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30th December 2024

18 days
Duration

Egypt
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Egypt tour: escorted small group history & cultural tour of Egypt

Nov 04 2024 to Nov 21 2024



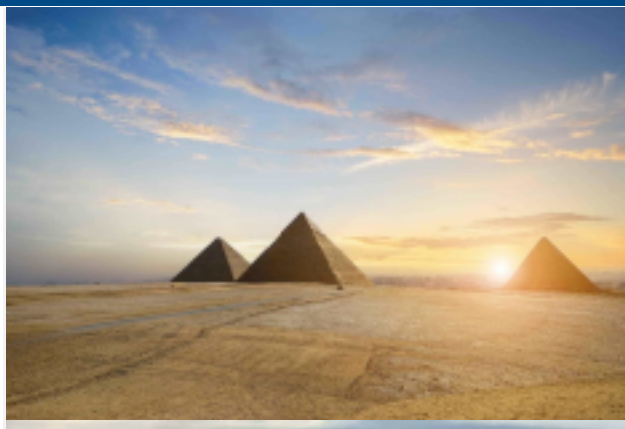
Ancient History of Egypt escorted Small Group tour

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Egypt. We explore Egypt's fairy-tale natural beauty, its ancient history, and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's

small group tours of Egypt, designed for the senior traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

This small group tour focuses on the history and culture of ancient Egypt , designed especially for mature-aged and senior travellers. Other tour operators or tour companies may simply survey the archaeological sites and monuments to the Pharaohs and the Giza pyramids. Our Egypt tour, however, also visits contemporary feats such as the Aswan Dam and lets us witness landmarks of the contemporary Egyptian experience, such as Tahrir Square. These sites show that Egypt's role as the pivot of civilisation is far from ended.

Visit Egypt with Odyssey Traveller on these escorted tours as we stand in awe of the symmetry and majesty of the Egyptians' ancient pyramids from Luxor to Aswan, and discuss the country's present-day experiences and accomplishments.







Ancient Egypt, An Advanced Civilisation

Egypt is located in the northeast corner of the African continent and has two coastlines–the Mediterranean coastline in the north and the longer Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba coastline in the east. The river Nile flowing in its heartland is the longest river in Africa.

A settlement that would later become Egypt emerged from the fertile and life-giving Nile valley and delta about 5,000 years ago, and for 30 centuries it was the principal civilisation in the ancient Mediterranean. Ancient Egypt's history, language, religion, and architecture continue to capture the imagination of archaeologists and historians, and has given rise to a specific field of study called "Egyptology".

Modern historians say ancient Egypt had 31 dynasties (with the rulers later called pharaohs, from *per aa,* "great house" or "great estate"), and these dynasties were divided into several periods or kingdoms. The legendary king Menes was said to be the first ruler of the first dynasty,

but there had been rulers before him, lost now to history.

The pyramids of Giza were built during the age of the Old Kingdom (circa 2650–2150 BC). An ancient Egyptian medical text, the Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus, is considered the oldest known surgical treatise and dates back to the Middle Kingdom (circa 2030–1640 BC)–one of the many testaments to ancient Egypt's advanced civilisation.







Small group tours Egypt itinerary

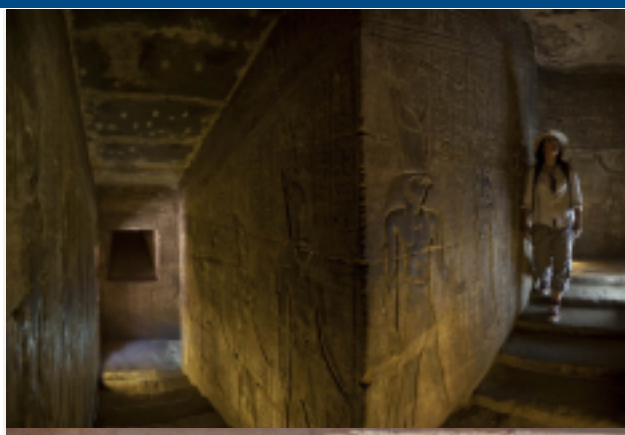
This Ancient History of Egypt journey includes a day tour in Cairo. In the Egyptian capital, we visit the Mohammad Ali Alabaster Mosque in the Citadel. The Mosque was constructed from 1830 to 1857 under Mohammed Ali Pasha in the Ottoman style. Mohammed Ali Pasha was the ruler of Egypt and the founder of the country's last dynasty. Next, we drive to timeless Old Cairo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During the journey, we will visit the Old Coptic Church and the Hanging Church, deriving its name from the way its nave overhangs an historic passage. After visiting the Ben Ezra Synagogue, we explore the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities. The museum in Cairo houses the treasures of the Tomb of Tutankhamen, among other fascinating exhibits including the role of Linen. Time permitting the group explores the new Egyptian capital city as yet un-named and the administrative capital for Egypt.

