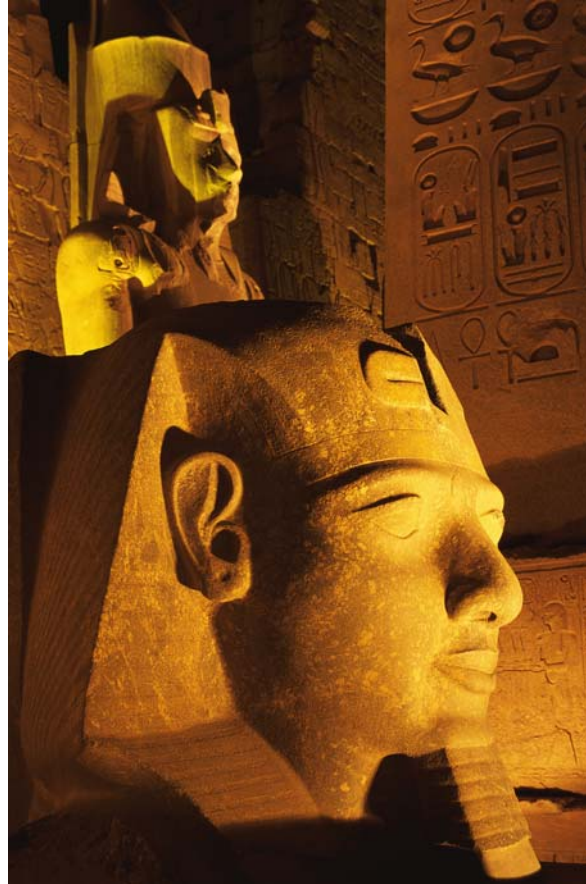


BIG FIVE
TOURS & EXPEDITIONS



EGYPT

Travel Guide

This 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



Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.

---Miriam Beard

Cairo ~ Elevation: 243 feet / Latitude: 30 08N / Longitude: 031 24E

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
66 / 48	70 / 48	75 / 52	90 / 62	90 / 62	95 / 64	95 / 71	95 / 71	89 / 68	86 / 64	75 / 57	70 / 50

Luxor ~ Elevation: 289 feet / Latitude: 25 40N / Longitude: 032 42E

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
73 / 43	77 / 45	84 / 52	93 / 61	102 / 70	104 / 73	104 / 73	105 / 73	100 / 72	95 / 84	84 / 55	75 / 46

WEATHER

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.

TIME ZONES & TRAVEL TIME

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

The flight time to Cairo from New York (East Coast) is approximately 14 hours, 35 minutes, plus whatever layover time you may have in Europe.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

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.

Visas: Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has 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>. Click on the "members" section to log in. For user name, enter **bigfive**, and the password is **55509**. You will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

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.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Every foreign visitor must register with the authorities within seven (7) days of arrival. Most hotels will arrange this for you, but do check for the triangular stamp in your passport, as there is a fine for not registering. There is no departure tax at this time.

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.

LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

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, film, cameras, binoculars, valuables, etc. All luggage should be locked and have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Note: Some companies such as Aurora Luggage (<http://www.auroraluggage.com/>) post the most current luggage requirements for major airlines on their web sites.

CAMERAS & FILM

Egypt is a photographer's paradise and the light is magical. Photographers should note, however, that they **cannot** photograph military establishments, airports, and strategic dams, bridges and buildings, including such places such as Aswan High Dam. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. Before photographing any religious festival or rural homestead, ask permission. Always ask people before taking pictures of people as some may find it offensive while others may charge a fee.

While photography is not allowed in the Egyptian Museum and a few of the tombs, it is allowed in most museums and sights, but you will need to buy a special ticket at each entrance. Prices vary but range from 5 LE for still

cameras in Memphis to 100 LE for video cameras in the Solar Boat. Please check with your guide.

