting some of the sites we have seen that you would like to spend more time exploring; visit the Museum of Mummification... Let us know what you would like to do, and we will try to arrange it.

Tour Day 17 – Abydos (Temples of Seti I & Ramesses II).

- Today we travel north to Abydos, the ancient religious capital of Egypt. Our journey will be a long one to see this wonderful site but the scenes of rural Egypt out the windows of our bus will keep you more than entertained as we travel.
- Abydos was one of the most important centres in Ancient Egypt: it is home to the tombs of Egypt's earliest kings and the mythological burial place of Osiris, god of the Underworld.
- Three major temples can be visited at Abydos, those of: Seti I (renowned for its most beautiful raised reliefs); Ramesses II (with some stunning coloured reliefs surviving to head-height); and the so-called Osireion (a cenotaph of the god built by Seti I and completed by Merneptah).

Tour Day 18 – Early morning Balloon Flight, Tomb of Ankhtefi, and the Temples of Montu at Tod and Hathor at Dendarah.

- We rise at dawn and set off across the cane fields for an early morning balloon flight over the West bank at Luxor. A spectacular way to gain an aerial perspective of the monuments. The balloon ride also offers a unique opportunity to gain once-in-a-lifetime photographs. We return to the flats in plenty of time for a hearty breakfast.
- After breakfast, we travel to the south of Luxor and the tomb of Ankhtefi. It was constructed during the First Intermediate Period after the collapse of the Old Kingdom. The tomb contains exceptional wall paintings and a significant auto-biographical inscription that details Ankhtefi's actions in this time of political chaos.
- Next it is on to the Temple of Montu – the Theban war god. While the site is seldom visited by tour groups the structures and their surrounds are beautiful. The opportunity to wander at your own pace and without the 'hassle' of better known sites makes our visit to Tod a very special experience.
- Arriving at the Temple of Hathor in Dendarah we will give you an introduction to its major features and show you around what many argue is the most beautiful temple in Egypt - Napoléon's troops wept with wonder and awe when they saw it! The recent restoration of the Temple's ceiling and walls leaves the visitor in no doubt as to why they had this reaction.
- In addition to the astounding halls, courts and pylons of the temple, a visit to its roof will give you an unprecedented view and an understanding of what an Egyptian temple complex was like. In many places its high walls still stand, while within its precincts the Sacred Lake, Hospital, 'Birth Houses' (and a later Christian Basilica) await your exploration. We can also show you reliefs of the famous Cleopatra (VII) and her child to Julius Caesar, Caesarion.

Tour Day 19 – West Bank (IV): A walk to the royal Tomb of Ay in the Western Valley. The Tombs of Roy and Shuroy, and the other Nobles Tombs (Rekhmire, Nakht, Menna, Sennefer & Ramose etc).

- We head off to the Western Valley, neighbouring the Valley of the Kings. Amenhotep III and Ay (Tutankhamun's successor) were both buried in this valley. Unlike the main valley, tourists seldom visit the western one. The eerie quietness and stillness of the Western Valley, and its lunar-like desert landscape will stay in your mind for a long time to come.



- At the head of the valley lies the tomb of King Ay (c.1325-1321 BCE). Wall paintings within the tomb include scenes of the Four Sons of Horus and a 'hunting in the marshes' scene - both are unique, occurring in no other royal tomb. Ay's sarcophagus has been restored and rests in the centre of the burial chamber.
- We then make our way to the West Bank Nobles' Tombs. We plan to visit as many as possible, and will ensure that you see the artistic masterpieces, including: Rekhmire (from the time of Tuthmosis III and which features scenes of artists and craftsmen at work, and foreigners bearing tribute to the royal court); Sennufer (from the time of Amenhotep II, which has a ceiling covered in painted grapevines and wonderful scenes of the owner and his wife, sister and daughter); Nakht (with exceptional paintings); Menna (with agricultural scenes from ancient Egypt); Ramose (from the time of Amenhotep III & Akhenaten which features some of the most beautiful portraits in existence and some of the earliest surviving scenes of Akhenaten's new artistic style); and the later tombs of Roy and Shuroy.

Cairo Days

Tour Day 20 – Transfer from Luxor to Cairo. Visit the Egyptian Museum.

- With last minute packing done it's off to the Luxor Airport and a flight to Cairo, then transfer to the Grand Hotel in the heart of Downtown Cairo.
- After lunch in a local restaurant we walk to the Egyptian Museum: over 100,000 ancient objects are on display, including the fabulous treasure of Tutankhamun! Hussam – our Guide in Cairo – will escort you around the displays and explain the major objects to you.
- On returning to the hotel we will show you some of points of interest in the local area: there are some wonderful bookstores within a few blocks of the hotel; a fabulous fruit market across the road; local cinemas are within walking distance; try a coffee at the Café L'Americaine opposite the hotel; or maybe just sit and chat with local Cairenes at the wonderful al-Andalus Café right outside our hotel door.