On the next day of this tour, a qualified Egyptologist provides a walking tour of the Great Pyramids. We stop to see features such as a royal burial chamber, the Valley Temple, and the Sphinx. Because no image is more prized than that of the traveller riding a camel at Giza, we have arranged for members of our party to enjoy a short camel ride against the backdrop of the Pyramids. For the remainder of the tour, we explore the Egypt that is beyond Cairo. We travel south down to Luxor to Aswan on the way, and to Abu Simbel before making our way back to the capital.

The highlights of Egypt experienced in a small group tour

Other highlights of our private guided tours include visiting the Egyptian Museum, fully escorted by a qualified Egyptologist, and seeing the Oasis of Wadi El Seboua and Alexandria. We also enjoy a cruise down the spectacular Nile River and enjoy shore excursions to Luxor, the Valley of Kings, exploring there tombs with local guides and visit the double temple of Kom Ombo just outside Aswan. You will have the opportunity to take in the sights and learn about the Red Pyramid, the Great Pyramids, the Valley Temple, and the Sphinx and so much more. We also visit the Temple of Philae, the 3000-year-old Abu Simbel, and Lake Nasser.

Ancient History of Egypt escorted Small Groups for mature travellers engages with the best available Egyptologists and professional guides. While accompanying the tour, they share the archaeology, the history, and the state of contemporary Egypt. The tour is suited for the senior or mature-aged couple or solo travellers.







Articles published by Odyssey Traveller about Egypt.

The following articles may also be of interest:

- From Cairo to NAC: Egypt builds a new capital city
- Discover Egypt with 10 great books
- Egyptian Linen Treasures
- Top 20 World Heritage Sites You Must Visit

To view the page with all the articles published that are are relevant or about Egypt follow this link.

Links to External Sites About Egypt.

Learn more about Egypt before you travel with these articles and links to external sites.

- Egypt the country.A country profile from Odyssey.
- More small group tours to Africa
- Mesopotamia – HISTORY
- Ancient Near East and Egyptian | Penn History of Art

For more details, click the ‘Top 5’ or ‘Itinerary’ buttons above! If you’re keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.







Tour Notes

- The tour itinerary order may be altered to suit cruising schedule. Duration of cruises may also vary depending on direction of travel.

Highlights

1. Tour the Egyptian Museum fully escorted by a qualified Egyptologist.
2. See the Oasis of Wadi El Sebou and Alexandria.
3. Cruise down the Nile River and enjoy shore excursions to Luxor, the Valley of Kings, and Kom Ombo.
4. Experience the Red Pyramid, the Great Pyramids, the Valley Temple, and the Sphinx.
5. Visit the Temple of Philae, the 3000 year old Abu Simbel, and Lake Nasser.

Itinerary







Day 1

Locations: Cairo

Overview:

Upon arrival in Cairo, we come to the hotel individually. Tonight, we enjoy a group dinner and program orientation.

(D)

Accommodation:

Fairmont Nile City or similar

Day 2

Locations: Cairo

Overview:

After breakfast, our guide will take us to see the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities (includes entrance inside the mummies room), the treasures of the Tomb of Tutankhamen are currently being relocated to a new museum due to open no later than January 2023 – The Grand Egyptian Museum. If the new museum is open to the public this collection will feature in the tour program supported by a local professional guide.

We then visit Tahrir Square, a hugely important site in Egypt's recent history and after lunch (at a local restaurant) we spend some time wandering the streets of Khan El Khalili bazaar.

(B,L)

Accommodation:

Fairmont Nile City or similar





Day 3

Locations: Cairo

Overview:

After breakfast we drive to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC), where you will have a private tour. You will see one of the most important and largest antiquities museums in the world. It is the first museum to be dedicated to the entirety of Egyptian civilization, where more than 50,000 artifacts will relate to the stages of the development of civilization, from the earliest times to the modern era. The museum's holdings will be displayed in a permanent major exhibition that deals with the most important achievements of Egyptian civilization. The museum includes spaces for temporary exhibitions, research center for the science of ancient materials and restoration as well as the royal mummies gallery.