To protect the ancient tombs and priceless works, it is forbidden to use a flash photography inside tombs so you will need high-speed film of 400 ASA or faster. Also, some places such as inside the pyramids do NOT allow the use of video cameras.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out any problems.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is a good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. A zoom lens in the 70 to 200 mm range will help you capture the sights. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean and free of dust and dirt.

Film: We recommend that visitors bring plenty of film. You will undoubtedly shoot more pictures than you planned. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot one 36 exposure roll of film per day, and enthusiastic shooters will far exceed that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated or, at least, cool. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and/or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage.

Video: If you are planning to shoot video, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Video tape is not affected by airport x-ray - only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage video tape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts, but be prepared with plenty of batteries.

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries can be expensive.

HEALTH

Currently, no vaccinations are necessary for entry into Egypt if you are arriving from North America. If, however, you are entering from cholera or yellow fever areas, inoculations against those diseases are 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.

As with any foreign travel, visitors should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters that are recommended depending on your personal health profile. Pharmacies in Egypt are open from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM, and sell many drugs over the counter that require prescriptions in the U.S. The majority of Egyptian doctors speak English.

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 check the latest regulations with your local health office or *National Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA, 404-332-4559*, or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.org>.

Insurance: We strongly suggest that you acquire travel insurance before any international 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.

Note: Please be sure to take a sufficient supply of required prescription medicine with you and any over-the-counter items you feel necessary. Medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage for Customs inspections.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects.

Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.

- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eye shades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from general effects of jet lag after the flight.

SAFETY

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!

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S.

Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or at the Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page at <http://travel.state.gov>. You can also contact the U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20520. (202)647-4000. Their website is www.state.gov.

TRAVELER'S ETIQUETTE

We guarantee cultural differences between Western society and those of Africa and the Middle East. Throughout the continent, people possess attitudes toward time, business, politics, friendships, etc., that are very different from ours, and are governed by traditions, customs, and philosophies, some of which are thousands of years old. But this is all part of why we travel – to experience different cultures of the world. Observing simple rules of common courtesy as well as keeping a good attitude and your sense of humor will go a long way toward making your journey interesting and fun for all involved. Treat everyone as you would want to be treated. A little respect goes a long way.

BANKING / CURRENCY

The Egyptian pound (LE) is divided into 100 piastres (PT), and has notes for 25 and 50 piastres, 1, 5, 10, 20 and 100 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 mainly traveler's checks, along with some cash dollars in small denominations. Travelers' checks are accepted in banks and hotels, and more places are accepting major credit cards. Do not plan on using personal checks.

Independent exchange offices have speedier service than banks and often offer a better rate. Always keep your exchange receipts.

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.

BANKING & BUSINESS HOURS

Banks, offices, and often stores close for public holidays as well as for religious holidays.

Banks: 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. daily, closed Friday, Saturday, and most holidays. Banks in the airport and some major hotels in Cairo are open 24 hours.

Business: 8 a.m. to 4-5 p.m., closed Friday and most holidays, and some are also closed on Saturday.

Many grocery stores and gas stations are open 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

Government offices: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, closed Friday and most holidays.

Shops: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. in winter, and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. in summer. Many shops are closed on Sunday.

The Khan al-Khalili bazaar is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, but closed on Sunday.

Museums: Museums are generally open daily 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; other sites are usually open the same hours as the museums.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 7 -----Coptic Christmas Day.
Jan 21 -----Grand Feast.
Feb 10 -----Islamic New Year.
Apr 25 -----Sinai Liberation Day (Sinai only).
May 1 -----Labor Day.
May 2 -----Sham el-Nassim (Coptic Easter).
Jun 18 -----Liberation Day.
Jul 23 -----Revolution Day.
Aug 15 -----Wafa'a el Nil (Flooding of the Nile).
Sep 11 -----* Coptic New Year.
Oct 6 -----Armed Forces Day.
Oct 24 -----Suez Victory Day.
Nov 3 -----Bairam Feast (End of Ramadan).
Dec 23 -----Victory Day.

