

Country Guide for

EGYPT



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Middle East, North Africa.

Ministry of Tourism
Misr Travel Tower, Abassia Square, Cairo, Egypt
Tel: (2) 684 1707 or 682 8439. Fax: (2) 859 551.
Web site: <http://www.touregypt.net>

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
26 South Street, London W1K 1DW
Tel: (020) 7499 3304. Fax: (020) 7491 1542. Opening hours: 0930-1630 Monday to Friday (1000-1500 during Ramadan).

Egyptian Consulate
2 Lowndes Street, London SW1X 9ET
Tel: (020) 7235 9719 or (09001) 887 777 (recorded visa information: calls cost 60p per minute).
Fax: (020) 7235 5684 or (09001) 669 902 (for visa application forms). Opening hours: Monday to Friday 0930-1230 (personal applications) and 1430-1600 (visa collection).

Egyptian State Tourist Office
Egyptian House, 3rd Floor, 170 Piccadilly, London W1V 9DD
Tel: (020) 7493 5283 or (09001) 600 299 (24-hour brochure service: calls cost 60p per minute) or (09001) 887 777 (visa information). Fax: (020) 7408 0295. Opening hours: Monday to Friday 0930-1630. E-mail: egypt@freenetname.co.uk
Web site: <http://www.touregypt.net>

British Embassy
7 Sharia Ahmad Ragheb, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt
Tel: (2) 794 0850/2. Fax: (2) 794 0859 (management and commercial) or 795 1235 (visa section). E-mail: webmaster@britishembassy.org.eg
Web site: <http://www.britishembassy.org.eg>
Consulates in: Alexandria, Luxor, Port Said and Suez.

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
3521 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 895 5400 or 966 6342 (consular section). Fax: (202) 244 4319 or 244 5131.

Egyptian Tourist Authority
630 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1706, New York, NY 10111
Tel: (212) 332 2570. Fax: (212) 956 6439. E-mail: egyptourst@aol.com

Egyptian Tourist Authority
8383 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 215, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, CA 90211
Tel: (323) 653 8815. Fax: (323) 653 8961. E-mail: egypt@etala.com
Web site: <http://www.egypttourism.org>

Embassy of the United States of America
5 Latin America Street, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt
Tel: (2) 795 7371. Fax: (2) 797 3200. E-mail: cacairo@state.gov

Web site: <http://www.usis.egnet.net/>

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
454 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6R3
Tel: (613) 234 4931. Fax: (613) 234 9347.
Consulate in: Montréal.

Egyptian Tourist Authority
1253 McGill College Avenue, Suite 250, Montréal, Québec H3B 2Y5
Tel: (514) 861 4420. Fax: (514) 861 8071. E-mail: eta@total.net
Web site: <http://www.touregypt.net>

Canadian Embassy
Arab International Bank Building, 5 Midan El Saraya el Kobra, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt
Tel: (2) 794 3110. Fax: (2) 796 3548. Web site: <http://www.canada-eg.com>

Country dialling code: 20.

2 GENERAL

Area: 1.002,000 sq km (386,874 sq miles).

Population: 62,056,000 (1998).

Population Density: 61.9 per sq km.

Capital: Cairo (El Qahira). Population: 6,789,000 (1996).

Geography: Egypt is bounded to the north by the Mediterranean, to the south by the Sudan, to the west by Libya, and to the east by the Red Sea and Israel. The River Nile divides the country unevenly in two, while the Suez Canal provides a third division with the Sinai Peninsula. Beyond the highly cultivated Nile Valley and Delta, a lush green tadpole of land that holds more than 90% of the population, the landscape is mainly flat desert, devoid of vegetation apart from the few oases that have persisted in the once fertile depressions of the Western Desert. Narrow strips are inhabited on the Mediterranean coast and on the African Red Sea coast. The coast south of Suez has fine beaches and the coral reefs just offshore attract many divers. The High Dam at Aswan now controls the annual floods that once put much of the Nile Valley under water; it also provides electricity.

Government: Republic. Head of State: President Muhammad Husni Mubarak since 1981. Head of Government: Prime Minister Atif Muhammed Ubaid since 1999.

Language: Arabic is the official language. English and French are widely spoken.

Religion: Islam is the predominant religion. All types of Christianity are also represented, especially the Coptic Christian Church.

Time: GMT + 2 (GMT + 3 from May to September).

Electricity: Most areas 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Certain rural parts still use 110-380 volts AC.

Communications:

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 20. Outgoing international code: 00.

Mobile telephone: Dual band, although coverage is limited to Cairo, Alexandria and along the north coast line of the Red Sea from Suez to Sham el Sheikh and the major towns along the Nile. Network providers include MobilNil and ClickGSM.

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

Telegram: International telegram services are available from the Central Post Offices in Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor and Aswan and main hotels.

Internet/E-mail: There are cybercafés in the main cities, including Cairo, Alexandria, Dahab and Luxor. Tourists can also access the Internet in hotels. The main ISPs are the national PTO, SOTELGUI, although there are two private ISPs BINTTA/MiriNet and ETI-Bull.

Post: The postal system is efficient for international mail. Airmail to western Europe takes about five days. There are Poste Restante facilities at the Central Post Office; a small fee is charged when mail is collected. All post offices are open daily 0900-1400 except Friday, and the Central Post Office in Cairo is open 24 hours.