Afterwards, in the same area, we will explore the Old Cairo and walk back in time. We will visit the Old Coptic Church, the hanging Church and the Ben Ezra Synagogue. Lunch will be served at local restaurant. After lunch, we will continue to the Mohamad Ali Mosque (known as the Alabaster Mosque, situated in the Citadel of Salah El Din).

(B, L)

Accommodation:

Fairmont Nile City or similar

Day 4

Locations: Cairo

Overview:

This morning, our guide – a qualified Egyptologist – picks us up for a full day of sightseeing. We make our way to the Sakkara section of Memphis and the Step Pyramid, built for the 3rd Dynasty Pharaoh Djoser to hold his mummified body. Pharaoh Djoser's Step Pyramid began as a traditional, flat-roofed mausoleum, but by the end of his 19-year reign, it had risen to 6 stepped layers and stood 204 feet (62 metres) high, making it the largest building of its time worldwide. We then visit a carpet school where young apprentices weave carpets manually with the same techniques that have been used since ancient

times.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we drive 20 kilometres south of Cairo to see the Great Pyramids, a royal burial chamber, the Valley Temple, and the Sphinx. In the history of photography and travel, no image is more prized than that of the traveller riding a camel at Giza, so we have arranged for members of our party to enjoy a short camel ride with the Pyramids as the backdrop. We will return to the hotel to end our day.

(B,L)

Accommodation:

Fairmont Nile City or similar

Day 5

Locations: Luxor

Overview:

This morning is free to explore the city of Cairo at our own pace.

In the afternoon, we transfer to Cairo Domestic Airport for our hour-long flight to Luxor. Upon arrival, we transfer to our hotel for check-in. In the evening, we visit the graceful Temple of Luxor built by Amenhotep III and Rameses II for rituals and festivals and dedicated to the god Amun. In the Egyptian language, the Temple is known as *ipet resyt*, “the southern sanctuary”. In Luxor there are several great temples on the east and west banks. Four of the major mortuary temples visited by early travelers and tourists include the Temple of Seti I at Gurnah, the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri, the Temple of Ramesses II (a.k.a. Ramesseum), and the Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu; and the two primary cults temples on the east bank are known as the Karnak and Luxor. Unlike the other temples in Thebes, Luxor temple is not dedicated to a cult god or a deified version of the king in death. Instead Luxor temple is dedicated to the rejuvenation of kingship; it may have been where many of the kings of Egypt were crowned in reality or conceptually (as in the case of Alexander the Great who claimed he was crowned at Luxor but may never have traveled south of Memphis, near

modern Cairo.)

(B,D)

Accommodation:

03 nights at Sonesta St. George Hotel or similar

Day 6

Locations: Luxor

Overview:

This morning, we drive to the West Bank of the Nile and visit the wondrous Valley of the Kings, a vast city of the dead where the magnificent tombs of 62 pharaohs have been discovered. The tombs were carved deep into the desert rock, richly decorated, and filled with treasures for the afterlife of the pharaohs. We visit several of the key tombs of the Pharaohs including Ramose tomb, Deir el Medina, and the Valley of the Nobles. A highlight of this day in the Valley of the Kings is a visit to the Tomb of *Tutankhamun.* The group Located in the Theban Necropolis, these are the burial places of some of the powerful courtiers and persons of the ancient city. We end our tour with a boat transfer back to the East bank of the Nile and then transfer to our hotel for dinner.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

Sonesta St. George Hotel or similar

Day 7

Locations: Luxor

Overview:

Our day starts with an early breakfast so we make our way to visit Karnak Temple at sunrise, also known as “the Temple of Temples.” It is the largest place of worship ever built. Its ancient name *Ipet-isut* means “the most sacred of places.” The temple, or, more correctly, the complex of temples, was built more than 2,000 years ago under generations of Pharaohs. One spectacular feature within the temple is the great

“Hypostyle Hall,” an incredible forest of giant pillars covering an area larger than the whole of Notre Dame Cathedral. Afterwards we will visit the Luxor Museum.

