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#### Anubis tours

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## Egypt

Arabic: Misr / Másr; officially, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Arabic: Gomhuriat Masr Al-Arabiah) [1] is in north-eastern Africa with its capital located in its largest city, Cairo. Egypt also extends into Asia by virtue of holding the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt is bordered by Israel and the Gaza Strip to the north-east, by Jordan to the east, by Sudan to the south and by Libya to the west. The country is bounded by the Mediterranean and Red Seas (to the north and east respectively) and geographically dominated both by the Nile River and its fertile well-watered valley, and by the Eastern and Western deserts.

Egypt is perhaps best known as the home of the ancient Egyptian civilization, with its temples, hieroglyphs, mummies, and - visible above all - its pyramids. Less well-known is Egypt's medieval heritage, courtesy of Coptic Christianity and Islam - ancient churches, monasteries and mosques punctuate the Egyptian landscape. Egypt stimulates the imagination of western tourists like few other countries and is probably one of the most popular tourist destinations world-wide.

## History

The regularity and richness of the annual Nile River flood, coupled with semi-isolation provided by deserts to the east and west, allowed for the development of one of the world's great civilizations. A unified kingdom arose around 3200 B.C. and a series of dynasties ruled in Egypt for the next three millennia. The last native dynasty fell to the Persians in 341 B.C., who in turn were replaced by the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines. It was the Arabs who introduced Islam and the Arabic language in the 7th century and who ruled for the next six centuries. A local military caste, the Mamluks, took control about 1250 and continued to govern after the conquest of Egypt by the Ottoman Turks in 1517. Following the completion of



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the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt became an important world transportation hub, but also fell heavily into debt. Ostensibly to protect its investments, Britain seized control of Egypt's government in 1882, but nominal allegiance to the Ottoman Empire continued until 1914. Partially independent from the UK in 1922, Egypt acquired full sovereignty following World

War II. The completion of the Aswan High Dam in 1971 and the resultant Lake Nasser have altered the time-honored place of the Nile River in agriculture and the ecology of Egypt. A rapidly growing population (the largest in the Arab world), limited arable land, and dependence on the Nile all continue to overtax resources and stress society. The government has struggled to prepare the economy for the new millennium through economic reform and massive investment in communications and physical infrastructure.

### **Climate**

Egypt is largely a desert, an extension of the great Sahara that bands North Africa. Save for the thin strip of watered land along the Nile River, very little could survive here. As the ancient Greek philosopher Herodotus stated: "Egypt is the gift of the Nile".

Generally, the summers are hot and dry and the winters, moderate. November through March are definitely the most comfortable months for travel in Egypt. There is almost no rain in the Nile valley, so you won't need wet weather gear!

The climate, however, does vary a little bit depending on where you are in the country. On the north coast along the Mediterranean Sea, a thin strip of land stretching from the sea to 50 km southwards receives some of the most heavy rain in the country during winter months.

Thunderstorms along with heavy rain showers that often last several hours are not uncommon here such as in Alexandria, Marsa Matruh and all other coastal areas, and even the Delta. In some years the rainstorms can last for a whole day or so, though the rain tends to be less heavy. Hail is also not uncommon, especially out in the desert where the weather is usually colder and allows for ice to fall and even frost to form on non-rainy days.



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In the Sinai Mountains and also the Red Sea mountains, which stretch along the east side of the country along the shore of the Red Sea, there is generally more rain as rain clouds tend to develop when warm air evaporates and rises as it moves across higher terrain. Floods in these areas are a common weather phenomenon as so much rain can fall in a very short amount of time (often a day or two), with thunder and lightning as well. Because of the desert and lack of abundant vegetation, the water from the rain quickly falls down across the hills and mountains and floods local areas. In fact, every year there are stories in the local

newspapers about flashfloods in areas of the Sinai and also in Upper Egypt (southern Egypt) such as in Assiut, Luxor, Aswan, Sohag, etc. These floods, however, only generally happen two or three times a year, and often do not happen at all in some years, depending on the weather. When they happen though, it is often in early times of the season such as in September, October or late winter such as February or March (often the rainiest season in Egypt). Thus, one should be careful when venturing out into the desert or camping in certain areas as water can suddenly rush down from the nearby mountains and hills. It can sometimes carry a quite strong current that has been known to break down homes of rural people who build their homes from mud, bricks, and other weak materials. It is not surprising to hear that some people drown in the floods, which is strange for a desert country that doesn't receive much precipitation.

Also, in higher elevations such as on top of the Sinai mountains, temperatures can drop much more than the surrounding areas, allowing for snowfall in winter months, since temperatures can drop down to below freezing, as well as formation of frost even in the low lying desert areas where the temperatures are generally several degrees colder than in the cities.

December and January are usually the coldest months of the year, although it is normally warmer the further south you go and within the bigger cities.

Visitors should be aware that most houses and apartments in Cairo and Egypt do not have central heating like countries with colder climates as the main weather concern in Egypt is the heat. Therefore, even though the weather might not be so cold for the Western traveller,



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inside the apartment it might be even colder as the temperature inside homes is generally a few or several degrees colder than out in the street.

### **Ramadan**

Ramadan dates

2010 (1431): Aug 11 - Sep 9

2011 (1432): Aug 1 - Aug 29

2012 (1433): Jul 20 - Aug 18

The festival of Eid ul-Fitr is held after the end of Ramadan and may last several days. Exact dates depend on astronomical observations and may vary from country to country.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and the most important month in the Islamic Calendar for Muslims, the majority religion in Egypt. Commemorating the time when God revealed the Qur'an to Mohammed, during this holy month, Muslims abstain from eating, drinking or smoking until after sundown on each day. Although strict adherence to Ramadan is for Muslims only, some Muslims appreciate that non-Muslims do not take meals or smoke in public places. During Ramadan, many restaurants and cafes won't open until after sundown. Public transport is less frequent, shops close earlier before sunset and the pace of life (especially business) is generally slow.

