TOUR CODE

03X

ADVENTURESABROAD

EGYPT & JORDAN FAMILY TOUR

Pyramids, Camels, Feluccas & Ruins

16 days

Updated 29/04/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Cairo*

Welcome to Cairo! Today we arrive in the capital of Egypt and transfer to our hotel.

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

Day 2 *Cairo: the Pyramids & the Sphinx*

Today we visit 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.

Overnight in Cairo. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Cairo: Archaelogical Museum & Khan el Khalili Market - Aswan*

This morning 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 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.

Later this evening we fly to Aswan.

Overnight in Aswan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Aswan: San Simeon by Camel & Nubian Village*

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. 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.

This evening we visit a Nubian village and enjoy dinner at a local home.

Overnight in Aswan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Aswan: Abu Simbel & Philae Sound & Light*

Early (very 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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Felucca Sailing on the Nile*

Today we board our felucca sail boat and spend the day leisurely cruising the Nile the way the ancients did! The leisurely and informal nature of felucca sailing means that our agenda is free-form. Our night stop depends upon the elements. 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.

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.

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

Day 7 *Arrive at Kom Ombo - Luxor*

Our felucca drops us at 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 travel by road to Luxor. This afternoon / evening we'll have a relaxing horse-drawn carriage ride around Luxor and the nearby countryside.

Overnight in Luxor. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *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.

Our preferred method of travel today is by donkey (though we can arrange a minibus 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 by the Colossi of Memnon. These two huge statues sit side by side; they originally flanked the entry to the funerary temple of Amenophis III.

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 on 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.

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 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. The valley was the burial ground for pharaoh kings throughout the New Kingdom. Note that some of the tombs have steep stairways and all are dark inside.

When we have finished the guided tour of the Valley of the Kings, 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 to the river.

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

Overnight in Luxor. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Luxor: Valley of the Queens & Karnak Temple*

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.

This afternoon 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.

Overnight in Luxor. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Luxor, Egypt - Amman, Jordan*

This morning we will fly from Luxor to Amman (via Cairo), the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Amman, the modern and ancient capital of Jordan, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the World. The city's modern buildings blend with the remnants of ancient civilizations. The profusion of gleaming white houses, kebab stalls with roasting meat, and tiny cafes where rich Arabian coffee is sipped in the afternoon sunshine, conjure a mood straight from a thousand and one nights.

Overnight in Amman. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Amman - Jerash - Amman*

This morning we leave Amman by bus for a tour of the extensive Roman site of Jerash. In the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, Jerash was a wealthy city and is today considered one of the most important and best preserved of all Roman sites. We visit the famous elliptical forum, the beautiful amphitheatre with its superb natural acoustics, and the site of the huge Temple of Artemis.

This afternoon we tour Amman, visiting the Roman Amphitheatre, Archaeological Museum, and the ruins of the Temple of Hercules.

Overnight in Amman. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Amman - Madaba - Nebo - Petra*

This morning we travel to Madaba, a small town famous for its magnificent mosaic floors. A unique mosaic covers the floor of St. George's church and consists of a huge map of the Holy Land as it appeared in the 6th century AD.

Driving to the edge of the Jordan Valley we reach Mount Nebo from where Moses and the Children of Israel first saw the Promised Land. On a clear day you can look down to see the Dead Sea and the River Jordan. On the other side of the valley is the city of Jerusalem. Here we see a huge mosaic of hunting scenes covers the floor of a ruined Byzantine church.

We leave Mt Nebo and travel south via the Dead Sea Highway.

Overnight in Petra. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Petra: Site Tour*

Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom from the fourth century BC to the 2nd century AD. From the 12th century until its rediscovery in 1812, Petra was lost to the world -- a closely guarded secret of the local tribes. Today the 'rose red city half as old as time' is probably the most impressive archaeological site in the Middle East, rivaling the temples and pyramids of Egypt in grandeur.

This morning, on our way into the hidden valley of Petra, we will see the Obelisk Tomb and the irrigation system that carried water from a dam throughout the desert city. Access to the monuments of Petra is through a narrow gorge in the towering rocks called the 'Siq'. As we emerge from the 'Siq' you stand in awe in front of the 'Treasury' (El Kazneh), a graceful structure carved from the living rock. After pausing to admire the elegant columns and carvings we carry on into the valley where elaborate tombs are carved into the multi-coloured walls. Everywhere the sandstone swirls and twists in shades of red, orange, yellow, pink and white. Next we will see the Roman amphitheatre, carved directly out of the mountain, with space for over 3,000 spectators.

Further on in the main valley of Petra, are the Royal Tombs including the Palace Tomb and the Silk Tomb. We visit the temple of the Nabataeans' main god, Dushara, and we also see the 'Temple of the Winged Lion'. Our formal guided tour of the site terminates with a visit to the Petra Nabataean Museum.

At this point, you may explore further on your own, or return to our hotel to relax and / or shop. You may also take a strenuous walk up a narrow pass to see the magnificent 'Monastery' building, El Deir. The views of Petra and the surrounding area are expansive. The walk is steep, mostly on steps carved into the rock, and will take APPROXIMATELY one hour up (30 minutes down).

NOTE: Access to Petra is by means of footpath only. The main sites occur near ground that is level and well-worn, though the overall site is huge. Our pace is leisurely with frequent breaks; however, to fully experience Petra you must be prepared for a considerable amount of walking and little shade.

Overnight at Petra. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Petra - Wadi Rum*

Leaving Petra we stop briefly at 'the Spring of Moses', supposed to have magical properties.

Our two-hour drive will take us to Wadi Rum where Lawrence of Arabia conducted many of his campaigns during the First World War. While at Wadi Rum we take four-wheel drive vehicles out into the desert where the sand is red and the rocks look like gigantic multi-layered chocolate cakes melting in the setting sun. We may be invited into a goat-hair tent to share a glass of tea with some Bedouin tribesmen -- the nomadic herdsmen of the desert who made up Lawrence's army. Running along the floor of the valley is the Hejaz Railway that Lawrence blew up repeatedly.

We will use 4x4 jeeps to drive around the atmospheric desert and rocky terrain, taking in the majesty of the famous "7 Pillars of Wisdom", attributed to the famous desert mountains described by T.S. Lawrence.

We will overnight in a Bedouin tent out in the desert of Wadi Rum. The atmosphere of experiencing the sound of silence out in the desert with the canopy of stars above you is incredible. You might even have the opportunity to try out a traditional Bedouin meal of lamb and rice, cooked in a hole in the ground!

Note: The desert tents are basic, but comfortable. There are nearby shared toilets and showers.

Overnight in Wadi Rum. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 15 *Wadi Rum - Kerak - Dead Sea*

Today we travel along the historic King's Highway to the Dead Sea. Along this route, castles and towns were positioned a one day's travel distance apart. En route we explore Kerak Castle, a 12th century Crusaders fortress. The castle's huge water cisterns and commanding position on a hilltop allowed it to hold out against many sieges.

King David, King Herod, Jesus, and John the Baptist were closely linked with the Dead Sea and its surroundings. During the Egyptian conquest it is said that Queen Cleopatra obtained exclusive rights to build cosmetic and pharmaceutical factories in the area. Later the Nabataeans discovered the value of bitumen extracted from the Dead Sea used by the Egyptians. Our hotel is located on the shores of the sea where you will have the chance to swim and experience your amazing buoyancy in the ultra-salty waters.

Overnight at the Dead Sea. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *Dead Sea - Amman Airport - Departure*

Today we transfer to the Amman Airport to connect with homeward flights.

RHLAH S'IDAH Meal plan: Breakfast.