



EGYPT

AGENT: Lyn McNaught from helloworld Lyn McNaught Travel

DAY 1 – CAIRO

Arrive in Cairo where you are met by your tour leader and transferred to our hotel located in Giza with a view to the Pyramids. The Mena House Oberoi was built in 1867 as Khedive Ismail's hunting lodge and has sumptuous rooms, gardens and a pool to match. Like a peaceful oasis of yesteryear, this is your ideal home away from home.

The afternoon is at your leisure to rest after your flight. This evening you meet your leader and fellow travelers for dinner. This is a good chance to get to know everyone and discuss what lies ahead.

Accommodation: Mena House Oberoi

DAY 2 – CAIRO

Breakfast on the roof terrace is hard to beat with views of the pyramids in the distance. After breakfast we head out on a tour of the Pyramids and Sphinx. Giza Plateau is the site of the ancient pyramids of Mycerinus, Chepren and the Great Pyramid of Cheops being the largest of the three and known as the Great Pyramid. It was built in the Fourth Dynasty (approximately 2690 BC) and is the oldest and only survivor of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Next we visit the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities which houses over 12,000 ancient Egyptian relics, including treasures from Tutankhamun and artifacts dating back to 4000 BC. The museum's most fascinating exhibit is its famous Mummy Room, where you will see the remains of ancient Egypt's pharaohs and nobility, including Ramses II. This visit is made all the more interesting by your guide with an expert Egyptologist.

We return to the hotel and the rest of the afternoon and evening is at your leisure. Your leader will be on hand to offer suggestions for dinner and to assist with any arrangements you may wish to make.

Accommodation: Mena House Oberoi

DAY 3 – LUXOR

We fly to Luxor this morning and visit the Temples of Karnak, north of the city on the east bank. This is one of the most important sights in Luxor and the largest religious building on the planet. The Great Hypostyle Hall, where 134 vast columns soar implausibly into the sky, is one of the most staggering things you will see in Egypt. Building here started about 3,200 years ago.

Afterwards, we take a motorboat transfer to our hotel on the West Bank to check-in and freshen up. Al Moudira hotel has a tranquil setting amidst ample grounds and is an architectural pleasure dome of vaulted ceilings, Pharaonic murals, wooden latticework and regal arches.

The afternoon is at your leisure to stroll around the lush courtyards, enjoy a cocktail in the sitting-room bar, soak up the sun on the terrace by the pool or rest up on your splendidly enormous room. As

the sun sets, we head back to the East Bank for a guided tour of Luxor Temple, which is dramatically lit at night, followed by dinner at Sofra Restaurant.

Accommodation: Al Moudira Hotel

DAY 4 – LUXOR

This morning we have an early start to avoid the crowds and head to the nearby Valley of the Kings – the exclusive precinct of tombs for all the Pharaohs of the New Kingdom, including Tutankhamun. We also visit Hatshepsut, one of the most beautiful buildings you will see in Luxor. The Ramesseum and The Colossi of Memnon.

Afterwards we visit the home of a local family to share a delicious meal and learn about their life, before returning to the hotel in the early afternoon where the rest of the day is at your leisure.

Accommodation: Al Moudira Hotel

DAY 5 – SAILING DOWN THE NILE

This morning is the start of a truly unique experience as you are transferred to the Esna to embark on a traditional dahabiya for a leisurely 4-night sailing adventure along the Nile from Esna to Aswan. Before setting off, we visit Esna temple – a fabulous and grand structure of the Ptolemaic period that was later added to by the Romans – and afterwards enjoy a short walk through the local markets.

The dahabiya is the traditional sailing boat once used by the Egyptian royals in the 19th century. They are beautifully appointed and each cabin offers every comfort you could wish for, a graceful and romantic way to enjoy one of the world's great rivers.

First we sail towards El Kab, which is the ancient town of Nekheb, where you will visit the remains of some wonderful tombs that were cut into the cliff. Tonight's mooring will be a short sail away on a small island off the Nile. Dinner will be served on board the Dahabiya or on the tranquil banks of the Nile.

Accommodation: Dahabiya Loulia

DAY 6 - SAILING DOWN THE NILE

Setting sail early in the morning is the best way to start the day followed by a guided tour of the Temple of Hors at Edfu. The Temple at Horus is the best preserved of all the temples in Egypt and well worth a visit. It was where Horus, one of the main gods of ancient Egypt, was worshipped.

Afterwards, we continue sailing and moor at a small island for the night. Along the way we enjoy stops in small villages and the desert, a great way to meet some locals and observe their way of life.