Note: (a)*These holidays are not official, although Coptic Christians may observe them. (b) Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes the Bairam Feast, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Some restaurants are closed during the day but most tourist attractions and hotels are not affected. Some disruption may continue into the 3-day Grand Feast itself.

COMMUNICATION

Languages: 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.

Telephones: Local telephone calls can be made from hotels, kiosks and phone boxes. International calls can be made from Telephone & Telegraph (TT) offices that are open 24 hours. TT offices send faxes cheaper than hotels.

Fax: Several of the major hotels in Cairo have introduced fax facilities; check with the hotel concerned before traveling.

Post: Most airmail letters to Europe take around a week to arrive. Mail to North America takes longer. We suggest you send mail from a main post office or a five-star hotel that should also sell stamps. Make the letter look as uninteresting as possible, avoiding inserting photographs or other items.

Internet: There are Internet cafes in the main cities, including Cairo, Alexandria, Dahab and Luxor. Tourists can also access the Internet in hotels.

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.

ARABIC

The following few words and phrases prove useful, but even they are not absolutely essential.

ENGLISH	ARABIC
hello / goodbye	sa-eeda
how are you?	ahlan-wa-sahlan
please	minfadlak
thank you	shukron
yes	aywa
no	la
good	kuwayyis
bad	battal
possible	mumkin
impossible	mish mumkin
never mind	ma-lesh
enough / stop	bass
I don't want any	ana mish eis
none	mafish
go away	emshee
to the right	yamein
to the left	shemal
straight ahead	ala-tool
near	urrayib
far	bi-eed
now	dilwaatee

CLOTHING

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.

Bear in mind that 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.

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.

Local Cuisine: 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.

Bread is one of the mainstays of Egyptian diets. A pita-style bread is the most common and is prepared with refined white flour or with coarse, whole wheat. *Aysh shams* is bread of leavened dough allowed to rise in the sun, and plain *aysh* comes in thin French-style loaves.

Native beans are another staple for most Egyptians. *Ful* beans can be boiled, with vegetables, and then mashed with onions, tomatoes, and spices. This mixture is often served with an egg for breakfast, without the egg for other meals. A similar sauce, cooked down into a paste, fills sandwiches sold on the street. *Ful* can also be soaked, minced, mixed with spices, formed into patties (called *ta'miyya* in Cairo and *falaafil* in Alexandria), and deep-fried. These patties, garnished with tomatoes, lettuce, and *tihina* sauce, are stuffed into *aysh* and sold on the street.

Molokhiyya is a green, leafy vegetable that is distinctively Egyptian, and is the basis for a traditional thick soup. Its leaves are chopped and stewed in chicken stock. It

may be served with or without chicken, rabbit, or lamb in it. This soup can also be served with crushed bread or over rice. If you're served it straight, it's polite to dunk bread.

Ruzz (rice) and bread are the main ingredients in Egyptian main courses, which may be served either as lunch or dinner. For most Egyptians, meat is a luxury and is used only in small amounts. It is cooked with vegetables, and served with or over rice. But meat dishes, on the other hand, comprise most restaurant fare.

Torly, a mixed-vegetable casserole or stew, is usually made with lamb, (only occasionally beef) and onions, potatoes, beans, and peas. Egyptian-style kebabs are made of chunks of lamb seasoned in onion, marjoram, and lemon juice, and then roasted over an open fire. *Kufta* is ground lamb flavored with spices and onions and rolled into long narrow balls and roasted. It is often served with kebabs. Pork is considered unclean by Muslims, but is readily available in restaurants as is beef.

Hamaam (pigeons) are raised throughout Egypt and many consider them a national delicacy. They are stuffed with seasoned rice and grilled. They are small so diners often order several. The best dishes are usually served in small, local restaurants where you may have to give the cook a day's notice (a good sign), *but beware--hamaam are occasionally served with their heads buried in the stuffing.*

Egyptians serve both freshwater and salt water fish under the general term of *samak*. The best fish seem to be near the coasts (ocean variety) or in Aswan, where they are caught from Lake Nasser. As well as common bass and sole, offerings include *gambari* (shrimp), *calamari* (squid), *gandofli* (scallops), and *ti'baan* (eel). The latter, a white meat with a delicate salmon flavoring, can be bought on the street already deep-fried.

