

#### DAY 1: CAIRO, EGYPT

Arrive at Cairo International Airport (CAI) and transfer to your elegant city center hotel, located on the east bank of the Nile. As you settle in, soak up your first views over this fabled river from your room, and if you wish, set off to explore on your own.

Accommodations: The Nile Ritz-Carlton, Cairo

#### DAY 2: ŞAQQĀRAH / DAHSHŪR

Begin your journey through ancient Egyptian history at the complex of Şaqqārah, home to Djoser’s step pyramid—the oldest standing pyramid in Egypt. Puzzle out your first set of hieroglyphics in the mastaba of Kagemni, and step inside the Pyramid of Teti to see an ancient burial chamber from the Old Kingdom. After lunch, we’ll veer off the beaten path with a trip to Dahshūr, home to the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid—both architectural precursors to the Pyramids of Giza. Return to Cairo and enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel this evening.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: The Nile Ritz-Carlton, Cairo

#### DAY 3: GIZA / CAIRO

This morning, discover the fabled Pyramids of Giza, built some 4,500 years ago. As you approach these architectural marvels, feel the thrill of glimpsing their ancient slopes through the gaps that stand between Cairo’s modern high rises. Stand in the shadows of the 481-foot Great Pyramid of Khufu—the largest structure in the complex—and if you wish, channel your inner Indiana Jones for an exhilarating excursion into the structure’s interior burial chamber. Gaze up at the Great Sphinx of Giza and enjoy lunch overlooking the pyramids. Gather for a talk on women’s issues in modern Egypt, then enjoy dinner at the hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: The Nile Ritz-Carlton, Cairo

#### DAY 4: LUXOR

Catch an early flight to Luxor, known in antiquity as Thebes. The city served as Egypt’s capital at the height of the New Kingdom and its chief god was Amun, king of the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses. Visit the open-air temple complex of Karnak, and weave your way between the intricately

etched columns of its Great Hypostyle Hall. Then pay a visit to the Luxor Museum to peruse ancient relics, including royal mummies and more than a dozen well-preserved statues discovered beneath the Luxor Temple courtyard in 1989. After nightfall, we'll visit the temple itself, lit up to showcase the grandeur of its soaring columns and larger-than-life statues.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Steigenberger Resort Achi

#### DAY 5: LUXOR / NILE RIVER

Venture into the Valley of the Kings, where the pharaohs of the New Kingdom built elaborate underground tombs—a departure from the burial pyramids of the Old Kingdom. We'll descend into several chambers, painted with vivid hieroglyphics that depict the lives of the pharaohs and the journey to the afterlife. Explore the tomb of Tutankhamun, discovered sealed and still containing original burial treasures, by British archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922. Our group will also enjoy a special opportunity to enter the less visited tomb of Seti I, where portions of the chamber are completely covered from wall to ceiling in brilliant hieroglyphics. Continue to the Colossi of Memnon for a photo op, then visit Madinat Habu—the mortuary temple for Ramses III. Later, settle into our luxury riverboat on the Nile.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations MS Farah or Jaz Regent

#### DAY 6: LUXOR / NILE RIVER

Begin the day with a visit to Ramesseum, Ramses II's mortuary temple. Scattered with granite remains of the king's giant likeness, the temple inspired the poem "Ozymandias" by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Continue to the Valley of the Queens, which holds the burial chambers for the pharaohs' wives and other family members—and sees far fewer visitors than the neighboring Valley of the Kings. Soak in the solitude of these stunning tombs, including Nefertari's, one of the most colorful and intricately decorated chambers from antiquity. Visit the impressive mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut—the longest reigning female pharaoh—then return to our riverboat and set sail on the Nile this afternoon.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations MS Farah or Jaz Regent

#### DAY 7: JABAL AS SILSILAH / KAWM UMBŪ

Follow in the wake of the pharaohs as we cruise south along the Nile, where magnificent temples and ancient villages line the banks against a dramatic desert backdrop. Dock at Idfū and travel inland to Jabal as Silsilah, where laborers once cut stone that was used in the construction of area temples, including those of Luxor and Karnak. Learn about ongoing National Geographic–sponsored efforts to excavate an ancient quarry. This afternoon, sail to the Temple of Kawm Umbū, dedicated to Sobek, the crocodile-headed god. When the temple was active thousands of years ago, crocodiles were held here; today, you can view several mummified specimens at the neighboring Crocodile Museum.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations MS Farah or Jaz Regent

#### DAY 8: ASWĀN

Wake up docked in Aswān, a busy market town north of the Aswān High Dam, completed in 1970 to tame the regular flooding of the mighty Nile. Explore the island temple of Philae, a site of ancient pilgrimage for devotees of the goddess Isis. In the 1960s, the entire temple complex was moved to its current location on Agilkia Island due to flooding caused by the construction of the Aswān dams. Visit a nearby quarry to view the “unfinished obelisk,” half-carved out of granite bedrock, that was intended to be larger than any ancient obelisk ever erected, before a large crack caused the project to be abandoned. In the afternoon, enjoy high tea at the historic Old Cataract Hotel. Then board a felucca—a traditional wooden sailboat—and enjoy a serene glide along the Nile.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations MS Farah or Jaz Regent

#### DAY 9: ABU SIMBEL / CAIRO

Fly to Abu Simbel, part of a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to two of Egypt’s most impressive temples, built by the Egyptian king Ramses II. In the 1960s, the site was dismantled, lifted, and reassembled some 600 feet west and 200 feet above the original site, a feat of engineering rivaling the original construction of the temples. Stand at the base of the colossal statues of Ramses II and puzzle out the hieroglyphs carved on the walls of the inner hall. Later, fly back to Cairo and settle into our hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: The Nile Ritz-Carlton, Cairo

#### DAY 10: CAIRO

This morning, we'll head into Old Cairo, the location of the earliest original settlement. Venture to the 12th-century Citadel of Saladin, a hilltop fortress commissioned by Sultan Saladin, and step inside the Mosque of Muhammad Ali, built in the Ottoman style. Next, continue to the area that is now the center of Egypt's Coptic Christian community, and home to the ruins of Roman fortifications, the first mosque built in Egypt, and the oldest synagogue in Cairo. Visit the Hanging Church—one of the city's oldest Coptic churches—and Saint Sergei Church. Enjoy lunch at a restaurant in the enchanting Khan el-Khalili souk, then put your bargaining skills to the test in the market stalls. Later, return to the hotel for some leisure time before an exclusive after-hours visit to the Egyptian Museum. This evening, cap off our extraordinary adventure with a farewell dinner.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: The Nile Ritz-Carlton, Cairo

#### DAY 11: CAIRO

After breakfast, transfer to the Cairo International Airport and catch your flight home.

Meals Included: Breakfast