As expected, exactly at sunset minute, the entire country quiets down and busy itself with the main meal of the day (iftar or breaking-fast) that are almost always done as social events in large groups of friends. Many richer people offer (Tables of the Gracious God ????? ????? )



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in Cairo's streets that cater full-meals for free for the passers-by, the poorer ones or workers who couldn't leave their shifts at the time. Prayers become popular 'social' events that some like to enrich with special food treats before and after. An hour or two later, an astonishing springing to life of the cities takes place. Streets sometimes richly decorated for the whole month have continuous rush hours till very early in the morning. Some shops and cafes make the biggest chunk of their annual profit at this time of year. Costs of advertising on television and radio soars for this period and entertainment performances are at their peak.

### Regions

A map of Egypt's regions and major destinations

Lower Egypt :containing the northern Nile delta, and the Mediterranean coast; Cairo, Alexandria

Middle Egypt :the area along the Nile where the historical Upper and Lower kingdoms met

Upper Egypt :a string of amazing temple towns located on the southern stretch of the Nile

Western Desert :location of the Western Oases: five pockets of green, each with their own unique attractions

Red Sea Coast :Luxury beach resorts, diving and marine life

Sinai :Rugged and isolated peninsula, with fascinating relics of the past and great scuba diving

### Cities

Cairo – the capital of Egypt, home to the Giza Pyramids, the Egyptian Museum and fabulous Islamic architecture



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## ANUBIS

Alexandria – Egypt's window on the Mediterranean, with still-palpable glimpses of the past  
Aswan – a more relaxed option, full of amazing sights  
Luxor – gateway to the Valley of the Kings, amongst other fabulous attractions  
Hurghada – a town on the Red Sea, filled with all-inclusive resorts and diving

### Other destinations

Abu Simbel – a very remote town in the far south, with some beautiful ancient temples  
Dahab – backpacker central, with excellent scuba diving  
Gulf Kebir – an oasis deep in the desert with evocative WWII wrecks and prehistoric rock paintings  
Karnak – scattered temples built with an emphasis on size, an impressive avenue of ram-headed sphinxes runs through the middle  
Lake Nasser – created by the Aswan Dam

Memphis & Saqqara – both filled with relics and ruins of ancient Egypt, they're often combined as a day trip from Cairo  
Sharm el-Sheikh – a hugely popular resort town on the Sinai peninsula, with some of the best scuba diving in the world  
Siwa – a stunning remote oasis near the Libyan border  
Valley of the Kings

### Egyptian visa

As a major tourist destination whose economy is dependent upon tourist money, Egypt is relatively easy to enter and/or obtain visas for if necessary. There are three types of Egyptian visa:

Tourist Visa - usually valid for a period not exceeding 3 months and granted on either a single or multiple entry basis



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Entry Visa - required for any foreigner arriving in Egypt for purposes other than tourism, e.g. work, study, etc. The possession of a valid Entry Visa is needed to complete the residence procedure in Egypt.

Transit Visa - rarely needed and only for certain nationalities

Entry visas may be obtained from Egyptian diplomatic and consular missions abroad or from the Entry Visa Department at the Travel Documents, Immigration and Nationality Administration (TDINA). Non-Egyptian travelers are required to have a

**valid passport.**

Citizens of many countries may obtain a visa on arrival at major points of entry; the fee is demanded on arrival and it is expensive to change money and then pay the fee. At airports, you must obtain these from a bank office before passport control, ostensibly to verify that the currency is real; however, you will have no problem obtaining one. Check with your nearest Egyptian Consular mission for more details concerning visa regulations applying to your citizenship.

The fees for a single-entry visa are as follows:

UK citizens: £15

US citizens: US\$15

Irish citizens: €15/US\$15

Australian citizens: A\$45

Canadian citizens: C\$26

other countries: US\$15

Citizens of Bahrain, Guinea, South Korea, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen receive a 3 month visa on arrival. Citizens of Kuwait can obtain 6-month Residence Permit upon arrival. China and Malaysian citizens receive a 15 day visa on arrival. Citizens of China(only Hong Kong and Macau SAR) may have a 30 day visit without visa.



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Citizens of the following countries are currently required to have a visa before arriving, which must be applied for through an Egyptian consulate or embassy outside of Egypt: Afghanistan, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, China (People's Republic of; except Hong Kong and Macau), Croatia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malaysia (if you intend to stay for more than 15 days), Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Russia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and all African countries (except citizens of Guinea and Libya, who do not require visa). Visitors entering Egypt at the overland border crossing at Taba or at Sharm el Sheikh airport can be exempted from a visa and granted a free fourteen day entry visa to visit the Aqaba coast of the Sinai peninsula, including Sharm el Sheikh, Dahab and St. Catherine's Monastery. Visitors wishing to leave the Sinai peninsula and to visit Cairo and other Egyptian cities are required to hold full Egyptian visas, although strictly speaking there is a small possibility no one will check for this unless you attempt to exit the country. These are not issued at the Taba border crossing and must be acquired in advance either in the country of residence, at the Egyptian consulate in Eilat or airport upon arrival. Visitors traveling on organized tours often may be able to have their visas issued at the border, but you should verify in advance with their travel agent or tour operator if this option is available to them.

Those in possession of a residence permit in Egypt are not required to obtain an entry visa if they leave the country and return to it within the validity of their residence permit or within six months, whichever period is less.

Tourists visiting Sharm-el-Sheikh who are planning to undertake scuba diving outside local areas (i.e. Ras Mohammed) will need to obtain the tourist visa, because this technically means leaving the Sharm-el-Sheikh area and leads to the requirement for a visa. Officials on boats may check dive boats whilst on the waters so you are advised to obtain the visa beforehand: there may be fines involved for you and the boat captain if you are caught



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without the appropriate visa. Most reputable dive centers will ask to see your visa before allowing you on trips.

Egypt has peaceful relations with Israel, but the degree of friendliness varies, and with it, the direct connections between the two countries. As of Dec. 2009, the direct air service between Cairo and Tel Aviv has been suspended for some years. Bus service seems to continue, as described below. In any case, verify the situation as you plan, and again at the last minute.

