

Nile Time



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Sailing the Nile



Upon visiting Egypt if you want to see all the old archeological sites along the Nile River and the best way is to take a cruise. There are over 400 boats operating from the cities of Luxor to Aswan.

About 15 years ago you used to be able to take a boat from Cairo all the way south to Aswan or even further to Khartoum in Sudan. But because of terrorist attacks starting in the late 90's they have secured a stretch of river from Luxor all the way south to the High dam at Aswan which is the Border of Sudan.

The boats have all been made the same dimensions on the outside which is the maximum size you can be to pass

through the locks. There are 2 sets of locks on the part of the river we journeyed.

Because of the pure volume of boats and poor infrastructure and economy in Egypt they will just dock up against the river bank or levee wall and use a large plank to board the boat. Then they will stack the ships up to 5 wide from the bank with all the entrances lined up. So when you return from exploring you sometimes have to walk through the reception of 4 other boats which is somewhat interesting.

Once onboard however you seem to forget you are on a boat and it feels more like a small hotel. The river is slow and calm

so you do not get the swaying and rolling of a cruise ship in the ocean. The ships are basically built on top of barges and usually 4 stories high with a sundeck and pool on the roof and the restaurant is on the bottom floor.

They are in port every day and the Nile valley similar to our own San Joaquin valley is a giant agricultural paradise. So the ships can get fresh food loading onboard everyday which means the fruits, vegetables and salads are all very good.

The drawback to the cruise is the Nile being the longest river in the world and you are pretty much at the end of it with a billion people using the water, need I say more.



Camel World

In the world of tourism the dollar is the almighty king and in Egypt the tourist pays good money to ride a camel. In fact we paid for a camel ride when we were at the pyramids so we contributed to this story.

See a long time ago a camel was not worth so much but now a camel goes for 4 times what a cow is worth. They bring them in from Sudan and other places and in the town of Daraw there is a Camel market as the locals call it where livestock is traded and this is where the camels are bought up and trucked to Cairo. I found out about this place because I saw a dump truck drive by us when we were out in the desert and it was loaded with camels.

Well now to the sad part of the story. We had

arrived at the camel market as everyone was packing up and leaving with our driver swerving around cows and goats being herded down the road. We found a local that had about 10 camels and he let us meet them but we noticed that they wanted to bite and were growling like wild dogs. I talked to the owner for a while and then we were off when out in the distance we saw a truck loading camels onto it. I had our driver stop and

we walked over to watch when to our surprise they started beating a camel very hard with a large stick. At this point Maddie got scared and ran to the car and I stayed to get the entire story of why they beat camels.

Not that I agree with the practice of beating camels but it turns out that they will sit down right before they get on the truck because they are very stubborn, so they are beaten to get them to move, it's an ugly sight.



Camels being loaded into a flatbed truck.



"Maddie reading some ancient Egyptian writing."

Edfu

Buried in the sands of time for 500 years Edfu was just recently uncovered. The temple was built over 20 centuries ago and was dedicated to the Horus the Falcon God. Because it was buried for so long the temple is the best preserved in all of Egypt and to the untrained eye looks perfect.

When you walk inside among the columns with a roof made of giant stones you enter an element of darkness and become amazed. Every wall in every room is covered with ancient writings each telling a story of some significance. One thing I noticed were all the faces had been removed from when the Romans ruled.



No Child Left Behind

Well that was what Lisa had in mind when we visited some local children at a small Nubian town in Southern Egypt.

I was talking with the kids and had Maddie come over and meet them when Lisa decided to show up with her hand bag that had a big bunch of pens and

pencils sticking out of it. The kids right away saw the writing utensils and Lisa started to hand out a couple of them when it turned into a free for all.

The amazing thing about giving to people who really are in need is that you can see the expressions of gratitude on their faces. You could give away play stations and iPods here in the United States and you will never experience what we did with 2 dollars worth the pens. The problem is you really never have enough to give away and someone will get left out.



"Lisa is dishing out the pens in a diplomatic order."

Guide Us

With a constant supply of boats stopping at each site along the river there is a need for a constant supply of tour guides. But it is not as easy as having 100 guides in each port as you have people arriving from all over the world so now you need guides that speak 10 different languages.

We had two guides on the trip and each one went with us on the boat to cover several sites then they would ride another boat to get back. I could

not get a firm answer from our captain on the boat but it seems the guides mostly work for tips and they were sure to let us

know that fact.

You definitely have a lot more understanding of things with the guides.





"Welcome to Karnak."

Karnak

Located in the town of Luxor it is the largest temple complex in the world even though it is only partially intact. Located across the river is the Valley of the Kings where the tombs of 63 ancient kings were buried with their treasures.

There is also the Luxor Temple a mile away from Karnak and they have found an ancient street lined with sphinx that connects the two. The city has been torn apart and the excavation is recent in fact some places you try and go cannot be found as they have been demolished recently. The idea is to rebuild the original street and make one large site but the size of the project is huge.

Karnak itself is more than

a person can see in a day if you really want to take it all in. The columns are vast with over a 100 of them reaching over 60 feet high. The temple was built over centuries and was a collaboration of the work of 30 pharaohs.

For us the temple was just too much to comprehend since we had been visiting ancient sites for the

previous four days. You really need more time to just sit back and to understand some of the smaller details. I talked with a gentleman from Scotland who was drawing artwork for himself across Egypt. It seemed to be a good way to really immerse yourself into the ancient civilization, if you can paint.



Get Spiced Up

There are spice dealers to be found in every market you will visit in Egypt. The

prices are incredible compared to what you would pay here in the US.

We did not buy any bulk spices just because we do not like to attract a lot of attention from the customs agents when we go across borders.

The smell of the shop when you have literally a ton of different aromas drifting and floating through the air is absolutely incredible. They do sell red hot chili peppers so you need to be careful what you smell.



"Red Hot Chili Peppers."

