

Big Five Presents

Egypt

The story of Egypt is written on a ribbon of time that tells tales both grand and small, past and present – from the reigns of pharaohs to the farmer who still tends his land with an ox as did his father and his father's father.

Egypt invites discovery from the extravagant pyramids of Giza, to the royal tombs in the valleys of the Kings and the Queens, to legendary cities of Cairo and Alexandria. The heart of this ancient world is the magnificent Nile River, graced with tall red dunes and dotted with palm trees and patches of greenery. One need only set sail aboard one of the new luxury ships to experience the grandest monuments between Aswan to Luxor – the masterpiece rock-cut temples of Abu Simbel; Aswan's High Dam; Temple of Philae, dedicated to Isis the Great Mother; and the statues and sanctuaries of Ramses II and his young queen, Nefertari. While many nations are blessed with archeological treasures, few can compare to extraordinary Egypt, still a preeminent destination for scholars and students, archeologists and travelers, and for all who are fascinated with the history of humankind.



Suggested Itinerary

Day 1: Cairo, Egypt

Egypt's capital is the largest city in the Arab world, and has long been a focal point in history for its strategic location.

Days 2/3: Cairo

Cairo offers a lavish banquet of ancient sites from Memphis and old Coptic Cairo to the phenomenal pyramids of Giza.

Day 4: Cairo / Abu Simbel / Aswan / Nile River Cruise

Abu Simbel's massive rock temples and Aswan's graceful island Temple of Philae and High Dam never fail to awe.

Day 5: Nile Cruise: Aswan / Kom Ombo

The Temple of Kom Ombo is an unusual double temple with everything perfectly symmetrical along the main axis.

Day 6: Nile Cruise: Edfu / Esna / Luxor

Edfu's Temple of Horus is the most completely preserved. The temple of Esna was known for the beauty of its site and architecture.

Day 7: Nile Cruise: Luxor

Luxor, ancient Thebes, was the seat of the Middle Kingdom and the site of the pharaohs' glorious temples and tombs.

Day 8: Luxor / Cairo

The treasures of the Cairo Museum of Antiquities include the enthralling mummy room.

Day 9: Cairo / Depart

Custom Options

Alexandria (4 days)

Called the "Pearl of the Mediterranean," this was the center of learning in the ancient world, and is home to striking antiquities.

Egypt Oases (2 days)

The oases have always been of critical importance to the trade routes through the desert; and Egypt's distinctive oases include Bahariya, Siwa, Dakhla, Farafra and Kharga.

Hurghada (4 days)

Hurghada is a secluded haven on the Red Sea Coast that enjoys the beauty of white sand beaches, and an aquamarine sea alive with exotic marine life.

Lake Nasser Cruise (4 days)

Lake Nasser is one of the largest man-made lakes in the world set in the middle of the largest desert on our planet.

Sharm El Sheik (4 days)

This city on the coastal strip between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai is a stand-out resort area, featuring diving, snorkeling and other water sports.

About Egypt

Abu Simbel: The Abu Simbel temples are two massive rock temples in Abu Simbel in Nubia, southern Egypt. They are situated on the western bank of Lake Nasser southwest of Aswan. The complex is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the "Nubian Monuments," which run from Abu Simbel to Philae. The twin temples were originally carved out of the mountainside in the 13th century BC. In a colossal undertaking, the complex was relocated in its entirety in 1968, on an artificial hill made from a domed structure above the Aswan High Dam reservoir. The relocation of the temples was necessary to avoid their loss during the creation of Lake Nasser.

Alexandria: This ancient port city, the second largest city in Egypt, the "Pearl of the Mediterranean," was the center of learning in the ancient world. It was once home to the legendary Bibliotheca Alexandria, an ancient library founded by a pupil of Aristotle in the fourth century BC. By the middle of the first century BC, the library is said to have contained 700,000 manuscripts on papyrus. Pompey's Pillar rests in a small park near city center. The largest known Roman burial site in Egypt is the Catacombs of Komel El Shokfa.

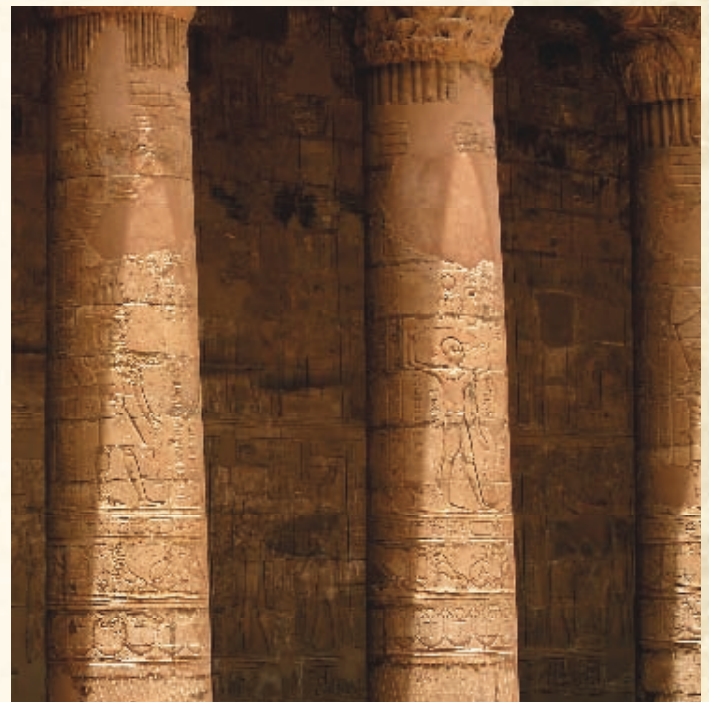
Three tiers of tombs and chambers cut into rock date from the second century AD. Fortress of Qait Bay, on the Island of Pharos, is an impressive 15th-century stronghold that stands on the site of the Great Lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Aswan: Egypt's southernmost city has among its many sites Philae Temple, the Unfinished Obelisk, intriguing tombs, the granite quarries of the pharaohs and the famous High Dam. Aswan has also become a popular winter resort.