DAY 7 – SAILING DOWN THE NILE

In the morning, we set sail for a Gebel el – Silsila to explore the ancient sandstone quarries and rock-out chapels for the kinds of the New Kingdom Ramses II and his son Merenptah.

Then continue sailing upstream towards the double temple of Horus and Sobek (the crocodile god) at Kom Ombo. Tonight's mooring is at the Island of Maniha.

Accommodation: Dahabiya Loulia

DAY 8 – SAILING DOWN THE NILE

Sailing continues this morning as we head further up the Nile to the village of Draw, which was once the last stop on the famous 40-day desert road between Sudan and Egypt. Here it is possible to stretch your legs and take a walking tour of the village markets.

As the afternoon progresses, we sail onto the Nubian Village of El Koubania to get a glimpse of the Nubian way of life before arriving in Aswan and experiencing the dramatic Sound and Light show at Philae Temple, featuring the love story between Isis and Osiris.

Accommodation: Dahabiya Loulia

DAY 9 – ASWAN

This morning we farewell our Dhabiya crew and set off on some amazing sightseeing around Aswan. We visit Philae Temple, the Aswan High Dam and the Unfinished Obelisk before heading to our hotel to check in and have the afternoon at leisure.

This evening we enjoy a wonderful evening in a Nubian family's home on the Elephantine Island where you will share dinner with the family and get acquainted with the Nubian culture.

Our hotel in Aswan is the legendary Old Cataract Hotel overlooking a bend in the river and the islands that make up the last cataract before the rivers long slow haul to the Nile Delta and the Mediterranean. The outdoor areas take full advantage of the stunning setting, and the historic hotels list of esteemed guests over the decades add to the atmosphere. Yes, there is more than a whiff of Agatha Christie's presence here.

Accommodation: Sofitel Old Cataract Aswan

DAY 10 – ABU SIMBEL AND RETURN TO CAIRO

This morning we have an early start with our flight to Abu Simbel. There, discover the site of the commanding twin temples of Ramses II, Egypt's longest-ruling pharaoh, and his wife, Queen Nefertari. The former's façade is dominated by four imposing statues of the pharaoh. All four towering sculptures – each nearly 70 feet tall – are impressive enough; but perhaps more astonishing is the fact that this entire site was disassembled and moved to its present location to save it from the floodwaters of the Aswan High Dam.

Afterwards we take a short flight back to Cairo and transfer to our hotel in the heart of the old city. Le Riad is a stunningly renovated mansion situated on one of the most vibrant narrow streets in the most vibrant district in town, teeming with ancient buildings that flaunt their beauty without restraint, while streets and alley-ways are free of cars, the rarest treat in town. Within 500 metres of the front door you'll find ancient mosques, a medieval mansion and Cairo's most famous souk.

We delve deep into the areas Islamic history with a visit to the Citadel of Sala Ed-Din. Located high atop Cairo, the citadel boast magnificent views of the city. Build by the Arab here Salah Ad-Din, the Citadel primarily functioned as a military garrison, as well as serving as a royal residence for over 700 years.

Continuing in the historical traditions of Islamic Cairo, we head to the famous Sultan Hassan Mosque, which dates back to the 13th century. Considered one of the masterpieces of Islamic art and architecture, its history also includes time spent at a school. Equally as impressive, the Mohammed Ali Mosque is one of Cairo's most visible landmarks, with its twin minarets rising high atop the Citadel.

We end our day at the famous local bazaar, Khan el-Khalili. A labyrinth of narrow streets and passageways, Khan el-Khalili is one of the world's largest bazaars, and offers a truly authentic local Cairo experience. Among the world's oldest bazaars, dating back to 1382, Khan el-Khalili offers an experience unique to the old streets of Islamic Cairo, and affords the opportunity to engage with the locals, as locals do, hunting for bargains and relaxing with a coffee as the hustle of the bazaar passes you by. A short walk will bring you back to your hotel at your leisure.

This evening the group gathers for a final farewell to Egypt with your last dinner together and your Egyptian tour leader who has by now become a firm friend.

Accommodation: Le Riad Hotel

DAY 10 – WELCOME TO JORDAN

On arrival in Amman you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

After a chance to check in and refresh from your flight we enjoy an afternoon tour of Amman, the capital and largest city of Jordan. Our first stop is the ancient Citadel, towering above the Downtown and the rest of the capital. This is the original city, with its monumental Temple of Hercules, Umayyad Palace, National Archaeological Museum and the panoramic views of Amman's jabals (hills) and the Roman Theatre, one of the largest and most impressive amphitheatres of the ancient world.

This evening meet your leader and the rest of your group and head to a welcome dinner at Fakhr El – Din Restaurant.

