



Share the Experience

April 2011

EGYPT 2011 PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Hi, thank you for choosing to holiday with Topdeck to Egypt. We certainly appreciate your decision to travel with us and rest assured everyone at Topdeck will be doing their utmost to ensure you have the holiday of a lifetime.

We have prepared the following information for you which we trust will assist you in planning for your trip. Some points should be taken as a guide only such as personal spending money, which can vary greatly between individuals, but we are sure you will find the information in general very useful.

Get ready for a fantastic holiday!

From all the Crew at Topdeck Travel

IMPORTANT UPDATE April 2011

Currently there are a number of problems with the availability of train tickets in Egypt for the overnight trains on all programmes except generally the Pyramids and Beaches, and the Egyptian Express. The Egyptian Government has withdrawn one of the first class recliner seat trains limiting the tickets available. Depending on availability of alternate train tickets, some groups will travel by private luxury air conditioned coach instead. This will be advised at the pre departure meeting in Cairo on day one.

Baggage

Soft bags, suitcases or frameless backpacks are best, plus a small day pack or carry bag. **No external framed packs** please, as they damage other bags on the coach. Remember, if you take too much, you have to carry it around. **Please limit your baggage allowance to a maximum of 20kgs.** Maximum allowable size for all bags must not exceed 70cm x 50cm x 25cm.

What to Bring

- Camera
- Hat and sunscreen
- Loose cotton clothing
- Daypack to carry your camera, bottled water and souvenirs
- Money belt
- Sunglasses
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Medication – some prescription medicines can be difficult to buy in Egypt
- First aid kit – Imodium is recommended in case of an upset stomach
- Book to read on long journeys
- Guide book

- Swimsuit and towel
- Sleeping bag (Only if your trip spends nights on the feluccas)
- Passport, visa, travel insurance, and air tickets.

Visas

Visa requirements change periodically and you should check the requirements before travelling.

All western visitors to Egypt require a visa with the exception of nationals of South Africa. Most nationals can obtain a visa on arrival at Cairo airport. These are available at all Banks at the airport which are open 24/7, and available for all flights. The cost is \$15 USD for a single entry visa. It is recommended that you contact your local Egyptian Consulate to ensure you can obtain a visa on arrival.

Please ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant documents/visas. Topdeck will accept no responsibility if you are refused entry through incorrect documentation.

Currently there is no departure tax payable when you leave Egypt.

Visa information in London is available from the Egyptian Consulate by dialling +44 20 72359777

Alternatively you can apply in person at the Egyptian Consulate in London at:

Egyptian Consulate
2 Lowndes Street
London SW1.

In addition to your passport, you will need an application form and one photo. Applications can be lodged Monday - Friday between 09:30 and 12:30 noon and collected in the afternoon between 2:30 and 3:30 even on the same day.

Health & Safety

All clients travelling on Topdeck trips must have personal insurance to cover all medical and repatriation costs. Please take your insurance policy with you. You will be asked to produce the policy number and emergency contact details by the Trip Leader on the first day of your trip.

There are no compulsory vaccinations but it is recommended that you ensure your tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid, polio and hepatitis vaccinations are up to date. Please consult a medical practitioner for the relevant requirements prior to travelling.

Strict food and water hygiene is essential to avoid diarrhoea. Make sure food has been properly prepared, drink only boiled or bottled water and keep in mind that ice will have been made up with tap water.

Take precautions against insect bites and sunburn. During the hot summer months it is advisable to carry bottled water in your daypack at all times.

Take care with your passport, credit cards and money - a money belt to fit beneath your clothes is highly recommended.

It is a good idea to pack a torch for those passengers travelling on the felucca sail boats, (Pharaoh's Footsteps, Ultimate Egypt, Nile and Beyond, Egyptian Express, and Pyramids and Beaches), and those who intend climbing Mt Sinai.

