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Uncover the Magic and Mystery of Egypt... www.HiddenEgypt.com

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Tailor-made Tours and Excursions in Egypt - Sample Tailor-made Programme

Programme 1: a 10-day whirlwind for the newcomer to Egypt who wants to combine the main highlights with some special places.

Your itinerary comprises 2 days Cairo, 2 days Luxor, 3 days Western Desert, 3 days Aswan (including Abu Simbel and your departure back to Cairo).

Day 1

Arrival in Cairo
Check in to Victoria Hotel
Visit the Pyramids of Giza and the Egyptian Museum
Visit the Khan el Khalili Bazaar in the evening

Day 2

Hunting the Pyramid Builders:
Visit Saqqara, Meidum & Dahshur – follow the evolution of the pyramids, from the Step Pyramid at Saqqara to the majestic tumble of Meidum and the Red and Bent Pyramids of Dahshur – and if we can get it opened up, the so-called (but still impressive!) decline at Abusir On the trail of the Pyramid Builders:

Day 3

Fly to Luxor
Arrival in Luxor, pick-up from airport
Visit the Temple of Karnak
Lunch
Visit the Temple of Luxor
Cross over to the West Bank
Check in to the Gezira Gardens Hotel
Sunset felucca ride

Day 4

Visit the highlight sites of the West Bank

- Valley of the Kings
- Colossi of Memnon
- Temple of Hatshepsut

Lunch

Visit Medinet Habu and Ramesseum

Sunset horse ride

Days 5-6-7

Your spectacular desert tour! From your hotel in Luxor and back to it, with visits to:

- The oases of:
 - *Baris*
 - *Kharga*
 - *Dakhla*
- The sites of:
 - *Dush* – the impressive Roman fortress and temple guarding the infamous Darb Al Arbayin
 - *Hibis* – the temple to Amun with intriguing reliefs
 - *Bagawat* – one of the oldest Christian cemeteries with tombs dating back to the 2nd century CE (Common Era → AD) and possibly the oldest remaining basilica structure
 - *Kharga Museum* – a lovely little museum with treasures from all over the Western Desert
 - *Balat* – the oldest tombs found in the desert so far, dating back to the 5th dynasty
 - *Bashendi* – home to some interesting Roman/Egyptian tombs
 - *Qasr* – a deserted medieval Islamic town, with its winding alleys and main houses fascinatingly preserved
 - *Deir el Hagar* (Monastery of the Stones) – a beautifully preserved Roman temple, part of the immense Roman presence in Dakhla oasis
- Long (air conditioned ☺) drives through desert landscapes
- A sunset camel ride into the desert (and back, I promise ☺)
- If you choose this, a treatment day with a Bedouin healer, including the famous sand-treatments
- A splash in one of the many hot, healing springs of the desert (bring a dark bathing costume as the metals and minerals in the water can stain lighter ones!)

Day 8

Early morning pick-up for your transfer to Aswan

In Aswan, after a quick lunch, visit:

- Philae Temple
- The High Dam
- The Unfinished Obelisk

Go to bed early! Maybe after a walk in the souq, as Aswan is the oldest market place in Egypt, dating back to the time of the Pharaohs!

Day 9

Very early pick-up for your visit to the spectacular site of Abu Simbel!
But don't worry too much about it: you can sleep in the bus on the way.
Afternoon free in Aswan

Or

In the all-inclusive version: extra organised tour (by felucca) to:

- Kitchener Island and its fantastic Botanical Garden, a haven of peace flanked by the Nile, with the busy city on one bank and the stark desert on the other...
- Elephantine Island and the Temples of Khnum and Satet on that Island

Day 10

Early morning transfer to the airport for your flight to Cairo.

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Programme 2: a 14-day extravaganza for the more experienced Egypt traveller

Day 0

Meet up in Cairo

Spend night in Cairo at Victoria Hotel

N.B: this night is not included in the price; it is a suggestion because we need to move early on day 1. We can, and will of course if you decide to do this, make the reservations for you etc.

