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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

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UNDERSTAND EGYPT

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

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History

The history of Egypt is as rich as the land, as varied as the landscape and as long as the Nile. In the past, it was the cradle of civilization. In the present, it is a land of ancient wonders and modern marvels. The history of Egypt is a story of resilience, of a people who have survived for thousands of years, and of a nation that has played a central role in the development of the world.

The Nile

The Nile is the lifeblood of Egypt, and has been for thousands of years. It is a river of many names, and many faces. It is a river that has shaped the destiny of a nation, and a people who have lived along its banks for centuries.

Egypt Today

You say you want a Revolution...
 Egypt today is a land of contrasts. It is a land of ancient wonders and modern marvels. It is a land where the past meets the present, and where the future is being shaped by the hands of a new generation. The revolution of 2011 was a turning point in the history of the nation, and it is a time of great change and opportunity.

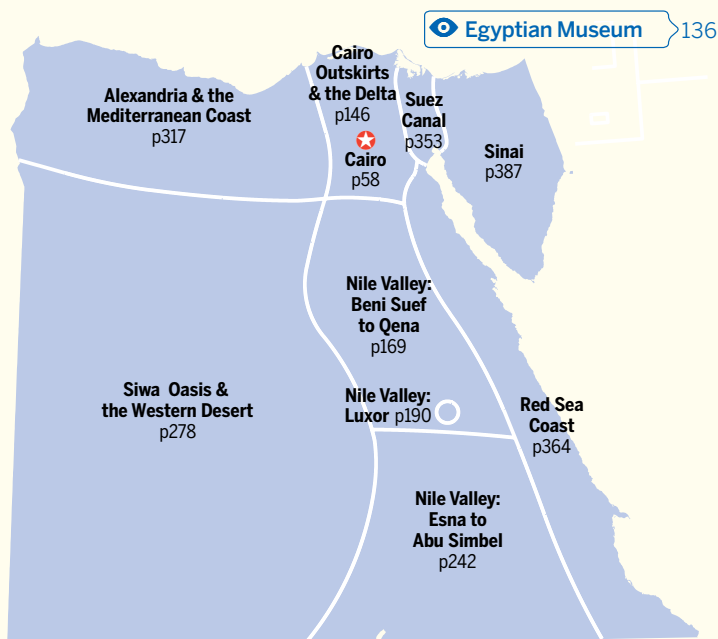
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Zora O'Neill

