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Destination Information Guide Egypt



The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some Frequently asked questions . It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

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Welcome to the Destination Guide for Egypt, all information to help you plan for your travel to Egypt

EGYPT BASIC FACTS:

Egypt, one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations, still draws visitors and businessmen by the plane-load. Ancient monuments, the Red Sea coast, Nile Cruises and Africa's largest city, Cairo, are among its many attractions.

EGYPT'S MAIN ATTRACTIONS:

* The Pyramids of Giza: The Pyramids represent one of the greatest architectural feats by man. The last surviving member of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Great Pyramid is one of the world's oldest tourist attractions and the reason most people visit Egypt today. More about the Pyramids .

* Luxor: Luxor is known as the world's largest open air museum. Luxor and Karnak Temples are hugely impressive as are the tombs across the Nile in the Valley of Kings and Queens. More about Luxor, Karnak and Thebes.

* Egyptian Museum in Cairo: With over 120,000 artifacts, the museum houses an incredible display depicting ancient Egypt's glorious reign. Mummies, sarcophagi, pottery, jewellery and of course King Tutankhamen's treasures... more about the Egyptian Museum

* Abu Simbel: The two temples built for the pharaoh Ramesses II have been attracting visitors since Victorian times. Almost as impressive as the monument itself is the story of its restoration in the 1960's. More about Abu Simbel ...

* Hurghada/Red Sea Coast: The Red Sea coast is hugely popular with beach lovers and divers. Package tours operate from every European country and are often very affordable ... more about Hurghada.

HISTORY

The regularity and richness of the annual Nile River flood, coupled with semi-isolation provided by deserts to the east and west, allowed for the development of one of the world's great civilizations. A unified kingdom arose around 3200 B.C. and a series of dynasties ruled in Egypt for the next three millennia. The last native dynasty fell to the Persians in 341 B.C., who in turn were replaced by the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines. It was the Arabs who introduced Islam and the Arabic language in the 7th century and who ruled for the next six centuries. A local military caste, the Mamluks, took control about 1250 and continued to govern after the conquest by Egypt by the Ottoman Turks in 1517. Following the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt became an important world transportation hub, but also fell heavily into debt. Ostensibly to protect its investments, Britain seized control of Egypt's government in 1882, but nominal allegiance to the Ottoman Empire continued until 1914. Partially independent from the UK in 1922, Egypt acquired full sovereignty following World War II. The completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1971 and the resultant Lake Nasser have altered the time-honored place of the Nile River in agriculture and the ecology of Egypt. A rapidly growing population (the largest in the Arab world), limited arable land, and dependence on the Nile all continue to overtax resources and stress society. The

government has struggled to prepare the economy for the new millennium through economic reform and massive investment in communications and physical infrastructure.

WEATHER / CLIMATE

Egypt is largely a desert, an extension of the great Sahara that bands North Africa. Save for the thin strip of watered land along the Nile River, very little could survive here. As the ancient Greek philosopher Herodotus stated: "Egypt is the gift of the Nile".

Egypt can be very hot in summer but the climate is extremely dry. Temperatures will vary from north to south, with Upper Egypt (in the south) hotter than Cairo and the north. Average temperatures range from 15-35°C in Cairo and 23-45°C in Upper Egypt although all centres can experience heat waves. Luxor, Abu Simbel and Aswan get temperatures as high as 50C in the summer months. The winter and spring months are generally the more pleasant months. The summit of Mt. Sinai at 2,285 meters can be bitterly cold and blanketed in snow in winter. Even in the other seasons it can be very cold especially at sunrise when the majority of travellers make the pilgrimage to the summit. If you intend making the ascent ensure you have warm clothing with you even though you may require it only this one time. Gloves and hooded jacket are advisable in winter. The cold is not realised en route to the summit, only once you are there, waiting for sunrise.

There is very little rain at any time of year in Egypt, but there is a considerable variation in temperature during the year and also between night and day. The climate is less extreme on the Mediterranean coast, where it is always cooler than in the rest of the country. Rain is most common in January & February in Cairo and November-February in Aswan. March and April can bring the khamaseen, a strong hot wind that carries dust and sand from the Sahara Desert. Cairo, which is actually part of Lower Egypt because the Nile flows from south to north, is extremely hot from June to September, but is more bearable at night. It can be quite cold in winter months, often with rain around Christmas. The air is drier and hotter toward the south, which is Upper Egypt. Southern areas are hot even in winter, with surprisingly cold nights. The tourist season is traditionally from the end of November to February, but Cairo and even Luxor are quite chilly at that time. The best time is either May when the heat is still bearable, or October-November when the long, hot summer comes to an end.

Temperatures

Average daily temperatures in °C:

	Cairo	Aswan	Luxor	Hurghada
Jan	09-19	08-24	05-23	10 - 22
Feb	09-21	09-26	07-25	13 - 29
Mar	11-24	13-30	11-29	13 - 24
Apr	14-28	18-35	16-35	16 - 26
May	17-32	21-39	21-39	21 - 30
Jun	18-35	24-42	25-41	24 - 32
Jul	22-35	25-42	24-41	26 - 33
Aug	22-35	25-42	24-41	27 - 34
Sep	20-32	22-40	22-39	24 - 32
Oct	18-30	19-36	18-35	20 - 28
Nov	14-25	15-30	12-30	15 - 26
Dec	10-21	10-26	08-25	13 - 23

Best time to visit Egypt

Egypt has only two seasons. The country receives the least rainfall in the world. The mild winter that lasts from **November** to **April** is the best time to visit. Throughout Egypt, days are warm or hot and nights are cool.

TIME ZONES

Egypt time is EST + 7 hours, which is two hours ahead of GMT (Greenwich Mean Time).

GET IN

As a major tourist destination whose economy is dependent upon tourist money, Egypt is relatively easy to enter and/or obtain visas for if necessary. There are three types of Egyptian visa:

- Tourist Visa - usually valid for a period not exceeding 3 months and granted on either a single or multiple entry basis
- Entry Visa - required for any foreigner arriving in Egypt for purposes other than tourism, e.g. work, study, etc. The possession of a valid Entry Visa is needed to complete the residence procedure in Egypt.
- Transit Visa - rarely needed and only for certain nationalities

Entry visas may be obtained from Egyptian diplomatic and consular missions abroad or from the Entry Visa Department at the Travel Documents, Immigration and Nationality Administration (TDINA). Non-Egyptian travelers are required to have a valid passport.

