



## Cairo, Egypt

Cairo has been in existence in one form or another for over 4,000 years. Its strategic location near the mouth of the Nile at the beginning of the delta makes it one of the most important trading ports of the Middle East. Officially, Cairo is located in Lower Egypt, which is north of Upper Egypt; the inverted designation arises from the fact that the Nile is one of the few rivers north of the equator to flow north rather than south. Thus, the Nile flows down from Upper Egypt to empty through Lower Egypt into the Mediterranean.

People visiting Cairo for the first time are warned to get a map and, if possible, a dragoman. Dragomans originally started out as interpreters, but over the centuries their position has grown into that of guide, interpreter, mentor, bodyguard, and father confessor. He is that well-known cliché from the movies who advises against tipping too much or giving too much loose change to the street urchins.

Cairo, in fact all of Egypt, is working hard to pull its people out of the claws of poverty. The streets still feature vendors working out of stalls and carts,

but there are hardly any beggars left on the streets, and those only in the outlying parts of the city.

Instead, Cairo is filled with middle-class people doing an honest day's work. There is a city-wide transportation system but it is usually filled with native commuters and is so confusing that it cannot be recommended for tourists. Visitors should take taxis, which are plentiful except at rush hour. The best place to catch one is outside a major hotel.

Of course, the most spectacular sights around Cairo are the pyramids and the Sphinx. Although they are nine miles away, the pyramids can be seen from the city. Pictures cannot do these sites justice, and visitors are inevitably awed when viewing them in person.

The Great Pyramid where the Pharaoh Cheops is entombed contains 2.5 million tons of stone. As figured by Napoleon, the cubic content of the pyramid is enough to build a wall ten feet high and one foot thick all the way around France. The area of its base can hold in it Westminster Abbey, the Cathedrals of St. Paul's and St. Peter's, plus the cathedrals of

Florence and Milan all at once. In American terms, the base is the equivalent of the four city blocks taken up by Lincoln Center in New York.

The Sphinx is 190 feet long and 66 feet tall. The face alone is 16.6 feet across.

Those expecting to rent a camel to cross the trackless sands to admire these wonders of the Ancient World will be a bit disappointed. A modern four-lane highway leads tourists right up to the base of the pyramids.

The traditional image of the heavily veiled woman is a myth in Cairo. Women travelling alone, however, should dress conservatively and restrict all shorts for the pools and beaches.

Cairo has one of the lowest crime rates of any major city in the world. Violent crimes are unknown, outside of the occasional family feud or vendetta.



**HOTELS:** Ten years ago getting an acceptable hotel room would have been a miracle on par with the mountain going to Mohammed. But recent financial and construction developments have made the accommodations in Cairo comfortable and plentiful.

- **Nile Hilton** (*Corniche el Nil*)  
Features: 499 rooms, beauty salon, barber shop, pool, tennis courts, restaurants, 24-hour coffee shop, direct outside dial telephones (exclusive), discotheque and casino.
- **Meridien** (*Garden City, Roda Island*)  
Features: 245 rooms (many with terraces), restaurants, rooftop dining room, nightly dancing and entertainment (usually a very tasteful belly dancer).
- **Cairo Sheraton** (*2 Kubri Al Galaa Square, Giza*)  
Features: 400 rooms, swimming pool, bar, restaurants, and casino.

**RESTAURANTS:** Egyptian cuisine is a combination of native tradition, plus Turkish, Syrian, Lebanese, French, Greek and Italian. The food is exotic and a little too spicy for most Western palates. The exteriors of most restaurants are simple and belie the fine service and food inside.

- **El Chimi** (*45 Midan Orabi*)  
Kebab and other Egyptian specialties.
- **El Dahan** (*4 Khamel Khalili*)  
Specialists in kebab and Kafta.
- **Casino Des Pigeons** (*On the Nile in Giza*)  
Outdoor cafe on the banks of the Nile specializing in roast pigeon.
- **Ali Hassan al Hai** (*8 Halin Square*)  
One of Cairo's oldest and finest restaurants. Western visitors will feel more at home with the decor which includes white linen tablecloths and crystal chandeliers.

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Egyptian citizens are not allowed to play in the casinos, so all players must show their passports at the door. The casinos offer blackjack, roulette, chemin de fer, and baccarat. Minimum bets are half a pound and only foreign currency is accepted.

**MONEY:** The Egyptian pound is equal to the British pound in value and their piasters are equivalent to the British pence. Credit card use is usually restricted to the larger hotels since most storekeepers do not take them.

**EQUIPMENT:** Ease Factor 6

**Langues :** Arabe  
**CVS :** 0-1

**Service Secret :** La CIA, le MI6 et le FSB y ont des Stations de Niveau 3.