Money

Upon arrival at Cairo airport it is advisable to cash up about £20 or equivalent at the 24-hour exchange banks. This will cover any expenditure on your Cairo sightseeing day and give you flexibility until you need to change more money. The Sheraton Hotel is very close to the Topdeck hotel in Cairo for the budget trips (Egyptian Express – Pyramids & Beaches) and offers more favourable exchange rates than at the airport. As for the rest of groups (After the day tour finishes – Day 02 – the Tour Leader will take the group to the nearest Bank to change money) On each trip you will be given the opportunity to change money at either a bank or hotel. Please note that it is difficult to exchange travellers-cheques in Egypt and they can only be exchanged in Cairo. It is easier to use credit cards or hard currency to exchange into Egyptian Pounds, which can be done in most large towns.

There is no compulsory money exchange or limit on the amount of foreign currency brought into Egypt. It is possible to change Egyptian pounds to Jordanian Dinar easily, but converting Egyptian pounds to hard currencies is difficult and receives a poor rate of exchange. Therefore try to budget wisely and not have surplus Egyptian currency at the end of your trip.

It is advisable to notify your bank or credit card issuing company of your intention to travel to Egypt. Sometimes for security reasons, banks and credit card companies have been known to block cards when clients are withdrawing cash in Egypt, thinking them to be fraudulent transactions.

The currency unit in Egypt is the Egyptian Pound (LE), which is divided into 100 Piastres (pt). The following is a list of banknotes and coins that are in circulation:

Banknotes: 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 LE

Coins: 10, 20, 25 piastres

Approx exchange rate: (Feb 2010)

1GBP = 9.75 LE

1USD = 5.95 LE

1AUD = 6.15 LE

1NZD = 4.75 LE

1CAD = 6.00 LE

1EUR = 8.60 LE

US Dollars cash is also widely accepted so carrying cash in small denomination notes is helpful.

Arriving in Egypt

Cairo and Luxor:

If you are getting your visa on arrival these are obtained from the banks in the arrival hall before you queue up for immigration.

A meet and greet service and transfer to the hotel with our local representative is included in your trip. (Please ensure we have your arrival flight details otherwise we cannot guarantee this service).

Cairo

If you arrive at Terminal 1 or 2, the Topdeck representative will be waiting inside the airport before you go through immigration.

If you arrive at Terminal 3, the Topdeck representative will be waiting for you at the bottom of the stairs after immigration but before you collect your luggage.

The transfer from Cairo International airport to the Topdeck hotel takes about 1 hour due to traffic if arriving during the day, or about ½ hour if arriving at night.

Luxor:

The Representative will be waiting for you before you go through immigration, and they will help you with the formalities.

The transfer from Luxor International airport to the Topdeck hotel takes about 30 minutes depending on traffic.

Banks are open 24 hours a day at the both airports so you can change money at whatever time of day or night you arrive.

Day 1: Is a joining day with no activities planned so you can arrive at any time. Check in is generally from midday. Some flights arrive during the night and if so we strongly advise that if you are arriving in the early hours of day one, you book a pre trip accommodation so you are well rested before the start of the trip. The hotel does not approve of clients arriving in the middle of the night and sitting in the lobby waiting till midday so they can check in. Better to get a good sleep after your flight so you have plenty energy to experience and explore on your first day. We cannot transfer you from the airport in the middle of the night if you do not have accommodation booked. We will meet you at the meeting point at 9am after you have cleared immigration and customs. Note there are not particularly good facilities at the airport if you plan on spending the night there rather than book a pre night accommodation.

At approximately 7:00 pm the Trip Leader will meet the group at the hotel for a trip briefing. Here the Trip Leader will give information on the itinerary, sightseeing, optional tours and meals.

The Trip Leader will also take a photocopy of passports (for the passengers who will join Ultimate Egypt, Pharaohs' Footsteps, Nile and Beyond, Egyptian Express, and Pyramids & Beaches tours).

They will also collect the local payment part of your trip price in \$US cash, or sterling equivalent (please see below) and check your travel insurance.

