

Walk Line an Egyptian

The historical treasures of Egypt will entice, even for those who are not history buffs. The amount of museums and ancient sites is seemingly limitless. After viewing the remarkable attractions of Egypt, King Tut's tomb may be somewhat anti-climatic. In addition to historical Egypt, there are many other activities including felucca rides and walking through the congested streets of Cairo.

Flying into Cairo allows one of the best aircraft views of any man-made wonder. Actually it is a view of one of the seven wonders, the Pyramids of Giza. The plane seems to tip to one side as passengers rise from their seat to gaze at the pyramids. The pilot may even dip one of his wings to assist in the view.



The pyramids are located in Giza, which is eight miles southwest of Cairo. Tourists can take a camel from Giza to the pyramids but probably will get hassled, as you are obviously a foreigner. For those who enjoy camel rides, take the three-day trip into the desert to visit the next closest set of pyramids. The largest Giza Pyramid is the Great Pyramid of Cheops, the last surviving of the "Seven Wonders of the World" and the tallest structure in the world until the Eiffel Tower was built in 1898. Guarding the pyramids is the Sphinx, half man and half lion.

Cairo is a large, complex city of about 15 million people; no one knows the population for sure. There are many narrow streets that twist and curve so it is easy to get disoriented. If this happens, ask a police officer or soldier. They're not hard to find, one is seemingly located every other block. Better yet, ask an owner of one of the small shops that are open late. The owner will often be in front of the open-air shops, looking for business. They are more likely to speak English than the officers and will probably be friendlier as they will offer mint tea and then directions.

The back streets are fascinating as many people are smoking through a shesha. They are not smoking an illegal substance, although it may appear that way as the shesha looks like a water bong with a multi-colored hose extending from it. But, they are smoking tobacco that is flavored like fruit, with orange being my favorite. Inhaling the smoke packs quite a punch; there is no filter.

Getting to the sites of Cairo can be daring, as the three marked lanes transform to five lanes due to the aggressive Egyptian drivers. One mode of transport, which is similar to a mini-van, has possible passengers yelling their destinations from the sidewalk as the driver navigates down the road. If the driver is going in that direction they will stop. Actually, they'll slow down; the passenger is responsible for getting on and then holding on. These mini-vans are hot and crowded but other forms of transport, including the metro, are possible.

After securing transportation, the first Egyptian destination should be the Egyptian Museum. There are over 120,000 pieces on display including artifacts found around all of Egypt. The most popular are those objects found at King Tut's burial site, located on the second floor. Also, worth visiting is the mummy room, which illustrates a

variety of different mummies. A visit here will be a good way to learn about Egypt before visiting the other sights.

Some of these sights are in the old area called Islamic Cairo. The Citadel is a huge fortress located on a hill that was built to protect Cairo against the crusaders. There are many mosques to visit but the most imposing is the Mosque of Mohammed Ali, as it is the largest mosque in Cairo. The marketplace, Khan El-Khalili, is a magical place to visit, especially at night. The narrow alleyways are confusing, but the market is divided into smaller markets for spice, copper, leather and clothing. This is a good place to pick up an alabaster vase, papyrus or traditional clothing.

While Islamic Cairo is the old, Central Cairo is an indication of the modern way. There are many activities pertaining to the Nile River, which is straddled by central Cairo. The Nile Hilton as well as several hotels located on the east bank around Tahrir Square offer plush accommodations. A modern university is located here, as is the Nileometer which is used to measure the Nile. Located on a small island on the Nile is the Gezira District which has upscale property including a sporting club. The Cairo Tower is 600 feet tall and affords a look over Cairo.

Although one can see many places from the Cairo Tower, it is not possible to see the city of Luxor in Upper Egypt. To the west of Luxor is the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, an amazing web of tombs. The most famous tomb in the Valley of



of the Kings is the Tomb of Tutankhamen. The tomb is probably one of the most disappointing as the interior is nondescript and several other tombs are more attractive. The most famous sight in the Valley of the Queens is the Temple of Hatshepsut; a three-tiered structure built into the surrounding hillside. The most interesting component of the temple is the carvings depicting the life of Queen Hatshepsut.

On the east bank is the city of Luxor and the Temple of Karnak. There are several

mosques and temples in Luxor to see, such as the Luxor Temple, which has a large statue of King Tut and his wife. Facing the Karnak Temple is a long walkway with several carvings on each side called the Avenue of Ram-Headed Sphinxes, built in the fourth century BC. The Karnak Temple is a dizzying array of obelisks, carvings and sculptures. In the heart of the complex is the Temple of Amun; the construction area covers 1500 square feet. Reactions to the nightly laser show at Karnak ranges from rolling eyes of disapproval to awed looks of enchantment.

Father down river, or technically up river, is the city of Aswan. There are two Nile River travel options, either by luxury boat or by felucca (sailboat). From the banks of the river, children



throw carpets at tourists on the luxury boats with the hope they will buy. Sadly, they are beaten back by authorities with bamboo sticks. The boats are more touristy but very relaxing; the feluccas allow passengers to touch the Nile but do not have bathrooms. Either way, most trips stop in Edfu and Esna to visit more temples. Aswan's sights include the Aswan Dam, which helped modernize Egypt and also chomps up crocodiles.

A tour of Egypt will vary greatly depending on which travel theme is chosen. For example an "outdoors" theme might include scuba diving off Sharm El-Sheikh and traveling from oasis to oasis in the Western Desert. The theme described here is the most popular and can be termed "historical Egypt". This trip contains spectacular attractions as well as insight of Egypt's history and its affect on the modern world.