Citizens of many countries may obtain a visa on arrival at major points of entry; the fee is demanded on arrival and it is expensive to change money and then pay the fee. At airports, you must obtain these from a bank office before passport control, ostensibly to verify that the currency is real; however, you will have no problem obtaining one. Check with your nearest Egyptian Consular mission for more details concerning visa regulations applying to your citizenship. The fees for a single-entry visa are as follows:

- UK citizens: £15
- US citizens: US\$15
- Irish citizens: €15/US\$15
- Australian citizens: A\$45
- Canadian citizens: C\$26
- other countries: US\$15

Citizens of Bahrain, Guinea, South Korea, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen receive a 3 month visa on arrival. Citizens of Kuwait can obtain 6-month Residence Permit upon arrival. China and Malaysian citizens receive a 15 day visa on arrival. Citizens of China(only Hong Kong and Macau SAR) may have a 30 day visit without visa.

Citizens of the following countries are currently required to have a visa before arriving, which must be applied for through an Egyptian consulate or embassy outside of Egypt:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, China (People's Republic of; except Hong Kong and Macau), Croatia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malaysia (if you intend to stay for more than 15 days), Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Russia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and all African countries (except citizens of Guinea and Libya, who do not require visa).

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Visitors entering Egypt at the overland border crossing at Taba or at Sharm el Sheikh airport can be exempted from a visa and granted a free fourteen day entry visa to visit the Aqaba coast of the Sinai peninsula, including Sharm el Sheikh, Dahab and St. Catherine's Monastery. Visitors wishing to leave the Sinai peninsula and to visit Cairo and other Egyptian cities are required to hold full Egyptian visas, although strictly speaking there is a small possibility no one will check for this unless you attempt to exit the country. These are not issued at the Taba border crossing and must be acquired in advance either in the country of residence, at the Egyptian consulate in Eilat or airport upon arrival. Visitors traveling on organized tours often may be able to have their visas issued at the border, but you should verify in advance with their travel agent or tour operator if this option is available to them. Those in possession of a residence permit in Egypt are not required to obtain an entry visa if they leave the country and return to it within the validity of their residence permit or within six months, whichever period is less.

Tourists visiting Sharm-el-Sheikh who are planning to undertake scuba diving outside local areas (i.e. Ras Mohammed) will need to obtain the tourist visa, because this technically means leaving the Sharm-el-Sheikh area and leads to the requirement for a visa. Officials on boats may check dive boats whilst on the waters so you are advised to obtain the visa beforehand: there may be fines involved for you and the boat captain if you are caught without the appropriate visa. Most reputable dive centers will ask to see your visa before allowing you on trips.

Egypt has peaceful relations with Israel, but the degree of friendliness varies, and with it, the direct connections between the two countries. As of Dec. 2009, the direct air service between Cairo and Tel Aviv has been suspended for some years. Bus service seems to continue, as described below. In any case, verify the situation as you plan, and again at the last minute.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Visa requirements change periodically and you should check the requirements before traveling. All western visitors to Egypt require a visa with the exception of nationals of South Africa. Most nationals can obtain a visa on arrival at Cairo airport. These are available at all Banks at the airport which are open 24/7, and available for all flights.

The cost is \$15 USD for a single entry visa.

Visas: Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival.

For UK Citizen

It is recommended that you contact your local Egyptian Consulate to ensure you can obtain a visa on arrival.

Visa information is available from the Egyptian Consulate in London by dialing +44 20 72359777 Alternatively you can apply in person at the Egyptian Consulate in London at:

Egyptian Consulate
2 Lowndes Street
London SW1.

In addition to your passport, you will need an application form and one photo. Applications can be lodged Monday - Friday between 09:30 and 12:30 noon and collected in the afternoon between 2:30 and 3:30 even on the same day. Please ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant documents/visas. We will accept no responsibility if you are refused entry through incorrect documentation.

Currently there is no departure tax payable when you leave Egypt.

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For USA Citizen

You can Obtain Your Travel Visa online

We have appointed Zierer Visa Service (ZVS) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet. You can also download the necessary forms from the website: <http://www.zvs.com>.

Important: Please look at your passport before you submit it to ZVS to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

Note: Remember to carry with you in a safe place photocopies of all important documents in the event your passport or other documents are lost or stolen. Also, it's a good idea to have a passport photo with you. As a tourist, you will need to produce your passport when booking in at hotels, changing money or travelers' checks and prove your identity whenever requested by a policeman.

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least two blank pages is necessary.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Once you pass through customs and immigration, you will be welcomed by a Big Five representative who will escort you to your hotel.

Arriving in Egypt

Cairo:

If you are getting your visa on arrival these are obtained from the banks in the arrival hall before you queue up for immigration.

A meet and greet service and transfer to the hotel with our local representative is included in your trip. (Please ensure we have your arrival flight details otherwise we cannot guarantee this service).

If you arrive at Terminal 1 or 2, the We representative will be waiting inside the airport before you go through immigration.

If you arrive at Terminal 3, the We representative will be waiting for you at the bottom of the stairs after immigration but before you collect your luggage.

The transfer from Cairo International airport to the We hotel takes about 1 hour due to traffic if arriving during the day, or about ½ hour if arriving at night.

Banks are open 24 hours a day at the airport so you can change money at whatever time of day or night you arrive.

Day 1: Is a joining day with no activities planned so you can arrive at any time. Check in is generally from midday. Some flights arrive during the night and if so we strongly advise that if you are arriving in the early hours of day one, you book a pre trip accommodation so you are well rested before the start of the trip. The hotel does not approve of clients arriving in the middle of the night and sitting in the lobby waiting till midday so they can check in. Better to get a good sleep after your flight so you have plenty energy to experience and explore Cairo. We cannot transfer you from the airport in the middle of the night if you do not have accommodation booked. We will meet you at the meeting point at 9am after you have cleared immigration and customs. Note there are not particularly good facilities at the airport if you plan on spending the night there rather than book a pre night accommodation.

At approximately 7:00 pm the Trip Leader will meet the group at the hotel for a trip briefing. Here the Trip Leader will give information on the itinerary, sightseeing, optional tours and meals.

The Trip Leader will also take a photocopy of passports (for the passengers who will join Ultimate Egypt, Pharaohs' Footsteps, Nile and Beyond, Egyptian Express, and Pyramids & Beaches tours).

They will also collect the local payment part of your trip price in \$US cash, or sterling equivalent (please see below) and check your travel insurance.

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In the reception of the hotel there is a We board with trip information and the Trip Leader's name and mobile number. If arriving a few days prior to the start of your trip please feel free to contact the Trip Leader for information on what to do in Cairo or advice on any problems.

