TOUR CODE

02X

ADVENTURESABROAD

EGYPT FAMILY TOUR

'In Search of Pharaohs'

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.

Day 2 *Cairo: Memphis & Saqqara, Great Pyramids & the Sphinx*

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.

From Memphis we travel a short distance to Saqqara, the ancient burial site. On the site, considered by many archaeologists to be one of the world's most important excavations, is the Step Pyramid, constructed by Imhotep in the 27th century BC. 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 62m (203 feet) in height!

After lunch we pay a visit to the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx. 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 135m (443 feet) high! You may enter one of the pyramids through a long, narrow passageway and explore the deep inner chambers (extra fee applicable - ask your Tour Leader).

Later we visit the Sphinx. 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 50m (164 feet) in length and 22m (72 feet) in height.

Overnight in Cairo.

Day 3 *Cairo - Aswan & Felucca Sailing*

Early this morning we fly from Cairo to Aswan in Upper Egypt.*

Upon arrival we have a leisurely sail on a felucca, a traditional sailing vessel used for centuries for carrying goods and passengers along the Nile.

* NOTE: The actual order of our Aswan area sightseeing may vary depending on incoming flight schedules and other logisitical considerations.

Overnight in Aswan.

Day 4 *Aswan: Abu Simbel & Philae Temple*

Early this morning we travel by road (3 hours, each way) from Aswan across the Western Desert to Nubia, or the "Land of the Gold". Our destination this morning is the impressive Abu Simbel -- the imposing rock temples of Rameses II and his queen, Nefertari.

We have 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 himself! We also gain insight into the reconstruction process by visiting the interior of the artificial mountain.

We travel back to Aswan making a brief stop at the High Dam en route. Constructed between 1960 and 1971, the High Dam collects and stores water over a number of years so that the annual Nile flood can be controlled. We will have a panoramic view of Aswan to the north and Lake Nasser to the south.

This evening we will attend the Sound & Light Show at Philae Temple. The temple is situated on an island, and we have to take a boat to get to the site. It is a good idea to have a small flashlight with you.

Overnight in Aswan.

Day 5 *Aswan: San Simeon & Nile Cruise Embarkation*

This morning we will travel by small boat across the River Nile to the west bank. From here we travel by camel across the sandy desert to the Christian Monastery of St Simeon. Before we begin this easy trek our Tour Leader and camel trainer will teach you the technique of riding a camel. This is a journey that can be undertaken by anyone at any age (one rider per camel). Our trek is about 45 minutes to the monastery, and then 15 minutes back to the riverbank. Those who prefer not to ride can stay with the boat and rejoin the camel riders for our trip to Kitchener's Island.

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. 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. Up the hill, above the river, is the Mausoleum of the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the Ismailis, a Shi'ite sect based principally in India but with followers around the world. The tomb is an elegant pink granite structure of late 1950 origin.

The main island is called Elephantine Island 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.

At around midday we board our Nile cruise vessel and enjoy lunch on board. This afternoon you have a choice between a free afternoon either on board the ship (which will remain docked in Aswan until tomorrow), or in the town of Aswan, OR you can join the ship's sightseeing programme. This sightseeing will likely include the 'Unfinished Obelisk', the High Dam (already seen), and Philae temple, also already visited, but some passengers enjoy seeing it again during daylight hours.

Overnight on Nile cruise. NTS cruise (or similar).

Day 6 *Nile Cruise: Kom Ombo & Edfu*

We will make a stop and visit the Temple of Kom Ombo. In ancient times, Kom Ombo was strategically important as a trading town on the caravan route from Nubia to Cairo. Kom Ombo, actually two temples in one, is dedicated dually to Haroeris and Sobek, respectively the god of the sky and the crocodile-headed god. Here we are able to see the remains of a 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!

From Kom Ombo we continue along the River Nile toward 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, enclosed by walls and flanked by two large pylon gateways. Here we will also be able to see a Nilometer -- an ancient technique of measuring the Nile's water fluctuations and setting the level of taxes.

Overnight on Nile cruise. NTS cruise (or similar).

Day 7 *Nile Cruise: Luxor Temple*

Overnight or early this morning we will have arrived at Luxor.