Press: The most influential Egyptian daily is Al-Ahram; others include Al-Akhbar and several weekly and periodical publications. Two daily newspapers - Journal d'Egypte and Le Progrès Egyptien - are published in French. The English-language daily newspaper is the Egyptian Gazette. The Middle East Observer is the main weekly English-language business paper.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:

MHz17.8815.4211.869.630

Voice of America:

MHz17.8215.169.7606.160

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	Yes/1	No
Australian	Yes	Yes/1	No
Canadian	Yes	Yes/1	No
USA	Yes	Yes/1	No
OtherEU	Yes	Yes	No
Japanese	Yes	Yes	No

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the period of intended stay required by all.

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

- (a) nationals of Kuwait for stays of up to 6 months;
- (b) nationals of Bahrain, Djibouti, Guinea, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen for stays of up to 90 days;
- (c) nationals of Jordan (if holding a 5-year passport) for stays of up to 30 days;
- (d) cruise ship passengers entering Egypt at any port for a maximum stay of 3 days.

Note: Requirements for visas and other regulations are subject to change at short notice; check with the appropriate authority before travelling.

Types of visa and cost: Tourist and Business (Single- and Multiple-entry). Cost varies according to nationality. Nationals of Australia, New Zealand, and all EU countries except Germany: Tourist: £15 (Single-entry); £18 (Multiple-entry). Business: £53 (Single-entry); £91 (Multiple-entry). Business visas are cheaper for Canadian nationals. Nationals of the USA pay a standard rate of £12 for visas of any type. South African nationals obtain visas free of charge. Payment of fees is in cash or by postal order only; cheques will not be accepted. Processing fees for other nationals vary considerably; check with the appropriate Consulate (or Consular section of Embassy) for costs of visas. Visa fees are per passport, not per person.

Note: 1.: Nationals of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA can usually obtain visas on arrival at Cairo International Airport, provided holding passports valid for a minimum of 6 months. However, they should check with their airline that they will be permitted to board the aircraft without a visa. It is advisable to obtain visas in advance if possible.

Validity: Varies, but are usually valid for 6 months from the date of issue for stays of up to 3 months.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy).

Application requirements: (a) 1 passport-size photograph. (b) Valid passport. (c) Application form. (d) Business letter for Business visa. (e) Postal applicants must enclose a registered- or recorded-delivery, self-addressed envelope and pay by postal order only.

Working days required: Up to 7.

Note: Visitors from all countries except Canada, the EU and the USA must register with the police within a week of arrival in Egypt, although this service is usually undertaken by the hotel.

4 MONEY

Currency: Egyptian Pound (££) = 100 piastres. Notes are in denominations of ££100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 25, 20, 10 and 5 piastres.

Currency exchange: Available at banks and official bureaux de change. There are five national banks and 78 branches of foreign banks.

Credit cards: MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Currency restrictions: There are no restrictions on the import or export of foreign currency provided it is declared on an official customs form. The import or export of local currency is limited to E£1000.

Banking hours: 0830-1400 Sunday to Thursday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Egypt without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 25 cigars or 200g of tobacco; 1 litre of alcoholic beverages; a reasonable amount of perfume and 1 litre of eau de cologne.

Notes: All cash, travellers cheques, credit cards and gold over E£500 must be declared on arrival. Persons travelling with valuable electronic equipment such as cameras, video cameras or computers may be required to list these in their passports in order to ensure that they will be exported on departure.

Prohibited items: Narcotics, firearms and cotton; for a full list, contact the Egyptian State Tourist Office.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Mar 6-9 2001 Grand Feast. Mar 25 Islamic New Year. Apr 14-16 Sham el-Nassim (Egyptian Easter). Apr 25 Sinai Liberation Day. May 1 Labour Day. Jun 4 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Jun 18 Liberation Day. Jul 23 Revolution Day. Oct 6 Armed Forces Day. Dec 18-20 Bairam Feast (End of Ramadan). Dec 23 Victory Day. Feb 23-26 2002 Grand Feast. Mar 14 Islamic New Year. Apr 25 Sinai Liberation Day. May 1 Labour Day. May 6 Sham el-Nassim (Egyptian Easter). May 24 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad. Jun 18 Liberation Day. Jul 23 Revolution Day. Oct 6 Armed Forces Day. Dec 7-9 Bairam Feast (End of Ramadan). Dec 23 Victory Day. Dec 18-20 Bairam Feast (End of Ramadan).

Note: 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. For more information see the World of Islam appendix.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	1
Cholera	Yes	2

Typhoid and Polio	Yes	-
Malaria	3	-
Food and Drink	4	-

1: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers over one year of age coming from infected areas (see below). Those arriving in transit from such areas without a certificate will be detained at the airport until their onward flight departs. The following countries and areas are regarded by the Egyptian health authorities as being infected with yellow fever: all countries in mainland Africa south of the Sahara with the exception of Lesotho, Mozambique, Mauritania, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe (and including Mali, Niger and Chad); Sudan south of 15°N (location certificate issued by a Sudanese official is required in order to be exempt from vaccination certificate); São Tomé e Príncipe. Also Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Peru, Surinam, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela.

2: Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is no longer a condition of entry to Egypt. However, sporadic cases of cholera have been reported and precautions could be considered. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness. See the Health appendix for further information.

3: Limited malaria risk, in the malignant falciparum and benign vivax forms, exists from June to October in the El Faiyoum area. There is no risk in Cairo or Alexandria at any time.

4: Mains water is normally chlorinated, and whilst relatively safe may cause mild abdominal upsets. Bottled water is available and is advised for the first few weeks of the stay. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled. Drinking water outside main cities and towns carries a greater risk and should always be sterilised.

Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information consult the Health appendix. Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present in the Nile Delta and the Nile Valley. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water. Swimming pools which are well-chlorinated and maintained are safe. Filariasis may occur in the Nile Delta. Precautions against hepatitis A and E and diphtheria should be considered.