EGYPT CUSTOMS

Duty-Free Items: 200 cigarettes or 25 cigars or 200g tobacco; 2 liters of alcoholic beverage; a reasonable amount of perfume or eau de cologne; gifts up to £E500. All cash, travelers' checks, credit cards and gold over £E500 must be declared. Persons traveling with expensive electronic equipment such as cameras, video cameras, or computers may be required to list these items in their passports to ensure that they will be exported upon departure.

Prohibited Items: All narcotics (hemp, opium, cocaine, morphine, heroin, etc.), firearms, obscene literature, pictures, or articles. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

US CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change, however, so check with your nearest customs office for a list of limited and exempt items, or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044. Or, visit their web site www.customs.ustreas.gov.

What to Bring

- Camera
- Hat and sunscreen
- Loose cotton clothing
- Daypack to carry your camera, bottled water and souvenirs
- Money belt
- Sunglasses
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Medication – some prescription medicines can be difficult to buy in Egypt
- First aid kit – Imodium is recommended in case of an upset stomach
- Book to read on long journeys
- Guide book
- Swimsuit and towel
- Sleeping bag (Only if your trip spends nights on the feluccas)
- Passport, visa, travel insurance, and air tickets.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

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Please remember that Egypt is predominantly a Moslem country with conservative standards of dress. These apply particularly to women. Women will be more accepted touring mosques and old churches if their head is covered. Do bring a bathing suit to use at hotels and onboard cruise ships, however, except onboard ships and poolside, women should not wear bare-backed dresses, shorts and short skirts. Bare shoulders are also taboo. It is acceptable, however, for men to wear shorts.

Clothes should be washable and loose-fitting with the emphasis on comfort. Visits to temples and excavations involve a considerable amount of walking, some of which may be in hot and dry weather. Therefore, cotton and cotton-synthetic combinations are preferable to pure synthetics that retain heat.

During the winter months between December and March, nights and early mornings can be cold. Bring a warm sweater. A light nylon windbreaker may come in handy early mornings or late afternoons. For April, May, October and November, a light wrap for evening is recommended.

A comfortable, well-broken-in pair of walking shoes with closed toes is vital. You will be doing a great deal of walking. The floors of tombs and temples are frequently uneven, and

Require quality footwear. Sneakers, running shoes or lightweight desert boots are ideal. During the day, dress is informal. Jeans or slacks and sport shirts are fine for ladies or gentlemen. Ladies may wear skirts or dresses if they prefer. At night, however, coats and ties for men and dresses for women are appropriate in many places. Gentlemen should pack one or two sport coats or suits, with two or three pairs of slacks, dress shirts and ties. Ladies should bring two or three dresses - lightweight between June & September, medium weight in April, May, October & November, and warm between December & March. On Nile cruises, you might want to pack something that you can wear to the costume party held on board.

Laundry service is very good and done the same day, except Fridays. Also remember, the rooms on the Nile cruise ships are small compared to larger, ocean-going liners.

LUGGAGE / Baggage

Soft bags, suitcases or frameless backpacks are best, plus small days pack or carry bag. **No external framed packs** please, as they damage other bags on the coach. Remember, if you take too much, you have to carry it around. **Please limit your baggage allowance to a maximum of 20kgs.** Maximum allowable size for all bags must not exceed 70cm x 50cm x 25cm.

INTERNAL FLIGHTS

On internal Egyptair flights and all flights from Egypt to other countries, and on flights from Nairobi to Cairo, your baggage will be weighed. Please pay close attention to baggage restrictions. Excess baggage charges are steep and strictly enforced. Your carry-on bag should hold important documents, prescriptions, cameras, valuables, etc. All luggage should be locked and have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

MONEY

The Egyptian pound (LE) is divided into 100 piastres (PT), and has notes for 25 and 50 piastres, 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 200 Egyptian pounds. It is now possible to purchase Egyptian currency abroad, however, only a maximum of 100 Egyptian pounds may be carried into or out of Egypt. We recommend that you take some cash dollars in small denominations, since US dollars are widely accepted, along with major credit cards. Do not plan on using personal checks, and in some areas you may have difficulty using traveler's

checks. Do not exchange money with any of the many people who will offer to do so on the street. Beware of those, too, who will try to escort you to a shop. If you go, you will be subjected to a very sophisticated, genteel, hard sell.

What to do? Where to go in Egypt?

There is a lot to do for the foreign traveler in Egypt. Apart from visiting and seeing the ancient temples and artifacts of ancient Egypt, there is also much to see within each city. In fact, each city in Egypt has its own charm of things to see with its own history, culture, activities, and people who often differ in nature from people of other parts of Egypt.

Cairo, for instance has so much to do and see. Besides the ancient Egyptian history, there is the history of Romans, Greeks, Byzantine Empire, Islamic empire, Ottomans, and finally modern Egyptian history.

Jewish and Christian History To see more about Egypt's Christian and Jewish history, go to a local tourist office and ask them to give you names of local Churches and Jewish Synagogues. There is at least two Jewish synagogues dating back many years ago, when Egypt had a population of a few hundred-thousand Jews in the country, who eventually left during the formation of Israel.

There is a lot of old and interesting Churches to see in different areas of Cairo, including downtown Cairo, Heliopolis, Korba, Shubra, Abbasiya, Zamalek, and Maadi. Some of these churches have been around for several hundred years and their architecture resemble that of Churches in Western countries, often built by Europeans who built much of the city's architecture in the 19th century as a resemblance to modern buildings of Europe at the time.

Modern Cairo If you want to see modern Cairo, try walking in the streets of Zamalek, Maadi, Mohandiseen, or Heliopolis where you will see some of the more modern buildings and get to experience the way of life in Egypt.

Cairo Tower is the tallest building in Egypt, and you can go up the tower and have a nice dinner with a full view of Cairo from above. There are telescopes which enable you to see magnified sections of city in more detail and allows the traveller to see much of the city in a short amount of time.

Local Cafes/Coffeeshops and Restaurants For social times, try sitting in one of the local cafes restaurants where you can meet and interact with fellow Egyptians. There are numerous coffeeshops/cafes and restaurants all over Cairo all catering for different tastes and backgrounds and range from the very budget to the very expensive.

Local chains include, Coffee Roastery, Cilantro, Grand Cafe, Costa Coffee and many other places. Generally each area of Cairo has its cafes and restaurants.