**Highlights of any visit to Egypt include famous archaeological sites from both Lower (North) and Upper (South) Egypt. The most famous are:**

**Cairo:**

the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx  
the Egyptian Museum  
the pyramids and temples of Saqqara and Dahshur  
Citadel of Salah El Din  
Mosque of Mohamed Ali

**Alexandria:**

Alexandria, with several historical sights and the stunning new Bibliotheca Alexandrina. These include Roman and Greek monuments including the Roman Colloseum in Alexandria. There is also other monuments to see underwater just off the shore of Alexandria, which form part of the heritage of Cleopatra's Era, and have now been



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submerged by water due to an ancient earthquake which took some parts of the land into the Mediterranean Sea. You can scuba dive there to see the underwater historical treasures. There is also word of building an underwater museum in Alexandria because there is so much to see underwater.

You can see the Citadel of Alexandria, a Medieval castle built during the times when Egypt was ruled by Mamluks during the Middle Ages.

You can see the Palace of King Farouk, the last king of modern Egypt who was expelled when Egypt was freed from the British during the 1952 revolution. His royal palace which was previously his summer resort in Alexandria at the time remains with its lush gardens, which is now a park that can be visited along with the place by paying an entrance ticket.

**Luxor:**

the temples of Luxor and the West Bank across the Nile  
the Valley of the Kings  
the Temples of Abu Simbel

**Aswan:**

In Aswan, you can see even more temples and ancient monuments. There you can also see Geziret El Nabatat (The Island of Plants). This is an island in the Nile River of Aswan which was planted by rare species of plants, trees, and flowers. It is a very nice experience to see a large park of greenery in the middle of the Nile River filled with exotic plants, most of them not even native to Egypt.

Perhaps the most popular activity in Luxor and Aswan is to do the Nile Cruise on a ship from Aswan to Luxor, which usually takes a week and begins somewhere along the Nile. It enables you to stop at each location along the Nile where you can see all the famous ancient monuments as well as experience being in the Nile River inside a five-star hotel boat.



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The Red Sea resorts at Sinai peninsula, including Dahab, Hurghada, and Sharm el Sheikh.  
The Red Sea offers some of the best dive locations in the world.  
The sights of the Sinai peninsula, including Saint Catherine's Monastery and Mount Sinai.  
The western desert and the oases there, including Siwa,  
Memphis, with some relics of ancient Egypt - including a huge statue of Ramesses II, evoking the image which inspired Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem Ozymandias

### Do

There is a lot to do for the foreign traveler in Egypt. Apart from visiting and seeing the ancient temples and artifacts of ancient Egypt, there is also much to see within each city. In fact, each city in Egypt has its own charm of things to see with its own history, culture, activities, and people who often differ in nature from people of other parts of Egypt.  
Cairo, for instance has so much to do and see. Besides the ancient Egyptian history, there is the history of Romans, Greeks, Byzantine Empire, Islamic empire, Ottomans, and finally modern Egyptian history.

**Jewish and Christian History** To see more about Egypt's Christian and Jewish history, go to a local tourist office and ask them to give you names of local Churches and Jewish Synagogues. There is at least two Jewish synagogues dating back many years ago, when Egypt had a population of a few hundred-thousand Jews in the country, who eventually left during the formation of Israel.

There is a lot of old and interesting Churches to see in different areas of Cairo, including downtown Cairo, Heliopolis, Korba, Shubra, Abbasiya, Zamalek, and Maadi. Some of these churches have been around for several hundred years and their architecture resemble that of Churches in Western countries, often built by Europeans who built much of the city's architecture in the 19th century as a resemblance to modern buildings of Europe at the time.

**Modern Cairo** If you want to see modern Cairo, try walking in the streets of Zamalek, Maadi, Mohandiseen, or Heliopolis where you will see some of the more modern buildings and get to



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experience the way of life in Egypt. Cairo Tower is the tallest building in Egypt, and you can go up the tower and have a nice dinner with a full view of Cairo from above. There are telescopes which enable you to see magnified sections of city in more detail and allows the traveller to see much of the city in a short amount of time.

**Local Cafes/Coffeeshops and Restaurants** For social times, try sitting in one of the local cafes restaurants where you can meet and interact with fellow Egyptians. There are numerous coffeeshops/cafes and restaurants all over Cairo all catering for different tastes and backgrounds and range from the very budget to the very expensive.

Local chains include, Coffee Roastery, Cilantro, Grand Cafe, Costa Coffee and many other places. Generally each area of Cairo has its cafes and restaurants.

**Sporting and Recreational Clubs:** If the heat is too much, you can go to one of the famous sporting clubs such as the Gezira Club located in Zamalek, or the Seid Club (otherwise known in English as the Shooting Club) located in Mohandiseen, where you can have a dip at the swimming pool or otherwise enjoy sitting in the shade and comfort of lush trees and gardens. Entrance for foreigners can be gained by buying a one-day ticket for 20-30 Egyptian pounds which enables the person to enjoy all the facilities of club including playing any sports. There are of course changing facilities and restaurants inside the club where one can enjoy a meal or a drink after engaging in any activity.

**Nightlife:** If you enjoy nightlife, there is quite a few nightclubs and discos where you can drink and dance to some of the most modern tunes in the west as well as listen to some arabic music. The music varies from Dance and Trance to Hip Hop, Rap, Techno, as well as Rock and Pop. These clubs are usually located inside five-star hotels or at areas such as Mohandiseen and Zamalek. Examples include: The Cairo Jazz Club (mohandiseen) Purple (on a boat in Zamalek) Hard Rock Cafe (inside the Four Seasons Hotel in Garden City) L'Obergine (pub and bar in Zamalek)



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**Desert Adventures:** For other adventures, try going to the Haram District of Cairo, and look for any horse-riding stables. There, you can rent a horse for a few hours and ride, or even ride a camel out in the desert by the pyramids and the Sphinx. The best time to do this is at night when you can see all the stars shining together in the sky and capture the magical feeling of the place. You will be with a local guide riding with you on another horse or camel, or you might even be joined a group of other individuals or groups of friends who enjoy riding horses in the desert by the pyramids like yourself.

**Nile Boat:** Try renting out a Feluca boat (small boat that can carry up to 20 individuals) in the Nile of Cairo. There you can experience the beauty of the Nile and the surrounding scenery, where you can see the city and its buildings and streets from within the water around. Depending on the weather, you can do this either day or night, but you will need to go to the Giza District and walk along the corniche area of the Nile and ask any of the locals for renting this boat.

