

PARK TUDOR GOES TO EGYPT & JORDAN

17 days

Itinerary downloaded on: February 22, 2024

Day 1: *Arrival in Cairo*

Today we arrive in Cairo and transfer to our hotel.

Overnight in Cairo.

Meal Plan: Dinner

Day 2: *Cairo: Islamic & Coptic Cairo*

This morning venture deep into the heart of Islamic Cairo. We will tour the Citadel, which was begun by Saladin in the 12th century. Today the Citadel's buildings are mainly from the Ottoman period, and are truly grand. Here we will see the fabulous Mosque of Mohammed Ali, also known as the "Alabaster Mosque." From the Citadel, which is actually a complex of three mosques and four museums, we enjoy an amazing view of Cairo spread beneath the hilltop. We also visit the Sultan Hassan and Al-Rifai mosques, located below the Citadel. In addition, we will visit the Ibn Tulun Mosque and climb the minaret. This is the oldest mosque in Egypt and one of the largest in the world, it is also famed for its lovely architecture and unique minaret. We then drive through the neat, tree-lined streets of the Garden City area to Coptic Cairo, the centre of Christianity in Cairo. We will walk the cobblestone streets and stop at a few of the churches, including that of Saint Sergius, presumed to be the spot where the Holy Family lived during their flight into Egypt. The present building dates from the 11th century. As we stroll along we will come to the recently restored Synagogue of Ben Ezra, the oldest Jewish synagogue in Egypt. Despite the 45 Jewish families that remain in Cairo, the synagogue is no longer operational. This evening we will take a stroll through the busy streets of downtown Cairo.

Overnight in Cairo.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3: *Cairo: Great Pyramids & the Sphinx - Whirling Dervishes*

This morning we pay a visit to the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx. These Pharaonic monuments have come to symbolize Egypt's glory and mystery. Impressive in their grandeur, the pyramids are estimated to have been constructed over a period of 20 years using more than 100,000 labourers each year. The Great Pyramid of Cheops, constructed from over two million stone blocks, is 135m (443 feet) high! The stone for the Pyramid complex--Pyramid of Cheops, Pyramid of Cephren and Pyramid of Mykerinos--was quarried from nearby hills south of Cairo. We have time to enter the Cephren pyramid through a long, narrow passageway and explore the deep inner chambers. We then visit the Sphinx. This feline-human was named by the Greeks because it resembled the mythical winged monster with a woman's head and lion's body. Legend has it that this "Sphinx" proposed a riddle to the Thebans and killed all who could not guess the correct answer! The Sphinx was carved from one solid piece of limestone and measures 50m (164 feet) in length and 22m (72 feet) in height. We will also enjoy a horse ride around the pyramids. This evening we will attend a performance of the Whirling Dervishes at El Ghouri compound.

Overnight in Cairo.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

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Day 4: *Cairo: The Museum of Antiquities & Khan al Khalili - Train to Aswan*

We proceed to the bustling Midan Tahrir and the famous Museum of Egyptian Antiquities. Here we will see some of Egypt's most beloved treasures. Among the 100,000 pieces housed on the museum's two floors is the famous exhibit of Tutankhamun whose tomb was discovered by Howard Carter in 1922. The tomb and treasures of this young Pharaoh, modest by Pharaonic Egyptian standards, is perhaps the best preserved of the discovered tombs. We also see archaeological relics from the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom and Greco-Roman periods. We also allow some time for you to explore the treasures on your own, including the mummy room. We visit the Al Azhar Mosque, established in 972 in a porticoed style shortly after the founding of Cairo itself. Located in the center of an area teeming with the most beautiful Islamic monuments from the 10th century, it was called "Al-Azhar" after Fatama al-Zahraa, daughter of the Prophet Mohamed. Our final stop is the lively Khan al Khalili Bazaar. This evening we board our overnight sleeper train to Upper Egypt.

