

# welcome to Egypt



## Pyramids & More

With sand-covered tombs, austere pyramids and towering Pharaonic temples, Egypt brings out the explorer in all of us. Visit the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, where Tutankhamun's tomb was unearthed, and see the glittering finds in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Hop off a Nile boat to visit a waterside temple, or trek into the desert to find the traces of Roman trading outposts. You never know – your donkey might stumble across yet another find, just as many previous discoveries were made.

## Two Religions

Egypt once ruled an empire from al-Qahira – Cairo, the City Victorious. The

metropolis is packed with soaring minarets, and medieval schools and mosques, some of the greatest architecture of medieval Islam. At the same time, Egypt's native Christians, the Copts, have carried on their traditions that in many respects – such as the church's liturgical language and the traditional calendar – link back to the time of the pharaohs. Tap into the history in remote monasteries and ancient churches.

## Beaches & Beyond

That empty beach with nothing but a candlelit cabin, and a teeming coral reef offshore: they're waiting for you in Egypt. The coast along the Red Sea has a rugged desert beauty above the waterline and a



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*Perhaps no other people in the world say ‘Welcome’ so frequently – and mean it every time. Egypt’s ancient civilisation still awes, but today’s Egyptians are pretty amazing, too.*

(left) Camels at the Pyramids of Giza (p125)  
 (below) Loom weaver, Aswan (p253)



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psychedelic vibrancy below – rewarding to explore on a multiday outing to one of the globe’s great wreck dives or on an afternoon’s snorkelling jaunt along a coral wall.

## Desert Beauty

Whether you’re watching the sun rise from the lofty heights of Mt Sinai (Gebel Musa) or the shimmering horizon from the comfort of a hot spring in Siwa Oasis, Egypt’s desert landscapes are endlessly fascinating – good thing, because they make up 95% of the country. In a land where time is measured by dynasties, and distance by the setting sun, there are plenty of opportunities to relax into the infinite expanse of sand and sea.

## Human Kindness

Egypt is the most traveller-friendly country in the Middle East. This means you’ll enjoy cheap buses, decent budget places to sleep, English spoken to some degree everywhere and even good cold beers. It also means that if you ever get into a jam, an Egyptian will likely be there to help you out. Then again, an Egyptian will also be there to sell you some papyrus or perfume – an undeniable reality of travel here. But the souvenir sales are a minor irritant when compared with the chance to connect with some of the world’s most generous people.