**Islamic Cairo/Fatimid Cairo:** For those interested in the Islamic architecture and history, try going to Islamic Cairo, ( el Gamalaya district or Khan El Khalili. There you will see numerous buildings and some mosques and see how buildings and houses were built in the Islamic Era of Egypt. There is also a Souk or (Bazar) where you can buy lots of different souvenirs and items.

#### **Talk**

The official language of Egypt is the Egyptian dialect of Modern Arabic. Egyptian Arabic differs from the Arabic of other countries such as Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Persian Gulf. In fact, every country in the Middle East/Arab world has its own dialect of Arabic so even though you might master one particular dialect of Arabic, you might still find it difficult to communicate in Arabic in another country in the Middle East.



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Generally speaking Egyptian Arabic is the most easily understood by most natives of the Middle East because of the influence of Egyptian culture and cinema throughout the region and also because most other Arab countries listen to Egyptian Arabic on Egyptian movies,

Egyptian TV programmes, or have at least met someone from Egypt. Thus, if you can speak Egyptian Arabic, not only will it help you to communicate in Egypt, but it will also help you to communicate with Arabs of other countries in the Middle East, as most Arabs are most familiar with the Egyptian dialect.

Some major differences in pronunciation you will notice between Egyptian Arabic and Arabic of other countries in the region are that: the letter jim (ج) is pronounced G instead of J. For example the Arabic word "جمل", which means "Camel" would be pronounced "Gamal" in Egypt, while it would be pronounced "Jamal" in other countries of the Persian Gulf.

Other variations include the way people say "hello" or "goodbye". In Egypt people say "Izayak" or "A'amel Eh", while in other countries it might be "Keefak" or "Shou Akhbarak". In some cases, the dialects can be so different that they seem like two different languages and neither speakers of two different dialects can understand each other. Thus, you will find that people from other countries will revert to the Egyptian dialect or speak "Fusha Arabic", which is the classical Arabic used in literature, media, and newspapers.

All Egyptians learn Standard Arabic/Fusha Arabic at school, so they would generally be conversant in it as well.

### English

As Egypt was a British colony until 1952, most educated locals would have learned English in school. Travelers are unlikely to encounter difficulties finding someone who speaks English, especially in tourist centers. In fact, English and French are taught as second languages in all public Egyptian schools, although people who go to these schools might be able to speak the language with varying degrees, depending on the status of the school, their level of education, and the location of the school. Furthermore, a lot of young Egyptians who did not



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learn much (if any) English at school try to improve their level of English by taking up English language courses locally.

Higher class Egyptians generally go to "Language Schools" a term that means, they went to a private school similar in context to public Egyptian schools, but where the main language of teaching was mostly or mainly in English. Thus, anyone who went to a language school or a private school generally will speak better English than anyone who went to a public school, (although there can always be exceptions depending on the person really).

### **French**

Besides, English, some Egyptians are fluent in French as well. These would normally have gone to French private schools in Egypt or have learned it from their French-educated parents (generally aristocratic families in the past spoke French more fluently than English, as French schools were more common than English schools in Egypt). However, in the last 20 years, English schools have become more common as English became more popular and in higher demand in the country than French, so people who speak French are less common than those who speak English and the majority of older populations among highly-educated people will speak French more than English (if they speak any second language after Arabic at all).

### **Other Languages**

A lot of young Egyptians like to take language courses to improve and learn other languages. Although the most popular language is English due to its high-demand in the work environment, the most other common and popular languages are French, Italian, German,



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Spanish. These are popular due to the high number of tourists who come from Europe speaking these languages respectively. Other popular languages that people learn are also Russian due to the high number of Russian tourists in Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada.

### **Speaking to Egyptians in English**

Following usual rules of politeness, instead of simply starting a conversation with someone in English, ask "Do you speak English?". All the better if you can do it in Arabic using an Arabic phrasebook if necessary: te'araf tetkalllem inglezi? (addressing a male) or "te'rafy tetkallemy

inglezi?" (addressing a female), which means "Do you speak English?" Egyptian Dialect in Areas outside of Cairo/Alexandria or Northern Parts

Note that Egyptians in the southern cities and areas south of the country like Luxor and Aswan speak a different dialect/accent from Cairenes. They speak "Se'eidi" or "?????", which may sound very different from the Arabic you hear in bigger cities like Cairo and Alexandria. Furthermore, resources to learn this dialect are difficult to find, but if you live there for several months and speak with the locals in their language, you will eventually learn the difference between this accent/dialect and the dialect of bigger cities (Standard Egyptian Dialect). Cairene Arabic should be enough to get by anywhere in Egypt really. If you know Cairene Arabic, remember that ? is pronounced with a "G" sound like "gah" in the southern cities instead of "ah" in Cairo, and ? is pronounced "jeem" as in classical Arabic instead of "geem." This should be enough for you to communicate, although many words are still completely different.

Other Languages: Nubian: There are a few other languages native to Egyptians other than Arabic. In southern areas like Luxor and Aswan, you might hear people speak a totally different language from Arabic. These people are usually of darker skin and look like Africans. They are Nubians, and related to an entirely different culture and background (though related to Egypt and Sudan), called Nubia. Nubia itself is an area of land between Egypt and Sudan,



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with its own history, culture, traditions, values, and norms, and of course language, which is "Nubian" language. They are different in the way they dress and the way they behave. They are generally more traditional than Egyptians in bigger cities like Cairo and Alexandria and you will know they are Nubians because of their brown/black skin color almost as dark as Africans or the same.

Barbar: In Siwa Oasis and the western desert of Egypt, people speak Barbar, a language which is completely different and not related in anyway to Arabic. In fact this language originated in North Africa in the areas of present day Morocco, Algeria, etc. several hundred or even a thousand years ago, when people of the Barbar came and settled in the deserts of Egypt. These people who were nomadic bedouins by nature moved across the land from Algeria and Morocco in search of food and water as resources are limited across the Sahara desert and with them brought this Barbar Language when they eventually settled after many years of traveling across the desert in the Oasis of Siwa. This language is not written and only spoken so there is no evidence of it ever being used in writing.