In the reception of the hotel there is a Topdeck board with trip information and the Trip Leader's name and mobile number. If arriving a few days prior to the start of your trip please feel free to contact the Trip Leader for information on what to do in Cairo or advice on any problems.

Starting Address:

As long as we have your arrival flight details and you are staying at the Topdeck hotel where your trip starts from, an arrival transfer from the airport is included in your trip price.

All trips starting in Cairo, with the exception of: the Essential Egypt, Egypt Explored, Ramses Adventure, Egypt Jordan Israel, Egypt Express, and the Pyramids & Beaches, start at the following hotel:

Swiss Inn Nile Hotel
110, El Bahr El Aazem Street,
Corniche El Nile,
Cairo
Phone: +20 2 - 377 66 501 / 2 / 3

The Essential Egypt, Egypt Explored, Egypt Jordan Israel, and Ramses Adventure start from the following hotel:

Tiber (Tiba) Pyramids Hotel
33, Pyramids Road
Cairo
Phone: +20 2 33851659

The Saturday departures of both the Egypt Express and the Pyramids & Beaches start at the following hotel:

Indiana Hotel
16 El Saray Street
Dokki
Cairo
Phone: +20 233 354 503/ 33 354 422/ 37 488 523

The Tuesday departures of both the Egypt Express and the Pyramids & Beaches start at the following hotel:

Pharaoh's Hotel
12 Lotfi Hassona Street
Dokki
Cairo
Phone: +20 237 610 871/2/3

The Nile in Style and the Luxor Adventure start from the following hotel:

Morris Hotel
Corner of Horreya St and Khaled Ebn El Waleed
Luxor
Phone: +20 95 22 79 833

In the reception of your hotel there is a Topdeck board with trip information and the Trip Leader's name and mobile number. If arriving a few days prior to the start of your trip please feel free to contact the Trip Leader for information on what to do in Cairo or advice on any problems.

Please note that on some dates if the appointed hotel is not available, the trip will be accommodated at a hotel of at least the same standard.

Should you experience difficulties of any kind in Egypt prior to your trip starting please contact the following contacts by mobile phone:

Tamer Adel	Operation Manager	Mob: + (201) 053 40 350
Rafik Gendy	Operations	Mob: + (201) 011 14 103
Osama Yousef	Representatives' Supervisor	Mob: + (201) 219 79 097

Or, if you cannot get through on those lines, the Topdeck emergency number in the UK +44 7792775415

Pre and Post Trip Accommodation

Should you require pre or post trip accommodation, please notify your agent at the time of booking; as this can be pre-booked for you by Topdeck. Unless a room is immediately available most hotels will not allocate your room until at least midday, it may be later than this if the hotel has had high occupancy the previous night.

If you are staying in the hotel before the start of your trip please be advised not to accept offers from people to visit speciality shops or to take guided tours. These people are not associated with Topdeck and therefore we can't be responsible for the service you receive from them. Your Topdeck trip includes a professional Egyptian guide who will accompany you to all the sites mentioned in your itinerary.

Local Payment

Part of your trip price is made up of a local payment. This is paid in US\$ cash (or sterling equivalent) at the start of your trip (at the meeting on day one.) This is used to pay some of the expenses of running the trip en route. **A very small part is used** by the Trip Leader to pay any tips that need to be paid as the group travels around for the duration of the trip e.g. bus drivers, local guides, hotel staff, felucca crew, waiters etc. This saves you the hassle of tipping and also saves you money as the Trip Leader is better qualified to know the accepted tipping levels. The rest of the amount is used, along with what you have previously paid, for the running of the trip. (It is not used for tips for your Trip Leader).

Weather

Egypt can be very hot in summer but the climate is extremely dry. Temperatures will vary from north to south, with Upper Egypt (in the south) hotter than Cairo and the north. Average temperatures range from 15-35°C in Cairo and 23-45°C in Upper Egypt although all centres can experience heat waves. Luxor, Abu Simbel and Aswan get temperatures as high as 50°C in the summer months. The winter and spring seasons are not so hot and generally are a more pleasant time to visit.

