

David Furlong Egyptian Trips

Practical Information



Weather:

Egypt has basically a desert climate with very little rain and considerable extremes of temperature over the day. During the winter there can be night frosts in the desert with temperatures during the day rising to 86° F. Temperature range in Luxor for this time of year is on average around 50° F. for night rising to 80° F. at noon. Bring a mixture of clothing including some warm heavy pullovers.

Time:

Egyptian time is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

Electricity:

The voltage is normally 220 volts A.C. Power sockets are of the two-pronged European Continental type. Suitable adaptors should be taken.

Travel Documents:

Visitors must have a valid passport extending at least **6 months** beyond the date of entry. A *visa* is required although this can be obtained on entry to Cairo or Luxor. This applies to those with a valid British Passport. For all other please consult the Egyptian Consulate in London.

Health and Inoculations:

As in all hot countries the non-acclimatized tourist should take sensible precautions to safe-guard his or her health. Adequate protection against the sun (head covering, sunglasses, protective cream etc.) is essential; and exposure to mid-day heat should be avoided. In order to compensate for the bodies loss water by perspiration it is necessary to drink a lot of liquids and also to be aware of taking adequate amount of salt.

It is easy to get stomach infections from eating unpeeled fruit, salad or from drinking dubious water. Bottled water can be readily purchased and should be used for washing teeth etc. Also hot tap water can be used for washing fruit etc for although not completely sterilised it is at least pasteurised. i.e. it will kill most of the pathogens liable to cause stomach and intestinal infections.

Malaria should not be a problem at the time of the year that we will be travelling.

Eye infections can sometimes be a problem. They are transmitted by flies or by direct physical contact: it is unwise therefore to lend your camera or binoculars to strangers.

Finally the following vaccinations are recommended although are not obligatory: Hepatitis A.; Polio; Tetanus; and Typhoid. Also you can take Malaria tablets. You are strongly advised to consult your doctor before leaving so that the necessary steps can be taken to safe-guard your health.

Currency:

The Egyptian currency is the Egyptian £ (LE) which is made up of 100 piastres (PT) and 1000 milliemes. There are bank notes for 5,10,25 and 50 piastres and 1,5,10 and 20 pounds. It is advisable to have some small currency which can be used for tipping etc. At the time of writing the exchange rate is £1 sterling = LE 4.70. There is a facility in most hotels for exchanging Travellers Cheques in £ or \$, alternatively banks will provide this service. I would suggest that you obtain some local currency before travelling. This should be able to be done at your departure airport.

Language:

The main language in Egypt is Arabic, which differs considerably from the European languages not only in the grammatical structure but also in the script it uses. However English and French are widely spoken so it is not difficult to make yourself understood.

Food and Drink:

Most good quality hotels and restaurants provide English/Continental menus. Except in the most expensive hotels and restaurants food and drink can be acquired for quite modest amounts of money. Please note the days that you will need to get your own lunches. We will stop at suitable eating places.

Manners and Customs:

Egypt is predominantly an Islamic country although there is also quite a strong Coptic element. It is therefore important particularly when outside of the hotels to avoid offending local susceptibilities. Unduly light or casual clothing should be avoided, particularly when visiting mosques, when one's shoes should be removed. Female visitors should, for their own protection, avoid unduly revealing dress; women with bare shoulders or wearing shorts are regarded as fair game.

Tipping:

Given the low rates of pay many families rely on **Bakshish**. It is the customs to give a tip for any service rendered. Therefore an adequate amount of small change is very necessary. It is normal to give 5-10% on any restaurant bill and for any taxi service etc. You may also in the main Tourist areas be pestered by small children asking for **Bakshish**. Unless they render some service this should be avoided, although sometimes sweets or birros are a good substitute. To tell youngsters to go away simply say "Ma fish bakshish". Porters should be given 1 LE. Although main tipping when moving hotels etc will be carried out by David Furlong.

Bartering:

Bartering is endemic throughout Egypt and if entered into with the right spirit can be fun. The only people who do not barter are the Copts. You can usually tell, if you enter a shop, by looking for any religious pictures or crosses. In these cases the price you are quoted is what you will be expected to pay with occasional small reductions. However in every other case the price you are initially quoted will be very inflated. Do not enter into bartering unless you are really interested in purchasing the goods. If you do wish to negotiate, and there are some good bargains to be had, a rule of thumb is to offer half of whatever sum you are quoted. You will then expect to pay something close to the mid point between the two figures, depending on how good your bartering is. So if you are offered a galabaya for LE50 offer LE25. You will eventually compromise around LE35. For the Egyptians part of the fun of life is bartering, so to accept the first price offered deprives you and them of an important personal interchange and social communication.

The Egyptians are amazingly skilled in getting tourists to part with their money and can be quite persistent in offering camel rides, donkey rides, horse rides and every type of reproduction artifact that you could possibly imagine. Do not feel intimidated, for it is their way of life. But be firm in saying no if you do not want what is being offered.

Warning: Some tourists have had alterations made to their credit card purchases. On the whole the Egyptian are a very honest people, but there are always exceptions. If you make a Credit Card purchase make certain that you keep the receipt slip. You do not want to find that the £50 purchase that you made has been changed to £500. Without your receipt the credit card companies have little course for redress. **So be warned.**

Opening Times:

Shops are usually open from 9 am to 1 pm and from 5 pm to a late hour in the evening. Banks open at 9 am and close at 1 pm. Friday is their Sabbath, so most shops offices and banks are closed then.

There are a number of excellent guide books but probably the easiest to read is Baedeker's **AA Guide to Egypt**. Also to be recommended is the **Blue Guide to Egypt**. On a more esoteric line there is an excellent book by John Anthony West called **The Travellers Guide to Ancient Egypt**. This is published by Quest Books. For general reading any books, which give greater information about the country will help your appreciation of the trip. Two recent books which have come to my attention are "Reading Egyptian Art" by Richard Wilkinson pub. by Thames and Hudson and "The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt" pub. Thames & Hudson.



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