



Nile Valley: Beni Suef to Qena

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Why Go?

If you're in a hurry to reach the treasures and pleasures of the south, it is easy to dismiss this first segment of Upper Egypt between Cairo and Luxor. But the less touristed parts of the country almost always repay the effort of a visit.

Much of this part of the valley is less developed than the other valleys but people here also have to grapple with the issues of modernity, with water and electricity shortages, and since the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood, with sectarian tension and security issues.

However much a backwater this region might seem, it played a key role in Egypt's destiny as its many archaeological sites bear witness – from the lavishly painted tombs of the early provincial rulers at Beni Hasan to the remains of Akhetaten, where Tutankhamun was brought up, and the Pharaonic-inspired monasteries of the early Christian period.

Note: due to security concerns, research was conducted remotely by the author for this chapter, except for Dendera, Abydos and Qena.

Best Places to Eat

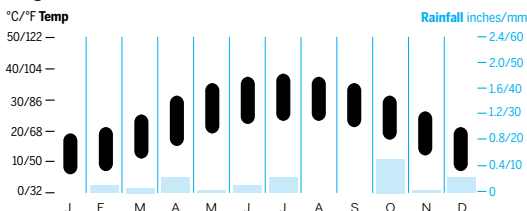
- ➔ Koshary Nagwa (p168)
- ➔ Dahabiyya Houseboat & Restaurant (p168)
- ➔ Al-Watania Palace Hotel (p174)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Al-Safa Hotel (p177)
- ➔ Al-Watania Palace Hotel (p174)
- ➔ City Center Hotel (p166)
- ➔ Horus Resort (p168)
- ➔ House of Life (p180)

When to Go

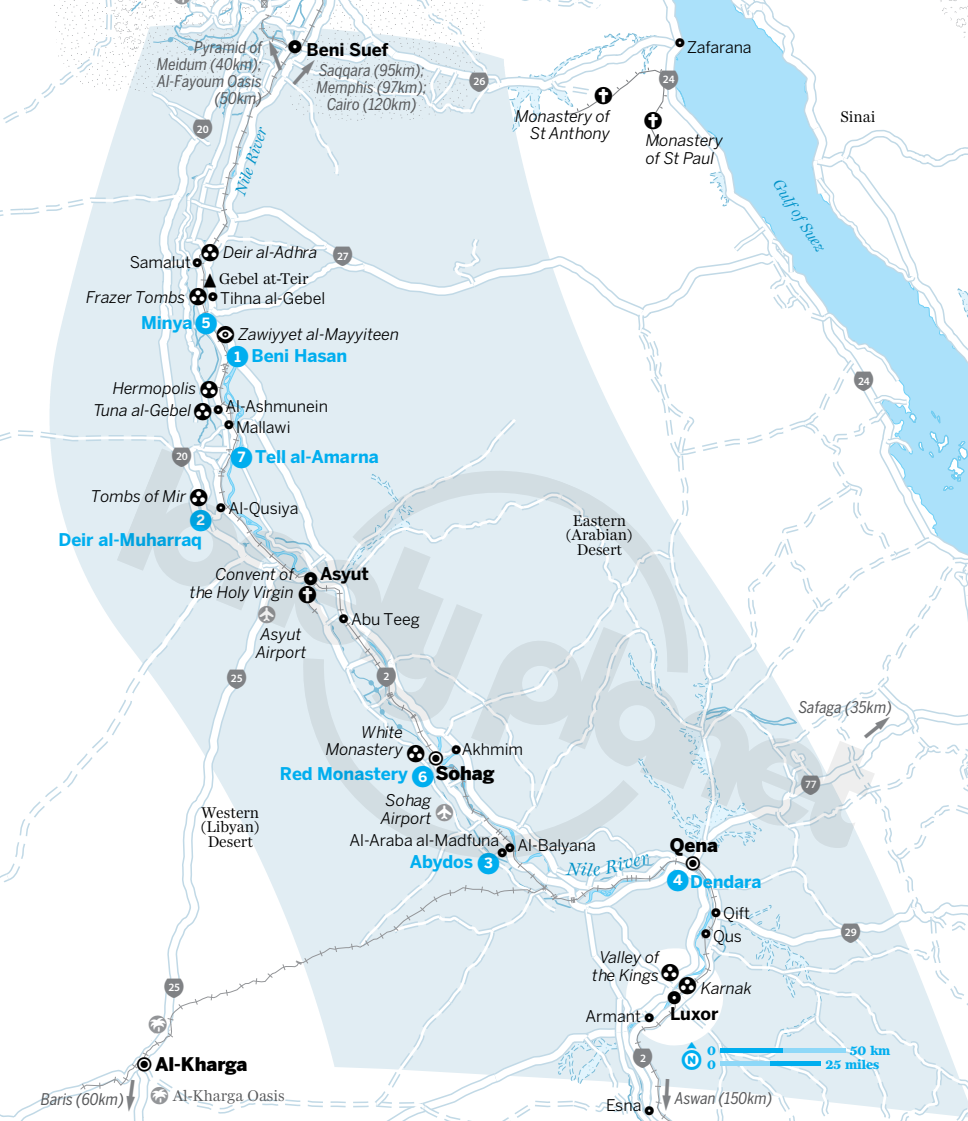
Asyut



Apr Sham el Nessim, the spring festival, is celebrated in style in the region.

Aug Millions of people arrive to celebrate the Feast of the Virgin outside Minya.

Oct-Nov The ideal touring time, with the light being particularly beautiful.



Nile Valley: Beni Suef to Qena Highlights

- 1 Admire lithe dancers, hunters and even wrestlers in the finely painted tombs at **Beni Hasan** (p169).
- 2 Visit the Coptic monastery of **Deir al-Muharraaq** (p173) to see why Copts claim to be heirs to the ancient Egyptians.
- 3 Gaze upon some of ancient Egypt's finest temple reliefs at the **Temple of Seti I** (p178) in Abydos.
- 4 Marvel at one of the best-preserved temple complexes in Egypt in Dendara's magnificent **Temple of Hathor** (p180).
- 5 Hang out in the colonial-era centre of **Minya** (p166).
- 6 See the frescos at the **Red Monastery** (p176), one of the finest buildings from late antiquity.
- 7 Wander through the lush countryside around Akhetaten in **Tell al-Amarna** (p170), site of the doomed city of the heretic king Akhenaten.