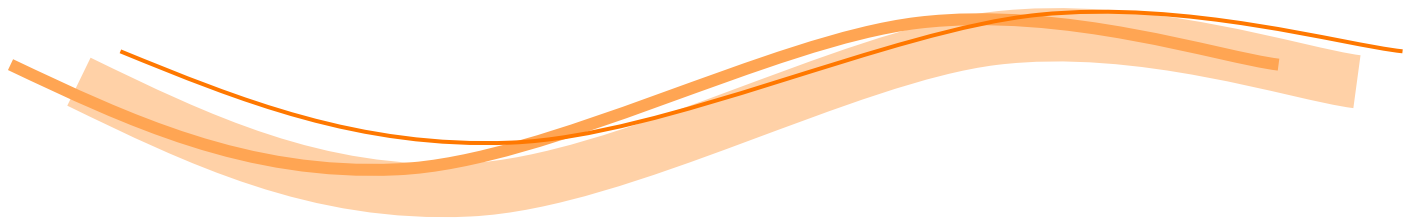




Chris' Travel Notes: EGYPT





EGYPT	The stunning, colossal monuments of Ancient Egypt never fail to astonish. The heat, sight and the light of the desert invigorate. The cool, turquoise waters rejuvenate. A romantic cruise along the world's longest river dazzles the senses. A first class getaway resort in the Red Sea Riviera is pure escapism. No place has the magic, mystery and pleasures of Egypt.
Location	It is located in the northeast corner of the African continent, on the Mediterranean Sea, at a crossroad between Africa, Asia and Europe. It is bordered to the east by the Red Sea, Palestine and Israel to the north-east, Libya to the west, and Sudan to the south.
Geography	<p>Egypt is the 29th biggest country in the world, covering a total area of a little over a million square kilometres. The country is divided into 4 main regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nile Valley and Delta: this region extends on both sides of the Nile from the southern limit of the river going through Aswan, Luxor, to reach Cairo, then Broadening to the north and encompassing the destinations of Damietta and Rosetta. This broadening, north of Cairo forms the Nile Delta, Egypt's most fertile agricultural land. - Western Desert: extending from the Nile Valley in the east to the Egyptian-Libyan border in the west and from the Mediterranean coast in the north to the southern Egyptian border, it is one of Egypt's most arid regions. Sparsely inhabited, yet charming oases – Siwa, Bahariya, Farafra, Kharga and Dakhla – dot this region that covers two thirds of the country's total land area. - Eastern Desert: this region lies between the Nile Valley to the west, the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez to the east, Lake Manzala to the north and the Sudanese border to the south. This arid region embraces the Red Sea Mountains chain, reaching an altitude of over 900 meters above sea level at some points. The region is Egypt's richest in natural resources. Its underground treasures include gems, coal and oil. - Sinai Peninsula: a triangularly shaped plateau linked from its north-western corner to Egypt's mainland, at the Gulf of Suez. The peninsula is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Gulf of Aqaba to the east. This area is divided into a southern section (encompassing Mount Catherine, the highest mountain in Egypt, rising about 2640 m above sea level), the middle section and the northern section.
Name	Over the millenniums, Egypt has had many names in many different languages. Today, its official name is Junhuriyah Misr al-Arabiyyah,

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	<p>which in English means the Arab Republic of Egypt. Egyptians themselves refer to Egypt as Misr, though this can also be a name for Cairo. Interestingly, it is common for Egyptians to refer to Egypt as Misr, if they are resident in Cairo, but if outside of Cairo, then they will refer to Cairo as Misr. In a certain respect, this is a custom that dates to the earliest times of ancient Egypt.</p>
Population	<p>The estimated total population of Egypt is about 90 million, according to the 2015 population census. Most of the Egyptian population is concentrated near the River Nile, in cities and towns such as Cairo, Luxor, Aswan and Port Said.</p>
Language	<p>Egypt's official language is Arabic, but foreign languages, such as English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish are also widely spoken, especially in tourism areas.</p>
Currency	<p>The Egyptian Pound (EGP) is the national currency in Egypt. The pound (or "Geneeh" in Arabic) is divided into 100 "piasters" (or "Ersh"). Egyptian banknotes come in denominations of 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5 pounds.</p> <p>The current exchange rate at May 2016 is approx. \$1 CDN = 7 EGP</p>
Tipping	<p>During your travels in Egypt you are sure to come across the word "Baksheesh"; usually whispered at you in hushed tones by hotel staff and eager toilet attendants. It's good to have an understanding of this concept prior to your trip.</p> <p>A 'Baksheesh' can mean a tip, a bribe, or a charitable gift; however it usually refers to a unique combination of all three. Essentially for tourists it's a kind a tip. It's endemic throughout the Arab world but nowhere more so than in Egypt.</p> <p>A 'Baksheesh' will be requested of you by almost anybody who provides you with a service, and indeed by many people that do not. This includes situations you may be accustomed to, such as after a meal, or by a porter who carries your bags to your room. But it also includes situations that may seem a little unusual such as in a public toilet, or by a security guard or curator at one of the ancient sites. This is not simply a method to take advantage of wealthy tourists. It's very much part of Egyptian culture, and something the Egyptians themselves take part in. The sums involved are usually miniscule by western standards.</p> <p>Some rough guidelines for tipping in Egypt: A restaurant: 10% of the Bill Security Guard or Museum Custodian: £E3-5 Toilet Attendant: 25-50pt Hotel Porter: £E2-5</p> <p>As a rule of thumbs if you're not sure how much to tip, give 10% of what you paid for the service.</p> <p>Taxi drivers need not be tipped as they factor this into their fare.</p>
Government	<p>Republic</p>
Documentation	<p>Canadians need an entry visa and valid Passport to visit Egypt. Most of</p>