Sporting and Recreational Clubs: If the heat is too much, you can go to one of the famous sporting clubs such as the Gezira Club located in Zamalek, or the Seid Club (otherwise known in English as the Shooting Club) located in Mohandiseen, where you can have a dip at the swimming pool or otherwise enjoy sitting in the shade and comfort of lush trees and gardens. Entrance for foreigners can be gained by buying a one-day ticket for 20-30 Egyptian pounds which enables the person to enjoy all the facilities of club including playing any sports. There are of course changing facilities and restaurants inside the club where one can enjoy a meal or a drink after engaging in any activity.

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Nightlife: If you enjoy nightlife, there is quite a few nightclubs and discos where you can drink and dance to some of the most modern tunes in the west as well as listen to some arabic music. The music varies from Dance and Trance to Hip Hop, Rap, Techno, as well as Rock and Pop. These clubs are usually located inside five-star hotels or at areas such as Mohandiseen and Zamalek.

Examples include: The Cairo Jazz Club (mohandiseen) Purple (on a boat in Zamalek) Hard Rock Cafe (inside the Four Seasons Hotel in Garden City) L'Obergine (pub and bar in Zamalek)

Desert Adventures: For other adventures, try going to the Haram District of Cairo, and look for any horse-riding stables. There, you can rent a horse for a few hours and ride, or even ride a camel out in the desert by the pyramids and the Sphinx. The best time to do this is at night when you can see all the stars shining together in the sky and capture the magical feeling of the place. You will be with a local guide riding with you on another horse or camel, or you might even be joined a group of other individuals or groups of friends who enjoy riding horses in the desert by the pyramids like yourself.

Nile Boat: Try renting out a Feluca boat (small boat that can carry up to 20 individuals) in the Nile of Cairo. There you can experience the beauty of the Nile and the surrounding scenery, where you can see the city and its buildings and streets from within the water around. Depending on the weather, you can do this either day or night, but you will need to go to the Giza District and walk along the corniche area of the Nile and ask any of the locals for renting this boat.

Islamic Cairo/Fatimid Cairo: For those interested in the Islamic architecture and history, try going to Islamic Cairo, (el Gamalaya district or Khan El Khalili. There you will see numerous buildings and some mosques and see how buildings and houses were built in the Islamic Era of Egypt. There is also a Souk or (Bazar) where you can buy lots of different souvenirs and items.

COMMUNICATION

The official language is Arabic, but English and French are very widely spoken, especially in tourist centers. Signs on major streets are usually in Arabic and Roman. It is a good idea to become familiar with numerals as it is often used for prices. English is taught in the schools and there is usually someone who is happy to practice with you.

English

As Egypt was a British colony until 1952, most educated locals would have learned English in school. Travelers are unlikely to encounter difficulties finding someone who speaks English, especially in tourist centers. In fact, English and French are taught as second languages in all public Egyptian schools, although people who go to these schools might be able to speak the language with varying degrees, depending on the status of the school, their level of education, and the location of the school. Furthermore, a lot of young Egyptians who did not learn much (if any) English at school try to improve their level of English by taking up English language courses locally.

Higher class Egyptians generally go to "Language Schools" a term that means, they went to a private school similar in context to public Egyptian schools, but where the main language of teaching was mostly or mainly in English. Thus, anyone who went to a language school or a private school generally will speak better English than anyone who went to a public school, (although there can always be exceptions depending on the person really).

French

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Besides, English, some Egyptians are fluent in French as well. These would normally have gone to French private schools in Egypt or have learned it from their French-educated parents (generally aristocratic families in the past spoke French more fluently than English, as French schools were more common than English schools in Egypt). However, in the last 20 years, English schools have become more common as English became more popular and in higher demand in the country than French, so people who speak French are less common than those who speak English and the majority of older populations among highly-educated people will speak French more than English (if they speak any second language after Arabic at all).

Other Languages

A lot of young Egyptians like to take language courses to improve and learn other languages. Although the most popular language is English due to its high-demand in the work environment, the most other common and popular languages are French, Italian, German, Spanish. These are popular due to the high number of tourists who come from Europe speaking these languages respectively. Other popular languages that people learn are also Russian due to the high number of Russian tourists in Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada.

Speaking to Egyptians in English

Following usual rules of politeness, instead of simply starting a conversation with someone in English, ask "Do you speak English?". All the better if you can do it in Arabic using an Arabic phrasebook if necessary: te'araf tetkalem inglezi? (Addressing a male) or "te'rafy tetkalem inglezi?" (Addressing a female), which means "Do you speak English?"

ELECTRICITY

The electrical voltage in Egypt is 220 volts, 50 cycle AC. You will need a transformer unless your equipment has one built in. You will also need an adapter for the round, two-pin European plug used in Egypt.

Many hotel rooms also have outlets that permit using American electric shavers without adapters and transformers, but it is better to bring a non-electric razor as well.

FOOD & DRINK

A certain amount of caution should be exercised in Egypt. Although the water and food in Egypt are generally safe, mild stomach upsets and traveler's diarrhea (TD) do occur, as they will in any foreign country. Visitors usually adjust to the differences in climate and diet in a few days if they rest, stick to plain food, and drink plenty of fresh lime juice and mineral water. You may wish to talk to your doctor about a general antibiotic to take to treat TD or take Pepto-Bismol. To be on the safe side, we suggest that you purchase bottled water in sealed containers. Risk of dehydration due to the heat is possible so do drink plenty of fluids but avoid very cold drinks during the heat of the day, and wait until after sunset to consume alcoholic drinks. Mineral water is cheap and readily available.

In hotels, restaurants, and aboard cruise ships, foods are usually well prepared, but, as a general rule in international travel, it's best to eat only foods that have been well cooked and fruits that can be peeled. Generally speaking, avoid

salads and raw vegetables. Overall, Egyptian food is very tasty so eat and enjoy.

Egyptian food reflects the country's rich history and varied influences with elements modified from Greek, Turkish, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian cuisine. Simple dishes are created using naturally ripened fruits and vegetables, and seasoned with fresh spices. Food in the Upper Egypt region is closely linked to North African cuisine, and is spicier than that found in the north, but neither is especially hot. Breads, rice and native beans are staples at Egyptian meals.

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Typical meals are *foul* and *taamiya*. Both are made from beans with *foul* being cooked beans mixed with oil or butter and *taamiya* being crushed beans that are then fried. Another popular vegetarian dish is *mahshee*, vegetables stuffed with rice and then boiled or *koshar* which is pasta and lentils topped with fried onions and a garlic sauce. *Kebab* (grilled beef), *kofta* (grilled meatballs) and chicken are common meat dishes. All the international fast food chains are also to be found in Cairo.

A 12% service charge plus 5% government sales tax (GST) will be added to your bill in most restaurants if not included already.

