



# Ultimate Egypt

13 Days



## Day 1 | Cairo

### A Room with a View

Arrive at Cairo International Airport (CAI) by 5 p.m. and hear the warm greeting of a Wild Women Expeditions tour coordinator, ready to bring you to our rendezvous hotel to meet your fellow Wild Women.

Over an authentic welcome dinner, we gather together for the first time, swapping stories with our Egyptian guide, a trusted female Egyptologist, and excitedly anticipating everything that's to come. Our hotel rooms look out onto the pyramids, sweeping us up in Egypt's magic and setting the tone for the coming days. We get to spend two nights here in order to fully enjoy this surreal setting and all of the hotel's amenities.

#### Included Meals

Dinner

#### Accommodations

Hyatt Regency Cairo West, Giza or similar



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## Day 2 | Giza

### Goddesses of Egypt

We start our day early with an engaging talk by an Egyptologist that delves into the historic and contemporary lives of women in Egypt, learning about ancient goddesses like Isis and Hathor and legendary queens like Hatshepsut, the sixth pharaoh of the 18th dynasty. At Deir el-Bahri, Hatshepsut erected her magnum opus—an enormous memorial temple to guarantee her perpetual life after death. The temple is reached by navigating a series of terraced colonnades and courtyards, which span the length of two and a half football fields. Our conversation also honors Egypt's modern-day heroines, who play integral roles in their communities and conquer challenges like the powerful women who came before them.

Later, we visit the shiny new Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), which is in the process of being completed. Once it is, GEM will be the largest archaeological museum complex in the world!

We follow up this tour of ancient treasures with an excursion to some larger-than-life wonders. Hop on a camel and enjoy a gently swaying 30-minute ride on one of the “ships of the desert” as we cross the famed Giza Plateau and head towards the pyramids. Finally, we take a pause (and several selfies) in front of the Great Sphinx, whose famous limestone lion's body with a human head is one of the world's largest sculptures.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Hyatt Regency Cairo West, Giza or similar



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## Day 3 | Fayoum

### Enter the Valley of the Whales

After a two-hour drive to the oasis of Fayoum, we enter the small village of Tunis, where local pottery has had an expected evolution. When a Swiss potter established a pottery school in the village decades ago, she had a giant influence on the area, which has become synonymous with modern pottery, eco-lodges, an annual handicrafts festival and great bird watching.

Next on our journey is Wadi El-Rayan National Park and the celebrated UNESCO World Heritage Site, Wādī al-Ḥītān or “Whale Valley” in the Western Desert. In this open-air museum, we learn about the fascinating evolution of whale skeletal development—hundreds of fossilized whale skeletons, as well as tangles of mangrove roots and elaborate crab tunnels, are visible on the sand’s surface.



This region is precious for its population of the endangered Slender-horned gazelle. Though sightings are rare, the Dorcas gazelle, Fennec fox and Rüppell's sand fox have been documented here as have 11 species of reptiles and 13 species of birds, which all bring resilience and adaptability to this tough environment.

After lunch and dessert in the desert (and maybe a fox sighting!), we transfer to our hotel near the airport (approximately a 2.5-hour drive) and prepare ourselves for our flight to Luxor the next day.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Hilton Heliopolis or similar



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## Day 4 | Luxor

### Tour the Ancient City

Please note: The order of today's itinerary will be dependent on the Cairo–Luxor flight arrival time.

We arrive in Luxor, with a big day of exploration ahead on us. On today's bucket list are the mortuary temples and tombs of the West Bank. We visit Valley of the Kings, Queen's Valley, Deir el-Bahari, Hatshepsut Temple and the 60 foot (18 m) statues of Colossi Memnon.