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	Egypt's tourists and visitors can obtain their visas at any of the country's entry points (airports and ports). This type of visa is valid for a one-month period, starting from your arrival date. The Embassy of Egypt in Ottawa is pleased to answer all queries regarding visas. Address: 454 Laurier Avenue, East Ottawa Ontario K1N 6R3 T: +1 613 234 4958, 234 4935, 234 4931
Time zone	Egypt is 6 hours ahead of EST in Toronto and Montreal.
Health	Watch what and where you eat. Many visitors to Egypt experience some degree of stomach upset, but it's not serious. Sticking to bottled water can minimize the risk.
Safety tips	Whether you're on a tour, travelling with children in Egypt, travelling as a woman alone, or backpacking in Egypt, Egyptians are friendly, helpful and largely honest people. The crime rate is minimal, and although there have been a number of terrorist related incidents, statistically the risk is still very low.

CLIMATE	
General climate	Egypt is a rather large country with two general seasons; a mild winter and a sunny summer. The majority of Egypt's landscape is a desert, except for the White Mediterranean coast, the Nile Valley and the Delta
Today's weather	Today, May 7 th 2016 it is sunny and 32C in Cairo.
Best time to visit	Between November and March the daytimes are pleasantly mild, whereas evenings and nights are cool and enjoyable in all of Egypt. In April and May temperatures are generally mild and this is an ideal time to visit any destination in Egypt. From June to September the weather is very hot, dry in the desert areas and humid in the Nile Valley and on the White Mediterranean coast. Sunglasses, sunscreen, a hat and good hydration are essential, and trips to the desert areas aren't a good idea in that period of the year. Late September and October, as well as April and May are ideal for touring Egypt. And the November to February period offers the pleasant balmy weather that is perfect for cruising down the Nile. The Red Sea Riviera has great weather all year round; it is the perfect sun & sea destination to escape to when the Canadian winter is at its worst.

GETTING AROUND	In a country that covers a total area of more than one million square kms, domestic flights come in handy to save time, and sometimes even money. The Egyptian national airline, Egyptair, operates all domestic flights in Egypt and serves 11 major airports: Abu Simbel, Alexandria, Assiut, Aswan, Cairo, Hurghada, Luxor, Marsa Alam, Marsa Matruh, Sharm el-Sheikh, and Taba. Here are some domestic flights durations (in hours):
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	<p>Cairo-Luxor: 1:00 Cairo-Aswan: 1:25 Cairo-Sharm el-Sheikh: 1:00 Cairo-Alexandria: 0:45 Luxor-Sharm el-Sheikh: 0:50 Check EgyptAir's website for more info about the flights' schedules and tariffs: http://www.egyptair.com/en/Pages/default.aspx</p>
Getting There	<p>Egyptair has direct flights from Toronto to Cairo three days a week: Times: 12:45 Toronto arriving 06:15 Cairo Flight time: 10.5 hours Aircraft: Boeing 777-300 Cairo International airport is only 15 km from the business centre of Cairo and has recently opened a new terminal capable of handling over 22 million passengers; many new facilities in the original 2 terminals have also been introduced, such as an Automated People Mover, the Air Mall and VIP lounges. A new highway has also been built, making your trip to and from the airport quicker and traffic free.</p>
Cities	<p>Cairo Cairo is a vibrant, exhilarating, exotic, fascinating and welcoming city. Home to the best Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic sights in Egypt, this city is where you never know what incredible, half-forgotten monument you might stumble across while wandering around. Enjoy the Nile view from your hotel room balcony, visit the capital's medieval markets by Khan El-Khalili, or walk down the Nile promenade. There are also plenty of cinemas, theatres and modern malls. Go for an opera or enjoy oriental music dance shows. Good for short breaks and long stays; you'll get to see the Giza Pyramids, thousands of ancient artifacts in the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities and much more. Moreover, Cairo is for everyone, there are plenty of mid-range and budget accommodations to choose from. Pick a charming boutique hotel in the heart of downtown or indulge in utter luxury in one of the city's most luxurious establishments. These usually house professional Spas and wellness centres where you'll be treated like royalty. There are more than 75 four and five-star hotels in Cairo, which all offer stunning views over amazing landmarks such as the majestic Nile, the Pyramids, beautiful parks and gardens, and upscale clubs and compounds. The weather in Cairo is moderate and low in humidity at almost any time of the year, except for some specific times in summer. Highs of 36°C are common in July and lows of 21°C have been witnessed; the winter months in Cairo, especially January, are much more pleasant with temperatures ranging between 21°C and 15°C. Accommodation by the Nile offers some relief from the summer heat due to the lovely breeze that comes from the river. In March, April, and June the Khamaseen</p>