Health care: Public hospitals and chemists are open to tourists. Health insurance is strongly advised.

Travel - International

AIR: The national airline is Egypt Air (MS). All main carriers service Egypt, including British Airways, Cathay Pacific, KLM, Lufthansa, JAL, Olympic Airways and Swiss Air. Charter services fly direct from Gatwick to Egypt.

Approximate flight times: From London to Cairo is 4 hours 45 minutes (from London to Luxor is 5 hours 35 minutes), from Los Angeles is 16 hours 40 minutes, from New York is 14 hours 35 minutes, from Singapore is 11 hours 45 minutes, and from Sydney is 21 hours 30 minutes.

International airports: Cairo International (CAI), 22km (14 miles) northeast of the city at Heliopolis (minimum travel time - 30 minutes, much longer during the rush hour). There are coach services every 5-6 minutes, and taxis are available. Special limousines are offered by local and international operators. Hotel cars may also be available. Airport facilities include incoming and outgoing 24-hour duty-free shops selling a wide range of goods, several 24-hour car hire firms, post office, 24-hour bank/bureau de change, 24-hour restaurants and bar, hotel reservation service, souvenir shops, bookshop and travel insurance services.

El Nouzha (ALY) is 7km (4 miles) southeast of Maydan al-Tahir (Alexandria). Regular bus services to Alexandria and to Cairo. Special limousines, local taxis and hotel cars are available. Airport facilities include 24-hour incoming and outgoing duty-free shops, 24-hour car hire, 24-hour bank and exchange services, and a 24-hour bar and restaurant.

Luxor Airport (LXR) is 5.5km (3.5 miles) from Luxor. There is a regular bus service to the city centre. Special limousine and local taxi services are available. Airport facilities include car hire, bank and exchange services, and a bar and restaurant. Improvement works have taken place and are expected to continue to meet the increasing tourist flow.

SEA: The main coastal ports are Alexandria, Nuweiba, Port Said and Suez. The Saudi Sea Transport Company runs a regular car ferry service between Suez and Jeddah. A steamer service usually travels three times a week up the Nile between Wadi Halfa (Sudan) and Aswan, but is occasionally suspended. For further information contact the Nile Navigation Company Limited and The Nile Maritime Agency. The Black Sea Shipping Company sails from Odessa. Other main passenger lines are Egyptian Navigation Company, Grimaldi/Siosa, North African Tourist Shipping, Rashid and Prudential.

RAIL: There are no international rail links to any of Egypt's northwestern neighbours. The railheads at Aswan and Wadi Halfa, Sudan are connected by a ferry across Lake Nasser.

ROAD: The road border between Libya and Egypt is open. There are two border crossings between Israel and Egypt: one runs from Cairo via El Arish to Rafiah on the north Sinai coast, and the other from Cairo via Suez and Taba to Eilat. Daily coaches leave early in the morning from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in Israel for travel via El Arish/Rafiah to Cairo and vice versa. Fares are US\$25-30 one way and US\$45-50 return. There are no direct buses from Eilat to Cairo; it is necessary to change in Taba. The crossing from to Rafiah is open 0900-1700. The crossing from Taba to Eilat is now open 24 hours a day. Passengers in taxis and rented cars are not permitted to cross the borders between Israel and Egypt. Privately owned vehicles may be taken across other borders, provided the appropriate documentation is obtained. All private vehicles entering Egypt must have a 3 month triptyche or Carnet de passage en douane from an automobile club in the country of registration. The driver must hold an international drivers licence. Visas should normally be obtained in advance; however, travellers entering Egypt via Taba may be able to obtain visas at the border. Contact the Tourist Office for further details of entry restrictions.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Egypt Air operates daily flights between Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor, Aswan, Abu Simbel, and Hurghada; and it flies twice a week to Kharga Oasis. For information on schedules, contact local offices. Air Sinai operates services on the following routes: Cairo to Tel Aviv; Cairo to El Arish; Cairo to St Catherine and Eilat (1 hour 15 minutes); and Cairo to Ras El Nakab, Luxor and Sharm el-Sheikh.

SEA/RIVER: There is a steamer service linking Hurghada with Sharm el-Sheikh in Sinai. There are also two new ferries operating a daily ferry service (travel time - 5-6 hours). The traditional Nile sailing boats, feluccas, can be hired by the hour for relaxed sailing on the Nile. Regular Nile

cruises operate between Luxor and Aswan, and sometimes between Cairo and Aswan usually for the following periods: four nights, five days (standard tour); six nights, seven days (extended tour), and 14 nights, 15 days (full Nile cruise). There are over 160 individually-owned boats of all categories operating on the Nile. The Sudanese railway system operates a steamer service from Aswan to Wadi Halfa.

RAIL: A comprehensive rail network offering a high standard of service is operated along an east-west axis from Sallom on the Libyan border to Alexandria and Cairo, and along the Nile to Luxor and Aswan. There are also links to Port Said and Suez. There are frequent trains from Cairo to Alexandria, and also several luxury air-conditioned day and night trains with sleeping and restaurant cars from Cairo to Luxor and Aswan for the Nile Valley tourist trade. For the overnight train, bookings should be made one week in advance through a travel agent or through Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits Egypte, Ramses Station, Ramses Square, Cairo (tel: (2) 574 9274 or 574 9474; fax: (2) 574 9074). On Egyptian state railways, children under 4 years travel free. Children aged 4-9 years pay half fare. Holders of Youth Hostel cards can get reductions. Vouchers may be obtained on presentation of a membership card from the Egyptian Youth Hostels Travel Bureau, 7 Sharia Dr Abdel Hamid Saiid, Maarouf, Cairo (tel: (2) 577 9773; fax: 505 8093). For details of other possible reductions, contact the Tourist Office.