### Local Currency

The local currency is the Egyptian pound (EGP), which is divided into 100 piastres. The currency is often written as LE (short for French livre égyptienne) or by using the pound sign £. In Arabic the pound is called gunaih (????), in turn derived from English "guinea", and piastres are known as qirsh (???). The Egyptian pound has been devaluating gradually over the last several decades. In the 1950's or 1960's, the Egyptian pound was rated almost the same as the British Pound. In fact, the Egyptian pound's value was so high that 1 L.E was



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nearly equal 1 Gold Pound. Today 1 Gold Pound is worth more than 1,000 L.E.! Nowadays, 1 British pound= 8.53 L.E and was as high as 11 L.E. up until the time before the economic recession and financial crisis of the last two years when most foreign currencies have lost a small amount of their value against the

### **Egyptian Pound.**

Other currencies value as follows: \$1 = 5.67 L.E 1 EUR= 6.99 L.E. 1 \$AUS= 4.5 L.E.

### **Exchanging Money and Banks**

Foreign currencies can be exchanged at exchange offices or banks, so there is no need to resort to the dodgy street moneychangers. Many higher-end hotels price in dollars or euros and will gladly accept them as payment, although often at a premium rate over Egyptian pounds. ATMs are ubiquitous in the cities and probably the best option overall; they often

offer the best rate and many foreign banks have branches in Egypt. These include Barclay's Bank, HSBC, CitiBank, NSGB, BNP Paribas, Piraeus Bank, CIB, and other local and Arab Banks. Bank hours are Sunday through Thursday, 8:30AM until 2:00PM.

Banknotes are available in all denominations ranging from 200 pounds to the thoroughly useless 5 piastres, while coins were rather rare until new 50-piastre and 1-pound coins were introduced in the summer of 2006. Counterfeit or obsolete notes are not a major problem, but exchanging pounds outside the country can be difficult. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted, but only bigger hotels or restaurants in Cairo and restaurants in tourist areas will readily accept credit cards as payment. Traveler's checks can be exchanged in any bank, but it could take some time.

### **Tipping**

Because of the economic situation of the country nowadays with an ever-expanding population and depletion of resources, this means that a lot of people may be unemployed (a rate which is much higher than in more developed countries). Even those who are employed in the service or hospitality industry (ie. restaurants, hotels, bars, etc.) are most likely



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underpaid as their wages do not really reflect the value of the work they do. It is even more difficult for them to make a living with the problem of non-stop inflation, which means prices for everything even basic commodities like food and water keep rising steeply, while their wages remain the same and if they do rise, will not even rise to a fraction of the increase that prices have risen to. This means that 90 % of people who work in the service/hospitality industry try to make their main source of income from living off of tips. In fact, for these people tips form a large majority of their income because without tips, their monthly wages/salaries would simply not be enough for them to survive in a place where prices rise steadily and salaries remain the same.

Having read that, please bear in mind that these people quite often live hard lives, often responsible for feeding large families and may very well live in poverty simply because their income from work is not sufficient for them to live easy lives. Many of them are forced in these jobs because otherwise they would not find another job at all, in a country with such high unemployment rates and overpopulation. Thus, don't be surprised or offended if almost

everyone at your hotel asks for a tip, even if all they did was a small thing. You don't have to pay huge tips as often smallest bills are appreciated. However, you don't have to tip if you feel that you haven't received any service or help at all or if you feel that the service was bad. Nobody will ever take offense or be disrespectful if you did not tip them.

### **Some general guidelines:**

Bathroom attendants: LE 3

Cruises: LE 30/day, to be divided by all staff on board

Guide: LE 40/day

Hotel bellman: LE 10 for all bags

Hotel doorman: LE 10 for services rendered (flagging down taxis etc)

Restaurants: In fancier restaurants, a service charge (10-12%) is added to bills, but a 5-10% tip on top of that is common. In fast-food places, tipping is unnecessary.

Taxi drivers: 10% on metered fares, but not necessary if you agreed the fare in advance



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Site custodians: LE 5 if they do something useful, none otherwise

Tour drivers: LE 10/day

If you ask a stranger for directions, tips are not necessary and may even be considered offensive. Officials in uniform, such as police officers, should not be tipped. Remember that bribery is technically illegal, although if forced to provide one you can rest assured that nothing will happen to you. Last but not least, be aware that as a foreign tourist, you are seen by many as easy money and you should not let yourself be pressured into tipping for unnecessary or unrequested "services" like self-appointed tour guides latching on to you.

### Shopping

Egypt is a shopper's paradise - especially if you're interested in Egyptian-themed souvenirs and kitsch. However, there are also a number of high quality goods for sale, often at bargain prices. Some of the most popular purchases include:

Antiques (NB: not antiquities, the trade of which is rightly illegal in Egypt)

Carpets and rugs

Cotton goods and clothing Can be bought at Khan El Khalili for around 30-40 EGP. Better quality Egyptian cotton clothing can be bought at various chain stores including Mobaco Cottons and Concrete which have many branches throughout the country. The clothes are expensive for Egypt (about 180-200 LE for a shirt) but cheap by Western standards given the quality.

Inlaid goods, such as backgammon boards

Jewellery Cartouches make a great souvenir. These are metal plates shaped like an elongated oval and have engravings of your name in hieroglyphics

Leather goods



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Music

Papyrus

Perfume - Perfumes can be bought at almost every souvenir shop. Make sure that you ask the salesman to prove to you that there is no alcohol mixed with the perfume. The standard rates should be in the range of 1-2 Egyptian Pounds / gm

Water-pipes (Sheeshas)

Spices - can be bought at colourful stalls in most Egyptian markets. Dried herbs and spices are generally of a higher quality than that available in Western supermarkets and are up to 4 or 5 times cheaper, though the final price will depend on

### **bargaining and local conditions.**

When shopping in markets or dealing with street vendors, remember to haggle.

You will also find many western brands all around. There are many malls in Egypt, the most common being Citystars Mall, which is the largest entertainment center in the Middle East and Africa. You will find all the fast food restaurants you want such as McDonald's, KFC, Hardees, Pizza Hut, etc. Clothing brands such as Morgan, Calvin Klein, Levi's, Facconable, Givenchy, Esprit, and more.