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	<p>winds blow from the desert bringing with them higher temperatures and sand.</p> <p>Alexandria</p> <p>Famous as the "Pearl of the Mediterranean," the captivating Alexandria will fascinate you with its mix of history and modernity. Although very little remains of the old city, Alexandria still retains its Mediterranean ambience and old European residence houses, combined with old cafes and Greco Roman monuments. The Catacombs of Kom el-Shouqafa, the underwater ruins of Montazah and Maamoura and the city's vibrant arts scene make Alexandria a great sightseeing destination. Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi Mosque and the Coptic Cathedral of St. Mark are also sights to behold.</p> <p>The beauty and cosmopolitanism of Alexandria inspired great authors such as the British novelist E.M. Forster, the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy who respectively lived in Alexandria in the early and late 19th century, and Lawrence Durrell who lived and wrote about the city during World War II.</p> <p>The Alexandrian coastline extends on no less than 70 km, from the north-western side of the Nile delta to Mariout Lake in the east. The coast is dotted with beautiful bays and harbours, such as Abu-Qir and the crescent-shaped Alexandrian Eastern Harbour which is overlooked by the majestic Qaitbay Fortress.</p> <p>The Cornice in Alexandria is a treat during both summer and winter. Starting from Ras El Tin and stretching all the way to Montazah you can enjoy spectacular view of the White Mediterranean. The Cornice was developed in the 1930s and further developments were made to it in the early 1990s. Beaches stretch along the coast from Maamoura in the east and all the way to the Agamy beach west of Alexandria.</p> <p>If you have time, do not forget to explore the nearby destinations of Borg El-Arab (where the main airport is located) and Abu-Mina. Both are about 50 km away from the city and home to interesting historical sites (St. Mena Monastery, and the Roman Necropolis in Borg El-Arab) and tourist resorts (the Hilton Borg El-Arab, and Golden Beach).</p> <p>The temperate Mediterranean climate in Alexandria insures cooler summers and warmer winters than in other parts of Egypt. While winters are mostly rainy with temperatures ranging between 10 and 20°C, summers are renowned for the refreshing sea breeze, with temperatures between 22 and 34°C.</p>
<p>Distances</p>	<p>Travel time by road in hours between major cities in Egypt:</p> <p>Cairo-Luxor: 9:00</p> <p>Cairo-Aswan: 12:00</p> <p>Cairo-Alexandria: 3:30</p>

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	<p>Cairo-Sharm el-Sheikh: 9:00 Cairo-Marsa Matrouh: 6:00 Aswan-Abu Simbel: 5:00</p>
<p>Boats</p>	<p>Cruising on the Nile has been a popular pastime for countless visitors since the 19th century. In 1849, Florence Nightingale was captivated by her trip on the river and wrote about it in glowing terms. Thomas Cook, the entrepreneur behind the leading travel company, was so smitten by the Nile that in 1869 he began offering cruises to his clientele, making him one of the first operators to do so.</p> <p>The Nile has held a fascination for centuries and even today conjures up images of whimsical days and romantic nights on board elegant steamers. This can at least partially be attributed to English novelist Agatha Christie and her famous work "Death on the Nile". The book was later made into a popular Hollywood film starring Peter Ustinov, with much of the filming being done in the Nile Valley.</p> <p>There's nothing quite like a touch of romance under the stars with that special person. Drift slowly past temples and sand dunes, watching the sun set together. You'll see fishermen casting their nets, farmers tilling their fields, and flocks of birds taking flight.</p>
<p>Trains</p>	<p>Egyptian Railways are easily the most comfortable way to travel between Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, Alexandria, Port Said & Suez. The views from the train can be wonderful, especially along the Nile amongst the fields and palm trees on the Cairo-Luxor-Aswan and Cairo-Alexandria routes. As so often, the train journeys give you an insight into the country.</p> <p>It's fairly easy to buy tickets at the station ticket office when you get to Egypt, although as this is Egypt a degree of patience is called for! Cairo main station has several booking windows, one for each class and group of destinations, so check that you are joining the right queue. You can pay for train tickets in Egyptian pounds, except for the Cairo-Luxor-Aswan deluxe sleeper which must be paid in foreign currency (dollars, euros or pounds sterling) at the separate El Watania sleeper office. Except during busy periods, it's normally easy to get 1st class tickets on the day of travel or the day before. The deluxe overnight sleeper train from Cairo to Luxor and Aswan often has places available if you book a day or two in advance, but at peak tourist times such as Easter it can get fully-booked by tour groups, so pre-booking is recommended.</p> <p>The train service between Alexandria and Cairo is excellent. There are broadly two sorts of train: modern air-conditioned express trains with comfortable 1st & 2nd class seats, not dissimilar to European trains, using either 'Spanish' or 'French' carriages, and ordinary trains with very basic non-air-con 2nd & 3rd class (plus air-con 2nd class on some trains). A 1st class one-way ticket for an air-conditioned express from</p>

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	Cairo to Alexandria costs about LE 50, less than \$8 CDN!
Car Rental	<p>Renting a car in Egypt is easy; all the international car hire agencies have offices in Egypt's airports and towns. Rates are comparable to international car hire charges and many companies offer online reservation facilities. Visit the agencies' websites for more details on the car rental procedures.</p> <p>In order to rent a vehicle and drive in Egypt, you'll be asked to provide an International Driving License.</p> <p>Egyptians drive on the right-hand side of the road, and the official out-of-town speed limit is 90 km/h.</p>
Buses	<p>There's an extensive network of buses running between the major cities in Egypt. Bus companies such as Superjet, Delta and Upper Egypt, usually provide air-conditioned buses, with some refreshments, toilets and an in-ride movie.</p> <p>Buses are by far the best transportation mean for day trips. They are very affordable, but you have to make reservations at least one day in advance.</p> <p>In general, buses tend to stop frequently. Therefore, if you are traveling long distances, the trains or domestic flights operated by EgyptAir might be better options.</p>