ROAD: Traffic drives on the right. Besides the Nile Valley and Delta, which hold an extensive road network, there are paved roads along the Mediterranean and African Red Sea coasts. The road looping through the Western Desert oases from Asyut to Giza is now fully paved. The speed limit is usually 90kph (56mph) on motorways and 100kph (62mph) on the desert motorway from Cairo to Alexandria (there are substantial fines for speeding). Private motoring in the desert regions is not recommended without suitable vehicles and a guide. For more details, contact the Egyptian Automobile Club in Cairo. Bus: The national bus system serves the Nile Valley and the coastal road. Main routes are from Cairo to St Catherine, Sharm el-Sheikh, Dahab, Ras Sudr, El-Tour, Taba and Rafah; from Suez to El-Tour and Sharm el-Sheikh; and from Sharm el-Sheikh to Taba, Neweiba, El-Tour, Dahab and St Catherine. Taxi: These are available in all the larger cities and are metered (see also Urban below). Long-distance group taxis for all destinations are cheap. Fares should be agreed in advance. Car hire: This is available through Avis, Europcar, Hertz, Budget, Thrifty and local companies. Documentation: Visitor's own insurance and an International Driving Permit are required to drive any motor vehicle. Carnet de Passage or a suitable deposit is necessary for the temporary import of visitor's own vehicle. All vehicles (including motorcycles) are required by law to carry a fire extinguisher and a red hazard triangle.

URBAN: The government-owned Cairo Transport Authority runs buses and tram services in Cairo and also operates cross-Nile ferries. There is a central area flat fare. In addition, there are other buses and fixed-route shared taxi and minibus services run by private operators. Vehicles normally wait at city terminals to obtain a full load, but there are frequent departures. Fares are three to four times higher than on the buses. Cairo's suburban railways have been upgraded to provide a rapid transit network, including Africa's first underground railway. Alexandria also has buses and tramways, with first- and second-class accommodation and distance-regulated fares.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Cairo to other major cities/towns in Egypt.

Air	Road	Rail	River
Alexandria	0.30	3.00	2.30
Luxor	1.00	12.00	17.00
Aswan	2.00	16.00	19.00
Port Said	0.45	3.00	3.00
St Catherine	0.30	4.00	--

Hurghada1.008.00--
Sharm el-Sh'k1.307.00--
Marsa Matr'h1.305.009.00-
Areish1.005.009.00-
Ismailia-2.002.30-
Suez-4.004.00-
New Valley2.0012.00--

Note: a. Overnight journey. b. For further information, see Sea/River section.

8 ACCOMMODATION

Tourism is one of Egypt's main industries and accommodation is available around all the major attractions and the larger cities. Egypt has all types of accommodation on offer, from deluxe hotels to youth hostels, at prices to suit all pockets.

HOTELS: The main cities have moderately priced quality hotels, which must be booked well in advance, especially during the winter months. Smaller hotels are very good value. For further information and the 'Egyptian Hotel Guide' contact the Egyptian Hotel Association, 8 El Sad El Ali Street, Dokki, Cairo (tel: (2) 335 9591; fax: (2) 360 8956 or 361 1333; e-mail: eha@idsc.gov.eg).

Note: Hotel bills are subject to a tax and service charge of 12%.

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: Travel through the desert wilderness is available through local tour operators. It should be borne in mind that desert travel is extremely hazardous without an experienced guide, ample supplies of water and a vehicle in good mechanical condition. There are only a few official campsites in the country. Tourists are advised to contact the local tourist offices on arrival for further details. The tourist office in Cairo is at 5 Adly Street, Cairo (tel: (2) 391 3454). There is also an office at Cairo International Airport.

Youth Hostels: There are 15 youth hostels altogether, which are located mainly in large towns and popular tourist regions. Further information can be obtained from the Egyptian Youth Hostels Association, 1 El-Ibrahmy Street, Garden City, Cairo (tel: (2) 796 1448; fax: (2) 795 0329; e-mail: eyhamo@usa.net).

9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

The major attractions in Egypt are Cairo, Alexandria and the northern coast, Nile cruises, Luxor, Abu Simbel, Aswan and the Pharaonic treasures, the Sinai peninsula, and the fabulous Red Sea coastline. Egypt's combination of beach resorts and ancient heritage make it one of the most exciting holiday centres within easy reach of Europe.

Cairo

The capital is a city of astonishing diversity and vitality, uniting elements of Africa, the Orient and Western Europe. Sprawling around the Nile and up towards the Delta, Cairo has a population of around 7 million. It takes several days to visit it properly.

The Egyptian Museum in Tahir Square contains more than 100,000 relics. It houses the largest and one of the most impressive collections of local and international Pharaonic and Byzantine art

and sculpture, including statues of Akhenaten and the celebrated treasures of Tutankhamun. Nearby is Tehrir (Liberation) Square, the focal point of central Cairo. This area, characterised by tall French neo-classical city blocks, was built in the middle of the 19th century by Pasha Ismail, whose ambitious plans to modernise his country reduced it to a state of bankruptcy (which lasted until Nasser came to power in 1952). The Cairo Tower, near the Gezira Sports Club on an island in the Nile, affords a wonderful view of the city; it stands amidst the elegant town-houses of a wealthy neighbourhood. By contrast, there is the hustle and bustle of the Khan-el-Khalili Bazaar, where one can bargain for traditional leather work, brassware and excellent inexpensive tailor-made clothing. It is set in an area of narrow winding streets where the local inhabitants will always approach the traveller in the hope of doing a little business. A trip around Old Cairo is an enchanting return to a former age, and there are many fine examples of Islamic art and architecture. The Citadel and nearby Al Rif'ai and Sultan Hassan mosques should not be missed; but numerous less well-known attractions may be found around almost every corner (Cairo has over 1000 mosques). There is also a Coptic Museum and an Islamic Arts Museum. About 35km north west of Cairo City centre is a camel market, where, for a small entrance fee, tourists can enter.