A common practice and a sign of hospitality is to be offered a cup of hibiscus tea. A deep red coloured drink served either hot or cold. Soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available.

Islamic law prevents the consumption of alcohol. However local beers and wines, also imported beverages are sold in hotels and restaurants. An average price for local Stella beer is approximately 15-25 LE while imported Stella beer is between 25-40 LE. A local bottle of wine costs about 60-85 LE and a spirit and mixer will cost approximately 25-45 LE.

All breakfasts are included on most Topdeck Egypt trips and quite often dinner is too. All meals are provided on the felucca or cruise journeys on the Nile. If you allow US \$15 per day for meals not included you will eat like a king! Drinks are extra.

RESPECT

Keep in mind that most Egyptian workers expect tips after performing a service, known as Baksheesh. This can be expected for something as little as pressing the button in the elevator. Many workers will even ask you to tip them before you get a chance. The typical tip for minor services is 50pt to 1 LE. Due to the general shortage of small change, you may be forced to give 5 LE to do simple things like use the bathroom. Just understand that this is part of the culture; the value of the baksheesh is very small to most westerners (USD\$0.10 to \$0.25) but makes up the a good portion of monthly income for many Egyptians.

Do not photograph people without their permission, and in areas frequented by tourists do not be surprised if a bit of baksheesh is requested. If you're male, don't be surprised if another male holds your hand or forearm or engages in some form of bodily contact - there's no taboo against men holding hands and unlike in the West, this behavior is not associated with homosexuality. In general, Egyptians are a lot more comfortable with less personal space than are most Westerners; however, pairs of Westerners should be cautious in engaging in same-sex contact. Normal contact is quite acceptable (shaking hands, pats on the shoulder, etc.) but holding hands could be mistaken in Westerners as a sign of homosexuality, which is quite taboo in Egypt. Smoking is very common and cigarettes are very cheap in Egypt.

Gamal Abdul Nasser, the first President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and many others are considered national heroes in Egypt; you should say absolutely nothing that could be perceived as offensive or derogatory regarding him. Hosni Mubarak (the current President) is largely unpopular but it is probably better not to discuss politics unless your Egyptian acquaintance brings it up first. Tread carefully around such topics and let others guide the openness of the discussion. Many Egyptians have a different interpretation concerning ambiguous expressions such as freedom of speech and democracy. Likewise, don't bring up politics and other delicate issues impulsively. It is advisable not to discuss Israel even if tempted; do not speak loudly about it as it may attract unwanted attention, even if you are only talking about it as a travel destination.

Never discuss religion from an atheistic or similar point of view. Even highly educated Egyptians who studied abroad won't appreciate it and doors will close for you. Also be aware that the Islamic "call to prayer" happens five times daily and can be heard loudly almost anywhere you go. Just understand that most Egyptians are used to it and enjoy it as part of the cultural experience.

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Take great care if you choose to drink, especially if you're from countries where heavy drinking is accepted. Even if you are used to it, you can't estimate the effects of the climate, even at night. The impact drunk people have on Egyptians is quite large and very negative. The best plan is just to abstain or limit your self to one drink per meal while in Egypt; it will be cheaper too.

TIPPING

Tipping is not compulsory, nor are there fixed amounts, however, the following is a general guideline to assist you.

Unless someone provides you with extra service such as room service, you need not tip. Always check your bill first to see if a service charge has been automatically added.

In first-class restaurants, 10 to 15 percent tip on the pre-tax total is adequate.

Handling of 1 piece of baggage is included. This includes porter's tips at airports, hotels, and lodges and camps. If you wish to give an extra gratuity to hotel or lodge porters, we suggest \$1 for all baggage brought to your room.

Drivers: The equivalent of \$2 to \$3 per person for full day tours.

Guides: The equivalent of \$5 to \$7 per person per day.

Tipping for cruise staff is done at the end of the cruise. Generally tips are pooled among the entire cruise ship staff. The equivalent of \$12-15 per person per day for the length of your cruise.

An exception to tipping -- please do not offer tips to professionals, businessmen, or others who would consider themselves your equal. You may seriously offend them by your act.

In Egypt, you are a foreigner and, therefore, thought to be rich. As such, you are supposed to have baksheesh (literally: share wealth) for everyone. Obviously, you tip a waiter, porter or taxi driver, but the guard who opens a tomb or switches on the light "especially for you" will also expect a tip. Children whose picture you take and even people who didn't do anything at all will ask for money. Alms for the poor are called baksheesh, too. Everyone seems to want something from you, and while this is annoying, please understand that is very much a part of the culture. Maintaining a good humor about this aspect of travel is essential to your enjoyment of the trip. So you might as well get used to paying something if someone makes your life easier. Indeed, this type of bribery is often necessary just to get something done. But do resist giving money to people who haven't done anything.

Feluccas

Feluccas are traditional Egyptian sailing boats that have been used as transport up and down the Nile for centuries. A cruise on a felucca is particularly relaxing, as it is a simple boat with no engine or modern conveniences. You sleep on cushioned mattresses (**bring a sleeping bag**) for all times of the year under a canopy for protection against the elements. Cooking is done on the boat, and is done by the felucca crew. Feluccas are still a common form of transport up and down the river.

You should be aware that toilet facilities on the banks of the Nile where we stop are minimal to say the least. Bring the toilet paper and leave the modesty at home.

During winter months it can get relatively cold on the river especially at night. It can even rain! We advise passengers to

Handicrafts: Egypt has been famous for its handicrafts, but unfortunately the overall quality has deteriorated and many products are now made to be sold cheaply. The main crafts to look for are carved woodwork, mother-of-pearl inlay work, pottery, alabaster, glass, and the obligatory painted papyrus.

Most of antiquities offered to tourists are fakes, which is just as well because genuine articles require a license from the Department of Antiquities for exportation.

Carpets are not an Egyptian specialty, but camelhair rugs are cheap and colorful. Gold jewelry and silver Bedouin jewelry are available. International clothing chains have recently opened

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up shops in Cairo and sell good quality, cotton clothes made in Egypt. Appliqué work, traditional Egyptian clothes, cotton sheets & towels are all available. Spices, incense, perfumes, glass, wood, ceramics and leather are some of the favorite buys. Cairo has been known for its brass and copper works for years. Brass trays of all sizes can be purchased. The larger ones that can be used as tables are more popular.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS IN EGYPT

When Egyptians meet, they don't just say hello. Greetings are elaborated, and very often they will force one another to stop for tea. The farewells will be as elaborate as the greetings. Foreigners who take time to ask after people's health are always appreciated.