After lunch, we cross to the West Bank and visit the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut. This beautiful monument rises out of the desert plain in a series of terraces and merges with the sheer limestone cliffs that surround it. On the way back to our hotel, we stop at the famed Colossi of Memnon, two statues of Amenhotep III measuring 66 feet and weighing 1,000 tonnes. These colossal statues were known by the ancient Greeks to emit haunting voices at dawn. Though damaged by nature and ancient tourists, the statues are still impressive. Later on, we visit the Souk (market) of Luxor and return to our hotel.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

Sonesta St. George Hotel or similar

Day 8

Locations: Nile Cruise

Overview:

After breakfast, we travel from Luxor by coach to Denderah, a distance of around 52 kilometres. Here we visit the Ptolomaic temple of the goddess Hathor. This incredible temple features a round ceiling covered in astronomical representations of the zodiac constellations. The temple was buried in sand up until the mid 1800s, when it was recovered. Two Roman fountains flank the path leading to the temple’s massive entry gate. The catacombs that run under the temple contain particularly enigmatic hieroglyphs and inscriptions. A packed lunch will be serven en route and later in the afternoon we board our cruise today to sail for to Aswan.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

04 nights aboard Nile Cruise MS Tulip or similar

Day 9

Locations: Nile Cruise

Overview:

After breakfast, we visit the Museum of Mummification. In the era of the Pharaohs, it was believed that Pharaohs' corpses needed proper care so that they would be able to carry out their new duties as king of the dead. If a kingly corpse was not properly preserved, it was believed that the royal cycle would be broken and disaster would befall Egypt. To prevent such a catastrophe, each dead Pharaoh was mummified to preserve his body. Everything the king would need in his afterlif,e such as furniture, food, and doll-like representations of servants was provided in their tombs in grave vessels made of clay, stone, and gold, so that his body would continue to receive food offerings long after his death. After our visit to the Museum of Mummification, we eat lunch on board the cruise while we sail to Esna.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

MS Tulip or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Nile Cruise

Overview:

After breakfast on board the boat, we set out by horse-drawn carriage to visit the Temple of Horus om Edfu, which is among the most perfectly preserved of all the Nile Temples. Horus, also known as Haroeris, was the falcon-headed solar war god. We will return to our cruise vessel by carriage and sail to Kom Ombo to see the dual temple of Sobek the crocodile god and the god Haroeris. The temple honours two deities with doubled, symmetrical architecture. There are two entrances, two courts, two colonnades, and two halls. There may have even been two priesthoods that worshiped there as well. The temple sits on a rise with a beautiful view of the Nile waters. In ancient times the sacred crocodiles would have basked in the sun along the banks below. We have lunch and dinner on board, and stay overnight on the vessel as we

sail to Aswan.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

MS Tulip or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Nile Cruise

Overview:

After breakfast on board, we take a tour of Aswan High Dam, Egypt's contemporary example of building on a monumental scale. Next, we proceed to the granite quarries that supplied the ancient Egyptians with most of the hard stone used in pyramids and temples. The quarries still hold the Unfinished Obelisk, which was possibly intended as a companion to the Lateran Obelisk, originally at Karnak but now in Rome. It would have weighed over 1,100 tonnes and would have been the world's largest piece of stone ever handled. We will continue by a short motorboat ride to the Temple of Philae on the island of Agilka. The temple was dedicated to Isis, sister/wife of Osiris and patroness of the Ptolemaic rule.

In the afternoon, we sail around Elephantine Island on a Felucca, which is a traditional Egyptian sail boat. Elephantine Island is the largest of the Aswan area islands, and it is the site of some of the most ancient remains in Egypt, with artifacts dating to pre-dynastic periods. In ancient times, the island was called Abu or Yabu, which means elephant, and the name lasts today with its modern name Elephantine, which is Greek for elephant. The name may indicate that the island was once a center for ivory trading.

Our voyage continues around Kitchener Island which is also known as Lord Kitchener's Botanical Garden, Plant Island, Gizirat al-Nabatat, Plantation Island, or Gizirat al-Bustan. Lord Kitchener moved there after he was given the island for his campaigns in the Sudan, which included the world's last cavalry charge at Omdurman which he participated in with the young Winston Churchill. Kitchener of Khartoum, as he was formally known, imported plants from around the world to create his famous garden. From the river, you can see the Aga Khan Mausoleum, an elegant pink granite structure built in the late 1950s. We return to our

cruise for dinner.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

MS Tulip or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Lake Nasser Cruise

Overview:

After breakfast, we disembark and take a bus journey to Abu Simbel (approx 4hrs), where we board a vessel on Lake Nasser for a 3 nights cruise. After check-in we enjoy lunch on the boat, before visiting the Abu Simbel Temple. We have dinner on board and spend the night on the boat in Abu Simbel.