ACCOMMODATION TYPES	<p>Egypt has the full range of accommodation options. At the top end, the beach resorts have five star all-inclusive resorts to rival any in the world. In the main tourist destinations of Luxor, Aswan, Cairo and Alexandria there are also five star options, many with the additional cachet of historical importance. Increasingly there are also spa resorts in the desert oases. At the other end of the spectrum there are backpacker hostels and cheap two star small hotels – all hotels are officially graded by the government.</p> <p>The Egyptian Tourism website has a comprehensive listing available online: http://en.egypt.travel/directories/hotels</p> <p>Here are some memorable suggestions:</p> <p>For a mix of luxury and history, there's the Mena House Oberoi, a former hunting lodge overlooking the Pyramids.</p> <p>The 19th-century Cairo Marriott opened at the same time as the Suez Canal.</p> <p>The famous five-star Sofitel Old Cataract is located on the banks of the Nile at Aswan, and is one of 'Death on the Nile' writer Agatha Christie's favorite hotels.</p> <p>In Luxor, the Sofitel Winter Palace is a landmark five-star hotel next to</p>
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	<p>the Nile. The hotel offers great views of the Valley of the Kings on the opposite of the river.</p> <p>El Salamlek in Alexandria, offers high style, and was once the residence of the Royal family.</p> <p>If you have an interest in eco-tourism, you can stay in one of the country's eco-lodge hotels, both located in the Western Desert.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qasr El-Bawity eco-lodge in the Bahariya Oasis. • Al Tarfa Desert Sanctuary Luxury Lodge and Spa at Dakhla. <p>For a full list go to www.eha.org.eg to visit the Egyptian Hotel Association website.</p>
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<p>LIFESTYLES</p> <p>Kids</p>	<p>I guarantee that kids of all ages will be as fascinated by Egypt's ancient sites as much as you are... But here is another suggestion to keep them happy when they have had enough of ancient sight-seeing:</p> <p>Crazy Water Aqua Park, Giza</p> <p>A water park in the desert; what could be more refreshing? Why not spend your day surfing or bouncing about in the Big Surf wave pool? How about riding several stories down a water fall, or slipping down the Kamikaze water slide? Sound like fun? Well there's a lot more offered here for your amusement; the entrance is also quite affordable, and includes a meal. Located in Giza, it makes a great place to cool off after a morning trip to the pyramids. Make sure you ask about the special family offers, and if you don't want to get wet you can always alternate between tanning on the beach chairs and going wild in the video arcade.</p> <p>Riding donkeys, horses and camels along the beach front, through the desert or over a hill and down into the Valley of the Kings is always a hit. Jeep Safaris, tearing about the dunes and camping out under the stars is also a child friendly activity.</p> <p>Also, the family is priority number one for Egyptians and travel with children to Egypt will likely evoke respect and affection from the locals. The friendliness and hospitality of the Egyptian people is a featured highlight of any visit to the country, and with such large families themselves, Egyptians have a seemingly natural mastery of entertaining young people.</p> <p>At the Red Sea beaches, with so many action packed aquatic activities</p>
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	to engage in, it's likely the bucket and spade will be forgotten on the sand. Swimming, snorkelling, scuba, banana boats, pedal boats, feluccas and more will keep them endlessly amused.
Romance	<p>Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony were charmed by Cleopatra and the romance of Egypt. Today, you too can share the charm of Egypt and enjoy an unforgettable romantic vacation.</p> <p>Imagine walking the powder-white sands of pristine Red Sea beaches. Feel the sun at your back and the sand covering your feet. Hear the waves. See the wide expanse of the sea.</p> <p>Now picture the two of you discovering, hand in hand, breathtaking scenery on a sensational desert tour. Take in the heat of the day and see different desert hues as far as the eye can see until the day gives way to a moonlit night. The sound of oriental music is in the air, the stars are shining and you're dancing by the camp fire.</p> <p>Experience a river cruise to share a seductive blend of luxury, sightseeing and intimate moments overlooking ancient Egyptian monuments while gliding gently along the dreamlike Nile River. Take pleasure in candlelit dinners with spectacular backdrops.</p> <p>Whether it's a well-planned honeymoon or a spontaneous winter getaway, Egypt is perfect for a romantic getaway under the brilliant sun and starry night skies of Egypt. Enjoy a captivating blend of European refinement and exotic Middle Eastern culture.</p>
Zoomers	<p>If your travels haven't already taken you here, then start planning now. Egypt is a country that is best enjoyed in an unhurried fashion, either on an organized tour (try Insight Vacations or GM Tours) or independently – just give yourself plenty of time to get around. A Nile Cruise is a particularly leisurely and memorable way to see some of the great sights of the country.</p>

UNIQUES	
Surprising	<p>There is a current controversy amongst Egyptologists as to whether there is an undiscovered tomb that lies through a secret passageway in Tutankhamun's tomb, which may be the burial chamber of Queen Nefertiti.</p>
History	<p>The history of Egypt stretches back to ancient times. It is a country best known the world over for its pharaohs, such as Tutankhamun, and its ancient civilizations that flourished along the banks of the Nile River, where visitors will find so many of the country's iconic structures.</p> <p>The earliest signs of civilization in Egypt date back to prehistoric times, before the pharaohs ruled the country, a period known as the pre-dynastic. The towns and cities of today trace their roots back to 8000 BC. This is the period when settlers began establishing communities on the fertile banks of the Nile River.</p> <p>Next to come is the dynastic period, which is widely regarded as one of</p>

