

# Egypt

## PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION



Egypt is a fascinating, diverse land that will both surprise and amaze you. The images that usually come to mind when Westerners think of Egypt are of pyramids and sand. When you visit, you will find that this only begins to describe the country. The culture of Egypt, historically and today, is inextricably connected to the Nile, and the extremely fertile Nile Valley. Discover the world's most impressive ancient wonders. You will be enveloped by the astounding history, the beautiful natural environment, and the warmth of the people.

# GETTING READY FOR YOUR TRIP

## Passports

- ❖ Passports are required of U.S. Citizens to enter
- ❖ Must be valid for at least 6 months after your trip – if not, apply or renew immediately
- ❖ Keep a copy of the picture page of your passport in a separate place while traveling
- ❖ Carry an extra passport photo in case you need to apply for a quick replacement

## Visas

- ❖ Visas are required for American citizens traveling to Egypt.
- ❖ Visas can be obtained upon arrival in Egypt for a fee of \$20. Please advise our office if you plan to get it on arrival so that we can make arrangements. (No application or photos are needed to get it on arrival.)
- ❖ If you'd prefer, you can obtain your visa in advance from the consulate or embassy in Washington. See the enclosed information for application instruction. This process may take up to two weeks for each visa. Apply for visas no more than three months in advance of your date of arrival.
- ❖ Nationalities of other countries please inquire regarding visas

## Health, Immunizations

- ❖ Some immunizations are highly recommended, but none are required for entry
- ❖ Recommended standard immunizations include: polio, tetanus, typhoid, MMR, hepatitis A & B
- ❖ SEEK INDEPENDENT MEDICAL ADVICE from your physician or local travelers health service
- ❖ For the latest recommendations for immunizations or malaria prevention contact the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia: 800-311-3435, or visit their website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- ❖ Many universities have immunization clinics that can assist you

## Time Difference

- ❖ Egypt is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (+2 GMT)
- ❖ Daylight saving time is observed but the dates differ slightly from the U.S.
- ❖ It is seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time
- ❖ When it is 9 PM in Cairo, it will be 2 PM in New York and 11 AM in Los Angeles, on the same day

## Electricity

- ❖ Electricity in Egypt is 220 V, 50 Hz
- ❖ You can most commonly find the European two round prong plugs. You will need an adaptor/converter for American appliances.



## ARRIVAL

- ❖ Upon arrival at the airport, you will be welcomed by our local representatives after passing immigration.
- ❖ We use local operators (private contractors) in each of the African countries where we offer trips. They all have extensive experience organizing safaris & tours in their respective areas. Guides in Egypt are experienced, knowledgeable, and speak English.
- ❖ Contact information for our local operators will be sent with your Last Minute Reminders packet a couple weeks before your departure.

## GETTING ALONG AS A VISITOR

### Food & Restaurants

- ❖ Eat only foods that are thoroughly cooked, and raw fruits and vegetables that you have peeled yourself
- ❖ Tap water in the city is heavily chlorinated, and the excessive chlorination can make some people feel ill.
- ❖ Drink only bottled drinks or purified water at all times, and avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice

- cubes. Bottled water is readily available, but make sure the bottles are properly sealed.
- ❖ Avoid fresh salads unless the vegetables are washed with purified water, and avoid dairy products that are unpasteurized or may not have been refrigerated properly
  - ❖ Don't buy food from street vendors or stalls
  - ❖ Meals provided on your trip are generally well balanced. When meals are not included in the trip cost, your guide will be available to make dining recommendations.
  - ❖ Special diet or meal requests cannot be guaranteed, but our operators will do their best to accommodate you. Please advise us if you have any special dietary requirements.
  - ❖ There are thousands of cafes, teahouses and market stalls where you can find exotic or plain food. In large cities, there are plenty of restaurants serving European dishes and places where you can get a hamburger or western type foods.
  - ❖ Look for a restaurant where lots of locals are eating - chances are the food will be delicious and reasonable
  - ❖ Average prices of a three course meal without wine range from around US \$10 to US \$45.