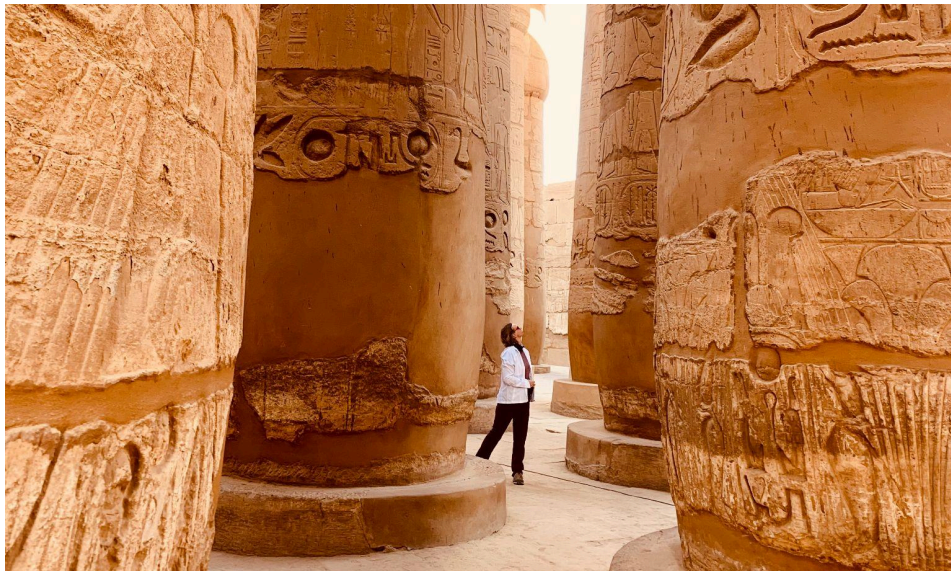
In the evening, we continue our study of towering monuments by touring the Temple of Luxor or set out on an engaging walking tour of the town with a local guide. Like real estate everywhere, the Temple of Luxor has been added to and adapted since Amenhotep III's original build in 1390–52 BC and later served as a Roman legionary fortress, churches, and a mosque.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Sonesta Hotel



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## Day 5 | Luxor Continued

### Obelisks and Hieroglyphs

This morning we head to the Temples of Karnak, Egypt's astounding compound of temples. One of the wonders of antiquity is the Great Hypostyle Hall, a vast path surrounded on each side by

six enormous columns, each nearly 80 feet tall. Inscriptions covering every surface of the temples reflect the succession of pharaohs, priests and rulers who left their mark on this important site for over 2,000 years.

After our enlightening Temples of Karnak tour, we head to Esna, the “city of fish,” and visit the Temple of Esna, dedicated to the ram-headed god of Khnum (the god of creation). Some of the most interesting inscriptions in this temple are actually found on the ceiling, with the sky Goddess Nut and astronomical representations of Orion’s Belt, the Dog and Dragon Star.

An easy ten-minute walk away, we reach our floating home for the next four nights: a traditional Dahabiya sailboat! As we move down the serpentine Nile, we can take in stellar sunsets and enjoy impromptu chats about goddesses, shawarma and Egypt’s affection for country music.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Dahabiya Sailboat





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## Day 6–8 | Edfu, Daraw & Silsila

### Sailing the Nile

During these three days, we embrace variety: a visit to the Temple of Horus at Edfu, time spent with a local family at El Higz, a lesson about the art of bamboo basket and box making from an Egyptian craftsman, and a short ride in an “Egyptian Ferrari,” which is the local term for a horse and carriage.

In Daraw town, tap into the energy of the camel trading marketplace or, if the market is closed, visit the barn where the camels are housed. You won’t see more camels anywhere (truly: this is the largest gathering of camels in the world).

Sailing to Silsila, we explore the shrine and enormous sandstone quarries. Our voyage continues to the temple of Kom Ombo, with its seemingly mile-high colonnades, and we end our tour of life on the Nile by meeting women who live in rural riverside villages.

#### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

#### Accommodations

Dahabiya Sailboat



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# Day 9 | Philae Temple

## Majestic Monuments

In the morning, we visit the Aswan High Dam, the Unfinished Obelisk and the Philae Temple. High Dam was an engineering feat built in 1960 to protect Egypt from the predictable annual floods on the Nile, but its construction wasn't a smooth process by any stretch and involved Cold War political maneuvering, an international effort to move archaeological monuments and the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people.

Located in a red granite quarry, the Unfinished Obelisk would have measured 137 feet (42 m) making it the tallest obelisk in history. It would also have been the heaviest obelisk as well, weighing in at 1,200 tons.

Our final stop is the majestic Philae Temple, which was built in honor of Isis. During the construction of the Aswan High Dam, UNESCO rescued the temple and transferred it block by block from its original site on Philae Island to Agilika Island, seven miles south of Aswan.