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	<p>the oldest cultural periods in the world. The dynastic period earned its name from the series of dynasties that ruled the country, beginning around 3100 BC. The first pharaoh is generally believed to have been Menes, who was instrumental in forming a divided Egypt into one country.</p> <p>A total of 30 dynasties ruled over Egypt during the next three millennia until the year 30 BC. Pharaohs desired a legacy of their own, and they put their own mark on Egypt by building beautiful palaces, temples, tombs and structures. It was during this time that many of the astonishing sights were constructed, sights that can still be seen today. Chief among them are the Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx of the Old Kingdom, and the Temples of Luxor in the New Kingdom.</p> <p>Egypt has seen many periods of history since the ancient dynastic era. Throughout the country are impressive reminders of how the country flourished under different civilizations. While Egypt has been occupied by the Persians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, British and the French, it is the pharaohs who have left the most awe-inspiring legacy – one that makes Egypt’s present day tourism one of the country’s leading industries.</p> <p>The country’s history is a sequence of invasions, eras of glory, battles and victories, which can be split into the following main periods and milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pharaonic Era (3100 BC – 332 BC) - Greek Era (332 BC – 32 AD) - Roman Era (32 AD – 638 AD) - Coptic Era (starting from 65 AD) - Islamic Era: starting with the Islamic conquest of Egypt (640 AD – 1517 AD) - Ottoman Rule (1517 – 1882) - French Invasion (1798) - British Colonization of Egypt (1882 – 1952) - The 23rd of July Revolution (1952) after which Egypt was declared a Republic. British troops leave Egypt in 1954 and Egypt becomes truly independent.
<p>Recommended Reading</p>	<p>Lonely Planet’s guide to Egypt is my go-to book for this destination: http://shop.lonelyplanet.com/egypt/egypt-travel-guide-12/</p> <p>Good novels for providing a sense of place here are: Lawrence Durrell’s Alexandria Quartet Agatha Christie’s Death on the Nile</p>
<p>1000 Places to See Before You Die</p>	<p>Alexandria – Famed over millennia Islamic Cairo – a maze of bazaars and medieval monuments Museum of Egyptian Antiquities – storehouse of a great civilization The Pyramids of Egypt – eternal wonder of the ancient world Mount Sinai and the Red Sea – heavenly pursuits</p>

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	Abu Simbel and Aswan – irreplaceable monuments where Egypt ends Luxor and a Nile Cruise – watery lifeline to the New Kingdom Siwa Oasis – better than a mirage
Must Sees	The Pyramids – of course!

SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Golf	<p>Golf in Egypt is a hundred year old tradition since the Gezira Sporting Club and the famous Mena House Golf course near the Giza pyramids first opened in the late 1800's.</p> <p>By the 1950's, there were seven world class golf courses in Egypt. Golf declined and most of these courses disappeared with the changing political climate: only Mena House (under renovation), the Alexandria Sporting Club and Gezira survived the changes.</p> <p>Luckily, golf in Egypt has experienced a tremendous boom over the last decade. All in all, there are 20 top-scale operational golf courses in Egypt's major cities and European golf competitions have included Egypt among world-class golf destinations.</p> <p>New real-estate developments located in the suburbs of Cairo or at a close distance from the city host amazing greens, these include the Katameya Dunes Golf Course, the Orange Lakes Golf Club, and the Allegria Golf Course, among others.</p> <p>Moreover, Red Sea and Sinai coastal destinations boast some of the most scenic courses to play at: Red Sea vacationers enjoy paradisiacal surroundings of crystal clear lagoons at El-Gouna Golf Course, whereas others experience what it is like to play golf on a peninsula in the amazing Cascades Golf Resort in Soma Bay.</p>
Fishing	<p>Egypt's access to three rich bodies of water - the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and the Nile, makes it one of most diverse fresh and salt water fishing destinations anywhere.</p> <p>Anglers from all over the world come to Lake Nasser, the top international location for Nile Perch and to take part in The Hurghada Fishing Competition at the Red Sea.</p> <p>Fishing enthusiasts will feel very much at home in Egypt. Ancient Egyptians worshipped the fish goddess Hatmehit and relied on a diet of perch, catfish (even the electric variety), carps, mullets, eels, tilapia, elephant-snout fish, tiger fish, moon fish and many others.</p> <p>Today, anglers on fish safaris in Egypt can catch some of the same species from the comfort of modern and adapted boat fleets or from traditional ones. Whether you are looking for turn-key deep sea fishing charters and safaris, or a quiet day spent shore fishing, Egypt is an ideal location for your next fishing adventure.</p>
Horse riding	<p>Horseriding Hurghada and Horse Rescue http://www.horseriding-hurghada-egypt.com/ Charlotte has been working with horses in Hurghada for the last 12</p>

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	<p>years and has now teamed up with Jo, also from the UK to work on an exciting new project: combining the rehabilitation of neglected horses and sharing the pleasures of the Eastern Desert with riders of all abilities and ages.</p> <p>Riding their beautiful Arabian cross horses in the spectacular scenery of the Eastern Desert is a life enhancing experience. They have horses for all levels, from complete beginners to professional riders, and everything in between! They have several child-friendly ponies so children are welcome. Normally, trips last from one to two hours, but they can arrange tailor-made full, half-day or overnight safaris to the mountains 20 kms away. They can also provide riding lessons if required. Safety is a priority with them so their equipment is of European standard including riding hats. Animal welfare is also a top priority. All horses are well treated, well fed and happy!</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>The Sinai is arguably the best hiking and trekking destination in the Middle East and definitely the best rock climbing in Egypt. The mountains, canyons and valleys of the Sinai are perfect for environmentally friendly activities such as hiking and trekking. Contact Bedouins in the Sinai before you go - you can't go wrong when your guide knows the desert like the back of his hand. Local guides can set up base camps and provide camel transport but you have to bring your own equipment. Bedouins can also rate the difficulty of each hiking site.</p> <p>The Coloured Canyon is the most beautiful canyon in Egypt, and as nature would have it, the canyon is also the easiest to reach and trek. The high iron content in the sandstone, water erosion and wind created the great spectrum of colours you'll find as you navigate the Coloured Canyon. Trekking the Coloured Canyon begins at Ain Furtaga Oasis, it takes a little more than an hour to reach the canyon from Sharm el-Sheikh, a couple of hours of walk through the canyon with light climbing along the way. The serpentine path is for the most part a little more than a meter wide and some of the enclosing cliffs can be over 80 meters high.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>There are not many options for cyclists in Egypt due to the heat, the traffic and the condition of the roads. The best bets are the Red Sea coast resort areas and the routes along the Mediterranean coast in the north.</p>
<p>Diving</p>	<p>Scuba diving in the Red Sea started in the 1950s when Greek and Italian workers began spear fishing while residing in Egypt. Explored by the Austrian zoologist Dr. Hans Hass, a well-known underwater movie maker, and the famous French diver Jacques Cousteau, the Red Sea has amazing coral reefs that are a magnet for thousands of species. Diving has matured since then, today you'll find fully equipped facilities, live-aboard diving, a myriad of programs and internationally certified</p>