Overnight train to Aswan.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5: *Aswan: Elephantine Island, Aga Khan Mausoleum & Nubian Village*

This morning we arrive in Aswan where we immediately embark on our day's sightseeing. We board a motorboat and glide among the islands dotting the Nile. The main island here is called Elephantine Island because many of the rocks look like elephants bathing in the Nile. We will arrive at the beautiful Kitchener's Island where we will have time to stroll through the rich botanical gardens with trees, plants, and bushes. We also make a stop at the Mausoleum of the Aga Khan. This is the burial site of the spiritual leader of the Ismailis, a Shi'ite sect (as were the Fatimid) based principally in India but with followers around the world. It is a very elegant pink granite structure of late 1950 origin, which also resembles the Fatimid tombs in Cairo. Later this afternoon we travel by camel to a Nubian village. Around 5,000 years ago, a rich and powerful nation called the kingdom of Kush (also referred to as ancient Nubia) was a center of culture and military might in Africa. Ancient Nubia had a wealth of natural resources such as gold, ivory, copper, frankincense and ebony but they also produced and traded a variety of goods such as pottery. This evening we enjoy dinner in a Nubian home (usually accompanied by some authentic Nubian entertainment). Upon our return to Aswan you may explore the colourful Aswan bazaar.

Overnight in Aswan.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6: *Aswan - Philae Temple - Felucca Sailing*

This morning we visit Philae Temple. The temple is situated on an island, and we have to take a boat to get to the site. Since early this century, the site of Philae was flooded for six months each year. An incredible restoration programme was undertaken in the 1960s and the temple was moved stone-by-stone to a higher elevation. After our visit we board our felucca and travel towards Kom Ombo. The leisurely and informal nature of felucca sailing means that our agenda is freeform. Our night stops depend upon the elements. As we enjoy the stimulating sailing, we see the intensive cultivation of the Nile Valley (mainly sugar-cane and maize), and at points along the Nile we view small villages which depend upon the river for their livelihood. WHAT IS A FELUCCA? Feluccas are NOT luxury boats, but a unique way of experiencing the romantic atmosphere of the Nile. Used for centuries for carrying goods and passengers along the Nile, they are open-decked sailboats with no engines or modern conveniences, and generally a crew of two or three Egyptian sailors. All meals are cooked on board by the boatmen, but culinary experts in the group are welcome to help cook if they wish. A canvas canopy can be erected for shelter from the sun by day; at night the felucca will tie up along the river bank and you can sleep on the mattresses provided on the deck or the shore. There are also plenty of cushions on deck, so although there is not a lot of space, the boat is comfortable.

Overnight on the felucca.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7: *Felucca disembarkation - Kom Ombo - Luxor*

Today we will reach Kom Ombo and enjoy a tour of the site. In ancient times Kom Ombo was strategically important as a trading town on the caravan route from Nubia to Cairo. Kom Ombo is actually two temples in one; it is dedicated to Horus and Sobek, respectively the god of the sky and the crocodile-headed god. Here we are able to see the remains of the mummified crocodile. Crocodiles no longer exist in the Egyptian part of the River Nile but in Pharaonic times they lived here in great numbers and were worshipped as gods. On arrival in Luxor we will have a horse-drawn carriage ride through the streets of Luxor to visit one of the most fantastic archaeological sites in the world: Karnak Temple. Karnak was built, added to, dismantled, restored, enlarged and decorated during its colourful history of over 1,500 years. At certain points in Egyptian history, this temple was the most important in all of Egypt. When we arrive at the temple you will be awed by the grandeur of the tremendous pylon gateway and the Avenue of 1,000 Sphinxes that originally ran all the way to the Nile and Luxor Temple! We will have a guided tour of the complex, massive by any standard. We also visit spectacular Luxor Temple. The temple was dedicated to the Theban Triad of Amun, Mut, and Chons and was, during the New Kingdom, the focus of the annual Opet Festival, in which a cult statue of Amun was paraded down the Nile from Karnak Temple. This evening you can explore the souks (bazaars) of Luxor.