Tour Day 21 – Pyramids (I): Meidum and Dashur pyramids.

- Today we drive south of Cairo on the desert highway to Meidum. Probably built by King Sneferu (or his father Huni?) around 2610 BCE, the pyramid at Meidum has a nucleus mastaba and eight additional layers (a little like the Step Pyramid at Saqqarah) which were then filled in to form the first true pyramid. The structure's original height was 92 metres, with sides of 144 metres square. The collapse of the pyramid's outer casing gives it its characteristic tower-like form. In addition to the pyramid itself, the site of Meidum holds some surprises for the visitor.
- We head north to Dashur - site of the Bent and Red Pyramids of Sneferu (c.2613-2589 BCE, the father of Khufu, builder of the Great Pyramid). Try climbing down the 65m passage of the Red Pyramid and explore its three corbel-vaulted rooms. From the entry point - 28m up the side of the pyramid - you have a stunning view to the pyramid fields at Saqqarah, Abu Sir and Giza.
- In the late afternoon/evening there will be free time in Cairo before we regroup for an evening meal.

Tour Day 22 – The Citadel and Islamic Cairo (including the Souk el-Fustat & the Khan-al-Khalili Bazaar), and watch the al-Tannoura Heritage Dance troupe.

- The Islamic monuments of Cairo can come as a surprise to some, especially after our focus on the ancient monuments of Egypt. Nevertheless their majestic grandeur and their beauty of design and architecture, along with the significant insights they give to the real nature of Islam make them a must see.

- We start the day with a visit to the mosque of Amr Ibn al-'As and then visit the Mosque of Ibn Tulun (876 CE) - the oldest functioning mosque in Cairo which has recently been restored. Next door is the delightful Gayer-Anderson Museum full of Islamic furnishings and decorations.
- Next we tour the Citadel of Cairo, begun in 1176 by Salah al-Din, and visit the Mosque of Mohammed Ali (1830), and the Mosque of al-Nasir Mohammed (1318); and the pleasant gardens of the Northern Enclosure. There are great views over the whole of Cairo – on a good day one can even see the pyramids at Giza.
- Spend hours wandering the famous Khan al-Khalili Bazaar - the largest souk in the world! **Shop 'til you drop** and then have a *shy* (tea) at Fishawi's Coffeehouse - its been open 24/7 for 200 years.
- In the late afternoon we regroup for a meal in the beautiful Khan el-Khalili Restaurant: a haven of peace within the noise and bustle of the markets.
- In the early evening we walk to a nearby venue for a free show provided by the al-Tannoura Egyptian Heritage Dance Troupe. The dancers will entertain us for 90 minutes with traditional Sufi dancing and music, and incredible displays of dervish dancing that will leave your head spinning for hours afterwards.



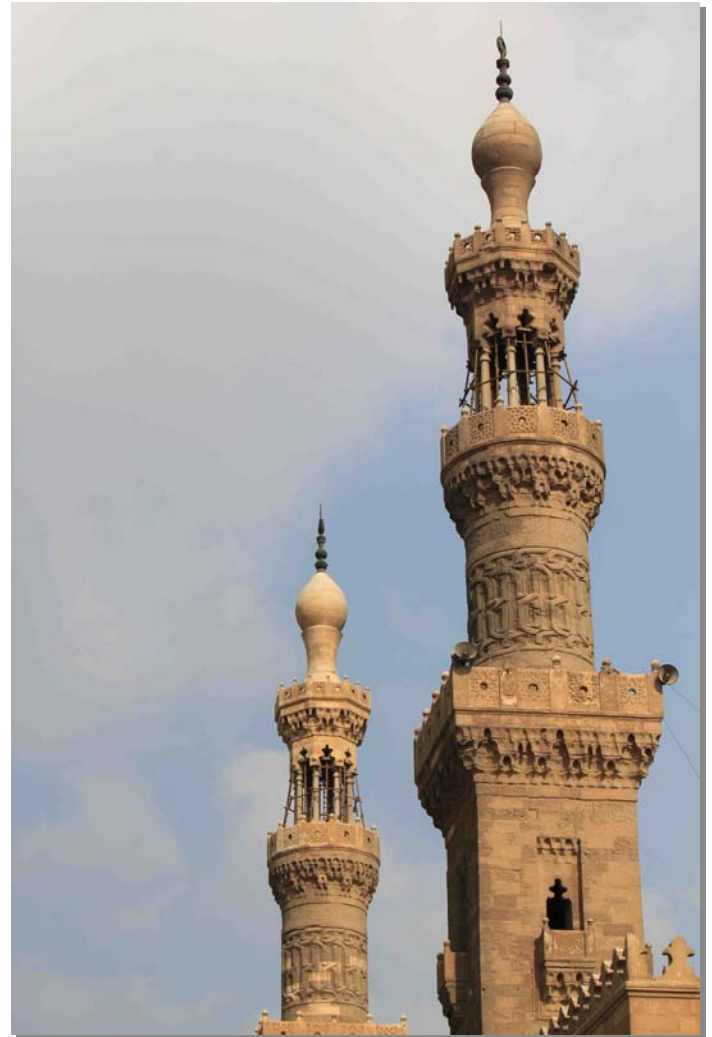
Tour Day 23 – Pyramids (II): Saqqarah & Memphis. Return for the Giza Sound & Light in the early evening.