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	<p>instructors. The Red Sea resorts of Hurghada, Sharm El-Sheikh, Marsa Alam, El Gouna and Taba are wonderful destinations that offer diving holidays packages and facilities all year round because of their moderate temperature. It doesn't matter if you have never dived before, if you're a beginner or a veteran, you'll find the right program for you and you'll surely be coming back for more.</p>
<p>Other Activities</p>	<p>Water activities, water games, water sports and sunbathing is a must do while you visit the Red Sea Riviera, the White Med or the Sinai. You'll find pool side bars in hotels, seaside restaurants, ancient and new harbours, seaside citadels, coastal islands and plenty of diving sites. You can start your day with a safari or a tour of Ancient Egyptian ruins and end your day sunbathing, going off for a swim and enjoying a cool drink while you take in the last rays of sun as it sets over the sea. For an easy going packaged vacation, plenty of sunbathing and some of the best diving sites in the world go to the Red Sea Riviera. Water activities include plenty of water games, diving and water sports. Take to the barren coastline of the Sinai coast and discover stunning natural wonders.</p>

<p>ATTRACTIONS</p>	
<p>Beaches</p>	<p>Agiba Beach Visit one of the most beautiful virgin beaches in the world, the pride of Marsa el-Sharif, west of Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast. Roughly 40 metre long, the clean sand and cool waters of the beach are snuggled between cliffs. Climb up one of the cliffs for an astonishing view of the impossible blue greens of the Mediterranean contrasted with the light shades of the shore, or follow the narrow path leading to the beach for a revitalizing swim in the cool waters of the Mediterranean. Atop one of the high cliffs, there is a small cafe where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.</p> <p>Cleopatra's Beach Cleopatra's Beach is a wonderful bay located on the opposite side of the biggest lagoon in Marsa Matrouh; its clear waters surrounded by rocks give the impression of a vast, square pool in which, according to the legend, Cleopatra came to bathe - with her lover, Mark Anthony. Ruins of one of her palaces were uncovered on the hillside opposite the pool and it seems that a subterranean passage lead from the "villa" to the beach, perhaps allowing cosy midnight swims! It is somewhat challenging to swim between the rocks, with strong currents and waves swirling you around, but after all maybe that's what you're looking for!</p>
<p>Nature</p>	<p>The Nile Valley is a birdwatchers paradise. Birds have always played</p>

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	<p>an important role in both day-to-day life in Egypt, and in the sacred culture of the country. Birders come to the Nile Valley to see the incredible number of species that live or winter in the region, including Little Gulls, Whiskered Terns, and the Kentish Plover. There are over 150 indigenous species of birds that live here all year round, with a further 280 or more species migrating in the summer months.</p> <p>Middle Egypt and the northern areas of Upper Egypt enjoy a warm climate that provides a perfect environment for many species of animals, reptiles, and amphibians. The area is home to turtles, frogs, mongooses, and the Nile Monitor, an awesome if somewhat menacing prehistoric-like lizard that can grow up to six feet long.</p> <p>Approaching Aswan, and beyond to Kom Ombo and Abu Simbel, the Nile Valley becomes more desert-like. The desert environment is ideal for wild Fennec foxes, the Desert Lynx, scorpions, and snakes, such as the Spitting Cobra (the iconic symbol of Pharaonic Egypt).</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Cairo: Al-Azhar Park Escape Cairo's frenetic pace by heading to the green landscaped gardens of Al-Azhar Park where you'll relax in a tranquil setting while gazing at beautiful panoramic views of the capital. Embracing valuable history, the park is also home to the newly discovered Ayyubid wall, constructed by Salah El Din more than 800 years ago. You can also choose to sit back at one of the numerous and unique cafes and restaurants, all offering five star services. They have been built and thoughtfully positioned for visitors to appreciate the beautiful surroundings.</p> <p>Alexandria: Montazeh Gardens Walking down the Alexandrian world famous waterfront corniche you can't miss the eye-catching beauty of the fantastic beaches and park of Montazah Gardens. Take a walk through the green and flourishing alleys of the park and have a look at the old Salamlek hotel in all its splendour. The El Salamlek Palace was actually built in 1892 for H.H. Khedive Abbas Helmi II as the Khedive's hunting lodge. It is located on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean, offering spectacular views of the coast.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>Montazah Gardens, Alexandria Walking down the Alexandrian world famous waterfront corniche you can't miss the eye-catching beauty of the fantastic beaches and park of Montazah Gardens. Take a walk through the green and flourishing alleys of the park and have a look at the old Salamlek hotel in all its splendour. The El Salamlek Palace was actually built in 1892 for H.H. Khedive Abbas Helmi II as the Khedive's hunting lodge. It is located on</p>

