

AFRICA · HISTORY · CULTURE · DESERT · DIVING · BEACHES · SACRED SITES



# Egypt

The Pyramids of Giza have stood at the edge of Cairo's sprawl for four and a half thousand years, and the Nile between Luxor and Aswan is lined with temples best seen from a cruise boat or felucca. Add the Red Sea's coral reefs and reliable winter sunshine, and expect to bargain for almost everything outside the big hotels.

**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Egypt.**

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.  
FCDO advice last updated 4 August 2026.

|                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  CAPITAL<br>Cairo                        |  CURRENCY<br>Egyptian pound (EGP)<br>£1 ≈ EGP 72.79 |  LANGUAGE<br>Arabic, English                          |  BEST TIME<br>Oct–Apr                |
|  DAILY BUDGET<br>£30–£170<br>££ Moderate |  PLUGS<br>Type C, F<br>220V · adapter needed        |  FLIGHT FROM LONDON<br>5h direct<br>~£250–£550 return |  TIME ZONE<br>UTC+2<br>standard time |

Egypt's geography makes route-planning simple: almost everyone lives along the Nile, and the classic first trip follows it. Start with three or four days in Cairo for the pyramids at Giza and Saqqara, the Grand Egyptian Museum and the medieval mosques of Islamic Cairo. Then fly or take the sleeper train south to Luxor for Karnak and the Valley of the Kings, cruise upriver past Edfu and Kom Ombo to Aswan, and make the early-morning run to Abu Simbel. Finish with a few days of snorkelling or diving on the Red Sea at Hurghada, Sharm el-Sheikh or Dahab.

Day-to-day Egypt is cheap: street food, trains and local transport cost little, but entry tickets to the big sites have risen steeply and are priced for foreigners, so budget for them separately. Winter is high season, and Luxor's tombs can be crowded by mid-morning; summer in Upper Egypt regularly tops 40°C. It suits first-timers on a tour as much as independent travellers, although the latter need patience with touts, constant offers and requests for baksheesh. What surprises most people is the warmth and humour of Egyptians once the hard sell is over, and how close the desert is to every town.

## Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

**Pyramids of Giza**

The Great Pyramid is the only survivor of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, flanked by two more pyramids and the Sphinx. Arrive at opening time, walk to the panorama point, and pair it with Tutankhamun's treasures at the nearby Grand Egyptian Museum.
- 2

HISTORY

**Luxor's temples and the Valley of the Kings**

Ancient Thebes straddles the Nile: Karnak's forest of columns and Luxor Temple on the east bank, and on the west the painted tombs of the Valley of the Kings, Hatshepsut's terraced temple and the Colossi of Memnon. Allow at least two full days.

3

## HISTORY

**Abu Simbel**

Ramesses II's colossal rock-cut temples near the Sudanese border, moved block by block in the 1960s to escape the rising waters of Lake Nasser. Most visitors make a pre-dawn road trip or short flight from Aswan; staying overnight means seeing them almost empty.

4

## CULTURE

**Nile cruise from Luxor to Aswan**

Three or four nights on a river boat or sailing dahabiya, stopping at the temples of Edfu and Kom Ombo as palms, farmland and desert slide past. Finish in Aswan with a felucca sail around Elephantine Island and a visit to Philae.

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## WILDLIFE

**Ras Mohammed National Park**

At the southern tip of Sinai near Sharm el-Sheikh, sheer coral walls drop into deep blue water busy with turtles, reef sharks and huge shoals of fish. Day boats serve divers and snorkellers, and the wreck of the Thistlegorm is a classic dive nearby.

## Biggest cities

## LARGEST CITY

**Cairo**

≈ 22 million people

The Arab world's biggest city is loud and exhausting but essential: the pyramids, the museums, Khan el-Khalili bazaar and Islamic Cairo's minarets need at least three full days.

## 2ND LARGEST CITY

**Alexandria**

≈ 5.5 million people

Alexander the Great's Mediterranean port mixes faded belle-époque cafés with the modern Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Qaitbay Citadel; best as a two-day trip from Cairo.

## 3RD LARGEST CITY

**Port Said**

≈ 750,000 people

A 19th-century Suez Canal city of wooden-balconied colonial buildings, where you can watch container ships enter the canal and ride the free ferry across to Port Fouad.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

## Holiday regions in Egypt

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.

**Red Sea coast**

Egypt Best: Mar–Apr, Oct–Nov 5h 20m from London

Sea up to 29°C ~£80/day

## When to go to Egypt

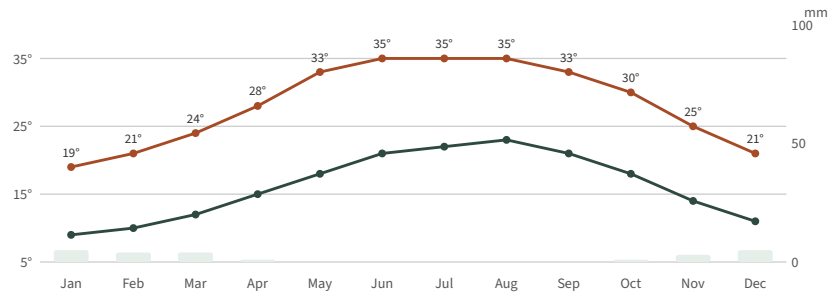
Best time: **Oct–Apr**.