Day 1

Wake up early to start our fabulous exploration of the desert oases!

We drive to Bahariya from Cairo. On the way the huge expanse of the desert starts to reveal itself, and the contrast between it and the busy streets of Cairo is extreme...

Just before we enter the part of Bahariya Oasis called Bawiti (which is where we will be staying), we visit the romantic ruins of Qasr Muharib, Castle of the Warrior, a huge Roman site where we see the ruins in their 'natural' state – this is what the temples and sites of the Nile Valley looked like before the archaeologists cleaned them up.

Then we pop into the Oasis Heritage Museum to see some fun local art. And after that, we make our way to our hotel, the simple but delightful Old Oasis Hotel, with its very own healing spring pool set in a sweet palm-grove garden. After checking in, we can take our first plunge in the hot healing waters for which the oases are rightfully famous!

Day 2

We visit the ancient sites of Bahariya Oasis, including the famous Golden Mummies and the very interesting and colourful tombs there. Another plunge in the healing pool and a night time stroll through the oasis town and into some of the nice shops there featuring local arts and crafts concludes our visit to Bahariya, and gets us ready for our next adventure...

Day 3

We set off from Bahariya and drive through the splendid landscape of the Black Desert towards Crystal Mountain, where we can marvel at this natural phenomenon all made up of crystals, and pick up some for ourselves from the ground! Then it's on to the White Desert, with its fantastic calcite rock formations that make it seem like a giant sculptor just left his workroom for a second, only to return soon to finish these magnificent creations... we catch the sunset there, as we set up our camp in the middle of all this beauty. Next a delicious dinner cooked over a traditional wood fire, and we're ready to marvel at all the stars we can see, including the Milky Way!

Day 4

After a nice breakfast and a quick wash in the White Desert, we move on to Farafra, where we only stop for a quick cup of tea in a local coffee shop (this oasis is a bit depressing, to be honest, and not home to any major or interesting sites) before moving on to Dakhla Oasis. On the way we have a simple lunch. Just before Dakhla we visit the site of the Muzawaka Tombs. The tombs themselves are unfortunately closed to the public, but the view from the hill top is stunning, and the guardians will show you some Roman mummies on the way up there. After this, we drive on to our simple but charming hotel in the lovely oasis of Dakhla, El Nogoom (The Stars).

Day 5

We drive out to the fascinating site of Deir el Hagar (Monastery of the Stones) a charming temple of the Roman era, but built completely in the ancient Egyptian style. Marvel at the lovely colours on the pieces of plaster still left on the stones and the commanding view from the temple hill... on the drive over we pass through some really traditional parts of the oasis, an experience in itself. After Deir el Hagar we move on to Qasr, a fantastically preserved medieval fortified town where we can wander through the narrow streets, and see what life must have been like then... Then we drive back to Dakhla, and for those of us feeling adventurous, there is the opportunity to do a sunset camel ride. What better place to ride a camel than in the desert!

Day 6

Our pamper day! But first, we need to do some work, so we start early to view the spectacular ruins of the 6th dynasty tombs at Balat, proving that Dakhla was an important site even as far back as that! Then on to the quaint town of Bashendi, to see the Roman tombs there and how one was converted in the middle ages to house the remains of an Indian Muslim saint (Pasha Hindi, therefore Bashendi). Then, we move to the site for our Bedouin treatments! First, we soak in an incredibly hot spring. In that spring, a Bedouin healer who is carrying on an ancient family tradition, will view how the water responds to our bodies, and from that diagnose any ailments we may have. A massage in the water is followed by an oil massage in a shielded tent and a fantastic picnic lunch (the other family tradition this healer is carrying on is the restaurant business, yum!). And then it's on to the grand finale, the famous sand treatment that is rumoured to cure any rheumatic complaints, any pains in the bones, and lots more!