Rice is often varied by cooking it with nuts, onions, vegetables, or small amounts of meat. *Bataatis* (potatoes) are usually fried but may also be boiled or stuffed. Egyptians stuff green vegetables with mixtures of rice. *Wara' enab*, for example, is boiled grape leaves filled with small amounts of spiced rice with or without ground meat. Westerners often know them by the Greek name of dolmadas or dolmas, but beware ordering them by that name; in Egypt, *doma* refers to a mixture of stuffed vegetables.

Native cheese, *gibna*, comes in two varieties: *gibna beida*, similar to feta, and *gibna rummy*, a sharp, hard, pale yellow cheese. These are normally used in salads and sandwiches. *Mish* is a spiced, dry cheese made into a paste and served as an hors d'oeuvre.

Egypt offers a wide variety of fresh fruits year-round, but since all are tree- or vine-ripened, only those in season appear in markets. In the winter, bananas, dates, and any of several varieties of oranges abound. Special treats are pink oranges with skin that looks like most oranges but the pulp is red and sweet. In summer, melon, peach, plum, and grapes are available. *Tin shawki* is a cactus fruit that appears in August or September.

Egyptian desserts of pastry or puddings are usually soaked with honey syrup. *Baklava* (filo dough, honey, and nuts) is one of the less sweet. *Fatir* are pancakes stuffed with everything from eggs to apricots. *Basbousa* is a sweet, is made of semolina pastry soaked in honey and topped with hazelnuts. *Umm ali*, named for Mamluk queen, is raisin cake soaked in milk and served hot. Egyptian rice pudding is called *mahallabiyya* and topped with pistachios. Egyptian ice cream runs closer to ice milk or sherbet than cream. Most restaurants and many homes serve fresh fruits for desserts.

Cuisine section condensed from The Ministry of Tourism, Egypt & The Egyptian Tourist Authority website -- <http://www.touregypt.net>.

SHOPPING

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.

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 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 more popular are the larger ones with small wooden stands that are used as table.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS IN EGYPT

When Egyptians meet, they don't just say hello. Greetings are elaborate, 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, a common practice.

Tippling: Big Five has included the basic hotel service/porter gratuities on every tour. Further tipping is not compulsory, nor are there fixed amounts, however, the following is a general guideline to assist you.

- All hotel taxes and service charges have been included in the cost of your tour, so 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.
- The equivalent of \$2 to \$3 per person for full day tours.
- 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 *khawaga* (foreigner) and, therefore, 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.

EGYPTIAN WONDERS

Pyramids of Giza: The three Pyramids of Giza are the last surviving of *the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*. The pyramids stand on a hill overlooking the Nile Valley. The city has grown out to almost meet them. Although there are some 80 pyramids in Egypt, the three at Giza are the most important and famous.

The great pyramid of Cheops (Khufu) is first in both size and age, erected about 2690 BC, is. The Great Pyramid remains the most massive stone structure in the world. Its original height was 481 feet, and its base covers 13 acres. It consists of an estimated 2.5 million tons of stone put together without mortar with such precision that not even a razor blade can be passed between them. Each stone weighs an average of 2.5 tons.

The interior contains several long empty corridors without decoration. Two openings pierce the entire structure and let in air from the outside.

Cheops' son, Khephren, built the second pyramid, slightly smaller in size, around 2650 BC. The third and smallest of the three was erected about 2600 BC, and named after Menkaru (Mycerinus).

The Sphinx: Five hundred feet southeast of the Great Pyramid is the fascinating Sphinx, the first large, royal statue known in ancient Egypt and one of the world's most significant monuments. Most scholars believe that it dates back to about 2500BC, the time of the Fourth Dynasty.