Today we visit Luxor Temple. The temple was dedicated to the Theban Triad of Amun, Mut, and Chons and was built during the New Kingdom, the focus of the annual Opet Festival, in which a cult statue of Amun was paraded down the Nile from nearby Karnak Temple to stay there for a while, with his consort Mut, in a celebration of fertility. Luxor temple is considered one of the largest ancient Egyptian temple complexes situated on the eastern bank of the river Nile. At the entrance is a huge tower built by King Ramses II.

Overnight on Nile cruise (docked at Luxor). NTS cruise (or similar).

Day 8 *Luxor: Cruise Disembarkation & Valley of the Queens*

Today we disembark our cruise and move to our hotel in Luxor.

This morning we make an excursion the Valley of the Queens.* After crossing the Nile we will board our bus for the short journey to visit this wonderful necropolis on the western shore of the Nile.

The Valley of the Queens was used as a burial site for the royal women of the 18th, 19th and 20th Dynasties. Ancient Egyptians called this place "Set Neferu" meaning Seat Of Beauty, and today only a few of the eighty tombs are open to the public. We will visit 3 tombs. The Valley of the Queens holds far more than graves of queens.

As well as our visit to the Valley of the Queens we will also have a guided tour of the workers' village and the Madinat Habu temple. Madinat Habu, also known as the temple of Rameses III was known in ancient times as Djanet, and according to ancient belief, was the place were Amon first appeared. Both Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III built a temple dedicated to Amon here, and later Rameses III constructed his larger memorial temple on the site.

* Due to periodic and unannounced closures of the tombs at the Valley of the Queens, your Tour Leader may substitute the Tombs of the Nobles, which may be of more interest.

Overnight in Luxor.

Day 9 *Luxor: Valley of the Kings*

Early this morning we cross the River Nile by boat to the West Bank where the wealth of antiquities is outstanding. On the other side we will meet our transport for our excursion into the Valley of the Kings.

We will accomplish part of our journey today by donkey. We'll "saddle-up" and begin a leisurely ride through the New Gourna Village and into the countryside. Avoiding the busier road, we will witness quiet village life along the way for about 40-45 minutes before re-uniting with our road transport for the final leg into the Valley of the Kings.

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. The valley was the burial ground for kings throughout the New Kingdom. Note that some of the tombs have steep stairways and all are quite dark inside (you might find a pocket flashlight useful).

We then proceed to the funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut -- the first woman to rule as pharaoh! We have a tour of this impressive complex, discovered in the mid-19th century and still under restoration.

After our tour we return by minibus through the countryside back to the river and the East Bank.

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

Overnight in Luxor.

Day 10 *Luxor: Karnak Temple*

This morning we visit one of the most fantastic archaeological sites in the world: Karnak Temple.

Karnak was built, added to, dismantled, restored, enlarged and decorated during its colourful history of over 1,500 years. 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 1,000 Sphinxes that originally ran all the way to the Nile and Luxor Temple! We will have a guided tour of the complex, massive by any standard.

During free time this afternoon, we suggest a visit to the excellent Luxor Museum.

Overnight in Luxor.

Day 11 *Luxor - Cairo: Archaeological Museum & Islamic Cairo*

Today we fly back to Cairo.

On arrival we proceed to the famous Museum of Egyptian Antiquities where we 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. We also 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 (Mummies Room: LE 40 or approx US $7 extra fee).

We then proceed to Islamic Cairo where we will tour the Citadel, begun by Saladin in the 12th century. Today the Citadel's buildings are mainly from the Ottoman period, and are truly grand. From the Citadel, actually a complex of three mosques and four museums, we enjoy an amazing view of Cairo spread beneath the hilltop. Here we will see the fabulous Mosque of Mohammed Ali, also known as the "Alabaster Mosque."

Overnight in Cairo.

Day 12 *Cairo: Coptic Cairo & Khan el Khalili*

On arrival we will drive through the neat, tree-lined streets of the Garden City area to Coptic Cairo, the centre of Christianity in Cairo. We will walk the cobblestone streets and stop at a few of the churches, including that of Saint Sergius, presumed to be 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.

We then make a stop at the Khan el Khalili Bazaar, one of the most interesting bazaars, not only in Egypt, but also in the whole Middle East. It is famous for its unusual, typically oriental souvenirs, and handmade crafts. The atmosphere of this traditional market, together with the labyrinthine layout of the streets, gives visitors a glimpse into what medieval markets once were like.

Overnight in Cairo.

Day 13 *Departure*

Departure from Cairo.

RHLAH S'IDAH !