The summit of Mt. Sinai at 2,285 meters can be bitterly cold and blanketed in snow in winter. Even in the other seasons it can be very cold especially at sunrise when the majority of travellers make the pilgrimage to the summit. If you intend making the ascent ensure you have warm clothing with you even though you may require it only this one time. Gloves and hooded jacket are advisable in winter. The cold is not realised en route to the summit, only once you are there, waiting for sunrise.

Temperatures

Average daily temperatures in °C:

	<u>Cairo</u>	<u>Aswan</u>	<u>Luxor</u>	<u>Hurghada</u>
Jan	09-19	08-24	05-23	10 - 22
Feb	09-21	09-26	07-25	13 - 29
Mar	11-24	13-30	11-29	13 - 24
Apr	14-28	18-35	16-35	16 - 26
May	17-32	21-39	21-39	21 - 30
Jun	18-35	24-42	25-41	24 - 32
Jul	22-35	25-42	24-41	26 - 33
Aug	22-35	25-42	24-41	27 - 34
Sep	20-32	22-40	22-39	24 - 32
Oct	18-30	19-36	18-35	20 - 28
Nov	14-25	15-30	12-30	15 - 26
Dec	10-21	10-26	08-25	13 - 23

Language

Arabic is the official language in Egypt although English is widely spoken throughout the tourist centres.

Opening Hours

The following opening hours are a guide only as they vary from business to business.

Banking	Sun - Thurs	08:30am – 1:00pm and then 5:00pm – 9:00pm
	Fri / Sat	closed

Some banks open on Saturday from 08:30am to 1:00pm and Sunday 10:00am – 12:00midday only.

Business	Sun - Thurs	9:00am – 2:00pm
	Fri / Sat	closed

Shopping	Sat - Thurs	9:00am – 3:00pm and 5:00pm – 9:00pm
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These hours are very approximate; some shops open on Friday and many close on Sunday. In tourist centres the hours may be extended. Some shops will close for a longer period in the afternoon from 1:00pm to 5:00pm.

Shopping

Bargaining is a common practice and an art when shopping in Egypt. Other than shops with fixed prices most shop owners accept the bartering of a price with the first quote rarely being the final price. Egypt offers popular items including gold and silver jewellery (especially cartouches), brassware, alabaster, perfume, papyrus, spices and cotton goods.

On most of our trips there is an overnight train journey. Whilst there is a bar on board and airline style food and drink is served, it is very expensive. The Trip Leader will take you to a supermarket prior to the journey where supplies of fruit, biscuits, chocolate, drinks etc. can be bought.

Eating and Drinking

Typical meals are *foul* and *taamiya*. Both are made from beans with *foul* being cooked beans mixed with oil or butter and *taamiya* being crushed beans that are then fried. Another popular vegetarian dish is *mahshee*, vegetables stuffed with rice and then boiled or *koshar* which is pasta and lentils topped with fried onions and a garlic sauce. *Kebab* (grilled beef), *kofta* (grilled meatballs) and chicken are common meat dishes. All the international fast food chains are also to be found in Cairo.

A 12% service charge plus 5% government sales tax (GST) will be added to your bill in most restaurants if not included already. A common practice and a sign of hospitality is to be offered a cup of hibiscus tea. A deep red coloured drink served either hot or cold. Soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available. Islamic law prevents the consumption of alcohol. However local beers and wines, also imported beverages are sold in hotels and restaurants. An average price for local Stella beer is approximately 15-25 LE while imported Stella beer is between 25-40 LE. A local bottle of wine costs about 60-85 LE and a spirit and mixer will cost approximately 25-45 LE. All breakfasts are included on most Topdeck Egypt trips and quite often dinner is too. All meals are provided on the felucca or cruise journeys on the Nile. If you allow US \$15 per day for meals not included you will eat like a king! Drinks are extra.