Michael Benanav, Jessica Lee, Anthony Sattin

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

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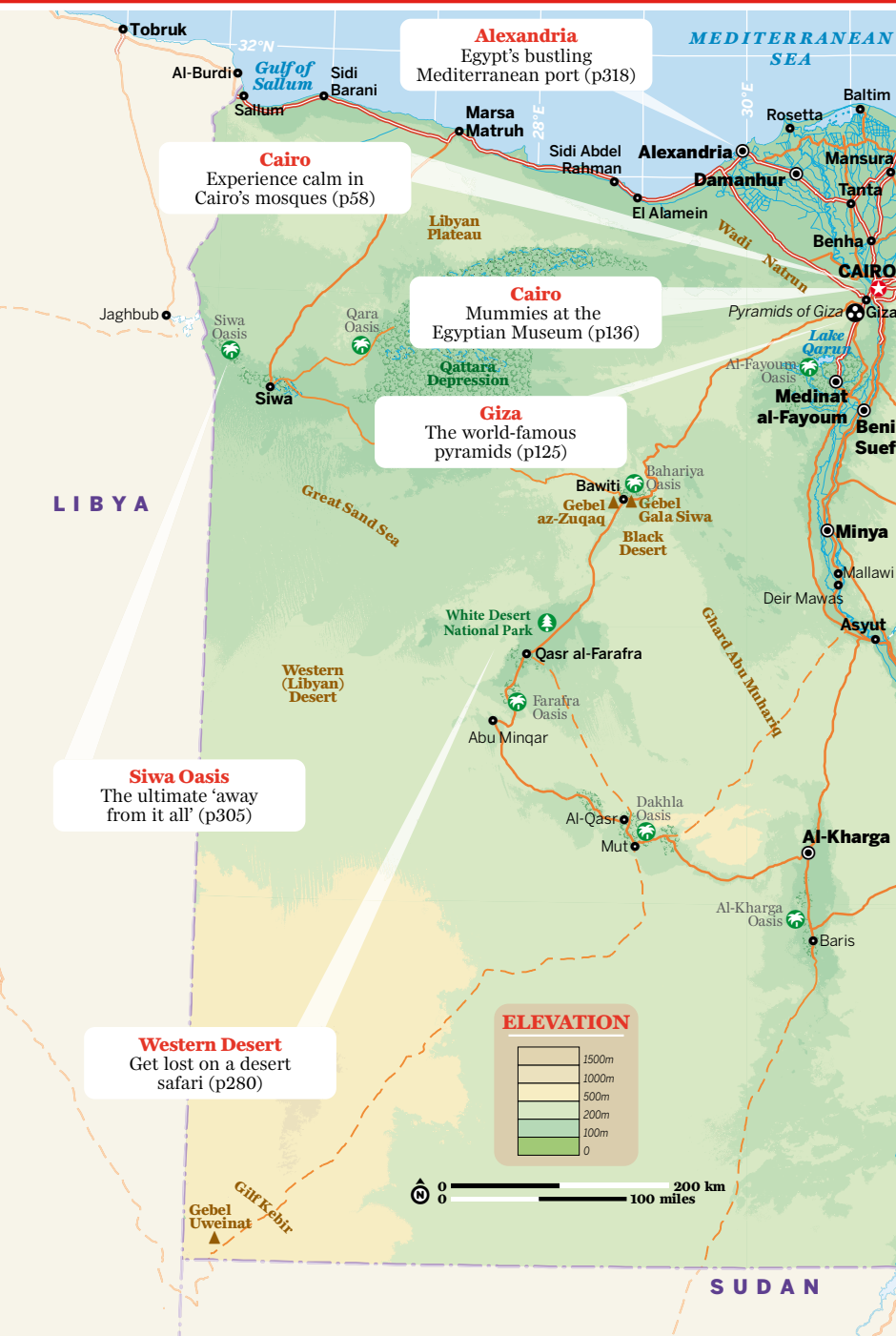
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Egypt







OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Zora O'Neill

Coordinating Author, Cairo, Egyptian Museum, Cairo Outskirts & the Delta

Zora first visited the Big Mango in 1992. She spent the summer clubbing, and learned a few verb conjugations. Twenty years on, Zora has earned a Master's degree in Arabic literature and has contributed to more than a dozen guidebooks, including an earlier edition of Lonely Planet's *Egypt*. She writes about food and travel for the *New York Times* and *Conde Nast Traveler*, and is working on a book about Arabic language and travel in the Middle East. She lives in Astoria, Queens, and reads the El-Said Badawi *Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* for fun.



Michael Benanan

Siwa Oasis & the Western Desert, Alexandria & the Mediterranean Coast

Michael cut his adventure-travelling teeth in Egypt back in 1998, and his experiences were so bizarre he figured he'd better start writing about them. Since then, he's authored several books, including *Men Of Salt: Crossing the Sahara on the Caravan of White Gold*, about traveling with one of the world's last working camel caravans. He also writes and photographs for the *New York Times* and other publications. Now that he's a father, his Egyptian friends call him Abu Lucas.



Jessica Lee

Suez Canal, Red Sea Coast, Sinai

Jessica escaped small-town New Zealand and high-tailed it for the road at the age of 18, spending much of her 20s traipsing extensively through Asia, Africa and Latin America. She washed up in Egypt in 2004 where she fell in love with the Arabic language and the incredible hospitality of the people. Since 2007 she has lived in the Middle East full-time, mostly based in Cairo, and has authored several guidebooks to the region. She tweets about things Middle Eastern @jessofarabia.