In the afternoon, dazzled by Philae, we take a bus ride to Nubia to check into our accommodation. Later, we return to the temple to be magically transported back to the time of pharaohs courtesy of the captivating Abu Simbel Sound and Light Show.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Nubian Lodge or similar





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## Day 10 | Abu Simbel

### The Nile and Crocodiles

There will be an opportunity this morning to visit the grand Abu Simbel temples before we drive back to Aswan. Fortified by a quick coffee and snack, we arrive to see the spectacular marmalade light of sunrise light up the temples, and afterwards enjoy a mid-morning brunch.

Abu Simbel is the site of two extraordinary temples built by King Ramses II. The four super-sized statues of Ramses located in front of the main temple were part of the exhaustive 1960s rescue mission, and the temples were successfully salvaged from the Nile's rising waters.

Next on our itinerary: making our way to Aswan, which takes approximately 3.5 hours, and checking into our fancy Nubian-styled hotel with uninterrupted Nile views from the terrace, suites and promenade—as well as a climate-controlled crocodile pond!

Before dinner, we gather for a henna experience and interactive cooking class. Later, we get to explore Aswan's lively market street before retiring back to our hotel. We've earned our rest today.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Sonesta Nouba Hotel Aswan



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## Day 11 | Cairo

### Kicking It around Cairo

This morning, we head to Aswan International Airport to board our domestic flight to Cairo. We have two days to explore Cairo, so the order of events may unfold differently depending on the group's energy and interests, but our time in Cairo includes a visit to the Citadel and Khan El Khalili, the famous bazaar and *souq* in the buzzy historic centre of Cairo. The vendors are determined and eager to engage in conversation. You will hear "looking is free" and several clever marketing lines from these skilled charmers!

If the group wishes to relax and unwind at the hotel instead, this can be arranged.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

## Accommodations

Steigenberger Hotel Tahrir Square or similar



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## Day 12 | Cairo Continued

### Diving into Islamic Cairo

Today's itinerary depends on the previous day's activities, but at the top of our list is a visit to the fascinating Egyptian Museum of Antiquities. Another must-see is Saint Virgin Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church, also known as the Hanging Church. Built on top of the gates of an old Roman fortress, this third-century church was the first in North Africa. We also visit Ben Ezra Synagogue (folklore suggests that this is where baby Moses was found) and the impressive Saladin Citadel, which was the beating heart of the Islamic world in medieval times.

Islamic Cairo is characterized by hundreds of mosques, tombs, madrasas (colleges for Islamic education), mansions, caravanserais (an inn with a central courtyard for travelers in the desert regions of North Africa) and fortifications dating from the Islamic era. After an authentic lunch at a local restaurant, we resume our exploration of the city in the afternoon.

Be sure to absorb all the sights, sounds and flavors of ancient Cairo on this last precious day!



### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Steigenberger Hotel Tahrir Square or similar

### The Hike

7.5 miles (12 km), with a 1,312 foot (400 m) gain and 1,312 foot (400 m) loss on return



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## Day 13 | Departure

### Up and Away

You can book a departure at any time today (airport transfer included)! Alternatively, you may wish to extend your stay and dig deeper into the deep pockets of Cairo! There's the Khan Al-Khalili bazaar, The Cairo Cave Church (St. Simon "The Tanner" Monastery) or the Cairo Tower. Or, simply spend a few days finding the very best shawarma, lamb *kofta* kebabs, *fiteer* (Egyptian pancakes) or Om Ali.

And now, after becoming an honorary whale fossil expert, Islamic understudy, Dahabiya sailboat crew member and Egyptian Queen trivia night champion...where next? Perhaps Jordan? Our



4-day Highlights of Jordan extension is the perfect way to continue your journey. This trip delivers the classics: visit the famed Treasury, enjoy a carefree float in the salty Dead Sea, and completely immerse yourself in Jordanian culture. Click on the Trip Extension tab to learn more.

### Included Meals

Breakfast



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## Trip Details

### Know Before You Go

For all of the logistical details you'll need to know prior to departure—including the packing list, arrival and departure details and suggested tipping information, click [HERE](#).

Itinerary version as of March 28, 2024.