TOUR CODE

00X

ADVENTURESABROAD

EGYPT FAMILY TOUR

with Nile Felucca Sailing Odyssey

13 days

Updated 29/04/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Cairo*

Today we arrive in Cairo; transfer to our hotel.

Al-Qahira, literally "The Vanquisher" or "The Conqueror", is the capital of Egypt and the second largest city in the Muslim World, the Arab world and Africa and the 16th largest metropolitan area in the world. Nicknamed "The City of a Thousand Minarets" for its preponderance of Islamic architecture, Cairo has long been a centre of the region's political and cultural life.

Overnight in Cairo. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Cairo: Museum of Egyptian Antiquities & Coptic Cairo*

This morning we depart from our hotel through the busy streets of Cairo. We will arrive at the bustling Midan Tahrir where the famous Museum of Egyptian Antiquities is housed. We will spend the morning here, where we can see some of Egypt's most beloved treasures. Among the 100,000 pieces housed on the museum's two floors is the famous exhibit of Tutankhamun, whose tomb was discovered by Howard Carter in 1922. The tomb and treasures of this young Pharaoh, modest by Pharaonic Egyptian standards, is perhaps the best preserved of the discovered tombs. In addition, we will see archaeological relics from the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom and Greco-Roman periods. Our tour today is fully guided by our English-speaking guide. We also allow some time for you to explore the treasures on your own.

This afternoon we drive through the neat, tree-lined streets of the Garden City area to Coptic Cairo, the centre of Christianity in Cairo. Along the quaint, modest alleyways are small, modest homes. We will walk the cobblestone streets and stop at a few of the churches here. One church is that of Saint Sergius where the church's crypt is presumed to have been the spot where the Holy Family lived during their flight into Egypt. The present building dates from the 11th century. As we stroll along, we will come to the recently restored Synagogue of Ben Ezra, the oldest Jewish synagogue in Egypt. Despite the 45 Jewish families that remain in Cairo, the synagogue is no longer operational.

Tonight you may choose to visit the Sound and Light show at the Pyramids (optional).

Overnight in Cairo-Giza. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Cairo: the Pyramids and the Sphinx - Overnight train*

This morning we travel to Memphis and Saqqara, chronologically the two most important sites in all of Egypt. Memphis was the capital of Egypt during the Old Kingdom (ca 2700-2180 BC), and Saqqara was used as a burial place for residents of Memphis including kings, princes and nobles. Our drive this morning takes us past some small, colourful villages and plantations in the fertile Nile valley. At the ancient city of Memphis, we will see several statues in a garden-like setting including the colossal statue of Rameses the Great. You will have ample opportunity to photograph the

statue from the gallery's mezzanine.

From Memphis, we travel a short distance to Saqqara, the ancient burial site. On the site, which is considered by many archaeologists to be one of the world's most important excavations, is the Step Pyramid, which was constructed by Imhotep in the 27th century BC. The pyramid is part of the tomb complex of Zoser, who was the first Pharaoh of the Old Kingdom. The pyramid began as a simple mastaba, or long, flat tomb building. Over the course of time, Imhotep added to this mastaba five times--the pyramid eventually measured 62 metres (203 Feet) in height!

After lunch we pay a visit to the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx. These Pharaonic monuments have come to symbolize Egypt's glory and mystery. Impressive in their grandeur, the pyramids are estimated to have been constructed over a period of 20 years using more than 100,000 labourers each year. The Great Pyramid of Cheops, constructed from over two million stone blocks, is 135 metres (443 feet) high! The stone for the Pyramid complex--Pyramid of Cheops, Pyramid of Chefren and Pyramid of Mykerinos--was quarried from nearby hills south of Cairo. You may enter one of the pyramids through a long, narrow passageway and explore the deep inner chambers. We also see the Sphinx, where legends and superstitions abound. This feline-human was named by the Greeks because it resembled the mythical winged monster with a woman's head and lion's body. Legend has it that this "Sphinx" proposed a riddle to the Thebans and killed all who could not guess the correct answer! The Sphinx was carved from one solid piece of limestone, and measures 50 m (164 feet) in length and 22 m (72 feet) in height.

From the Pyramids we drive to the Giza train station where we board our overnight wagons-lits sleeper train to Aswan, in Upper Egypt. Our overnight journey is comfortable. Each couchette has two bunk beds. Attentive stewards serve dinner and breakfast in your cabin (single compartments NOT available on overnight train).