Whether Muslim or Copt, Egyptians are deeply religious and religious principles govern their daily lives. Combined with religious belief is commitment to the extended family. Each family member is responsible for the integrity of the family and for the behavior of other members.

All visitors to mosques, mausoleums, and madrasas must remove their shoes. Most Muslims walk around in their stockings but those mosques that are major tourist attractions have canvas overshoes available. Here, a tip of 50PT to LE1 is in order for the people who put them on for you. Women must cover bare arms and should also have a hat or other head covering.

Muslims are scrupulous about washing before prayer. They are just as scrupulous about eating and will only use their right hand, the left is reserved for cleaning themselves. Feet are also considered unclean, so when a Muslim enters a mosque he takes off his shoes and when he sits down facing someone, he makes sure the soles of his feet are not showing.

Egyptian men walk hand in hand down a street, but it is rare to see males and females touch in public. Physical contact between foreign couples is also frowned upon. If you want to feel at ease, don't kiss or embrace in the street. For men, speaking to an unknown Egyptian woman is a breach of etiquette.

Ticket lines are occasionally segregated by gender. Women should line up with other women (especially since the lines are usually shorter). On buses, the driver may ask a woman to be seated in

the front with other women. On the metro lines, the first car is usually reserved for women.

Unlike most Westerners, most Egyptians require little personal space and will stand within inches of you to talk. You will find that whenever you start talking with an Egyptian, you will inevitably draw a crowd, and often the Egyptians will start discussing among themselves over the correct answer to a question.

Egyptians, if offered anything, will refuse the first invitation, which is customary. Therefore (unless you're dealing with Egyptians used to Western frankness) you should do the same. If the offer is from the heart, and not just politeness, it will be repeated. If you're invited into a home, especially in small villages, and have to refuse, the householder will often press for a promise from you to visit in the future, usually for a meal. If you make such a promise, keep it, for having foreign guests is often considered a social coup. If you fail to arrive, your would-be host will be humiliated. To repay invitations, you may host a dinner in a restaurant.

As with travel to any destination, common sense should be the prevailing guide to avoid problems. In major cities in Egypt as elsewhere, it is strongly suggested that visitors not walk alone at night. While violent incidents in Egypt are rare, purse snatching, pick-pocketing and petty thefts are not uncommon. Aggressive panhandling is common.

Unescorted women are vulnerable to sexual harassment and verbal abuse. Women should be confident when walking in the streets, and not react to verbal obscenities. In public places, there is often a section reserved for women. Cairo is generally safer than most European capitals, but tourists are considered wealthy and some Egyptians cannot resist the temptation.

During the day, take only the indispensable in your backpack or fanny pack. Do not take your passport, airline tickets, or all your money on day trips. Leave these and other valuables in hotel safes, and always ask for a receipt. Do not leave cash, travelers' checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Carry copies of your documents and only the amount of money you think you will need. Leave your jewelry at home!

Opening Hours

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The following opening hours are a guide only as they vary from business to business.

Banking Sun - Thurs 08:30am – 1:00pm and then 5:00pm – 9:00pm

Fri / Sat closed

Some banks open on Saturday from 08:30am to 1:00pm and Sunday 10:00am –12:00midday only.

Business Sun - Thurs 9:00am – 2:00pm

Fri / Sat closed

Shopping Sat - Thurs 9:00am – 3:00pm and 5:00pm – 9:00pm

These hours are very approximate; some shops open on Friday and many close on Sunday. In tourist centers the hours may be extended. Some shops will close for a longer period in the afternoon from 1:00pm to 5:00pm.

SHOPPING / BUY

Whether in bazaars and markets, retail shops, or department stores, Egyptians love to shop and to sell. Wherever you decide to shop, plan on spending some time. Bazaars and markets are the most enjoyable, but also time consuming and nerve racking. The rule is -- bargain hard. First, look around to get a feel for prices. Decide what a particular item is worth to you. Always bear in mind that bargaining is a way of life and a great game, and Egyptians are wonderful players. When walking through bazaars, your eyes should linger only on the items that are truly of interest to you. Make eye contact only with a vendor if you wish to stop and look. Once you are drawn into a shop, be ready to bargain.

In small retail shops, prices are fixed and usually written in Arabic, so try to become familiar with numerals. Department stores also have fixed prices and usually accept credit cards.

Local Currency The local currency is the Egyptian pound (EGP), which is divided into 100 piastres. The currency is often written as LE (short for French livre égyptienne) or by using the pound sign £. In Arabic the pound is called gunaih (جنيه), in turn derived from English "guinea", and piastres are known as qirsh (قرش).

The Egyptian pound has been devaluating gradually over the last several decades. In the 1950's or 1960's, the Egyptian pound was rated almost the same as the British Pound. In fact, the Egyptian pound's value was so high that 1 L.E was nearly equal 1 Gold Pound. Today 1 Gold Pound is worth more than 1,000 L.E.! Nowadays, 1 British pound= 8.53 L.E and was as high as 11 L.E. up until the time before the economic recession and financial crisis of the last two years when most foreign currencies have lost a small amount of their value against the Egyptian Pound.

Other currencies value as follows: \$1 = 5.67 L.E 1 EUR= 6.99 L.E. 1 \$AUS= 4.5 L.E.

Exchanging Money and Banks Foreign currencies can be exchanged at exchange offices or banks, so there is no need to resort to the dodgy street moneychangers. Many higher-end hotels price in dollars or euros and will gladly accept them as payment, although often at a premium rate over Egyptian pounds. ATMs are ubiquitous in the cities and probably the best option overall; they often offer the best rate and many foreign banks have branches in Egypt. These include Barclay's Bank, HSBC, CitiBank, NSGB, BNP Paribas, Piraeus Bank, CIB, and other local and Arab Banks. Bank hours are Sunday through Thursday, 8:30AM until 2:00PM.

Banknotes are available in all denominations ranging from 200 pounds to the thoroughly useless 5 piastres, while coins were rather rare until new 50-piastre and 1-pound coins were introduced in the summer of 2006. Counterfeit or obsolete notes are not a major problem, but exchanging pounds outside the country can be difficult. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted, but only bigger hotels or restaurants in Cairo and restaurants in tourist areas will readily accept credit cards as payment. Traveler's checks can be exchanged in any bank, but it could take some time.

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HOW TO BUY?

Bargaining is a common practice and an art when shopping in Egypt. Other than shops with fixed prices most shop owners accept the bartering of a price with the first quote rarely being the final price. Egypt offers popular items including gold and silver jewelers (especially cartouches), brassware, alabaster, perfume, papyrus, spices and cotton goods.