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	<p>a hill overlooking the Mediterranean, thus offering spectacular views of the coast.</p> <p>Al-Azhar Park, Cairo Escape Cairo's exhilaration by heading to the green landscaped gardens of Al-Azhar Park where you'll relax in a tranquil setting while gazing at beautiful panoramic views of the capital. Embracing unique history, the park is also home to the newly discovered Ayyubid wall, constructed by Salah El Din more than 800 years ago. You can also choose to sit back at one of the numerous and unique cafes and restaurants, all offering 5 star services. They have been built and thoughtfully positioned for visitors to appreciate the beautiful surroundings.</p>
<p>Historical Sites</p>	<p>Where to begin? No list would be enough, so please treat the following as just a starter list...</p> <p>Cairo: the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx the Egyptian Museum the pyramids and temples of Saqqara and Dahshur Citadel of Salah El Din Mosque of Mohamed Ali</p> <p>Alexandria: Alexandria, with several historical sights and the stunning new Bibliotheca Alexandrina, is the country's main summer attraction for Egyptians escaping the summer heat and looking for a place to spend the summer vacation. Tourist attractions include Roman and Greek monuments, Bibliotheca Alexandria, Qa'edbay's Castle, and Qasr El Montaza (El Montaza Palace).</p> <p>Ain Sokhna A line of mountains and calm beautiful beaches for miles and a range of hotels to satisfy various budgets 90 min drive from Cairo for a relaxing experience with a group of friends or couples to stay there is a must.</p> <p>Port Said: Port Said, is one of the country's main summer resorts for Egyptians escaping the summer heat and looking for a place to spend the summer vacation and to have shopping benefiting its free trade zone, Tourist attractions include the unique buildings of the city which back to the 19th century and the old lighthouse of Port Said which was the first building built in the world using reinforced concrete.</p>

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	<p>Luxor: the temples of Luxor and the West Bank across the Nile the Valley of the Kings the Temples of Abu Simbel</p> <p>Aswan: In Aswan, you can see even more temples and ancient monuments. You can also see Geziret El Nabatat (The Island of Plants). This is an island in the Nile River of Aswan which was planted by rare species of plants, trees, and flowers. Perhaps the most popular activity in Luxor and Aswan is to do the Nile Cruise on a ship from Aswan to Luxor. It enables you to stop at each location along the Nile where you can see all the famous ancient monuments as well as experience being in the Nile River inside a five-star hotel boat.</p> <p>The Red Sea resorts at Sinai peninsula, including Dahab, Hurghada, and Sharm El Sheikh. The Red Sea offers some of the best dive locations in the world.</p> <p>Sharm El Sheikh: In Sharm El Sheikh, you can make different types of excursions as diving, snorkelling and safari. You can also go from Sharm El Sheikh to visit Ras Mohammed, Cairo, Luxor and St. Catherine Monastery. The sights of the Sinai peninsula, including Saint Catherine's Monastery and Mount Sinai.</p> <p>The western desert and the oases there, including Siwa, Memphis, with some relics of ancient Egypt - including a huge statue of Ramesses II, evoking the image which inspired Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem Ozymandias</p>
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OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	One of the joys of visiting a country as fascinating as Egypt is the variety of souvenirs on display. Beautiful souks and numerous Egyptian handcrafts reflect the culture of different destinations along the Nile such as blown glass rugs, perfumes, alabaster, basket ware, textile and jewelry.
Markets	
Nightlife	Trendsetters are leading the way when it comes to nightlife and culture, especially in Cairo and Alexandria. Where once entertainment consisted solely of traditional music and dancing, the choice is expanding as Egyptians become more accustomed to western styles. Travellers will find concerts by worldwide rock stars and westernized

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	classical music, musical theater, opera, and ballet. Historic sites have adopted new technology by offering sound and light shows at the Pyramids of Giza, the Karnak Temples in Luxor, the Philae temple in Aswan, and in Abu Simbel.
Casinos	
Spas	<p>Get away from life as you know it and find sanctuary in the pleasures found at Al Tarfa Luxury Lodge and Spa in the Dakhla Oasis. A sanctuary in the desert, Al Tarfa offers a number of extravagant treatments that will have you leaving the plights of modern living far behind. Imagine relaxing on an outdoor platform surrounded by aromatic candles and enjoying a deep massage as you watch the scenic sun set over the desert dunes.</p> <p>Numerous types of massages, a sauna, a steam room, and a heated pool – perfect for desert nights – are also available indoors. The best way to go before sipping on a refreshing cocktail at the relaxation room or out on the terrace in the quiet of the oasis.</p> <p>See more at: http://altarfa.net/</p>

CUISINE	<p>When it comes to food, Egyptians know their way around. Food is always presented with generosity; never expect to be fed small portions, and always be prepared for unexpected extras on the house, such as freshly baked bread and dips, or a refreshing after-meal cup of “karkadeh” (hibiscus tea).</p> <p>Egyptian cuisine caters to all types of palates, including hard-core carnivores, vegetarians and vegans. It is simple and tasty, mostly relying on vegetables, herbs, lamb and chicken.</p>
Food	<p>Here are some of the must-eat Egyptian staples:</p> <p>Hamam mahshi (Stuffed Pigeon) Mouthwateringly succulent, these small pigeons are stuffed with rice or “fereek” (green wheat) and then roasted. While eating, it’s recommended that you watch out for the tiny bones. One of Egypt’s most loved dishes, it’s definitely worth trying, you will find many places that serve this specialty at the entrance to Khan el Khalili in Cairo, and it can also be found at upscale eateries. The pigeon has a different taste than chicken and the meat is a little darker, it is full of flavour and the stuffing is delectable.</p> <p>Dawood Basha Made with small balls of kofta (ground meat with parsley and onions), cooked in a thick tomato sauce and served on a bed of rice and garnished with roasted pine nuts, this hearty and delicious meal is a favourite in the Middle East. The best Dawood Basha is made with lamb and is cooked at home, but many restaurants feature it on their menus.</p>

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You know it is cooked right when the tomato sauce does not overpower the taste of the meat. This dish was named after a prominent Ottoman politician.