Overnight train. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Arrive in Aswan*

Late this morning we arrive in Aswan, the gem of Egypt. This is the country's most beautiful town where the river is at its most scenic. At Aswan the deserts close in on the river, confining its sparkling blue between smooth amber sand and rugged extrusions of granite bedrock. Lateen-sailed feluccas glide past the ancient ruins and gargantuan rocks of Elephantine Islands, palms and tropical shrubs softening the islands and embankments until intense blue skies fade into soft-focus dusks. The city's ambience is palpably African; its Nubian inhabitants have different tastes and customs.

Overnight in Aswan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Aswan: St Simeon Camel Trek*

We travel by boat across the River Nile to the west bank. From here, we travel by camel across the warm, sandy desert to the Christian Monastery of St Simeon. Riding a camel is one of the most invigorating, exciting ways to see Egypt. Before we begin this easy trek our Tour Leader and camel trainer will teach you the technique of riding a camel! For many of our clients, the ride to St Simeon's monastery by camel is one of their trip highlights. With a camel trainer holding and guiding each camel, this is a journey that can be undertaken by anyone at any age. We spend a total of 45 minutes on our camels.

Dating from the 6th century, and in use until the 13th century, the Monastery of St Simeon is one of the best-preserved Christian sites in Egypt. A high wall surrounds the monastery, built on two plateaux. Inside we will see the chapel, living quarters, kitchen and dining areas, wine press, bake area and storerooms. On our tour we will also see the remains of some Coptic frescoes-- depictions of Christ and saints as well as many geometric patterns.

From here we board our boat and ride among the islands dotting the Nile. The main island here is called Elephanta because many of the rocks look like elephants bathing in the Nile. We will arrive at the beautiful Kitchener's Island, where we will have time to stroll through the rich botanical gardens with trees, plants, and bushes. After this very relaxing stop, we continue on to our hotel.

The evening is free to explore the relaxed town of Aswan.

Overnight in Aswan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Aswan: Free Day*

Today is free in Aswan. You may rest by our hotel's swimming pool or perhaps stroll down the Nile corniche with its many riverboats.

You may also choose to take an optional early morning excursion to Abu Simbel -- the imposing rock temples of Rameses II and his queen, Nefartari. The excursion includes a guided tour of this site, including the interior of the colossal temples. The Temple of Rameses II, with its immense statues of the Pharaoh seated on his throne, is one of the classic images of the power of the Pharaohs. Inside the temple you will see well-preserved wall decorations and several murals. There is a wonderful relief of Rameses presenting captives to various gods, including him! At the Temple of Hathor, which is colonnaded with six statues of Rameses and his wife Nefartari, we will see the temple hall and the sanctuary. Your Tour Leader can help organize this tour for you in advance (see your pre-departure info package for current pricing on this option).

Overnight in Aswan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Aswan - Felucca Departure*

This morning we board our felucca and travel towards Kom Ombo.

The leisurely and informal nature of felucca sailing means that our agenda is free-form. Our night stops depend upon the elements. As we enjoy the stimulating sailing, we see the intensive cultivation of the Nile Valley (mainly sugar-cane and maize), and at points along the Nile we view small villages which depend upon the river for their livelihood. Our evening stops are carefully chosen.

WHAT IS A FELUCCA? Feluccas are NOT luxury boats, but a unique way of experiencing the romantic atmosphere of the Nile. Used for centuries for carrying goods and passengers along the Nile, they are open-decked sailboats with no engines or modern conveniences, and generally a crew of two or three Egyptian sailors. All meals are cooked on board by the boatmen, but culinary experts in the group are welcome to help cook if they wish. A canvas canopy can be erected for shelter from the sun by day; at night the felucca will tie up along the river bank and you can sleep on the mattresses provided on the deck. There are also plenty of cushions on deck, so although there is not a lot of space, the boat is comfortable. If this is not for you, you might consider our luxury cruise programme, code EG3.

Overnight on the felucca. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Felucca Sail Trek*

Today we should reach Kom Ombo.

In ancient times Kom Ombo was strategically important as a trading town on the caravan route from Nubia to Cairo. Kom Ombo is actually two temples in one; it is dedicated to Horus and Sobek, respectively the god of the sky and the crocodile-headed god. Here we are able to see the remains of the mummified crocodile. Crocodiles no longer exist in the Egyptian part of the River Nile but in Pharaonic times they lived here in great numbers and were worshipped as gods.