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Anthony Sattin

Cruising the Nile, Nile Valley chapters, Egypt Today, History, The Egyptians, The Arts, Egyptian Cuisine: Bi-I Hana wa-Shifa!, Environment

Anthony has been travelling around and writing about Egypt and Egyptians for more than 20 years. He has contributed to previous editions of Lonely Planet's *Egypt* and *Discover Egypt*, as well as *Morocco* and *Algeria*. He contributes to the *Sunday Times* and *Conde Nast Traveler* and presents documentaries for BBC radio. Anthony's nonfiction includes *A Winter on the Nile* and *Lifting the Veil*. Follow him at anthonyattsattin.com.

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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Four Weeks Egypt Bottom to Top

In a month you can cover most of Egypt's main sights – a trip of nearly 2000km.

Head south from Cairo on the sleeper train to **Aswan**, where you can soak up Nubian culture and make the side trip to the awesome **Abu Simbel**. Sail back down the Nile to **Luxor** on a felucca. If you want to skip the crowds at the big sites, take a boat to **Dendara** and **Abydos** instead.

When you've had your fill of ancient ruins, make your way back to the modern metropolis of **Cairo**. Along with the top sites, make time to sit in one of the city's bustling ahwas (cafes), wreathed in sweet sheesha (water pipe) smoke.

After Cairo, take the bus to **Siwa Oasis**, one of Egypt's most idyllic spots. After hanging out in this tranquil haven, and perhaps going on a desert safari, backtrack along the Mediterranean coast to **Alexandria** and spend a couple of days in its wonderful cafes and museums.

Finally, head for **Dahab** to recharge and enjoy the laid-back Bedouin vibe, pausing only to arrange the obligatory dive trip and to hike up **Mt Sinai**.



One-Two Weeks Whistle-Stop Nile Tour

If you pay for domestic plane tickets, one week is enough time to sample Egypt's top sights. With two weeks, you can extend your trip to Aswan.

Three days in **Cairo** will allow you to see the astounding **Pyramids of Giza**, seek out the treasures of the Egyptian Museum and explore the medieval souq of Khan al-Khalili. Then fly to **Luxor**. In three days you can visit most major sights, including the **Valley of the Kings**, the Valley of the Queens and Deir al-Bahri on the west bank of the Nile, as well as the spectacular temples of **Karnak** and **Luxor** on the east bank.

If you can add another week to your trip, or even a few days, you can head further south. The long, relaxing version is to spend four days sailing up the Nile to **Aswan** on a budget-friendly felucca or a luxurious cruiser; the shorter version is to hop on the morning train. From Aswan, you absolutely must visit **Abu Simbel**, the grandest of all Pharaonic monuments, perched on the edge of Lake Nasser. Fly there, then to Cairo and home.