Best Good Mixed Poor

**Average climate in Cairo**

High °C Low °C Rain (mm)



## Festivals & events

Feb, Oct

### Abu Simbel Sun Festival

Around 22 February and 22 October, the rising sun shines down the length of the Great Temple to light the statues in its inner sanctuary; crowds gather well before dawn.

Feb–Mar

### Ramadan

The fasting month moves about 11 days earlier each year, falling in February and March in 2026–27. Days are slower, but evenings come alive with iftar feasts, lanterns and late-night crowds.

Apr–May

### Sham el-Nessim

An ancient spring festival held on the Monday after Coptic Easter, when Egyptians of every faith picnic in parks and along the Nile and eat salted fish and coloured eggs.

## How much does Egypt cost?

SHOESTRING

**£30**

per person / day  
≈ EGP 2,184

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

**£75**

per person / day  
≈ EGP 5,459

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

**£170**

per person / day  
≈ EGP 12,374

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

## Food to try

### Koshari

Egypt's carb-loaded street classic: rice, lentils, macaroni and chickpeas under a spiced tomato sauce, sharpened with garlicky vinegar and topped with crisp fried onions.

### Ta'ameya

Egyptian falafel, made from dried fava beans rather than chickpeas and packed with herbs that turn it green inside; eaten in baladi bread with tahini and pickles at breakfast.

### Molokhia

A silky green soup of finely chopped jute leaves with garlic and coriander, served with rice and chicken or rabbit; a favourite of home cooking.

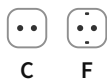
## Getting around

EgyptAir flies from Cairo to Luxor and Aswan in about an hour, with onward flights to Abu Simbel, while Abela's overnight sleeper trains link Cairo with Luxor and Aswan. Go Bus and other coach firms run to Alexandria, Hurghada, Sharm el-Sheikh and Dahab. In Cairo and Alexandria, Uber and Careem avoid taxi haggling, and Cairo's metro is cheap and quick. Between Luxor and Aswan, cruise boats double as transport.

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## Practical information

### PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-C/F adapter

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### DIALLING CODE

+20

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### TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

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### TIPPING

Baksheesh oils everything: tip 10–15% in restaurants even when service is added, and keep small notes for guides, drivers, guards and toilet attendants.

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### ETIQUETTE

Dress modestly away from beach resorts, covering shoulders and knees; women need a headscarf in mosques. During Ramadan, avoid eating, drinking or smoking in public in daylight hours.

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### MAIN AIRPORTS

Cairo International Airport (CAI), Cairo; Luxor International Airport (LXR), Luxor; Hurghada International Airport (HRG), Hurghada

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### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **123**

Fire: **180**

Police: **122**

Tourist police: **126**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

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### TIME ZONE

UTC+2 (standard time)

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### DRIVING

On the right

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## Visas & entry for Egypt

Shown for a British passport.

**Visa required — apply before you go**

British passport holders travelling to Egypt normally need a visa.

If you are arriving by air to Sharm El-Sheikh and staying for less than 15 days at resorts in Sharm El Sheikh, Dahab, Nuweiba or Taba, you do not need a visa. You will get a free entry permission stamp on arrival at Sharm El-Sheikh Airport. If you plan to travel outside the resorts or stay more than 15 days, you must get a visa. You can get a visa at Sharm El-Sheikh Airport or online.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

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## Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

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### RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

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### SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Rabies

Typhoid

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YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Egypt

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

|                 |                                                            |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thu 7 Jan 2027  | Coptic Christmas Day                                       |
| Thu 28 Jan 2027 | January 25th Revolution and National Police Day (observed) |
| Tue 9 Mar 2027  | Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)                               |
| Wed 10 Mar 2027 | Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)                               |
| Thu 29 Apr 2027 | Sinai Liberation Day (observed)                            |
| Sat 1 May 2027  | Labour Day                                                 |
| Mon 3 May 2027  | Spring Festival                                            |
| Sat 15 May 2027 | Day of Arafah (date may shift)                             |
| Sun 16 May 2027 | Eid al-Adha (date may shift)                               |
| Mon 17 May 2027 | Eid al-Adha (date may shift)                               |
| Tue 18 May 2027 | Eid al-Adha (date may shift)                               |
| Thu 10 Jun 2027 | Islamic New Year (observed, estimated) (date may shift)    |
| Thu 1 Jul 2027  | June 30 Revolution Day (observed)                          |
| Fri 23 Jul 2027 | July 23 Revolution Day                                     |
| Sat 14 Aug 2027 | Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)                        |
| Thu 7 Oct 2027  | Armed Forces Day (observed)                                |

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Egyptian Arabic

| ENGLISH           | EGYPTIAN ARABIC | SAY IT               |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Hello             | السلام عليكم    | as-sa-LAAM a-LAY-kum |
| Thank you         | شكراً           | SHOOK-ran            |
| Please            | من فضلك         | min FAD-lak          |
| Excuse me         | لو سمحت         | law sa-MAHT          |
| How much is this? | بكام ده؟        | bi-KAAM da           |

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## Know before you go

Most major sites, including Giza, now sell tickets by bank card only, so bring a card that works abroad, then keep small Egyptian-pound notes for baksheesh and street food.

Agree prices for camel rides, carriage rides and taxis before you start, and be firm but friendly with touts: a smiling 'la, shukran' (no, thank you) works best.

Start sightseeing at opening time: Luxor's tombs and the Giza plateau are far cooler and quieter before the coaches arrive, and many sites close by late afternoon.

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Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice ([gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)) and TravelHealthPro ([travelhealthpro.org.uk](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk)). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.