It portrays a recumbent lion with the head of a man. It was carved from natural rock. The body of the lion, the symbol of kingship, represented might. The Sphinx's human head symbolized intelligence. It has a total length of approximately 240 feet and is 66 feet tall at its highest point. The face alone measures 16.6 feet. The Sphinx faces east from where it was meant to watch the rising sun, the return of life, each day.

The image represented by the Sphinx is generally accepted to be the son of King Cheops, Chephren depicted as *Horus* presenting offerings to Ra, the sun god.

Sphinx is a Greek word, and was not originally used as the name of the statue. In the New Kingdom, around 1550BC, it was known as *Hor-em-akht*, 'Horus in the Horizon' or *Bw-Hol*, 'Place of Horus'.

Horus, originally a sky god, whose eyes were the sun and the moon, was often depicted as a falcon-headed man, and was revered as the protector of Kings. In the New Kingdom, the Sphinx became a symbol of kingship and many kings of this period built temples and *stelae* in the area surrounding the statue. Amenhotep II built a mud-brick temple to the northeast of the Sphinx. Rameses II, one of the ancient kingdom's most prolific builders, constructed an altar of granite between its paws. Ancient tablets also show images of worshippers presenting burnt offerings to the Sphinx.

The Sphinx once had a beard, pieces of which were found between the Sphinx's paws by the archaeologist Cavaglia in 1816. These fragments represent only about 15

percent of the original beard. Caviglia donated some of the fragments to the Cairo Museum; others can now be seen in the British Museum in London.

Mysteries and cryptic tales surrounding the Sphinx are numerous and legendary. One such apocryphal tale reported that a record of the lost city of Atlantis lies somewhere under the Sphinx's paws. Other believe a huge temple lies beneath the Sphinx itself. Stories of a tunnel stretching from the Sphinx to the pyramids have also been negated. In 1978, two passages were in fact discovered, one behind the head and another on the tail. But far from leading to the pyramids, these tunnels led under the monument and were made during the past century by treasure-hunters.

Preservation: Countless men and women have come to study this magnificent structure including French scholars accompanying Napoleon's army in 1798, and Baraize in 1926. Baraize was the first to begin restoration work. He used cement to restore the head, and cleared away sand around the Sphinx.

The most recent period of restoration began in 1953, continuing until the present day. The cement that was used in earlier attempts has now been found to be causing its own set of problems. The porous limestone of the statue allows the passage of air. But cement is non-porous and rigid and has caused changes in the basic proportions of the statue.

A rising water table has presented another problem. Water evaporates, leaving salts behind that interact badly with the limestone, causing the rock to become powdery and to crumble. Pollution from the nearby city of Cairo, together with heat, wind, sand, and humidity are all agents in the monument's slow destruction.

In 1982, stones were lost from the north paw and, in 1988, a large stone fell from the Sphinx's shoulder. From 1989 onwards, the restoration project entered a more enlightened phase, with more thought being given to the monument's long-term preservation in its original form.

Many agencies and individuals are actively dedicated to the preservation of this renowned monument. The true origin and purpose of the Sphinx remains a mystery, and it is perhaps a puzzle that may never be fully solved. Despite its fundamental enigma, the image of the Sphinx remains as a touchstone to ancient Egypt.

EGYPT: THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Located in the northeastern corner of Africa, Egypt covers an area of 386,000 square miles. It occupies 3.3 percent of Africa's land mass, but 95 percent of the population inhabits only about five percent of their country, mostly along the banks of the Nile River. The very existence of this country depends on the slender ribbon of the Nile, the world's longest river. The river runs through rainless Egypt from south to north, and irrigates the land like the blessed river that Muslims believe runs through the gardens of paradise. The Nile is more than 3,800 miles long, and for the last 1,600 miles of its course through the Sudan and Egypt, it has no tributaries.

The Nile made the development of civilization along the valley possible and the construction of Aswan High Dam made it feasible to grow three crops a year. Egypt's main crops include cotton, on which its 19th-century wealth was based, rice, sugar cane, grains, and beans. Agriculture now accounts for only 18% of the gross domestic product, industry for 30%, and services for 52%.