## Money and Currency Exchange

- ❖ Egypt's National Currency is the Egyptian Pound (EGP).
- ❖ Money can be exchanged at the airport American Express offices, commercial banks, and hotel cashiers. You should exchange money only at designated exchange facilities.
- ❖ All exchange transactions in Egypt will require that you present your passport and endorse the checks with your passport number. Be sure that your currency exchange form has been stamped when changing money. This form must be surrendered when leaving the country.
- ❖ It can be extremely difficult to convert remaining Egyptian Pounds to Dollars at the end of the trip. It is illegal to bring in/take out of the country more than 20 Egyptian Pounds.
- ❖ There are banks in almost every hotel. In large hotels, banks are open 24 hours for the traveler's convenience. Rates of exchange are the same at all banks, though commission might vary, so ask first.
- ❖ Travelers checks are honored at most shops, restaurants and hotels.
- ❖ Most major credit cards are accepted throughout Egypt at major hotels and restaurants.
- ❖ Basic additional expenses include meals not included in the land cost, refreshments, liquor, laundry, gratuities for your guides, airport departure tax & taxis. The total of these expenses seldom exceeds \$350.

## Tipping

- ❖ Tipping in Egypt is called "Baksheesh." The same term is also used for a bribe, a way to persuade someone to do a service the way you want it done. This can include anything from someone carrying your bags for you to guiding you through the city unwillingly. Be sure to carry plenty of small change with you if you expect any service. For some travelers who are not familiar with this type of lifestyle it can be irritating, but it is expected and the accepted way of getting things done.
- ❖ Gratuities should be in the local currency. Recommendations for good service are:
  - ❖ Guide: \$6-8 per person, per day
  - ❖ Drivers & Local Escorts: \$3-4 per person, per day
  - ❖ You may want to consider tipping a little more if you are in a small group (4 people or less).
  - ❖ On the Nile cruise, it is customary to leave \$5 per person/day in an envelope at the reception at check-out to be distributed to staff and personnel.
  - ❖ Restaurant staff should be tipped 10% of the total meal.
  - ❖ Anytime you especially appreciate someone particularly informative or helpful, an extra tip is always gratefully accepted.

## Emergency Services

- ❖ Emergency services and care for major medical illnesses may be limited outside of major cities
- ❖ Prevention of injury is always the best policy.
- ❖ Your guide will advise you in the case of urgent medical need during your tour

## SPECIAL REMARKS

### Language

- ❖ Arabic is the official language of Egypt.
- ❖ However the Arabic spoken on the streets differs significantly from the standard or classical Arabic written in newspapers, spoken on the radio or recited in the mosque. It is both useful and fun to learn a few phrases and words. However, many people in the cities understand and speak some English.
- ❖ It is always good to learn a few words of the official language as locals will fully appreciate any attempt made to communicate in their language.

### Interacting with Local People

- ❖ Sensitivity to local culture and customs can prevent misunderstandings and unpleasantness. By respecting the culture and with consideration for your hosts, you can be a welcome guest in Egypt.
- ❖ In Egypt a woman traveling alone is generally safe, but will attract men who may tag along trying to strike up conversations. The best strategy is just to ignore them. The people of this region stereotype Western women based on American television programs seen in their county. If an advance becomes too uncomfortable, raising a commotion will often result in bystanders taking the woman's side and lecturing the offending man. In a society that places a high value on honor and shame, this is an effective but rarely necessary strategy. Female staff members at JOURNEYS have traveled in Egypt on their own and have found people to be extremely helpful, respectful, and kind.
- ❖ While most people are receptive to posing for pictures, always ask permission. Children will almost always agree, but adults might say no. Some superstitious Muslims believe that by taking photos of children you might be casting an evil spell.
- ❖ Do not take pictures of anything connected with the government or the military, such as post offices, banks, bridges, border posts, barracks, prisons, airports and the U.S. Embassy.
- ❖ You can take photos of the interior of most mosques, temples and some tombs, though at some sights the government now charges for this privilege. Some museums, such as the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, charge up to \$100 for the use of a video camera; your guide can advise you of the charges.
- ❖ Egyptians are also sensitive about the negative aspects of their country. It is not uncommon for someone to be angry at you for taking photos of garbage carts, crowded streets or vehicles, and beggars. Please use caution when doing so.
- ❖ Flash photos are forbidden in all tombs in Egypt. You must pay a small fee in order to use your camera in many of the tombs and museums, and a larger fee (\$10-\$30) to use your video camera. If you have not purchased this ticket then you should put your camera away; otherwise, you will be requested to leave it outside!