- We travel from Cairo to Memphis and Saqqarah. Memphis was the capital of Egypt for hundreds of years and once the largest city in the world. Explore the local museum with its lovely garden displays, alabaster sphinx, and huge statue of Ramesses II.
- Our first stop at Saqqarah will be the Imhotep Museum where some of the major finds from the site are now on display.
- Next it is on to the step-pyramid of Djoser (c.2668-2649 BCE) - the first great pyramid ever built and one of the earliest monumental stone structures on our planet. Wonder at the complex's various courts and subsidiary buildings, then on to view the nearby Pyramids of Userkaf and Unas (interiors closed).
- While in the area we will visit some of the mastaba tombs constructed next to the Unas complex causeway.

- Still at Saqqarah we make our way to the Tomb of Mereruka (the largest non-royal Old Kingdom tomb in Egypt comprising some 32 rooms), and the nearby pyramid of Teti (interior open) with its fascinating pyramid texts.
- We then visit the Tomb of Akhetotep & Ptahhotep from the 5th Dynasty period, and take a short walk to the Mastaba of Ti and its famous wall-reliefs.
- After a meal at a local restaurant that boasts the best chicken in Egypt, in the early evening we set off to Giza for the Sound and Light Show.

Tour Day 24 - Old & Coptic Cairo – the Coptic Museum, the Hanging Church, the Churches of Sts. Sergius & Bacchus, the Souk-el-Fustat, the City of the Dead (if time permits). Time to re-visit the Egyptian Museum in the afternoon.

- Today we continue our exploration of the history of Cairo. We begin with a visit to the Coptic Museum, which contains masterpieces in textiles, paintings and books.
- You will have a chance to tour the so-called Hanging Church, before heading down to the Church of Sts Sergius and Bacchus, supposedly built over the cave where the Holy Family stayed during their time as refugees in Egypt.
- We then cross the road to the Souk-al-Fustat, a modern tourist shopping venue built on the oldest site in Cairo. This is where the artists and artisans of Egypt display their wares for sale. Many of the shops donate a sizable portion of their profits to the Education Fund for the Children of Upper Egypt.
- If time permits, we will visit one of the oldest glass-blowing factories in Egypt, located in the City of the Dead.



Tour Day 25 – Pyramids (III): Giza! The Great Sphinx, Great Pyramid of Khufu, Pyramids of Khafre & Menkaure, the Solar Boat Museum etc.

- An extended visit to the Giza Plateau! Choose to either come along with the group or set off on your own to explore the wonders of Giza.
- Explore Giza's three large pyramids, their temple complexes and subsidiary pyramids, & the interiors of those that are open.
- Visit the Museum of the Solar Boat of Khufu. Wander around the Sphinx and get those photos that will make your friends envious! The more adventurous might like to set off into the desert on horse or camel-back to get shots of the complete pyramid site rising from the sands, while others might like to just sit in the shadows of the pyramids and contemplate or explore the numerous tombs, *mastabas* and minor pyramids of Giza.
- We aim to give you as much time at Giza as we can – after all who has not dreamed of being in the shadows of the great Giza pyramids?
- When we return to Cairo the rest of the afternoon is yours to enjoy as you wish.



Tour Day 26 – Free Day.

- We can suggest lots of things to do if you wish for some ideas as to how to spend your free time: shopping in the local area; a return visit to the Egyptian Museum (there is *so* much to see there!); an excursion out of the city; a return to the Khan; a stroll down to the Nile; a visit to Cairo Tower... Don't forget packing though (yuk). In the evening we regroup for a farewell meal at a traditional Egyptian restaurant.

Tour Days 27 & 28 – International flights ex-Cairo.