Electricity

The electricity supply in Egypt is 220 volts at 50 hertz. (A standard European plug or adapter is required).

Feluccas

Feluccas are traditional Egyptian sailing boats that have been used as transport up and down the Nile for centuries. A cruise on a felucca is particularly relaxing, as it is a simple boat with no engine or modern conveniences. You sleep on cushioned mattresses (**bring a sleeping bag**) for all times of the year under a canopy for protection against the elements. Cooking is done on the boat, and is done by the felucca crew. Feluccas are still a common form of transport up and down the river.

You should be aware that toilet facilities on the banks of the Nile where we stop are minimal to say the least. Bring the toilet paper and leave the modesty at home.

During winter months it can get relatively cold on the river especially at night. It can even rain! We advise passengers to bring a jacket or warm windcheater during these months. Daytime temperatures during these months are, on the whole, very pleasant.

Extra costs in Egypt

Our trips will take you to many historical sights and museums, however entry is optional and the costs extra. Some Student cards allow half price entry to many all archaeological sites and museums in Egypt.

Many archaeological sites and museums charge a camera charge. Flash photography is often prohibited as it contributes towards the destruction of sensitive colours, especially in the tombs.

The following prices are meant only as a guide and are not to be taken as definitive. Whilst we do our best to constantly update this information to ensure it is correct we will take no responsibility for any errors in the pricing. In addition please note that not all of the entrance fees below will relate to your specific trip.

Entrance fees:

		Full Fee	Student fee
CAIRO	Pyramids & Sphinx area	60 LE	30 LE
	- Sound and Light show	75 LE	75 LE
	Entry into 3 rd Pyramid	30 LE	15 LE
	Egyptian Museum	60 LE	30 LE
	- Mummy Room	100 LE	50 LE
	Cairo Tower	65 LE	--- LE
	Saqqara	60 LE	30 LE
ASWAN	Abu Simbel	95 LE	54 LE
LUXOR	Karnak Temple	65 LE	35 LE
	Luxor Temple	50 LE	25 LE
	Valley of the Kings	84 LE	44 LE
	Medinet Habu Temple	30 LE	15 LE
	Ramesseum Temple	30 LE	15 LE
	Temple of Queen Hatshepsut	32 LE	17 LE
	Kom Ombo Temple	30 LE	15 LE
Edfu Temple	50 LE	25 LE	

Optional tours:

On Topdeck trips we have combined a selection of sightseeing and optional excursions to create maximum flexibility for interest and budget. Below is a list of the optional excursions in Egypt. Please note that some of the options may not apply to your trip. Your Trip leader will advise you of which ones are available on your trip at the meeting on day one. There is also a table of these in the brochure and on the website.

Cairo	Sound & Light Show	£22.00
	Dinner Cruise and show: - belly dancer, Darwish dance and live music	£27.00
Luxor	East Bank (Karnak & Luxor Temple)	£30.00
Aswan	Phialae Temple	£25.00
	Nubian village	£15.00
	Nubian dinner	£07.00
	Camel ride	£16.00
Hurghada	Giftun Island (including lunch)	£26.00
	Desert Safari (Quad bikes)	£28.00
Dahab	Camel Ride	£16.00
	Desert Safari (Quad bikes)	£32.00
	Mt Sinai and St Catherine's**	£25.00

The above rates include transportation, guiding and entrance fees. Prices are quoted in Pounds Sterling and are payable locally in Egypt to the Trip Leader.

** Mt Sinai optional needs at least four people to operate.

Please note that some hotels may put on a compulsory Gala Dinner on the following nights:

Christmas (24 December), New Year (31 December), and sometimes Easter. Please check with your Travel Agent you booked through, or direct with us to know how much the supplement will be.

Please don't hesitate to contact your agent of us if you need any further information, or look on line: www.topdecktravel.co.uk

We wish you a very enjoyable trip in this beautiful and friendly country