Western Desert: To ancient Egyptians, the west was the

place of the dead, so it must have seemed appropriate that the threats to Egypt's security often came out of the Western Desert. The desert here is relatively flat with depressions that have created oases.

Eastern Desert: Unlike the Western Desert, the narrow stretch of land between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea coast is mountainous. Its mountains rise to heights of 2,500 feet and are rich in gold and other minerals.

Holy Desert: The Sinai Desert offers an even more dramatic landscape than the Eastern Desert. The Sacred Mt. Sinai is where Moses is said to have received the Ten Commandments.

Cairo: Cairo, Egypt's capital and the largest city in Africa, has a population of 15 million people. It is the meeting place of Africa and Arabia, Europe and Asia. It has been the bank and the warehouse of east-west trade. Its strategic location made it the most convenient junction to ship goods from the East via the Red Sea. From there, products were carried overland the short distance to Cairo, where they were stored, bought, and sold. Finally, they were floated down the Nile to the Mediterranean and on to Europe.

Few capitals in the world have quite the same all-encompassing position as does Cairo today. Almost nothing happens in Egypt that doesn't happen in Cairo. It is Egypt's economic, political, administrative, cultural, educational, entertainment, military, transportation and historical center.

The great city has known many incarnations in its long history. The first is so ancient, historians do not know when it was started or by whom. Known simply as On in antiquity, but the Greeks called it Heliopolis, the city of the sun. It became the center of worship for Re, the sun god, reaching its peak around 2500 BC.

For hundreds of years, On possessed the ancient world's most advanced university. After the rise of Thebes, however, it lost its pre-eminence. Still, it remained an important center of the empire. After the Persians under Cambyses razed Heliopolis to the ground in 525 BC, the city's history was broken for a thousand years.

The Greeks followed the Persians, shifting the capital to Alexandria. From that point, Egypt was considered less a part of Africa and more a part of the Mediterranean community. At the same time, the reign of pharaohs ended and a European era began.

A thousand years later, Arabs streaked across the desert to pitch their tents at what had then become known as Fustat, forerunner of modern Cairo. This signaled the end of Greek culture and the Christian era in the region, and the beginning of a new Arab and Islamic Egypt.

Cairo continued to change and evolve over the following five centuries, expanding north along the Nile. But even after a thousand years, the city's greatest expansion has been in this century, and, more specifically, since World War II. Today Cairo stretches so far in each direction that the only place from which one can glimpse its great expanse is from the Tower of Cairo on the island of Gezira, in the middle of the Nile.

Luxor: The present day town of Luxor on the east bank of the Nile is situated 400 miles south of Cairo on the site of ancient Thebes, the capital of Egypt at its zenith during the Middle and New Kingdoms. The actual site of Thebes is said to have occupied all of the area between Luxor and Karnak. Today, the area contains ruins of the most gigantic monuments, statues, and temples in all Egypt. On the west bank of the

Nile is the world-famous Valley of the Kings, burial grounds for the great pharaohs. In nearby cliffs are the Tombs of the Nobles. Interior walls and ceilings are painted with beautifully detailed scenes and inscriptions in colors so vivid they could have been applied yesterday.

Dandera: Dandera was the capital of the sixth district of Upper Egypt under the Ptolemies. Here, the Temple of Hathor, is one of the best-preserved monuments in Egypt, built in the 1st century BC near the end of the Ptolemaic rule. It was dedicated to Hathor, goddess of heaven, joy and love, and patron deity of Dandera. It took about 100 years to build, and some parts were never completed. The temple is elaborately decorated.

Abydos: For centuries, Abydos was a place of pilgrimage, the tomb of Osiris was supposedly located in the area. It is situated on the site of the ancient city of This (Thinis), which was one of the earliest settlements of man in the Nile Valley. Tombs of the Pharaohs from the first Dynasty have been discovered here.