Overnight in Luxor.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8: *Valley of the Kings - Train to Cairo*

Early this morning we cross the River Nile by boat to the West Bank where the wealth of antiquities is outstanding. On the other side we will meet our transport for our excursion into the Valley of the Kings. Our preferred method of travel today is by donkey (though we can arrange a minibus for those who do not wish to travel in this manner). After we "saddle-up" we begin our trek through the New Gurna Village and into the countryside. En route we will pass residences and farms where we will gain an insight into how the rural Egyptians live and work. En route we will pass by the Colossi of Memnon. These two huge statues sit side by side; they originally flanked the entry to the funerary temple of Amenophis III. The Colossi were named from a legend explaining the phenomenon of the dawn. Excellent photo opportunities occur here with you on your donkey and the Colossi in the background. We continue from here along the road leading into the hills. From where the road forks, we travel along the stony pathway toward the cliff ridge. Our donkey ride from here on offers breathtaking views of the Nile valley below. At some points, we make brief stops for photographs and to give our donkeys a rest; there are also some parts of the trail that we have to walk as the burden to the donkey would be too much. It is very important to prepare yourself for the sun's intense rays; please remember to wear a hat and sunblock. When we arrive at a ridge overlooking the Valley of the Kings we will dismount from our donkeys and walk the remainder of the way down into the valley. It is a short but steep walk; a good pair of shoes or lightweight hiking boots will be required. Once in the isolated valley dominated by large pyramid-shaped mountains, we will have a guided tour of three of the many tombs that are here. The valley was the burial ground for pharaoh kings throughout the New Kingdom. Note that some of the tombs have steep stairways and all are dark inside. It is a good idea to have a small flashlight with you today for a closer inspection of the interior of the tombs. When we have finished the guided tour of the Valley of the Kings. We then proceed to the funerary temple of Queen Hatshepsut--the first woman to rule as pharaoh! We have a tour of this impressive complex, discovered in the mid-19th century and still under restoration. The temple's 37 m- (121 foot-) wide causeway leads us to three huge terraced courts. After our tour we return by donkey (or minibus) through the countryside to the river. We may be invited into a village home for some tea before returning to Luxor. Later this evening we board our overnight train back to Cairo.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

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Day 9: *Arrival in Cairo - Amman, Jordan*

This morning we arrive in Cairo. Later today we transfer to the airport for our flight to Amman, Jordan, the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Amman is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the World. The city's modern buildings blend with the remnants of ancient civilizations. The profusion of gleaming white houses, kebab stalls with roasting meat, and tiny cafes where rich Arabian coffee is sipped in the afternoon sunshine, conjure a mood straight from a Thousand-and-One-Nights.

Overnight in Amman.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10: *Amman - Madaba - Mt Nebo - Petra*

Driving to the edge of the Jordan Valley we reach Mount Nebo from where Moses and the Children of Israel first saw the Promised Land. On a clear day you can look down to see the Dead Sea and the River Jordan. On the other side of the valley is the city of Jerusalem. Here huge mosaics of hunting scenes cover the floor of a ruined Byzantine church. We leave Mt Nebo and travel south via the Dead Sea Highway, making a stop at the Dead Sea en route. King David, King Herod, Jesus, and John the Baptist were closely linked with the Dead Sea and its surroundings. During the Egyptian conquest it is said that Queen Cleopatra obtained exclusive rights to build cosmetic and pharmaceutical factories in the area. Later on, the wily Nabateans discovered the value of bitumen extracted from the Dead Sea used by the Egyptians for embalming their dead. The Dead Sea contains 10 times more salts and minerals than the Mediterranean Sea. The high salt and mineral concentration enables everyone to float in its waters but doesn't allow the proliferation of fish and other marine life. We continue to Petra.