In Egypt, prices are often increased for foreigners, so if you see a price on a price tag, it may be wise to learn the local Eastern Arabic numerals:

Latin Numerals 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Eastern Arabic numerals ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

Like Latin Numerals, they are written from left to right. For example, the number 15 would be written as ??.

Shopping in Egypt ranges goods and commodities that represent souvenirs of Egypt's ancient as well as modern things. These include items such as small pyramids, obelisks, and souvenir statues which can be bought at more touristic areas such as Khan El Khalili and Islamic Cairo.



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You can also do general shopping in Cairo for clothing items and other goods such as in the modern shopping malls of City Stars, City Center, Arkadia Mall, or Nile City (all of which contain some of the most famous designer brands of the world, including Guess, Calvin Klein, Armani, Hugo Boss, etc.

### **Eat**

Egypt can be a fantastic place to sample a unique range of food: not too spicy and well-flavoured with herbs. For a convenient selection of Egyptian cuisine and staple foods try the Felfela chain of restaurants in Cairo. Some visitors complain, however, that these have become almost too tourist-friendly and have abandoned some elements of authenticity. As in many seaside countries, Egypt is full of fish restaurants and markets--so fish and seafood are must-try. Frequently, fish markets have some food stalls nearby where you can point at specific fish species to be cooked. Stalls typically have shared table, and locals are as frequent there as tourists.

### **Hygiene**

Be aware that hygiene may not be of the highest standards, depending on the place. The number of tourists that suffer from some kind of parasite or bacterial infection is very high. Despite assurances to the contrary, exercise common sense and bring appropriate medications to deal with problems. "Antinal" (Nifuroxazide) is cheap, effective and available in

every pharmacy. "Immodium" or similar products are prescription drugs only. Although Antinal is very effective, sometimes when nothing else is, the elderly should check the brand name with their doctor before relying on it as it contains a high concentration of active ingredient that is not approved by the US FDA or the British regulatory pharmaceutical body.

### **Local dishes**

Classic Egyptian dishes: The dish Ful Medames is one of the most common Egyptian dishes; consists of fava beans (ful) slow-cooked in a copper pot (other types of metal pots don't



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produce the right type of flavor) that have been partially or entirely mashed. Olive oil is often an ingredient, and garlic is sometimes added. Ful medames is served with plenty of olive oil, chopped parsley, onion, garlic, and lemon juice, and typically eaten with Egyptian (baladi) bread or occasionally Levantine (shami) pita. Also sometimes seasoned with chili paste and tumeric.

One must try is the classic Falafel (known as Ta'miya in Egypt) which is deep-fried ground fava bean balls (but better known worldwide for the ground chickpea version typically found in other cuisines of the Middle Eastern region) that was believed to be invented by Egyptian bedouins. Usually served as fast food, or a snack.

Koshary is a famous dish, which is usually a mixture of macaroni, lentils, rice, chickpeas and tomato sauce. Very popular amongst the locals and a must try for tourists. The gratinated variation is called Taagin.

Egyptian cuisine is quite similar to the cuisine of the Arabic-speaking countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. Dishes like stuffed vegetables and vine leaves, Shawarma-sandwiches are common in Egypt and the region. Vegetarian Tourists Options: Vegetarian tourists although have limited options for them to explore from but Falafel and Koshary are excellent choices for them.

### Exotic fruits

Egypt is one of the most affordable countries for a European to try variety of fresh-grown exotic fruits. Guava, mango, watermelon, small melons, ishta are all widely available from fruit stalls, especially in locals-oriented non-tourist marketplaces.



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## Drink

### Water

Bottled water is available everywhere. The local brands (most common being Baraka, Siwa, Hayat) are just as good as expensive imported options which are also available: Nestle Pure Life, Evian, Dasani (bottled by Coca-Cola), and Aquafina (bottled by Pepsi). A note on the local brand Baraka: while it is perfectly safe to drink this brand of bottled water, some may notice a very slight baking soda aftertaste, due to the high mineral content of its deep well water source. No matter where you buy bottled water from (even hotels are not entirely reliable), before accepting it check that there is a clear plastic seal on it and the neck ring is still attached to the cap by the breakable threads of plastic. It is common to collect empty but 'new' bottles and refill them with tap water which drinking a bottle of will make you ill. Not all brands have the clear plastic cover but all the good ones do.

### Juices

Juices can be widely found in Egypt - kasab(sugar cane); erk soos (licorice); sobiia (white juice); tamr and some fresh fruit juices(almost found at same shop which offer all these kind of juices except erk soos may be which you can find another places).

Karkadae is also famous juice specially at Luxor and it is hibiscus tea which is drunk hot or cold but in Egypt it is preferred to drink it cold. Should mention also that hibiscus tea is known to lower blood pressure so be careful.

## Alcoholic drinks

Egypt is a predominanty Muslim nation and alcoholic drinks are forbidden (haram) for strictly observant Muslims. That said, Egyptians tend to adopt a relaxed and pragmatic view towards



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alcohol for non-Muslims and foreigners. It is tolerated by the vast majority of Egyptians and consumed by a sizable number of them (including less strict Muslims - you may even be asked to "procure" drink for someone!) Alcoholic beverages and bottled drinks are readily available throughout the country (especially in larger towns and cities, as well as tourist centers). Please note, however, that public drunkenness (especially the loud and obnoxious variety) is definitely not appreciated - without caution, you may end up drying out in a police cell. Try to be a good ambassador: if you must get "tipsy", confine it to the hotel or very nearby! (It's actually quite rare to see drunken tourists, even in the most intense tourist areas...)

Stella (not artois) is a common beer in Egypt. Other local brands are available, most a with higher alcohol variant that have claimed levels of 8% or even 10%..

### Restrictions on Alcohol

Egyptian laws towards alcohol are officially quite liberal compared to most Islamic countries, except for the month of Ramadan when alcohol is strictly forbidden. During Ramadan only holders of foreign passports are allowed to buy alcohol, by Egyptian law. However, the enforcement of this law is by no means consistent. In tourist areas like Luxor, alcohol is sold even during Ramadan, and those who look like foreigners will not be asked to show passports or other documentation.

