



Alexandria & the Mediterranean Coast

Includes ➔

Alexandria	305
Aboukir	330
Rosetta (Ar-Rashid)	330
Mediterranean Coast	331
El Alamein	331
Sidi Abdel Rahman	334
Marsa Matruh	335
Sallum	339

Best Places to Eat

- Picnic at Agiba Beach (p335)
- Zephyrion (p330)
- Kadoura (p323)
- Mohammed Ahmed (p322)
- Greek Club (p323)

Best Places to Stay

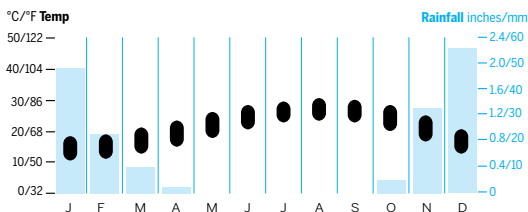
- Cecil Hotel (p321)
- Egypt Hotel (p321)

Why Go?

Egypt's northern coastline runs for 500km along Mediterranean shores. Its sandy beaches and turquoise-hued sea lures floods of Egyptians here during the summertime. Most travellers, however, make a beeline straight to the once-great port city of Alexandria. Eulogised through the centuries, this faded old dame of a metropolis continues to be celebrated today in Egyptian music and literature despite its well-worn facade. By far Egypt's most atmospheric city, Alexandria's fresh sea air, fantastic seafood, ancient history and crumbling gems of belle époque buildings imbue it with an urban pulse distinctly different from that of Cairo.

To delve deeper into this region, take a pilgrimage to the sobering, beautifully kept WWII war memorials of El Alamein. Or amble the souq streets of Rosetta, edged by Ottoman-era architecture and brimming with time-stood-still ambience.

When to Go Alexandria



Apr–May Warm spring weather, perfect for strolling near-deserted Mediterranean shores.

Jun–mid-Sep Join the carnival atmosphere along packed beaches as Egypt's holiday season begins.

Nov This month's film festival is the main event on Alexandria's culture calendar.

ALEXANDRIA

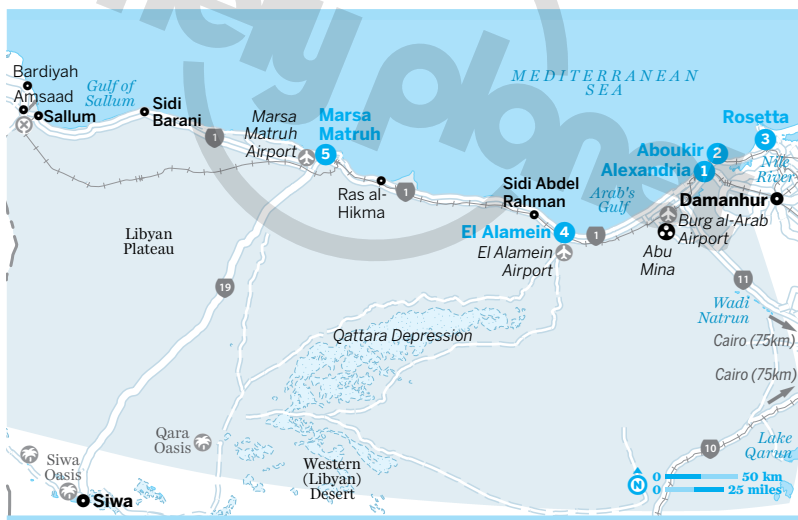
03 / POP 4.1 MILLION

Founded by none other than Alexander the Great and once the seat of Queen Cleopatra, the city of Alexandria (Al-Iskendariyya) is the stuff that legends are made of. Its harbour entrance was once marked by the towering Pharos lighthouse (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) and its Great Library was renowned as the ultimate archive of ancient knowledge. Alas, fate dealt the city a spate of cruel blows. The Pharos lighthouse collapsed. The literary treasures of the Great Library were torched. Today no sign remains of the great Alexander himself and the city of Cleopatra has been mostly swallowed up by the ocean. To add insult to injury, Egypt's subsequent Muslim rulers moved the capital to Cairo, ignobly thrusting the once-influential metropolis into near obscurity for centuries.

In the 19th century Alexandria was revived by a cosmopolitan makeover that flirted with European-style decadence. The city's

renaissance, as one of the Mediterranean's key commercial hubs, brought with it a new, swaggering fame, lauded by writers and poets. This revival, though, was cut short in the 1950s by President Nasser's nationalism. Today the peeling, faded and scarred remnants of this later period pockmark the once-grand seafront Corniche, ingraining the city with an aching sense of abandoned glory. Alexandria is a champion survivor, however, and today is striving to forge a new identity as Egypt's cultural capital. Legions of young local artists and writers are finding their voices here, and the modern library of Alexandria is probably the most innovative cultural landmark in the country.

But for many visitors, Alexandria remains a city of ambience rather than sights. After you've deciphered its mind-boggling history amid museums and monuments, it's the ideal place to spend time sipping coffee in old-world cafes, and meandering the harbour area to gaze up at belle époque architecture



Alexandria & the Mediterranean Coast Highlights

- 1 Tour the modern incarnation of an ancient wonder at the **Bibliotheca Alexandrina** (p313), tasting the last drops of 19th-century grandeur at a period cafe, and stroll the streets and souqs of soulful Anfushi at night in **Alexandria**.
- 2 Eat your fill of fresh seafood along the shore at **Aboukir** (p330).
- 3 Amble through the dusty, donkey-filled streets of **Rosetta** (Ar-Rashid; p330), where narrow lanes are rimmed by restored Ottoman-era architecture.
- 4 Remember the desert battles of WWII's North Africa campaign at the poignant war memorials of **El Alamein** (p331).
- 5 Splashing about in stunning aqua waters at the beaches near **Marsa Matruh** (p335).