In Pharaonic times, the east bank of the Nile was for the living and the west was for the dead. Today's west bank is the most modern part of the city - site of the university, the wealthy suburb of Zamalek and the apartment blocks of Dokki - but where the city stops, the Egypt of the fellahin (peasants) abruptly starts - date palms, canals, mud villages and lush green fields. To the south, the transition is even more startling. An area of casinos and luxury hotels suddenly gives way to rolling sand dunes and, towering above them, the magnificent Pyramids of Giza. There are three, the largest being over 137m (450ft) high and containing some three million huge blocks of stone. One can explore deep inside the pyramids by means of labyrinthine tunnels and staircases. Adjacent is the massive Sphinx, much admired by Alexander, Caesar, Cleopatra and Napoleon. The 10-year Sphinx restoration project is complete. Camels and horses may be hired and there is a golf course nearby. The night skyline is illuminated by a light show (an unusual but effective way to see the pyramids and Sphinx).

A new archaeological site at Dahshur, Egypt's capital during the Old Kingdom, is to be developed as part of an improvement plan, including the provision of tourist and cultural services. A satellite survey will be carried out to discover the buried monuments in the area, known as the Archaeological Golden Treasure Area, which was largely unexcavated as it was a military site. At nearby Sakkara, the step pyramids of Zoser are even older than those at Giza and there are fine wall reliefs, particularly in the Necropolis. An important tomb of the sixth dynasty has been discovered west of Sakkara Pyramid. Inscriptions on the facade indicate the owner of the tomb belonged to the royal family. Exquisite scenes depicting daily life adorn the walls of the 7m-long burial chamber. Donkey rides can be taken to Sakkara from Giza. 50km (30 miles) further south is Al Faiyoun, a salt-water lake visited by Herodotus in 450BC (malaria is a serious risk here).

Nile Cruises

A number of tour operators offer Nile cruises, the majority operating from Luxor to Aswan or vice versa. Some trips include an extension to Abydos and Denderha. The Luxor/Aswan cruise lasts four nights/five days; the cruise which includes Abydos and Denderha lasts six nights/seven days; while one or two companies operate long tours on special departure dates only to Minia (a charming town with Roman, Greek and Pharaonic ruins, including the Beni Hassan archaeological area) and/or through to Cairo. For further information, see also the Sport & Activities section.

The Northern Coast

Alexandria: Alexandria is more modern than Cairo and is graced by numerous Hellenistic and Roman relics from the age when it was the cultural capital of Europe. It remains a popular holiday resort for Egyptians. The New Alexandria Library, overlooking the Mediterranean at

Shatby, is to provide international scholars access to unique collections and materials (web site: <http://www.bibalex.gov.eg>). It is circular in design, partly submerged in a pool of water, an image of the Egyptian sun. Archaeologists have discovered ruins of the ancient city of Heraklion under the sea, three and a half miles from the coast of Alexandria. Some of the artefacts, which include at least a hundred statues are housed in the Greco-Roman Museum.

The northern beaches stretch from the Libyan border to the Nile Delta and along the north of Sinai. West of Alexandria, the coast road leads to the Mersa Matruh resort, which has a very fine beach; from there it is possible to head inland to visit the Siwa Oasis (site of Amon's oracle, visited by Herodotus and Alexander the Great) on the Libyan border. Two castles are to be restored at Siwa - one witnessed the crowning of Alexander and the other, called Ogoremy, served as the temple for prophesies. There are other fine beaches at El Alamein (where World War II relics are on view), Baltim, Gamasa, Sidi Kreir and Ras El Bar, where the temperatures are warm enough for bathing until November.

Luxor

Luxor - Homer's 'Hundred-gated Thebes' - is about 500km (300 miles) south of Cairo and **contains a vast conglomeration of ancient monuments:** the Temples of Amon at Karnak; colossal statues, obelisks and halls (there is, as at Giza, a son et lumière show); the Valley of the Queens and the Valley of the Kings, where 64 of the Pharaohs are depicted in an enormous relief hewn from the rock. An American team led by Professor Kent Weeks discovered 46 more chambers in the tomb of Ramses II's sons in 1997 in addition to the 60 chambers discovered in 1995 during cleaning works. A total of 108 chambers are located in six passages, each extending to 48m (150ft), making it the largest tomb discovered so far. The other temples, tombs and monuments are equally awe-inspiring. Visitors have the opportunity to view these monuments from a hot-air balloon. Many specialist guidebooks are available; the Egyptian State Tourist Office can also supply more detailed information.

Aswan

As well as being a beautiful winter resort with many hotels, Aswan has a huge array of temples and monasteries, the Elephantine Island's ancient Nilometre, and the Aswan High Dam, one of the three largest dams in the world. 2km (1.2 miles) south of Aswan is Philae, a classical temple considered to be sufficiently important to be saved from the flooding caused by the opening of the Dam. Further to the south is Abu Simbel - surviving largely thanks to a UNESCO-backed project in the 1960s - with the two magnificent temples of Rameses II. 120km (75 miles) north of Aswan is the temple of Edfu, one of the best preserved in Egypt. There are three weekly sailings from Aswan down the Nile into Sudan.