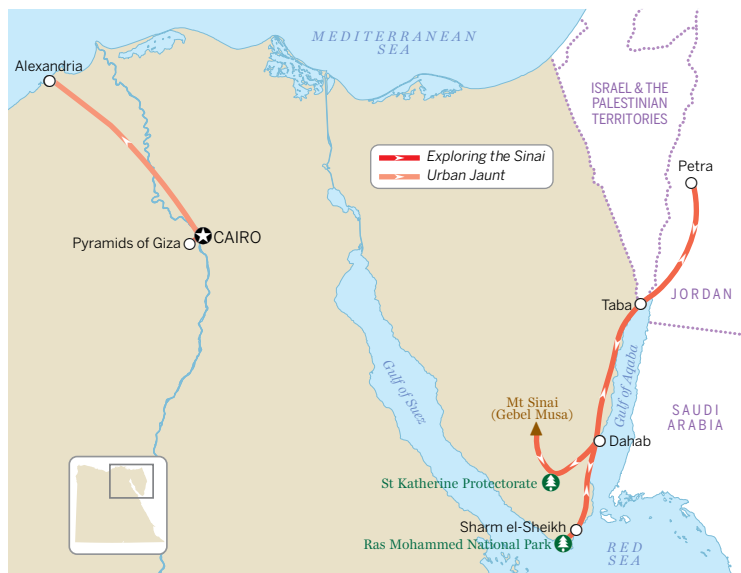
One-Two Weeks Desert Escape

Inspired by *Lawrence of Arabia* and *The English Patient* scenery, would-be desert rovers can get sand-happy in the amazing Western Desert.

Begin with a bus from **Cairo** or **Asyut** to **Al-Kharga Oasis**, the southernmost oasis in the Western Desert loop. Spend a day here exploring the Al-Kharga Museum of Antiquities as well as the Graeco-Roman temples, tombs and other interesting traces of the trade routes that flourished here during the Roman Empire.

From Al-Kharga, make your way north-west to **Dakhla Oasis** to see the fascinating hivelike, mud-walled settlements of Balat and Al-Qasr. Next, hop north to either **Farafra Oasis** or **Bahariya Oasis**, where you can make a two- or three-day camp in the stunning **White Desert National Park**.

If you have closer to two weeks, then you can strike west across several hundred kilometres of open sands to **Siwa Oasis**. You'll need to go as part of an organised desert tour, or hire a 4WD to drive the remote desert highway, one of the most surreal spots in the entire country. Perched on the edge of the **Great Sand Sea**, Siwa is renowned for its dates and olives and is a great base for additional dune exploration, should you need it.



10–14 Days Exploring the Sinai

To sample all the peninsula has to offer, spend up to two weeks in its incredible desert landscapes and serene underwater world. You'll also have time to hop across the border to Petra, in Jordan.

From **Sharm el-Sheikh**, arrange a trip to the spectacular reefs of **Ras Mohammed National Park**. Divers will want to head on to the Thistlegorm, a sunken British supply ship that many consider the world's best wreck dive. For those who prefer snorkelling, there are fine reefs close to shore (and in Sharm as well).

Then hop on a bus to **Dahab**, a laid-back town dubbed the 'Ko Samui of the Middle East'. From here, you can arrange camel and jeep safaris to such natural wonders as the Coloured Canyon.

After a few days' beach time, lace up your boots and head to the **St Katherine Protectorate** for a trek with a Bedouin guide, as well as a night-time ascent of **Mt Sinai** (Gebel Musa) to catch a sunrise of biblical proportions.

In your last few days, take the ferry and bus to the ancient city of **Petra**. Return, after two nights, to fly out of Sharm el-Sheikh.

One Week Urban Jaunt

Get a taste of contemporary Egypt in its two largest cities. First thing in Cairo, head to the **Pyramids of Giza**, on the city's western edge. Not only will you check these sightseeing biggies off your list, you'll get a sense of the scale of this megalopolis. Spend the next day wandering Islamic Cairo and Al-Azhar Park, on the city's east edge. For contrast on your third day, take the metro to Coptic Cairo and the excellent Coptic Museum. Nearby Souq al-Fustat makes for easy, attractive souvenir shopping. In the evening, ride a felucca on the Nile. On your last day, cafe-hop in leafy Zamalek and the Cairo Opera grounds. At sunset, take the elevator up the Cairo Tower for a final view.

The next morning, take the express train to **Alexandria**, rich with Graeco-Roman history. The stunning modern Bibliotheca Alexandrina hints at the glory of the ancient library here – stop here and at the excellent Alexandria National Museum. On your second day, indulge in Alexandria nostalgia: ride the creaking streetcar and tour cafes where the city's literati sipped coffee and scribbled. Thanks to the new airport, you can fly directly out of Alex.

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