Esna: Located about 30 miles south of Luxor, the Temple of Khnum is Ptolemaic in origin. From other evidence, however, it appears an earlier temple was constructed by Thutmose III (1500 BC) on the same site. The drawings in this temple were the last representations of a pharaoh found in Egypt. The temple here is well preserved and restored.

Edfu: Located about halfway to Aswan on the left bank, approximately 70 miles south of Luxor. The ancient Greeks called the site Apollonopolis, after Apollo (or Horus) whose representation here is in the form of an eagle. The Temple of Horus is practically intact and is one of the finest examples of Ptolemaic art in Egypt. Edfu was almost completely buried in the sand until the 1860's. It is the best preserved temple in Egypt, and in fact, the best preserved temple of the ancient world found anywhere. Its foundation was laid in 237 BC but the temple was not completed until two centuries later. Like all major temples, it is built upon hallowed ground.

Kom Ombo: Located about 105 miles south of Luxor, Kom Ombo is situated on a hill overlooking the Nile at a point where the river makes a wide bend to the west. In ancient times, it was a strategic location on the desert route to Nubia and Ethiopia. The principal deities of the ancient town were Harwar, a hawk-headed god and Sobek, represented in the form of a crocodile. The Temple of Kom Ombo is dedicated to the two deities, and is unlike any other monument in Egypt. To avoid offending either god, a twin temple was constructed, the left half dedicated to Hathor, the right half to Sobek.

Aswan: From its beginning, Aswan located about 600 miles south of Cairo was the gateway to the south and the trade route from Egypt to Central Africa. The city has long been a favorite winter resort because of its dry climate and beautiful location. The late Aga Khan maintained a villa here and asked to be buried there upon his death. Every year since the

ancient times, the flooding of the Nile has been the Egyptians' main concern. The necessity to cope with the inundation led the ancient Egyptians to acquire mathematical, astronomical, and engineering knowledge far in advance of other civilizations. Planning for lean years during the years of plenty established law and order. With the building of the High Dam, the unpredictable behavior of the Nile was a thing of the past. Aswan, Egypt's southernmost town, is totally different from the rest of the country. It feels more African and the majority of its inhabitants are Nubians, darker and taller than Upper Egyptians. They speak a different language and have different customs. Even in ancient times, this is where Egypt ended and Nubia began. Aswan's position made it an important market for caravans passing with gold, slaves, incense, and ivory.

Abu Simbel: On the edge of the Nile, 768 miles south of Cairo, stands the Temple of Abu Simbel, the most colossal temple in all of Egypt, and one of the best preserved. Situated on the western bank of the river, it was carved out of the side of a sandstone rock cliff. It faces east to let the light of the rising sun penetrate the innermost sanctuary. The huge complex was built between 1300 and 1233 BC by one of the greatest pharaohs, Ramses II, and dedicated to the three principal gods of ancient Egypt. Four colossal statues of Ramses II in a seated position stand at the entrance, each more than 65 feet high. On the right and left of each statue are smaller statues of the royal family. From the facade to its innermost chamber, the temple measures 200 feet. The first room has a ceiling supported by eight columns faced with huge stones of Ramses II in the pose of the god Osiris. The ceiling and walls throughout the temple are beautifully decorated. The color in many places is still in excellent condition. In the centuries that followed, sands piled up around the temples until they were finally buried and forgotten.

In 1813 the Swiss explorer Burckhardt rediscovered them. It was not, however, until the building of the Aswan Dam and the publicity to save the monuments of Nubia that an avalanche of visitors fell upon this spot. Upon the completion of the new Aswan Dam, Nile waters inundated the area between Aswan and the Sudan border. Many groups worked in this area, making important finds and dismantling and transporting monuments and temples to other locations.

The most difficult of all these projects was saving the temples of Abu Simbel. The salvage project began in 1965, first by building a protective wall around them, then dismantling the temples. All 400,000 tons of stone were cut into sections that were crated and reassembled in the exact position as before at the top of the mountain cliff, ninety feet above the old site.

The project was executed with such precision that only an inch by inch examination of the stones reveals the salvage work.