Sinai & The Red Sea

Sinai's diving resorts include Ras Muhammed, Sharm el-Sheikh, Dahab, Neweiba and Arish, most with diving centres offering lessons at all levels. The views across the Gulf of Aqaba to the Saudi Mountains are breathtaking and temperatures are warm until very late in the year. Other watersports are on offer and the whole Sinai east coast has beach resorts with hotels and beach huts where the desert merges into beach fringed by palm trees. Ras Muhammed, the southernmost point of the peninsula, is the site of the world's most northerly mangrove forest. In the interior there are the rugged and scenic Sinai Mountains, amongst which is the Mount Sinai of the Bible. Nearby is the famous St Catherine's Monastery. This was first settled by hermits in the 4th century and attracted an increasing number of pilgrims, particularly after the construction of a sanctuary in 337. Almost every subsequent century saw additions to the architecture of the settlement, as well as intermittent periods of decline and abandonment. Many of the bequests made to the monastery over the years are also on display in the museum. Other

attractions in Sinai include Saladin's massive Qalaat al-Gundi fortress, one of the region's many reminders of the Crusaders' presence in the Middle East during the 12th and 13th centuries; and Al-Tur, on the Red Sea, capital of South Sinai.

The western coast of the Red Sea has become increasingly popular in recent years. Hurghada, some 400km (250 miles) south of Suez, is a well-equipped diving resort with marvellous coral reefs. There is a modern tourist village at El Gufton nearby.

10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Diving: Diving: The Red Sea coast and the Gulf of Aqaba are deservedly popular among divers, owing to their rich marine life and shipwrecks. A large variety of coral, tiny florescent fish, giant turtles, Napoleon wrasse and nurse sharks are just some of the species inhabiting the area. The main dive centres are on the Sinai Peninsular at Sharm El Sheikh and Ras Muhammad, a national park since 1983. Equipment may be hired and training is available for all levels of ability. Near Sharm El Sheikh there is a famous Second World War wreck, the SS Thistlegorm and the nearby Straits of Tirian host spectacular offshore reefs, as well as two more wrecks. Live-aboard packages are available from some operators. Conditions vary according to the time of year: in February and March, the extra plankton in the water attracts manta rays and in November and December, the visibility is particularly good. A twice weekly tour for E\$5 can be taken to four islands in the Red Sea, namely Abou Kizan, The Emerald, The Two Brothers and The Rocky Island. For further information, see the Resorts & Excursions section or contact the Egyptian State Tourist Office (see address section).

Note: Note: The Red Sea coral reefs are all protected by law and persons removing 'souvenirs' will incur heavy fines.

Nile cruises: Nile cruises: There are numerous cruise steamers on the Nile, the majority of which provide a very high standard of service. Vessels usually carry between 50 and 100 passengers, with the facilities varying according to the size of the individual vessel. Contacting a specialist operator is recommended for choosing a Nile cruise. Normally visitors can only book the complete package through the tour operators. Traditional felluccas may also be chartered. For further information, see Nile Cruises in the Resorts & Excursions section or contact the Egyptian State Tourist Office (see address section).

Tennis, golf, croquet: Tennis, croquet and horseriding clubs are found in both Alexandria and Cairo. For details, ask at the hotel. There is a public golf club at the foot of the Giza pyramids and there is a Gary Player course at Soma Bay on the Red Sea. Most courses either adjoin or are part of hotels, for instance the Mena House which is 15 mintues from Cairo. Other courses include the Alexandria Sporting Club (30 mintues from Alexandria); Jolie Ville (5 minutes from Sharm el Sheikh); Royal Valley Golf Course (25 mintues from Luxor); The Steigenberger Golf Club (30 mintues from Hurghada). The Egyptian State Tourist Office can provide further information (see address section).

11 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Egyptian cuisine is excellent, combining many of the best traditions of Middle Eastern cooking, and there are both large hotel restaurants and smaller specialist ones throughout the main towns. Some of the larger hotels in Cairo and its environs have excellent kitchens serving the best cosmopolitan dishes. In the centre of Cairo, American-style snack bars

are also spreading. Local specialities include fowl (bean dishes), stuffed vine leaves, roast pigeon, grilled aubergines, kebabs and humus (chickpeas). Restaurants have waiter service, with table service for bars. Drink: Although Egypt is a Muslim country, alcohol is available in café-style bars and good restaurants.

Nightlife: Sophisticated nightclubs, discotheques and good restaurants can be found in Cairo and Alexandria. There is nightlife in Luxor and Aswan, including barbecues along the Nile.

Shopping: The most interesting shopping area for tourists in Cairo is the old bazaar, Khan-el-Khalili, specialising in reproductions of antiquities. Jewellery, spices, copper utensils and Coptic cloth are some of the special items. There are also modern shopping centres available, particularly near Tehrir Square. Shopping hours: Winter: 0900-1900 every day except Monday and Thursday when shops close at 2000. During Ramadan, hours vary, with shops often closing on Sunday as well. Summer: 0900-1230 and 1600-2000 Saturday to Thursday (closed Sunday).

Special Events: For a complete list containing organiser details, contact the Egyptian State Tourist Office (see address section). The following is a selection of the major festivals and other special events celebrated in Egypt during 2001:

Jan 2001 International Sailing Championship, Safaga. Feb Cairo International Book Fair; International Fishing Competition, Hurghada; International Egyptian Marathon, Luxor. Feb 22 Ramses Festival, Abu Simbel. Apr International Camel Race Competition, Sharm el-Sheikh. Jun El-Ahram International Squash Competition, Giza. Jul Shopping and Tourism Festival, Cairo. Aug International Song Festival, Cairo; International Folkloric Arts Festival, Ismailia. Sep International Cinema Festival, Alexandria; Wafaa El-Nil Festival, Cairo; Sharkya Festival for Arabian Horses. Oct International Nile Swimming Competition; Pharaohs Rally Festival, Giza. Oct 22 Ramses Festival, Abu Simbel. Nov Arab Horse Festival, Cairo. Nov 4 Tut Ankh Amoun Festival, Luxor. Dec International Cinema Festival, Cairo; International Rowing Festival, Cairo, Aswan and Luxor.