Overnight in Petra.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11: *Petra: Site Tour*

Petra was the capital of the Nabatean Kingdom from the fourth century BC to the 2nd century AD. From the 12th century until its rediscovery in 1812, Petra was lost to the world--a closely guarded secret of the local tribes. Today the 'rose red city half as old as time' is probably the most impressive archaeological site in the Middle East, rivaling the temples and pyramids of Egypt in grandeur. This morning, on our way into the hidden valley of Petra, we will see the Obelisk Tomb and the irrigation system which carried water from a dam throughout the desert city. As we emerge from the 'Siq' you stand in awe in front of the 'Treasury' (El Kazneh), a graceful structure carved from the living rock. After pausing to admire the elegant columns and carvings we carry on into the valley where elaborate tombs are carved into the multi-coloured walls. Everywhere the sandstone swirls and twists in shades of red, orange, yellow, pink and white. Next we will see the Roman amphitheatre, carved directly out of the mountain, with space for over 3,000 spectators. Further on in the main valley of Petra, are the Royal Tombs including the Palace Tomb and the Silk Tomb. We visit the temple of the Nabateans' main god, Dushara, and we also see the 'Temple of the Winged Lion'. Our formal guided tour of the site terminates with a visit to the Petra Nabatean Museum. At this point, you may explore further on your own, or return to our hotel to relax and / or shop. You may also take a strenuous walk up a narrow pass to see the magnificent 'Monastery' building, El Deir. The views of Petra and the surrounding area are expansive. The walk is steep, mostly on steps carved into the rock, and will take APPROXIMATELY one hour up (30 minutes down). At some point on our visit to Petra we will visit the "Made in Jordan" shop above Petra Kitchen. We will also enjoy a Turkish bath.

Overnight in Petra.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

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Day 12: Petra - Wadi Rum

Today we continue down the Desert Highway to Wadi Rum where Lawrence of Arabia conducted many of his campaigns during the First World War. On arrival at Wadi Rum we take four-wheel drive vehicles out into the desert where the sand is red and the rocks look like gigantic multi-layered chocolate cakes melting in the setting sun. We will have a chance to hike and scramble in this unique landscape and may be invited into a goat-hair tent to share a glass of tea with some Bedouin tribesmen--the nomadic herdsman of the desert who made up Lawrence's army. Running along the floor of the valley is the Hejaz Railway that Lawrence blew up repeatedly. We spend the night at a desert camp built in the Bedouin Arabic tradition, blending naturally into its desert surroundings. This is a very basic Bedouin camp where we will sleep in our sleeping bags in tents or out under the stars if you prefer! No shower facilities and basic toilet facilities.

Overnight in Wadi Rum.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13: Wadi Rum

Today we have a full day to explore Wadi Rum by foot and by camel. Riding a camel is one of the most invigorating, exciting ways to see the area. There will also be ample opportunities for hiking / scrambling. Before we begin this full-day trek our Tour Leader and camel trainer will teach you the technique of riding a camel! We hope to enjoy some traditional music this evening.

Overnight in Wadi Rum.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14: Wadi Rum - Shobak & Kerak - Amman

Today we travel back to Amman, with stops at Shobak and Kerak castles en route. Shobak Castle was strategically located on a hill on the plain of Edom, along the pilgrimage and caravan routes from Syria to Arabia. This allowed Baldwin I of Jerusalem to control the commerce of the area, as pilgrims and merchants needed permission to travel past it. It was surrounded by relatively fertile land, and two cisterns were carved into the hill, with a long, steep staircase leading to springs within the hill itself. Kerak is a 12th century Crusader fortress with huge water cisterns and commanding position on a hilltop allowing it to hold out against many sieges.

Overnight in Amman.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15: Amman - Jubilee School

Today we head to the Jubilee School, a co-educational private boarding school. The project to establish the school was first announced in 1977, during Jordan's Silver Jubilee celebrations of King Hussein's accession to the throne, as a tribute to His Majesty's development efforts, especially in the field of education. In 1984, Queen Noor accepted responsibility for the as yet unrealized project, and a year later it became one of the major undertakings of the newly established Noor Al Hussein Foundation. After years of research, planning and teacher training, and temporarily housed in a Ministry of Education building, the School opened its doors in 1993 to eighty-nine of Jordan's brightest ninth graders admitted for their exceptional intelligence and academic achievement, and in

1997 the School celebrated its first graduating class.

Overnight Jubilee School.

Meal Plan: Breakfast

Day 16: Amman

Sightseeing - TBA.

Overnight in Amman.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17: Departure

Departure from Amman. RHLAH S'IDAH

Meal Plan: Breakfast