Cairo: Africa's most populous city, Cairo was founded in 969 AD. The timeless and energetic city occupies the banks and islands of the Nile River in northern Egypt. The oldest section of the city has grown haphazardly over the centuries, creating small, crowded lanes, curio shops, old mosques and tenements. Using Paris as a model, western Cairo was built in the mid-19th century, with boulevards, public gardens and grand, open spaces. In the desert west of Giza, the ancient necropolis of Memphis encompasses the three great pyramids. The wealth of ancient rulers is housed in the renowned Egyptian Museum, including its fascinating collection of mummies. Khan el Khalili bazaar is a shopping adventure. Sakkara Step Pyramid is the world's oldest known pyramid.

Edfu: The Temple of Horus at Edfu is the most completely preserved. Built from sandstone blocks, the huge Ptolemaic temple was constructed over the site of a smaller New Kingdom temple, oriented east to west, facing towards the river. The later structure faces north to south and leaves the ruined remains of the older temple pylon to be seen on the east side of the first court.

Egypt Oases: Dotted the Egyptian desert, each oasis shows its own unique personality. Bahariya Oasis, for example, is rich in wildlife. It has several small villages surrounding it and encompasses mosques, health springs and unique rock formations and rock crystals. Kharga Oasis has important sites such as the sixth-century Temple of Hibis, which is the finest temple from the Persian period and the best example of a Persian Period temple in Egypt. Also nearby is the Al-Bagawat Necropolis containing hundreds of Egyptian tombs made with traditional mud and brick as well as chapels and murals. Other oases include Siwa, Dakhla and Farafra.



Esna: The temple of Esna, which has only been partially excavated, was noted for the beauty of its site and for its architecture. It was built of red sandstone, and its portico had six rows of four columns each, with lotus-leaf capitals. Esna is also known for its lively tourist market.

Hurghada: Founded in the early 20th century, this resort area on the Red Sea coast is known for water sports: sailing, windsurfing, and deep-sea fishing, glass-bottom boat tours, swimming, snorkeling and diving. The warm waters support a variety of rare fish and coral reefs, including offshore underwater gardens. The town has a bazaar, museum and aquarium as well as fine resorts and restaurants.

Kom Ombo: The Temple of Kom Ombo is an unusual double temple built during the Ptolemaic dynasty in the Egyptian town of Kom Ombo. The building is unique because its design meant that there were courts, halls, sanctuaries and rooms duplicated for two sets of gods. The southern half of the temple was dedicated to the crocodile god Sobek, and the northern part of the temple was dedicated to the falcon god Horus the Elder. Much of the temple has been destroyed by the Nile, earthquakes and later builders who used its stones for other projects.

Lake Nasser: The man-made lake was created as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam between 1958 and 1971. A cruise on Lake Nasser offers the opportunity to explore the ancient temples and monuments including temples of Amada, Dakka and Meharakka and Wadi El Seboua. The lake shelters the last colonies of Nile crocodiles, monitor lizards, gazelles, jackals, fennecs and the famous Nile Perch. The west bank has stretches of shoreline that shelters some of the 100 species of birds.

Luxor: Luxor, ancient Thebes, was the seat of the Middle Kingdom and the site of the pharaohs' glorious temples and tombs. It became a prosperous city known for its high social status and luxury. Ruins of the temples at Karnak and Luxor are across the Nile River from the temples and tombs of the West Bank Necropolis of the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens. The West Bank, the Colossi of Memnon, Queen Hatshepsut's Temple and the Valley of Kings, sport richly decorated edifices.

Sharm El Sheik: Sharm el Sheik sits on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula on the coastal strip between the Red Sea and Mount Sinai. This is another stand-out resort area that features diving, snorkeling and other water sports. Ras Mohamed, once an important city for travelers heading for Mecca, became a national park in the 1980s to protect the region's marine and desert life. Foxes and gazelles were reintroduced. Hotels and restaurants are clustered around the center of Sharm, known as Naama Bay, with golf courses and other leisure facilities further up the coast.

Best Time To Go

In Cairo, and along the Nile River Valley, the climate is hot desert, but often with high humidity due to the Nile River Valley's effects. Wind storms can be frequent, bringing Saharan dust into the city during the months of March and April. High temperatures in winter range from the 12°C / 55°F to the low 20°Cs / 70°Fs, while nighttime lows drop to below 4°Cs / 40°Fs. In summer, the highs often surpass 40°C / 104°F, and lows drop to about 20°C / 68°F. Rainfall is sparse, but sudden showers can cause flooding.

\$400 - \$3200 per person per day
Land only, double occupancy

Consider enhancing your adventure by including the following destinations: Israel (p133-136), Jordan (p137-140), Kenya (p17-20), Morocco (p21-24), UAE & Oman (p145-148)