During Ramadan alcohol is often sold only in Western-style hotels and pubs/restaurants catering especially to foreigners. A few days of the year, as the day of the full moon the month before Ramadan, alcohol is completely banned. Also some hotels and bars catering to foreigners will stop serving alcohol during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan - phone ahead to make sure alcohol is still being served in order to avoid disappointment.

### Stay safe



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### Scams and hassle

Travelers often complain about being hassled and attempts at scamming while in Egypt. While irritating, most of this is pretty harmless stuff, like attempting to lure you into a local papyrus or perfume shop.

Typically, you will be approached by a person speaking fluent English who will strike up a conversation under social pretenses. He (and it will always be a he) will then attempt to get you to come along for a cup of tea or similar at his favourite (most-paying) souvenir shop. This could also happen outside museums etc. where the scammer will try to make you believe the "museum is closed" or similar.

Hassling, while never dangerous, could also be annoying, especially in the main tourist areas. There is no way to avoid this, but a polite *la shukran* (no thanks) helps a lot. Apart from that, try to take hassling with a smile. If you let yourself be bugged by everyone trying to sell you something, your holiday won't be a very happy one.

Potentially more annoying are taxi drivers or others getting a commission fee to lead you to their hotel of choice, of course paying commission fees for each guest they receive. Firmly stand your ground on this. If they insist, just ask to be dropped off at a street or landmark close to the place you are heading to. This scam is especially common among taxi drivers from the airport. Egypt is generally a safe and friendly country to travel. Egyptians on the whole are very friendly - if you are in need of assistance they will generally try to help you as much as they are able. Egyptian men will make compliments to women; do not take offense if they do this to you. Men shouldn't be worried, either; if they do this to your partner/daughter, it will be nothing more than a compliment, and hopefully won't go any further than that.

### Terrorism

Terrorism is certainly the most spectacular safety concern, and the country's terrorist groups have an unpleasant record of specifically targeting Western tourists and the places they frequent. The most infamous attack was the one in 1997 in Luxor, which killed 62 people, but



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there has also been a series of bombings in the Sinai in 2004-2006 and one largely unsuccessful attempt in Cairo in 2005.

The most recent incident involving British nationals occurred on 24 April 2006 in the resort town of Dahab killing 23 people, and injuring more than 60 including three British nationals. On the evening of 22 February 2009, an explosion occurred near the Al Hussein Mosque in Cairo, killing one French national and injuring others. The Egyptian security forces remain on a high level of alert.

Realistically speaking, though, the odds of being affected by terrorism are minimal and most attacks have only succeeded in killing Egyptians, further increasing the revulsion the vast majority of Egyptians feel for the extremists. The government takes the issue very seriously and tourist sites are very heavily guarded. For example, if you take a taxi from Cairo to Alexandria, you will be stopped at a checkpoint before leaving Cairo. They will ask where you are going, and communicate with the checkpoint at Alexandria to make sure you reach your destination within a certain time period. The same goes for most trips into the desert, particularly in Upper Egypt. During different branches of your drive, you may be escorted by local police. They will travel to your destination with you, wait around until you are finished, and usually stay behind at one of the next checkpoints. The best example of this is when you travel from Aswan to Abu Simbel to visit the Temple of Ramses II. An armed tourism police officer will board your tourist bus and escort you until you arrive at Abu Simbel, and after your tour, he will ride on the same bus with you back to Aswan. There are also many tourism police officers armed with AK-47s riding on camels patrolling the Giza plateau. They are there to ensure the safety of the tourists since the Pyramids are the crown jewels of all the Egyptian antiquities. Some tourists may find it exciting or even amusing to take pictures with these police officers on camel back; however, since they are all on patrol duty, it is not uncommon for them to verbally warn you not to pose next to them in order to take a picture with them.



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### **Crime**

Pickpocketing is a problem in Egypt's bigger cities, particularly Cairo. Many locals opt not to carry wallets at all, instead keeping their money in a clip in their pocket, and tourists would be wise to adopt this as well. On the upside, violent crime is rare, and you are highly unlikely to physically mugged or robbed. If, however, you do find yourself the victim of crime, you may get the support of local pedestrians by shouting "Harami" (Criminal) while chasing the person who robbed you. Overall, scams are the main concern in Egypt. Be aware that many Egyptians who start a conversation with you in Cairo and Luxor want your money. There is a very insidious tactic used where they will "befriend" you, take you around, show you things, even bring you back to their place for dinner, and then they will demand money for it. Basically, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Demand prices for absolutely everything, because if you say "I thought it was free!" after the fact you are in for a vicious argument.

### **Stay healthy**

#### **Fluids**

Ensure that you drink plenty of water: Egypt has an extremely dry climate most of the year - a fact aggravated by high temperatures in the summer end of the year - and countless travelers each year experience the discomforts and dangers of dehydration. A sense of thirst is not enough to indicate danger - carry a water bottle and keep drinking! Not needing to urinate for a long period or passing very small amounts of dark yellow urine are signs of incipient dehydration.

Egyptian tap water is generally considered safe by locals, but will often make travellers ill. It is not recommended for regular drinking, especially to very local differences in quality. Bottled



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mineral waters are widely available -- see Drink:Water section. Beware of the old scam, however, whereby vendors re-sell bottled water bottles, having refilled with another (perhaps

dubious) source.... Always check the seal is unbroken before parting with your money (or drinking from it) and inform the tourist police if you catch anyone doing this....

Be a little wary with fruit juice, as some sellers may mix it with water. Milk should also be treated carefully as it may not be pasteurized.... Try only to buy milk from reputable shops. Hot beverages like tea and coffee should generally be OK, the water having been boiled in preparation, though it pays to be wary of ice as well.

### **Sun**

Wear sunscreen, wear a sturdy hat and bring good sunglasses - it's bright out there!

### **Schistosomiasis**

In order to avoid contracting the rightly dreaded schistosomiasis parasite (also known as bilharzia), a flatworm that burrows through the skin, do not swim in the Nile or venture into any other Egyptian waterways, even if the locals are doing so. It is also a good idea not to walk in bare feet on freshly-watered lawns for the same reason. Although the disease takes weeks to months to show its head, it's wise to seek medical attention locally if you think you've been exposed, as they are used to diagnosing and treating it, and it will cost you pennies rather than dollars. Symptoms include fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain and fatigue, making the disease easy to mistake for (say) the flu or food poisoning, but the flatworm eggs can be identified with a stool test and the disease can usually be cured with a single dose of Praziquantel. Outbreaks of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) in Egypt have led to 23 human fatalities since 2006. The last fatality was in December 2008.