Accommodation: Four Seasons Hotel

DAY 11 – JERASH

After breakfast drive about an hour north from Amman to the ruins of Jerash, one of the best-preserved Roman cities of the Middle East. As we wander the paved, colonnaded Cardo Maximum it is easy to imagine life in ancient times, with bustling streets full of shops, roaming performance artists and open public spaces alive with debates.

Next we visit the laidback town of Madaba, best known for its superb historically significant Byzantine-era mosaics; a map of the Holy Land which was unearthed on the floor of St Georges Church in 1884.

Following lunch at the beautiful Haret Jdoudna restaurant we visit Mt Nebo, where Moses first cast his eyes upon the Promised Land before returning to Amman.

The rest of the evening is at your leisure. Your tour leader can help you to further explore Amman or you may prefer some relaxation in the many beautiful public areas of the Four Seasons Hotel overlooking the neighbouring residential districts.

Accommodation: Four Seasons Hotel

DAY 12 – THE DEAD SEA AND PETRA

After breakfast we visit the Dead Sea, the lowest point on Earth, an intense blue lake surrounded by reddish brown hills. Here you'll be able to experience the sensation of floating in its water as well as enjoying the facilities at the plush O Village Resort as well as views of Mt Nebo, the Dead Sea and across the Dead Sea to Jericho and Jerusalem, some 27 km away.

We then head down to the King's Highway to Shobak castle – a reminder of the desperate struggle of the Crusades that pitted the Christian West against the Islamic East. Built by the French Crusader King Baldwin I, it withstood numerous attacks before succumbing to the armies of Saladin in 1189, after an 18-month siege. Its remote location overlooking a plateau lends a dramatic aspect and it's easy to imagine the dramas of the siege as they played out in this spot centuries ago.

En route to your hotel in the Petra there is also a visit to Little Petra. This is a remote part of the Nabatean city, not frequented by many tourists. You might experience the same sense of discovery and wonder that many of the Victorian explorers did.

This evening you enjoy a magical experience of Petra by night. The incredible walk down The Siq – your path lit only by candlelight, with your first glimpse of the Treasury through a cleft in the walls is one of the most inspiring and heart thumping moments in travel – an experience that will take your breath away.

DAY 13 – PETRA AND WADI RUM

An early start for a full day exploring Petra means you will avoid the tourist crowds. The main path from Treasury opens out to wider valley lined with tombs, caves and a small amphitheatre cut into the

rock-face. Further on is the Roman quarter, a colonnaded street surrounding by the ruins of temples that are well worth exploring.

If you still have the energy after the main tour of Petra, it's worth taking the climb up to the remote Monastery. The climb takes about the 50 minutes and is best done in the late morning when there is some shade along the way. The Monastery itself is quite photogenic and there are stunning views from some of the nearby rocks.

Returning to the hotel you have a chance to freshen up from your morning's explorations, and enjoy lunch before we set off for Wadi Rum.

It's a couple of hour's drive, during which the scenery changes from craggy hills to a wider expanse of open desert interspersed by rocky outcrops. Wadi Rum is like the landscape of another planet, a series of dramatic jebels (rocky mounds), joined together by valleys of sand that stretch for miles toward a hazy, distant horizon. Look out for black Bedouin tents and flocks of sheep and goats as a reminder of the few Jordanians who still practice this traditional lifestyle.

We arrive at your tented desert just in time for sunset – and there is no better place to see this than at our camp. Afterwards we are treated to a truly special meal of Zarb, a traditional Bedouin meal cooked under the ground for many hours infused with different herbs and spices that stimulate your senses.

Accommodation: Bespoke Hideaways Desert Camp

DAY 14 – WADI RUM

After breakfast we enjoy a 4WD safari to further explore the surrounds – including the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, Siq Um Tawaqi & Lawrence's springs, and stopping to enjoy an exceptional experience of lunch with a sheik, before we return to the camp in the late afternoon where you can sit back and enjoy your surroundings. Our camp is modelled on traditional Bedouin tents but offers all the comforts and romance of glamping.

This evening we join the local Bedouins for a night of entertainment and traditional food under the stars. This is a great way to interact with the fascinating locals and to learn more about their way of life.

Accommodation: Bespoke Hideaways Desert Camp

DAY 15 – RETURN TO AMMAN

After breakfast this morning we say goodbye to our Bedouin friends and head back to Amman. Arriving at our hotel early afternoon the rest of the day is at your leisure.

This evening we enjoy our last dinner together to farewell not only our tour leader but our fellow travellers, with whom we have enjoyed a fabulous journey...

Accommodation: Four Seasons

DAY 16 – DEPARTURE DAY

This morning you are transferred to the airport where you will farewell your leader and board your onward flight.