Day 7

After an early night after our treatments of the previous day, we make an early start from Dakhla, in order to view the fantastic sites of the next oasis, Kharga. There, we visit the Oases Museum which houses fantastic finds from all the Oases, one of the oldest and best-preserved early Christian cemeteries at Bagawat, and the best-preserved temple in all the Oases, at Hibis. After a quick stop at the outlet of the date plantations for which Kharga is rightly famous, and time-permitting, we will then drive on the oasis of Paris, to visit the site of Dush. Most tours don't make it this far, but it is a fantastic site with amazing views over the infamous Darb al Arbayin, the old caravan and slave-trading route from the Sudan. Seriously worth visiting! And then it's back to Luxor over the desert road... once there, we will take you to the Gezira Gardens Hotel, where you will check in for 4 nights. The Gezira Gardens is a lovely hotel situated on Luxor's West Bank, with its own pool and roof top terrace. You will stay in their lovely 'chalets', which are family units with bathrooms, kitchen, two bedrooms and a private balcony/terrace. The accommodation during this part of your trip is bed and breakfast, but on excursion days your other meals will be included as well.

Day 8

As we've had some heavy days at the end of the desert tour, it is suggested that you take this day to lounge and relax. Your hotel has a lovely pool area, and you are very near to the Nile, so you could also consider a felucca ride. If this is your first time in Luxor, you could take in some of the historical highlights, such as the Temples of Karnak and Luxor, as the rest of the programme is based on the assumption that this is not your first time here, and focuses on more special and out of the way places. So this is a free day, but should you like some programme suggestions, we will of course be happy to oblige (one thing you could consider is a magical balloon ride over the many wonders of Luxor! Just say the word, and we can book this for you separately).

Day 9

Just outside of Luxor, about 20 minutes away, lies the enchanting temple of Al Tod. It is very seldom visited by tourists, and is therefore a haven of tranquillity and peace. This sanctuary was dedicated to the god Montu, the lord of war who held sway over this area before Amun took over as main god. Signs of temple activity on this site date back at least as far as the 5th dynasty! The ancient docking stations for the sacred barks, including the actual mooring posts, and the *via sacra* leading up to it, are completely intact, giving you a feel of the lost grandeur of the place. A very special experience!

We visit the lovely site of Al Tod in the morning and then have lunch in the beautiful Sofra restaurant, a place where Egyptian cuisine is taken to amazing levels and the atmosphere and décor are just stunning.

After lunch we join the 2 o' clock convoy, only to veer away from it a little while later to dive deep into the small rural villages. If we're lucky, we'll pass the sugar cane trains on the way. On this trip, you will see the real Upper Egypt, how people really live and go about their daily lives. We drive to the small town of Garagos. It is the heart of a thriving pottery industry started by two French monks in the early 20th century.

At the site of the pottery workshop – which was built by the renowned architect Hassan Fathy, by the way – we get a guided tour showing us the process from start to finish. And then we dive into the shop and the storeroom, a real treasure trove of ceramic goodies! The pottery that comes from Garagos is very charming and in high demand. And getting it at the source means getting the best price! Always nice, eh?

Day 10

Let's leave this day open for discussion! There are so many great things you can see and do in Luxor, we'll just present you with options and decide together. One excursion you could consider is following the trail of the Ramessid monuments on the West Bank – the Ramesseum, the mortuary temple for Ramses the Great, with the famous fallen colossus, then on to his father Seti's temple, and then his son's, to be

followed after lunch with the fabulous site of Medinet Habu. Or, we could choose to see the tiny wonders on the West Bank, beautiful nobles' tombs, tiny hidden shrines, tucked-away temples. Or we could even leave Luxor altogether to go to the marvellous temples at Abydos and Denderah! Really, there is so much to choose from. And the choice is yours – as a group. And whichever one you choose, will be included in the price, so no worries about that.