Overnight on the felucca. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Felucca Sail Trek*

This is a full day of sailing on our comfortable, shaded felucca. Reading, chatting, watching the world glide by.

Overnight on the felucca. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Edfu - Luxor*

Today we should reach Edfu. As the largest and most completely preserved Pharaonic temple, albeit Greek built, Edfu is dedicated to the god Horus. Construction of this temple began under Ptolemy III Euergetes I in 237 BC. We will allow time to explore this massive and impressive site, which is enclosed in walls and flanked by two large pylons. Here we will also see a nilometer--an ancient technique of measuring the Nile's water fluctuations and setting the level of taxes: Edfu is also famous for depicting the scene of the slaying of the evil Seth by Horus.

We leave our felucca behind and travel by road to Luxor; transfer to our hotel.

NOTE: due to variables such as winds and water levels, we may alter our itinerary in order to accomplish our sightseeing objectives. Such adjustments will be made at the discretion of your boatmen and Tour Leader.

Overnight in Luxor. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Luxor: Valley of the Kings*

Early this morning we cross the River Nile to the west bank. On the other side we will meet our transport for our excursion into the Valley of the Kings.

Our preferred method of travel today is by donkey (we can arrange taxis for those who do not wish to travel in this manner). After we "saddle-up", we begin our trek through the New Gourna Village and into the countryside. En route we will pass residences and farms where we will gain an insight into how rural Egyptians live and work.

Our first stop today is at the Colossi of Memnon. These two huge statues sit side by side; they originally flanked the entry to the funerary temple of Amenophis III. The Colossi were named from a legend explaining the phenomenon of the dawn. This is an excellent photo opportunity with you on your donkey and the Colossi in the background.

We continue from here along the road leading into the hills. From where the road forks, we travel along the stony pathway toward the cliff ridge. Our donkey ride from here offers breathtaking views of the Nile valley below. At some points, we make brief stops for photographs and to give our donkeys a rest; there are also some parts of the trail that we have to walk as the burden to the donkey would be too much. Today, it is very important to prepare yourself for the sun's intense rays. Please remember to wear a hat; have adequate sunblock; and always cover your shoulders, arms and neck.

When we arrive at a ridge overlooking the Valley of the Kings, we will dismount from our donkeys and walk the remainder of the way down into the valley. It is a short but steep walk; a good pair of running shoes or lightweight hiking boots will be required. Once in the isolated valley dominated by large pyramid-shaped mountains, we will have a guided tour of three of the many tombs that are here. Note that some of the tombs have steep stairways and all are dark inside; it is a good idea to have a small flashlight with you today for a closer inspection of the interior of the tombs.

We return to our resting donkeys. We then proceed to the ridge again, and turn toward the funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut--the first woman to rule as pharaoh! We have a tour of this impressive complex which was discovered in the mid-19th century and is still under restoration. The temple's 37 m- (121 foot-) wide causeway leads us to three huge terraced courts.

After our tour we return by donkey through the countryside to the river. Today we may be invited into a village home for some tea before returning to our hotel.

Tonight we will travel by horse-drawn carriage, known as "caleche", through the streets of Luxor to see the Sound and Light Show at one of the most fantastic archaeological sites in the world, Karnak Temple. At certain points in Egyptian history, this temple was the most important in all of Egypt. When we arrive at the temple, you will be awed by the grandeur of the tremendous pylon gateway and the Avenue of 1000 Sphinxes, which originally ran all the way to the Nile and Luxor Temple!

Overnight in Luxor. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Luxor - Cairo: Islamic Cairo*

This morning we board our one-hour flight Luxor to Cairo. Then we enjoy a visit deep into the heart of Islamic Cairo. We will tour the Citadel, which was begun by Saladin in the 12th century. The Citadel is the natural focus of a visit to Islamic Cairo--it presents the most dramatic feature of Cairo's skyline: a centuries-old bastion crowned by the needle-like minarets of the great Mosque of Mohammed Ali. This fortified complex was begun by Salah al-Din, the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty--known throughout Christendom as Saladin, the Crusaders' chivalrous foe. Salah al-Din's reign (1171-93) saw much fortification of the city, though it was his nephew, Al-Kamil, who developed the citadel as a royal residence, later to be replaced by the palaces of Sultan al-Nasir.

NOTE: This itinerary is based on local flights schedules which can change without notice.

Overnight in Cairo. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Departure*

Departure from Cairo.

RHLAH S'IDAH ! Meal plan: Breakfast.