Abu Simbel is 280 kilometres south of Aswan, and the site of the first coordinated international heritage preservation project. When the construction of the Aswan Dam threatened the temples with submersion in Lake Nasser, the Egyptian Government secured the support of UNESCO and launched a worldwide appeal to save them. During the salvage operation, which began in 1964 and continued until 1968, the two temples were dismantled and raised over 60 metres up the sandstone cliff, where they had been built more than 3,000 years before. Here they were reassembled, in the exact same relationship to each other and the sun, and covered with an artificial mountain. Most of the joins in the stone have now been filled by antiquity experts, but inside the temples it is still possible to see where the blocks were cut. One can also go inside the man-made dome and see an exhibition of photographs showing the different stages of the massive removal project.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

03 nights aboard Lake Nasser Cruise, MS Omar El Khayyam or similar

Day 13

Locations: Lake Nasser Cruise

Overview:

In the morning, we sail to the once fortified Kasr Ibrim, a significant archaeological site located on what is now an island. There, we take the opportunity to observe very rich fauna, including the last colonies of Nile crocodiles, a huge variety of birds, monitor lizards, gazelles, jackals, fennecs (small nocturnal foxes), and the famous Nile Perch. You will have the opportunity to view and take photos of the site from the sundeck.

In the afternoon, we head to Amada, where we see the temples of Amada and Derr as well the tomb of Penout.

Finally, in the evening, we will sail to Wadi El Seboua and pass the Tropic of Cancer. Lunch and dinner will be served on board.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

MS Omar El Khayyam or similar

Day 14

Locations: Lake Nasser Cruise

Overview:

Our breakfast will be followed by a morning visit to Wadi El Seboua, also called Valley of the lions, due to the sphinx-lined approach to the temple forecourts. There are two temples – Temple of El Seboua and Temple of Amun. Nearby we'll also visit the Temple of Dakka which was built during the Ptolemaic area in the 3rd century BC. These Wadi El Seboua temples were relocated in 1964 when they were threatened by the flooding from the construction of the Aswan Dam project. The US supported the Egyptian Antiquities Service on the move of the temples 4km west from their original location.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

MS Omar El Khayyam or similar

Day 15

Locations: Cairo

Overview:

In the morning we will visit the Temple of Kalabsha (also known as Temple of Mandulis), the temple was originally located at Bab at-Kalabsha (approx. 50km south of Aswan), and it was relocated to its current place over two years. After our visit we disembark and are transferred to Aswan airport for our flight to Cairo.

(B,D)

Accommodation:

01 night at Le Meridien Pyramids Hotel or similar

Day 16

Locations: Alexandria

Overview:

From Cairo, we drive 225km down the Desert Road south to Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt. Alexandria was built under Alexander the Great at the site of an old fishing village, which had a small harbour that was sheltered by the island of Pharos. Upon arrival in Alexandria, we will visit the Catacomb (Kom El Shoafa), which is a remarkable example of the Alexandrian blend of Greco-Roman and Egyptian styles, carved into 100 feet of solid rock and the Roman Amphitheatre. We have lunch en route.

Next, we visit the Alexandria Library, the origin of library techniques such as archival and cataloguing that are still used today. In antiquity, the Alexandria Library was the largest and most important library in the world. In April 2002, the library was reopened with the ambition of reclaiming its former glory and prestige. We continue to the Montazah gardens of the Montazah Palace. Originally built in 1892, the palace was the summer home of the Egyptian royal family.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

01 night at Helnan Palestine Hotel or similar

Day 17

Locations: Cairo

Overview:

This morning we continue our sightseeing and then drive back to Cairo, arriving at our hotel later in the afternoon. In the evening we enjoy our farewell dinner at the hotel.

(B,L,D)

Accommodation:

01 night at Le Meridien Pyramids Hotel or similar

Day 18

Locations: Cario

Overview:

After breakfast, we say our farewells and the tour draws to a close.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 10 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 7 night cruise on the Nile River and Lake Nasser in twin berth or single cabins.
- 17 breakfasts, 14 lunches, and 14 dinners.
- 2 internal flights.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Services of a group leader.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Meals other than specified.
- Costs of a personal nature.
- Visa service and fees.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.