On most of our trips there is an overnight train journey. Whilst there is a bar on board and airline style food and drink is served, it is very expensive. The Trip Leader will take you to a supermarket prior to the journey where supplies of fruit, biscuits, chocolate, drinks etc. can be bought.

WHAT TO BUY ?

Egypt is a shopper's paradise - especially if you're interested in Egyptian-themed souvenirs and kitsch. However, there are also a number of high quality goods for sale, often at bargain prices. Some of the most popular purchases include:

- Antiques (NB: not antiquities, the trade of which is rightly illegal in Egypt)
- Carpets and rugs
- Cotton goods and clothing Can be bought at Khan El Khalili for around 30-40 EGP. Better quality Egyptian cotton clothing can be bought at various chain stores including Mobaco Cottons and Concrete which have many branches throughout the country. The clothes are expensive for Egypt (about 180-200 LE for a shirt) but cheap by Western standards given the quality.
- Inlaid goods, such as backgammon boards
- Jewellery Cartouches make a great souvenir. These are metal plates shaped like an elongated oval and have engravings of your name in hieroglyphics
- Leather goods
- Music
- Papyrus
- Perfume - Perfumes can be bought at almost every souvenir shop. Make sure that you ask the salesman to prove to you that there is no alcohol mixed with the perfume. The standard rates should be in the range of 1-2 Egyptian Pounds / gm
- Water-pipes (Sheeshas)
- Spices - can be bought at colourful stalls in most Egyptian markets. Dried herbs and spices are generally of a higher quality than that available in Western supermarkets and are up to 4 or 5 times cheaper, though the final price will depend on bargaining and local conditions.

DRESS

Egyptians are generally a conservative people and most are religious (roughly 90% Muslim and 10% Christian) and dress very conservatively. Although they accommodate foreigners being dressed a lot more skimpily, it is prudent not dress provocatively, if only to avoid having people stare at you. It is best to wear pants or jeans instead of shorts as only tourists wear these. In modern nightclubs, restaurants, hotels and bars in Cairo, Alexandria and other tourist destinations you'll find the dress code to be much less restrictive. Official or social functions and smart restaurants usually require more formal wear.

At the Giza Pyramids and other such places during the hot summer months, short sleeve tops and even sleeveless tops are acceptable for women (especially when traveling with a tour group). Though you should carry a scarf or something to cover up more while traveling to/from the tourist destination. Also, it's perfectly acceptable for women to wear sandals during the summer, and you will even see some women with the hijab who have sandals on.

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Women should cover their arms and legs if travelling alone, and covering your hair may help to keep away unwanted attention. Though as a foreigner, you may get plenty of attention no matter what you wear, mainly including people staring at you along with some verbal harassment which you can try to ignore. Egyptian women, even those who wear the full hijab, are often subjected to sexual harassment, including cat calls. You may find that completely covering up does not make a huge difference, with regards to harassment, versus wearing a top with shorter sleeves. In regards to harassment, it's also important how you act. Going out with a group of people is also helpful, and the best thing to do is ignore men who give you unwanted attention. They want to get some reaction out of you. Also, one sign of respect is to use the Arabic greeting, "Asalamualaikum" (means "hello, peace be upon you"), and the other person should reply "Walaikumassalam" ("peace be upon you"). That lets the person know you want respect, and nothing else.

LAUNDRY

There are a number of options for washing clothes whilst travelling in Egypt:

By far the easiest, most practical - and not at all expensive - is to arrange for your hotel to have your washing done for you. By prior arrangement, clothes left on the bed or handed in at reception will be returned to you by evening freshly laundered and pressed.

Determined self-helpers can persist with hand-washing or finding one of the many "hole-in-the-wall" laundries where the staff will wash and press your clothes manually - a fascinating process in itself! Just be aware that your clothes will probably smell of cigarette smoke when returned...

Cairo possesses a few basic Western-style laundromats in areas where foreigners and tourists reside - they are virtually nonexistent elsewhere in the country. Some hotels in tourist towns like Luxor and Dahab offer a washing machine service in a back room - the machines are usually primitive affairs and you'll be left with the task of wringing and ironing your clothes yourself.

The moral of the tale?: Do yourself a favour, maximise your quality time in Egypt, and get the hotel to do your laundry for you!

STAY SAFE

Egypt is generally a safe and friendly country to travel. Egyptians on the whole are very friendly - if you are in need of assistance they will generally try to help you as much as they are able.

Egyptian men will make compliments to women; do not take offense if they do this to you. Men shouldn't be worried, either; if they do this to your partner/daughter, it will be nothing more than a compliment, and hopefully won't go any further than that.

Terrorism

Terrorism is certainly the most spectacular safety concern, and the country's terrorist groups have an unpleasant record of specifically targeting Western tourists and the places they frequent. The most infamous attack was the one in 1997 in Luxor, which killed 62 people, but there has also been a series of bombings in the Sinai in 2004-2006 and one largely unsuccessful attempt in Cairo in 2005.

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The most recent incident involving British nationals occurred on 24 April 2006 in the resort town of Dahab killing 23 people, and injuring more than 60 including three British nationals. On the evening of 22 February 2009, an explosion occurred near the Al Hussein Mosque in Cairo, killing one French national and injuring others. The Egyptian security forces remain on a high level of alert.

Realistically speaking, though, the odds of being affected by terrorism are minimal and most attacks have only succeeded in killing Egyptians, further increasing the revulsion the vast majority of Egyptians feel for the extremists. The government takes the issue very seriously and tourist sites are very heavily guarded. For example, if you take a taxi from Cairo to Alexandria, you will be stopped at a checkpoint before leaving Cairo. They will ask where you are going, and communicate with the checkpoint at Alexandria to make sure you reach your destination within a certain time period. The same goes for most trips into the desert, particularly in Upper Egypt. During different branches of your drive, you may be escorted by local police. They will travel to your destination with you, wait around until you are finished, and usually stay behind at one of the next checkpoints. The best example of this is when you travel from Aswan to Abu Simbel to visit the Temple of Ramses II. An armed tourism police officer will board your tourist bus and escort you until you arrive at Abu Simbel, and after your tour, he will ride on the same bus with you back to Aswan.

There are also many tourism police officers armed with AK-47s riding on camels patrolling the Giza plateau. They are there to ensure the safety of the tourists since the Pyramids are the crown jewels of all the Egyptian antiquities. Some tourists may find it exciting or even amusing to take pictures with these police officers on camel back; however, since they are all on patrol duty, it is not uncommon for them to verbally warn you not to pose next to them in order to take a picture with them.