Social Conventions: Islam is the dominant influence and many traditional customs and beliefs are tied up with religion. The people are generally courteous and hospitable and expect similar respect from visitors. Handshaking will suffice as a greeting. Because Egypt is a Muslim country, dress should be conservative and women should not wear revealing clothes, particularly when in religious buildings and in towns (although the Western style of dress is accepted in the modern nightclubs, restaurants, hotels and bars of Cairo, Alexandria and other tourist destinations). Official or social functions and smart restaurants usually require more formal wear. Smoking is very common. Photography: Tourists will have to pay a fee of E£7.50-15.00 to take photographs inside pyramids, tombs and museums. Tipping: 10-12% is added to hotel and restaurant bills but an extra tip of 5% is normal. Taxi drivers generally expect 10%.

12 BUSINESS PROFILE

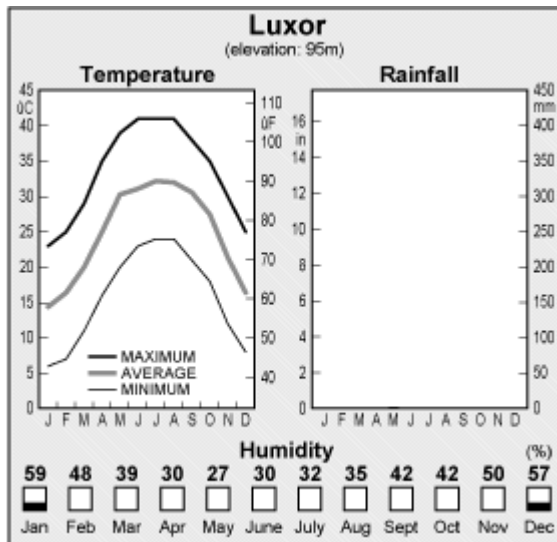
Economy: On taking power in the 1950s, Nasser quickly instituted a Soviet-style command economy which was closed to Western investment. After his death, his chosen model was gradually dismantled by his successor, Anwar Sadat, who followed a policy of 'infitah' (openness) towards investment. Egypt's economy underwent rapid growth during the 1970s with the swift expansion of the oil industry, tourism and the Suez Canal. Today, Egypt's major industries are textiles, fertilisers, rubber products and cement. There are also steel production works and several vehicle-assembly plants. Agriculture, which relies on irrigation from the Nile, employs one-third of the working population. The main crops are cotton, rice, wheat, sugar, maize and a range of fruit and vegetables. Egypt's major trading partners are the USA and the major EU economies (especially Italy and Germany). Expansion of the tourist sector has been hampered by

the Islamic fundamentalist campaign of violence. Foreign aid, especially from the USA, is an important source of government funds. Economic reform programmes pursued during the 1990s have enjoyed mixed success but the Egyptian economy is currently performing reasonably well with output growing at 6.5% annually.

Commercial Information: The following organisations can offer advice: Egyptian-British Chamber of Commerce, PO Box W1A, 4th Floor, 299 Oxford Street, London W1A 4EG (tel: (020) 7499 3100; fax: (020) 7499 1070); or Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce, 4 Midan el-Falaki, Cairo (tel: (2) 795 1164; fax: (2) 795 7940).

Conferences/Conventions: Cairo has many hotels and three large meeting halls (seating up to 2000 people) which are equipped for use as conference centres. The new Cairo International Conference Centre, 12km (7 miles) east of Cairo International Airport, has seating for 2500 people, with an exhibition hall, banquet hall and comprehensive facilities. There is also a new convention centre at Alexandria University, which has a main hall with seating for 2400. For more information on conference facilities in Egypt, contact the Egyptian State Tourist Office (see address section); or Cairo International Conference Centre, Nasr Road, Nasr City, Cairo (tel: (2) 401 8948; fax: (2) 401 8950; e-mail: cicc@egnet.net; web site: <http://www.cicc.egnet.net>); or Egyptian General Company for Tourism and Hotels, 4 Latin America Street, Cairo (tel: (2) 302 1460; fax: (2) 354 3531).

13 CLIMATE



Hot, dry summers with mild, dry winters and cold nights. Rainfall is negligible except on the coast. In April the hot, dusty Khamsin wind blows from the Sahara.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens during summer with warmer clothes for winter and cooler evenings.