### Time

- ❖ Relax and enjoy the easy-going rhythm of Egypt
- ❖ Do not expect everything to happen on time; remember that in some places time is not as important as it is back home, and there is often little concern for punctuality
- ❖ Despite best efforts, departures and arrivals could be a little before or after the time given. This applies particularly to aircraft movements. Operating requirements, weather and terrain sometimes present problems, and on these occasions, to ensure your safety, flight times may vary

### Restroom Facilities

- ❖ It is a very good idea to carry your own small supply of toilet paper.
- ❖ In cities where there are flush toilets you may find a wastebasket next to the toilet if the sewage systems can't handle paper.
- ❖ Some bathrooms will neither look nor smell as sanitary as those you are used to.

## Safety

- ❖ Observe the same precautions taken at home
- ❖ Do not flaunt a bulging wallet, lock unattended vehicles, do not leave baggage unattended in public
- ❖ In towns, the best place to carry your passport and money is in a pouch worn around the neck inside of the shirt or in a money belt around the waist
- ❖ It is highly recommended that you buy travel insurance that covers your baggage before you leave
- ❖ Don't take anything you can't afford to lose or can't replace
- ❖ For the latest security information on Egypt, please consult the US State Department website <http://www.state.gov/travel/>.

## Shopping

- ❖ Bargaining is a way of life in Egypt. A good guideline is to negotiate about half of the asking price. You may ask your guide privately how much you could expect to pay for an item, but do not ask him in front of a salesperson. It is not appropriate for your guide to bargain for you. Your guide will also be happy to assist you in translation although most people you encounter will speak English.
- ❖ Egypt offers a wide selection of handicrafts, jewelry, fabrics and precious stones at very moderate prices.
- ❖ Some shops in hotels or larger tourist shops will have fixed prices. Although goods can be bought from special duty-free stores downtown or in public airport areas, they can only be claimed in the departure area, or for incoming travelers in the immigration area of airports.

## Seasons & Weather Conditions

- ❖ Northern Egypt has a typical Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers, except for the winter months of December, January and February.
- ❖ Summer temperatures (May to Sept) can reach well over 100°F during the summer, while weather in the winter is more moderate with lows from 40-50°F.
- ❖ The further south you go, the hotter & drier it gets.