CRIME

Pickpocketing is a problem in Egypt's bigger cities, particularly Cairo. Many locals opt not to carry wallets at all, instead keeping their money in a clip in their pocket, and tourists would be wise to adopt this as well. On the upside, violent crime is rare, and you are highly unlikely to physically mugged or robbed. If, however, you do find yourself the victim of crime, you may get the support of local pedestrians by shouting "Harami" (Criminal) while chasing the person who robbed you.

Overall, scams are the main concern in Egypt. Be aware that many Egyptians who starts a conversation with you in Cairo and Luxor want your money. There is a very insidious tactic used where they will "befriend" you, take you around, show you things, even bring you back to their place for dinner, and then they will demand money for it. Basically, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Demand prices for absolutely everything, because if you say "I thought it was free!" after the fact you are in for a vicious argument.

SCAMS AND HASSLE

Travelers often complain about being hassled and attempts at scamming while in Egypt. While irritating, most of this is pretty harmless stuff, like attempting to lure you into a local papyrus or perfume shop.

Typically, you will be approached by a person speaking fluent English who will strike up a conversation under social pretenses. He (and it will always be a he) will then attempt to get you to come along for a cup of tea or similar at his favourite (most-paying) souvenir shop. This could also happen outside museums etc. where the scammer will try to make you believe the "museum is closed" or similar.

Hassling, while never dangerous, could also be annoying, especially in the main tourist areas. There is no way to avoid this, but a polite la shukran (no thanks) helps a lot. Apart from that, try to

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take hassling with a smile. If you let yourself be bugged by everyone trying to sell you something, your holiday won't be a very happy one.

Potentially more annoying are taxi drivers or others getting a commission fee to lead you to their hotel of choice, of course paying commission fees for each guest they receive. Firmly stand your ground on this. If they insist, just ask to be dropped off at a street or landmark close to the place you are heading to. This scam is especially common among taxi drivers from the airport.

STAY HEALTHY

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

Currently, no vaccinations are necessary for entry into Egypt if you are arriving from North America. If, however, you are entering from cholera area, inoculation is mandatory. Your inoculation information must be displayed on an International Vaccination Certificate.

Updated vaccinations for tetanus with diphtheria, Gamma globulin Hepatitis A, and inactivated polio are recommended. If traveling to rural Nile/Delta areas, anti-malaria precautions are also highly recommended. If you are arriving in Egypt from Kenya or Tanzania, you will require a vaccination against Yellow Fever.

The sun is hot year-round so use a high-factor suntan lotion and wear a hat and sunglasses. Take antiseptic cream for cuts as flies can spread infections. Take insect repellent as mosquitoes can make life a misery and may carry malaria.

Please note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. U.S.

Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. Uninsured travelers, who require medical care overseas, may face extreme difficulties.

For the most current information, please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>

Fluids

Ensure that you drink plenty of water: Egypt has an extremely dry climate most of the year - a fact aggravated by high temperatures in the summer end of the year - and countless travelers each year experience the discomforts and dangers of dehydration. A sense of thirst is not enough to

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indicate danger - carry a water bottle and keep drinking! Not needing to urinate for a long period or passing very small amounts of dark yellow urine are signs of incipient dehydration.

Egyptian tap water is generally considered safe by locals, but will often make travellers ill. It is not recommended for regular drinking, especially to very local differences in quality. Bottled mineral waters are widely available -- see Drink : Water section. Beware of the old scam, however, whereby vendors re-sell bottled water bottles, having refilled with another (perhaps dubious) source.... Always check the seal is unbroken before parting with your money (or drinking from it) and inform the tourist police if you catch anyone doing this....

Be a little wary with fruit juice, as some sellers may mix it with water. Milk should also be treated carefully as it may not be pasteurized.... Try only to buy milk from reputable shops. Hot beverages like tea and coffee should generally be OK, the water having been boiled in preparation, though it pays to be wary of ice as well.

Sun

Wear sunscreen, wear a sturdy hat and bring good sunglasses - it's bright out there!

Schistosomiasis

In order to avoid contracting the rightly dreaded schistosomiasis parasite (also known as bilharzia), a flatworm that burrows through the skin, do not swim in the Nile or venture into any other Egyptian waterways, even if the locals are doing so. It is also a good idea not to walk in bare feet on freshly-watered lawns for the same reason.

Although the disease takes weeks to months to show its head, it's wise to seek medical attention locally if you think you've been exposed, as they are used to diagnosing and treating it, and it will cost you pennies rather than dollars. Symptoms include fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain and fatigue, making the disease easy to mistake for (say) the flu or food poisoning, but the flatworm eggs can be identified with a stool test and the disease can usually be cured with a single dose of Praziquantel.

Outbreaks of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) in Egypt have led to 23 human fatalities since 2006. The last fatality was in December 2008.

EMBASSIES

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- **Australian** [12] - World Trade Centre (11th Floor), Corniche El Nil, Boulac (Code No. 11111), Cairo, Egypt Phone +20 2 575 0444, Fax +20 2 578 1638, cairo.austremb@dfat.gov.au
- **British** [13] - 7 Ahmed Ragheb Street, Garden City, Cairo +20 (2) 2791 6000 (24 hour service 365 days per year), Fax: +20 2 2791 6132, information.cairo@fco.gov.uk
- **Canadian** [14] - 26 Kamel El Shenaway Street, Garden City, Cairo Tel: +20 (2) 791-8700, cairo@international.gc.ca
- **German** [15] - 2, Sh. Berlin (off Sh. Hassan Sabri) Zamalek / Cairo, Tel: + 20 2 739-9600 Fax: +2 2 736-0530, germemb@tedata.net.eg

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- **Indian [16]** - 5 Aziz Abaza St., Zamalek, Cairo Tel: 2736-3051, 2735-6053, 2736-0052 (Intl. Dial Code is +20 2), Fax: +20 (0)2 2736-4038, embassy@indembcairo.com
- **Italian [17]** - 15, Abdel Rahman Fahmy Str., Garden City, Cairo Tel: +20 (0)2 7943194 - 7943195 - 7940658, Fax: +20 (0)2 7940657, ambasciata.cairo@esteri.it
- **Norwegian [18]** - 8 El Gezirah Street., Zamalek, Cairo, (Opening Hours Sun - Thu: 08:30 - 15:30) Tlf: +20 2 27358046 / 2735 3340 / 2736 3955, Fax: +2 02 2737 0709, emb.cairo@mfa.no
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