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### **Respect**

Keep in mind that most Egyptian workers expect tips after performing a service, known as Baksheesh. This can be expected for something as little as pressing the button in the elevator. Many workers will even ask you to tip them before you get a chance. The typical tip for minor services is 50pt to 1 LE. Due to the general shortage of small change, you may be forced to give 5 LE to do simple things like use the bathroom. Just understand that this is part of the culture; the value of the baksheesh is very small to most westerners (USD\$0.10 to \$0.25) but makes up a good portion of monthly income for many Egyptians.

Do not photograph people without their permission, and in areas frequented by tourists do not be surprised if a bit of baksheesh is requested. If you're male, don't be surprised if another male holds your hand or forearm or engages in some form of bodily contact - there's no taboo against men holding hands and unlike in the West, this behavior is not associated with homosexuality. In general, Egyptians are a lot more comfortable with less personal space than are most Westerners; however, pairs of Westerners should be cautious in engaging in same-sex contact. Normal contact is quite acceptable (shaking hands, pats on the shoulder, etc.) but holding hands could be mistaken in Westerners as a sign of homosexuality, which is quite taboo in Egypt. Smoking is very common and cigarettes are very cheap in Egypt. Gamal Abdul Nasser, the first President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and many others are considered national heroes in Egypt; you should say absolutely nothing that could be perceived as offensive or derogatory regarding him. Hosni Mubarak (the current President) is largely unpopular but it is probably better not to discuss politics unless your Egyptian



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acquaintance brings it up first. Tread carefully around such topics and let others guide the openness of the discussion. Many Egyptians have a different interpretation concerning ambiguous expressions such as freedom of speech and democracy. Likewise, don't bring up politics and other delicate issues impulsively. It is advisable not to discuss Israel even if tempted; do not speak loudly about it as it may attract unwanted attention, even if you are only talking about it as a travel destination.

Never discuss religion from an atheistic or similar point of view. Even highly educated Egyptians who studied abroad won't appreciate it and doors will close for you. Also be aware that the Islamic "call to prayer" happens five times daily and can be heard loudly almost anywhere you go. Just understand that most Egyptians are used to it and enjoy it as part of the cultural experience.

Take great care if you choose to drink, especially if you're from countries where heavy drinking is accepted. Even if you are used to it, you can't estimate the effects of the climate, even at night. The impact drunk people have on Egyptians is quite large and very negative. The best plan is just to abstain or limit yourself to one drink per meal while in Egypt; it will be cheaper too.

### Dress

Egyptians are generally a conservative people and most are religious (roughly 90% Muslim and 10% Christian) and dress very conservatively. Although they accommodate foreigners being dressed a lot more skimpily, it is prudent not dress provocatively, if only to avoid having people stare at you. It is best to wear pants or jeans instead of shorts as only tourists wear these. In modern nightclubs, restaurants, hotels and bars in Cairo, Alexandria and other



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tourist destinations you'll find the dress code to be much less restrictive. Official or social functions and smart restaurants usually require more formal wear.

At the Giza Pyramids and other such places during the hot summer months, short sleeve tops and even sleeveless tops are acceptable for women (especially when traveling with a tour group). Though you should carry a scarf or something to cover up more while traveling to/from the tourist destination. Also, it's perfectly acceptable for women to wear sandals during the summer, and you will even see some women with the hijab who have sandals on. Women should cover their arms and legs if travelling alone, and covering your hair may

help to keep away unwanted attention. Though as a foreigner, you may get plenty of attention no matter what you wear, mainly including people staring at you along with some verbal harassment which you can try to ignore. Egyptian women, even those who wear the full hijab, are often subjected to sexual harassment, including cat calls. You may find that completely covering up does not make a huge difference, with regards to harassment, versus wearing a top with shorter sleeves. In regards to harassment, it's also important how you act. Going out with a group of people is also helpful, and the best thing to do is ignore men who give you unwanted attention. They want to get some reaction out of you. Also, one sign of respect is to use the Arabic greeting, "Asalamualaikum" (means "hello, peace be upon you"), and the other person should reply "Walaikumasalam" ("peace be upon you"). That lets the person know you want respect, and nothing else.

#### **Contact**

Egypt has a reasonably modern telephone service including three GSM mobile service providers. The three mobile phone providers are Mobinil, Vodafone and Etisalat. Principal centers are located at Alexandria, Cairo, Al Mansurah, Ismailia, Suez, and Tanta. Roaming



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services are provided, although you should check with your service provider. Also, it is possible to purchase tourist mobile phone lines for the duration of your stay, which usually costs around 30 LE.

Internet access is easy to find and cheap. Most cities, such as Cairo and Luxor, and even smaller tourist sites, such as Edfu, boast a plethora of small internet cafés. The price per hour is usually 2-10 LE depending on the location/speed. In addition, an increasing number of coffee shops, restaurants, hotel lobbies and other locations now provide free wireless internet access. Free wi-fi (Mobilnil) is also available at modern coffee shops such as Cilantro and Costa Coffee, where you obtain access by getting a 2-hour "promotional" card from the waiter, and if you go into almost any McDonald's, you will have access to a free WiFi connection.

### Laundry

There are a number of options for washing clothes whilst travelling in Egypt: By far the easiest, most practical - and not at all expensive - is to arrange for your hotel to have your washing done for you. By prior arrangement, clothes left on the bed or handed in at reception will be returned to you by evening freshly laundered and pressed. Determined self-helpers can persist with hand-washing or finding one of the many "hole-in-the-wall" laundries where the staff will wash and press your clothes manually - a fascinating process in itself! Just be aware that your clothes will probably smell of cigarette smoke when returned...Cairo possesses a few basic Western-style laundromats in areas where foreigners and tourists reside - they are virtually nonexistent elsewhere in the country. Some hotels in tourist towns like Luxor and Dahab offer a washing machine services



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