## Equipment & Packing

- ❖ A good goal is to fit everything into a single piece of checked luggage and a carry-on daypack
- ❖ We recommend a durable, water-resistant, soft duffel bag or lightweight soft-sided suitcase as your checked luggage. Hard suitcases are not practical due to space limitations in vehicles.
- ❖ A small backpack or hip-pack is ideal for carrying bottled water, camera, extra sunblock, etc, while on excursions where the terrain requires your hands to be free.
- ❖ Choose a distinctive, easily identified bag, and use a JOURNEYS luggage tag for bag identification by staff, and your name and address should be also indelibly affixed inside the luggage.
- ❖ It is recommended that you dress conservatively. Casual clothing is acceptable for traveling and visiting monuments. Western fashions are acceptable in the major tourist centers, but in rural areas, conservative dress is more important. Women are especially advised to dress conservatively and avoid shorts, swimsuits, and low cut tops. For visiting some religious sites, you should wear a long sleeved shirt. Most Arabs are used to seeing foreign women dressed in jeans and shirts.
- ❖ For regional international flights, most air carriers allow 22 kilos (about 45 lbs.) per person, or two pieces. However, the domestic baggage weight limit is 16 kilograms (about 35 lbs.) per person on domestic flights in Egypt so we recommend you pack for this limit if you will be taking these flights.
- ❖ Take warm clothes in winter. On spring and fall trips you should bring sweaters and sweatshirts. On summer trips you should bring cool cotton clothing, but long sleeves, hats and scarves are recommended to protect yourself against the hot sun.
- ❖ Lightweight & light colored clothes will help keep you cooler. Also keep in mind that synthetic fabrics dry faster than natural fibers like cotton, especially in humid areas, so you can pack less if you are able to wash and dry your clothes easily.
- ❖ Laundry services are available in most hotels, but you may need to wash out some clothes en route
- ❖ You may want to bring an extra smaller, collapsible (lockable) duffel, to leave items in a city hotel while you are on an excursion or to use on your return for souvenirs



# CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT SUGGESTIONS CHECKLIST

## Pre-Departure Tasks

- Obtain or renew passport
- Buy travelers checks in low denominations
- Evaluate and obtain trip cancellation, baggage and medical insurance
- Consult with physician for immunizations and prescription medicine recommendations
- Break-in primary footwear
- Make final payment to JOURNEYS at least 60 days before trip departure

## Clothing

- Lightweight hiking boots or comfortable athletic or walking shoes
- Sport sandals with Velcro strap
- Extra shoes, flip-flops or sandals
- Shorts
- Comfortable, lightweight pants
- Nicer pants or skirt (optional)
- Lightweight long-sleeve shirt
- T-shirts, short sleeve shirts
- Lightweight jacket
- Sun hat or cap with wide brim
- Bandana
- Swim suit
- Socks
- Sleepwear
- Under clothes

## Personal Items

- Soft duffel with shoulder strap or durable soft-sided suitcase
- Day pack (can also serve as an airline carry-on bag)
- Luggage tags
- Copies of all important documents
- 2 spare passport photos (in case of lost passport)
- Ziploc-type bags for packing shampoo or other liquids
- Stuff sacks or plastic bags for organizing inside luggage (also useful for dirty laundry)
- Sunblock (waterproof, high SPF)
- Lipbalm with SPF
- Insect repellent with DEET content
- Wrist watch and/or travel clock
- Sunglasses (with strap, case)
- Extra eyeglasses/contacts
- Money belt or pouch for valuables
- Small flashlight with extra batteries
- Camera, memory cards, film, batteries, charger
- Lead bag/containers to protect film in X-ray machines
- Lightweight binoculars
- Plug adapter (if needed)
- Thread, needles, safety pins for minor repairs
- Small packable umbrella



## Personal First Aid Kit

- Aspirin or other pain killer
- Cold relief tablets, antihistamine, cough drops
- Band-aids, gauze pads
- Antibiotics
- Prescription medicines
- Aloe gel or lotion in case of sunburn
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antibiotic cream/ointment
- Supply of feminine hygiene items
- Motion sickness tablets
- Earplugs

## Essential Items For Your Carry-On Bag

- Passport
- Domestic and international air tickets
- Travelers checks, money and credit cards
- Insurance certificates
- Address and telephone number of emergency contact
- Prescription medicines
- Extra set of underclothes
- Toiletries in small leak-proof bottles
- Camera gear, film and other valuables

## Optional Items

- Binoculars
- Address book, writing paper, or journal, pen/pencil
- Small washcloth
- Wet wipes/moist towelettes and Kleenex
- Favorite snack foods (pre-packaged)
- Pictures of your house and family
- Map
- Silica bags for moisture (protect camera equipment)
- Video camera
- Phrase book