14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: The history of Egypt is one of the richest, oldest and most varied of any country in the world, and the country's place in the history of the Middle East is as central now as it was in the fourth millennium BC. The unification of the Lower and the Upper Kingdoms in about 3180BC marks a convenient starting point for Egyptian history. This dynamic, culturally sophisticated and powerful kingdom on the banks of the Nile grew into one of the greatest civilisations of the ancient world. The pre-Hellenic period is reckoned in Kingdoms (Old, Middle and New) and subdivided into dynasties; the IVth saw the construction of such architectural masterpieces as the Great Pyramid, and the XIth and XIIth saw the zenith of Egyptian power at the start of the second millennium. Tutankhamun, whose magnificent tomb was discovered in 1922, ruled briefly during the XVIIIth Dynasty. From the XXth Dynasty onwards the power of Egypt was on the wane, and the country was overrun on several occasions by foreign powers. The latest and most permanent of these invasions, which brought the Pharaonic period to an end, was that of Alexander the Great in 332BC. During the Hellenic and Augustan Roman period (circa AD30), the emergence of law and literature in Alexandria allowed 7 centuries of comparative peace and economic stability. From the middle of the 4th century, Egypt became part of the Eastern Empire. Then, in 642, an invading Arab army - one manifestation of the rapid Islamic conquests which followed the death of Mohammed - was welcomed by the Coptic Christians in preference to their previous Greek rulers. The Fatamids gained control of the country in the late 10th century but their power declined after a century or so. The subsequent revival of Muslim fortunes, and the reawakening of the spirit of Jihad (holy war), was largely associated with the career of Saladin, whose control of Egypt enabled him to reunite much of the Muslim world. Under Ottoman rule, Egypt became a somewhat neglected corner of a large and increasingly moribund empire. The arrival of Napoleon in 1798 brought Egypt once more into violent contact with a European power. By 1805, however, the struggle for independence had been won, Muhammed Ali being recognised as Sultan. A generally pro-Western policy was followed by Muhammed and his successors. The Suez Canal was opened in 1869, but subsequent financial problems and internal struggles led to a British occupation, maintained from 1882-1936. For the next ten years, Egypt was formally independent though severely constrained by the British. Discontent against the Government culminated in the 1952 revolution by young army officers, led by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser. After consolidating his position as President of the new government, Nasser took the Suez Canal into public ownership with all revenues directed to the Egyptian treasury. This led to the Suez Crisis of 1956 in which a combined Anglo-French-Israeli military operation attempted to seize and depose Nasser. The failure of the operation greatly enhanced Nasser's standing and inspired supporters throughout the Middle East who shared his vision of a united Arab world free from foreign interference. Disputes between Arab countries scuppered these plans. The defeat of Arab forces by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War deprived Egypt of the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza strip, land which was recovered only after another defeat by the Israelis in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the subsequent Egyptian-Israeli peace initiative which culminated in the 1979 Camp David accord. The treaty was signed on the Egyptian side by Nasser's successor, Anwar El-Sadat, and this, along with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt after the Iranian revolution, accounted for his assassination in 1981. Sadat was succeeded by his deputy, Hosni Mubarak, who pursued similar policies to his former boss. However, the rapprochement with the Arab world (especially Saudi Arabia) at the Amman Summit in 1987, instigated a new phase of diplomatic relations within the Middle East and marked the rehabilitation of the Mubarak government into the wider Arab community. Egypt has since been closely involved in the Israeli-Palestinian political settlement, broadly supportive of the September 1993 agreement between the two sides. Since then, in common with most of the Arab world, Egypt has become increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of implementation for which it holds the Israelis very largely responsible. A trade boycott and refusal to attend various international summits have been among various gestures taken to show Cairo's displeasure. Relations with the United States have also been

strained as a result, although as a major recipient of US aid, there is no serious threat to the close relationship with Washington. The election of Ehud Barak in Israel will, Mubarak hopes, improve the situation in the near future. The other major foreign policy concern is the spread of militant Islam: indeed, this has important domestic consequences for the Egyptians. Mubarak is aware that Egypt's deep-rooted social and economic problems render Islam an attractive option for many young Egyptians, and tried to keep this tendency in check by holding multi-party national assembly elections in November 1995. Amid widespread allegations of ballot-rigging, the ruling National Democratic Party won 80% of the poll. In January 1996, premier Atif Sidqi resigned to be replaced by his deputy, Kamal Ganzouri, who has since remained in the post. Nevertheless, the Egyptian government continues to worry about the Islamists' persistent political strength and popular appeal. Draconian 'anti-terrorist' legislation was introduced and a 'national state of emergency' announced (and renewed in 1997 for three years) since when the government achieved some success in suppressing the militants' violent campaign. At its peak, it was responsible for several hundred deaths annually; and there has been no repeat to date of the massacre of 70 people, mostly foreign tourists, near the ancient city of Luxor in 1997. The restrictions are likely to remain in force at least until parliamentary elections due in November 2000.

Government: The 454-member Majlis al-Sha'ab (People's Assembly), which functions as the legislature, nominates the president; the nomination is endorsed by popular referendum. The president, who serves a 6-year term, has executive power and appoints one or more vice presidents, a prime minister and a council of ministers. The Majlis al-Sha'ab is elected for a 5-year term. There is also a 210-member advisory assembly, the Majlis ash-Shura.

15 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Egypt is bounded by the Mediterranean, Sudan, Libya, the Red Sea and Israel. The River Nile divides the country in two, while the Suez Canal provides a third division with the Sinai Peninsula. Beyond the highly cultivated Nile valley and delta, the landscape is mainly flat desert and largely devoid of vegetation. The coast south of Suez has fine beaches and the coral reefs just off shore attract many divers.

The capital Cairo, sprawling around the Nile and up towards the delta, is a city of astonishing diversity and vitality, uniting elements of Africa, the Orient and Western Europe. The Egyptian Museum contains the celebrated treasures of Tutankhamun.

A number of tour operators offer Nile cruises, the majority operating from Luxor to Aswan or vice versa, which offer visitors the chance to step back in time and visit the stunning temples which line the banks of the Nile.

Alexandria is more modern than Cairo although it is still graced by numerous Hellenistic and Roman relics.

Egyptian cuisine is excellent. Local specialities include fowl (bean dishes), kebabs and humus (chickpeas pureed with garlic and olive oil).

Sophisticated nightclubs, discotheques and good restaurants can be found in Cairo and Alexandria. There is also night entertainment in Luxor and Aswan, including barbecues along the Nile.

