



Understand Egypt

EGYPT TODAY440

In the aftermath of the downfall of President Mubarak, Egypt has been undergoing massive social and political changes. We chart the major movements.

HISTORY443

From the rising of the Nile and death of pagan culture to the coming of the Arabs and the many centuries of foreign occupation, we follow the long and winding road towards independence.

PHARAONIC EGYPT..... 461

All the significant moments and key players in the three-thousand-year rollercoaster that was ancient Egypt.

THE EGYPTIANS.....480

Things you need to know about the people, including the role of women, religious divides, black economy and a love of football.

THE ARTS487

The revolution has been good for the arts, freeing the tongues and minds of Egyptian writers, singers, film-makers and visual artists.

EGYPTIAN CUISINE: BI-L HANA WA-SHIFA!494

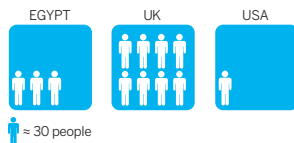
Egypt's home-grown culinary traditions are often overlooked. We guide you to the best of the country's dishes and drinks, including its thriving wine industry.

ENVIRONMENT..... 501

There's such variety in Egypt's landscape, from desert to rich farmland and marine parks to one of the world's great artificial lakes. And there's just as much variety in the creatures that inhabit it.



population per sq km



Egypt Today

You say you want a Revolution...

It's all change in Egypt at the moment. After three decades of President Hosni Mubarak's regime, and almost another three before that under Presidents Nasser and Sadat, Egyptians decided to break the mould. The extent of change is still not known at the time of writing, but two things are clear now as they have been for many years: Egyptians demand their right to vote and many of them will use it to support the Muslim Brotherhood and more extreme Islamist parties, banned under Mubarak.

This state of revolution clashes with the idea that Egypt is a place where time stands still. This is, after all, where Menes united the two states of Upper and Lower Egypt, and set the stage for one of the greatest civilisations the world has ever known. It is a land of magnificent World Heritage Sites built by the many pharaohs. But it has seen more than its share of upheavals. This was where Alexander conquered, Mark Antony flirted and the Holy Family sheltered. Napoleon stopped long enough to print propaganda and pilfer antiquities, while the British stayed around to get the train system running, ensure the safety of their passage to India, and at the same time take enough items to furnish every spare nook of the British Museum.

Lingering over coffee in one of Alexandria's cosmopolitan cafes or sipping a calming glass of *shai* (tea) after a frenzied shopping episode in Cairo's Khan al-Khalili are activities as popular today as they were back when 19th-century tourists started to arrive en masse. Magnificent monuments are everywhere – the pointed perfection of the Pyramids, soaring minarets of Cairo's skyline and the majestic tombs and temples of Luxor are just a few of the wonders that generations of visitors have admired during their city sojourns, jaunts up and down the Nile and expeditions through spectacularly stark desert landscapes.

- » Population: 83 million
- » Annual population growth rate: 1.8%
- » Average male life expectancy: 71 years
- » Average female life expectancy: 75 years
- » Male literacy rate: 83%
- » Female literacy rate: 59%

Key Words

- » **Insha' Allah**, God willing – as in 'The flight to Luxor takes one hour, insha' Allah'
- » **Bukra**, tomorrow – often used in conjunction with the above
- » **Mumkin**, maybe – best used as 'everything is mumkin' or, 'mish mumkin', no way!

Mosque Etiquette

- » Remove your shoes at the entrance to a mosque
- » Dress respectfully – Egyptians wouldn't enter a mosque in shorts or with women showing their shoulders or legs
- » Avoid visiting during prayer times

Take time to...

- » Say hello – Egyptians are usually extremely courteous, however busy they might be
- » Sit in a cafe and watch the world go by
- » Learn a few words in Arabic – the effort will be hugely appreciated