Day 11

We get up early to drive to Esna. There we will join the wonderfully atmospheric dahabeeya 'Cinderella' and embark our Dahabeeya Dream. All meals, coffee, tea and water are included on this stretch of the trip, and all cabins have private bathrooms fans. So while you sail down the Nile at the leisurely pace that the Victorians used to explore this wondrous country, you still have all the comforts and luxury of today. Best of both worlds, eh? Before setting off, we take an hour or two to explore the temple of Khnum at Esna and the winding streets behind the local souq, to have a look at the centuries-old oil-press that is still in use today, and perhaps to purchase some freshly-pressed, natural oils for ourselves. Also we'll have a quick look at the medieval rest stop for the camel caravans that arrived here from the Darb al Arbayin, the last stretches of which were guarded and the goods taxed at the fortress at Dush, which we visited during our desert tour. The Cinderella will set sail after this and your leisurely travel down the Nile begins. Lunch will be served on the upper deck (weather permitting) with time to relax and view life on the Nile as we sail towards Edfu. En-route we can make a brief stop for a tour of El Kab, the very ancient site of veneration of the vulture goddess Nekhbet, the lady who protects Upper Egypt. This out of the way site is very hard to get to, so grab this chance! It is also the home of the famous tomb of Ahmose, son of Ibana, a professional soldier who served during one of the most turbulent times in Egyptian history. A fascinating sight for any student of hieroglyphs!

Day 12

After enjoying breakfast, we will take a calèche (horse and carriage) to the temple of Edfu, one of the largest and most intact of Egypt's monuments. This temple holds the famous building texts and many more intriguing wonders. One of the wonderful things of visiting it by dahabeeya is that we can avoid the push of the crowds that are disgorged every day by the big cruise ships. After lunch you can relax as we sail to Gebel el Silsila (Mountain of the Necklace), another destination that can only be visited by smaller vessels. You will be amazed as we tie up alongside the Temple of Horemheb. This site holds an ancient rock quarry, and whilst gazing at the marks still left on the rocks from those ancient times, it is almost as if you can still hear the workers of long ago chipping away (and who knows, maybe you really *are* hearing them!). If possible dinner will be served on the upper deck, as we gaze at the illuminated temple. In the vicinity of Silsila we can also take a stunning desert walk through Wadi Chat with loads of pharaonic graffiti along the way, temperature and stamina permitting of course!

Day 13

We'll breakfast at leisure as we sail into Kom Ombo. Gaze upon the water buffalo as they wade in the shallow water besides the banks of the Nile, the donkeys as they go about their day to day business and the varied bird life of the river. After arriving, we will visit the temple at Kom Ombo. This dual temple, dedicated to both the falcon-headed god Haroeris (Horus the Elder) and the crocodile god Sobek is unique; it is totally symmetrical with two entrances, two halls, and two sanctuaries. The view from the temple heights is impressive, and it shows how this strategic spot served its purpose on the route of the gold caravans from Nubia, just as El Kab did. Afterwards, we will start to make our way to Aswan, again enjoying the beautiful scenery of the ever-changing and yet ever-constant Nile on the way...

Day 14

We have arrived at our final destination: Aswan, the gateway to Nubia and the Sudan. Here we can choose between many sites: for first-time visitors to this bustling city, the temple of Philea and the Aswan Dam fall under the category of 'must see'. But should you want to see some other places, the temple island of Elephantine is enchanting, the Nubian Museum stunning, and the botanical garden on Kitchener Island breath-taking. So, we can decide on our programme together. At the end of the day, we will take you to either the train station or the airport, for whichever destination is next on your itinerary!

The desert part of this trip is *all-inclusive* except for alcoholic beverages and drinks you have at the hotels when we are staying there. All else, transportation, explanations, tickets, hotels, desert camping, all meals, and soft drinks and water whilst on the road, is included. Travel insurance is your own responsibility. The other part of the trip is bed & breakfast except on excursion days, then everything is included during the excursion. On the Dahabeeya everything is included except for soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

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