TOUR CODE

EG5

ADVENTURESABROAD

EGYPT & JORDAN

'The Classic Combo'

21 days

Updated 11/12/2013

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: 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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Cairo - Alexandria - Cairo***

Early this morning we travel from Cairo to Alexandria. The second largest city in Egypt, known as "The Pearl of the

Mediterranean", has an atmosphere that is more Mediterranean than Middle Eastern; its ambience and cultural heritage distance it from the rest of the country although it is actually only 225 km from Cairo (3-4 hours, depending on traffic).

We head to the southwest of the city and a hill littered with the remains of ancient walls, architectural fragments and rubble on which stands Alexandria's largest ancient monument, Pompey's Pillar, rising from the ruins of the ancient and famous Serapeion (Temple of Serapis). This column of red Aswan granite with a Corinthian capital, standing on a badly ruined substructure and rising to a height of almost 90ft / 27m, is traditionally believed to have been erected by the Emperor Theodosius.

We also visit the Roman Catacombs, the last existing major construction for the sake of the old Egyptian religion. Though the funerary motifs are pure ancient Egyptian, the architects and artists were schooled in the Graeco-Roman style. Applied to the themes of Ancient Egyptian religion, it has resulted in an amazing integrated art, quite unlike anything else in the world.

Another highlight today is a visit to Bibliotheca Alexandria. Once the greatest library in the ancient world, the Bibliotheca is dedicated to "the writings of all nations." Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the modern Bibliotheka cost some USD150 million, all by donation from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iraq.

We return to Cairo in time for dinner.

Overnight in Cairo. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *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). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *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). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *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). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 9 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *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. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Cairo, Egypt - Amman, Jordan*

This morning we will fly from Cairo to Amman, 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 15 *Amman: Jerash & Amman City Tour*

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 16 *Amman - Madaba - Mt Nebo - Kerak - 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. 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.

Overnight in Petra. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 17 *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 18 *Petra: El Beidha & Leisure Time*

This morning we take a tour by bus to the nearby Nabatean site of 'el Beidha' (known as 'Little Petra'). We will also see a settlement dating from the Neolithic period, some 8,500 years ago. This is one of the oldest sights in the Middle East; it shows evidence of habitation by a "Pre-Pottery" population who were herders experimenting with agriculture. We return to our hotel by bus.

This afternoon, you can either relax or re-enter the breathtaking main site of Petra (the entrance fee today is at your own expense). You can join your Tour Leader on a steep walk to the 'High Place', which (some believe) was the site of human sacrifice to the Nabataean gods. From here it is possible to see the tomb of the Jewish prophet, Aaron. This site offers the best views of the entire site of Petra, but should be attempted only by the fit!

Overnight at Petra. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 19 *Petra - Shobak - Wadi Rum - Aqaba*

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

Castle, built by the Crusaders in 1115 and sacked by Moslem forces under Saladin in 1189, before continuing to Aqaba.

En route we make an excursion 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 overnight at Jordan's only port, Aqaba, located on the Red Sea (though Aqaba is of limited interest, it is the only place for us to conveniently overnight in the vicinity of Wadi Rum).

Overnight in Aqaba. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 20 *Aqaba - Dead Sea*

Today we travel along the historic King's Highway to the Dead Sea.

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 21 *Dead Sea - Departure*

Today we transfer back to Amman's Queen Alia International Airport to connect with homeward flights. Departure from Amman.

LAND ONLY customers can make their own way to the airport by taxi directly from the Dead Sea (your Tour Leader will assist).

NOTE that many international flights from Amman depart late at night. Most passengers enjoy the extra "downtime" (ie all day today) at the Dead Sea; however, some prefer to depart earlier (ie last night). You might consider this situation and your preferences before finalizing your air.

RHLAH S'IDAH Meal plan: Breakfast.