Mouloukhiya

Made from the leafy green vegetable called mallow in the West and eaten throughout the Middle East, it is a stew with a soup like texture, usually cooked with chicken or rabbit, and flavored with coriander and lots of garlic. Served with rice, it is delicious, healthy, and filling. Variations on Mouloukhiya are many; some cook it with chunks of lamb, or both chicken and lamb together. It is also served with different garnishes, ranging from a spicy tomato dressing, to lemon juice, to vinegar and chopped onions.

Seafood

Egypt has loads of shoreline and so, fresh seafood is abundant and delicious. Have some of today's catch fried in olive oil, grilled over hot coals, or cooked in a "tajin" (clay pot). The fish that is most commonly eaten in Egypt is 'balti' which is a grey silver fish that is long and almost flat, or 'bouri' which is known in the West as mullet. 'Gambari' and 'calamari', prawns and squid respectively, are also common delicacies.

Karkadeh

Purple and refreshing; what could be better? Karkadeh is made by boiling dried red hibiscus flowers, and then chilling the water. With a little sugar the flavor is between sweet and sour and nothing tastes quite as great as you cruise down the Nile. It can also be enjoyed hot as a herbal tea, and has a number of benefits; it is a good source of vitamin C and minerals, and in large amounts it can be used to fight high blood pressure.

Umm Ali

Made with layers of bread soaked in milk and bursting with raisins and sometimes nuts, then baked in the oven until the surface is golden brown, this Egyptian specialty is loved around the Middle East. The result is a creamy cake like finish with raisin explosions in your mouth. The best Umm Ali is home cooked but you will find it at most local Egyptian restaurants. It is also regularly served on Nile Cruises.

Taameya

Known in other Middle Eastern countries as falafel, this delicious vegetarian friendly food is a staple in Egypt. It is pounded broad beans mixed with lots of spices, moulded into the shape of a miniature doughnut, deep fried until it is nice and crunchy, then made into a

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	<p>sandwich with lots of vegetables and tahini sauce. It is one of the most famous Egyptian sandwiches, and the best taameya is usually found at street vendors or small family shops.</p> <p>Koshari Perhaps the most famous Egyptian food is Koshari. It is sold by street vendors and small shops throughout Egypt and a sure sign that a place offers Koshari is a great big silver pot in the window. Made from rice, lentils, fried onions, and pasta then coated in a thick tomato sauce, which can sometimes be quite spicy, it is an all-time Egyptian favorite. Add some vinegar with garlic to the mix and you have a tasty, economical, and interesting lunch or dinner.</p> <p>Aish Baladi In Arabic, Aish means life, and for the Egyptian people, bread is the most important component of every meal. It is usually made with a mixture of wholemeal and white flour and then baked near an open flame, until it reaches a pita-like result. Aish Baladi is found just about anywhere in Egypt, from street vendors to supermarkets. Aish Mirahrah is thinner and crispier, resembling chapatti. It is found in more rural areas. Aish is used to scoop up food and to make sandwiches of taameya or shawarma (strips of grilled meat or chicken).</p> <p>Ful Medammes Also simply called "Ful", "Ful Medammas" is one of Egypt's favorite, cheapest and most popular quick eats. It consists of slow-cooked fava beans, seasoned with salt, garlic, chopped parsley, lemon, olive oil, black pepper and cumin. "Ful" is usually eaten at breakfast, but you can buy it at any time of the day.</p>
<p>Drink</p>	<p>Juices Juices can be widely found in Egypt - kasab(sugar cane); erk soos (licorice); sobiia (white juice); tamr and some fresh fruit juices. Karkadae is also famous juice specially at Luxor and it is hibiscus tea which is drunk hot or cold but in Egypt it is preferred to drink it cold.</p> <p>Alcohol Egypt is a predominantly Muslim nation and alcoholic drinks are religiously forbidden - though not legally - for strictly observant Muslims. That said, Egyptians tend to adopt a relaxed and pragmatic view towards alcohol for non-Muslims and foreigners. It is tolerated by the vast majority of Egyptians and consumed by a sizable number of them. Alcoholic beverages and bottled drinks are readily available throughout the country (especially in larger towns and cities, as well as tourist centers). Stella and Sakkara are common lager beers in Egypt (approx. 4%), both</p>

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	<p>brewed by Heineken's Egyptian subsidiary, Ahram Beverages Company. Foreign brands made under license in Egypt include Heineken and Meister.</p> <p>Restrictions on Alcohol</p> <p>Egyptian laws towards alcohol are officially quite liberal compared to most Islamic countries, except for the month of Ramadan when alcohol is strictly forbidden. During Ramadan only holders of foreign passports are allowed to buy alcohol, by Egyptian law. However, the enforcement of this law is by no means consistent. In tourist areas like Luxor, alcohol is sold even during Ramadan, and those who look like foreigners will not be asked to show passports or other documentation.</p> <p>During Ramadan alcohol is often sold only in Western-style hotels and pubs/restaurants catering especially to foreigners. A few days of the year, as the day of the full moon the month before Ramadan, alcohol is completely banned.</p>
Restaurants	<p>Cairo has seen an explosion in the number of restaurants serving Western food in recent years. Between a well-paid expat community and economic growth that favours the upper classes, there has been a steady increase in demand and good support for new places that can deliver a decent dining experience. The main eating district is the upmarket island district of Zamalek, where a core of well-established places is regularly supplemented by new trendy eateries.</p>

FOR MORE INFO	<p>Website: www.egypt.travel Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/experienceegypt Twitter: https://www.facebook.com/experienceegypt/app/294627540601598</p>
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CHRIS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES	<p>I travelled in Egypt a while back to Cairo, Giza, Luxor, The Valley of the Kings, sailing on the Nile and through the desert to the oasis of El Faiyum.</p>
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