

PYRAMIDS LAND TOURS

The Egypt Planning Guide

2026 Edition

Everything you need to plan your first trip:

Itineraries · Costs · Timing · Packing · What Not to Miss

Complimentary guide for visitors planning a private Egypt tour

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This guide is complimentary from Pyramids Land Tours. We have operated private Egyptologist tours since 2004, serving over 20,000 visitors from 60+ countries. All content reflects current conditions as of early 2026.

Chapter 1

How Long Should I Go?

The most common question before a first Egypt trip. The answer depends on what you want to cover — and whether you are willing to return for a second visit.

Duration	What It Covers	Best For
5 days	Giza, GEM, Valley of the Kings, Karnak. One day in Luxor, brief Aswan.	Travellers with fixed leave. Expect to leave things out.
7 days	Cairo (Giza + GEM + Saqqara + Old Cairo). Full Luxor (both banks). Aswan + Abu Simbel.	Right minimum for a complete first trip.
8–10 days	Everything in 7 days, plus 4-night Nile cruise OR Abydos + Dendera + Red Sea extension.	The comfortable version. Most popular choice.
12–14 days	Full circuit without rushing. Plus one extension: Alexandria, White Desert, or Siwa Oasis.	Travellers who want Egypt properly.

Our recommendation: **7 days minimum** for a first visit. 10 days if you can manage it. The most common response from people who take 7 days: "I should have taken 10."

What the Nile cruise changes: a standard 4-night cruise between Luxor and Aswan replaces four hotel nights but adds the Nile river experience and the temples of Edfu and Kom Ombo. To include a cruise on a first trip, you need 8 days minimum — 3 in Cairo, 4 on the cruise, 1 in Aswan.

Chapter 2

The Best Time to Visit Egypt

Month	Weather	Crowds	Verdict
Oct–Nov	22–28°C days, cool evenings	Growing, book ahead	Best months
December	18–24°C, crisp mornings	Peak season	Best months
January	15–22°C, occasional rain in Cairo	Peak season	Best months
February	17–24°C, sunny and dry	High season	Best months
March	22–30°C, dusty (khamsin possible)	Shoulder season	Good
April	28–35°C, khamsin winds	Low season	Good
May–Sep	38–45°C at midday	Very low	Avoid midday

Abu Simbel solar alignment: February 22 and October 22. The rising sun illuminates the inner sanctuary of the Great Temple — the only two days per year. Book Abu Simbel accommodation many months in advance for these dates.

Ramadan: dates shift each year (approx. 1 month earlier annually). During Ramadan, some restaurants close during daylight hours, the atmosphere in Islamic Cairo is distinctive and worth experiencing, and crowds at tourist sites are generally lower. The sites themselves remain open and accessible.

Chapter 3

The Three Zones of Egypt

A standard first Egypt trip divides into three distinct zones, each with a different character and historical period.

Cairo & the Pyramid Sites

Old Kingdom · 2700–2180 BC · 2–3 days recommended

Key sites: Giza Pyramids · Great Sphinx · Grand Egyptian Museum · Saqqara Step Pyramid · Dahshur · Coptic Cairo · Khan el-Khalili

Note: The GEM opened in 2023 and now holds the complete Tutankhamun collection — 5,000 objects. Plan 2–3 hours inside.

Luxor (Ancient Thebes)

New Kingdom · 1550–1070 BC · 2–3 days recommended

Key sites: Valley of the Kings · Karnak Temple · Hatshepsut Temple · Luxor Temple · Deir el-Medina · Abydos (day trip)

Note: The most concentrated collection of ancient monuments on earth. Both banks of the Nile require separate time.

Aswan & Abu Simbel

Ptolemaic, Roman & Nubian · 380 BC – present · 1–2 days recommended

Key sites: Philae Temple · Aswan High Dam · Unfinished Obelisk · Nubian Villages · Abu Simbel (280km south)

Note: Abu Simbel requires a full day — leave Aswan at 5am, arrive before the flights from Luxor. Well worth the early start.

Chapter 4

Nile Cruise vs. Hotels: Which Is Right for You?

	Nile Cruise (4 nights)	Hotels + Flights
Edfu & Kom Ombo	✓ Included as morning stops	Day trips (4hr drive each)
Nile river experience	✓ Waking up on the Nile	Felucca trips in Aswan only
Logistics	✓ One check-in for 4 nights	Check in/out at each city
Flexibility	Fixed ship schedule	✓ Fully flexible pace
Room size	Cabin: 15–20 sqm	✓ Full hotel room
Best for	First timers, romantics, history lovers	Families, solo travellers, those who dislike fixed schedules

Dahabiya option: a traditional two-masted wooden sailing vessel carrying only your party. More intimate than a cruise ship, slower pace, meals on deck. Best for couples, small families, and travellers who want the river as an experience rather than a vehicle. Available as a 3–7 night charter.

Chapter 5

Planning Your Budget

All prices per person, in USD. Exchange rates fluctuate — verify current EGP rate before travel.

Item	Budget	Mid-Range	Luxury
International flights (Europe–Cairo return)	\$400–600	\$600–900	\$900–2,000+
Accommodation (per night, per person sharing)	\$30–60	\$80–150	\$200–500+
Private Egyptologist guide (per day)	\$60–80	\$100–150	\$150–250
Entrance fees (7-day trip total)	\$40–60	\$55–80	\$80–120
Domestic flights (Cairo–Luxor–Aswan)	\$60–90	\$100–140	\$150–250 (charter)
Food & incidentals (per day)	\$15–25	\$30–50	\$60–150
Nile cruise (4 nights, per person)	\$400–600	\$700–1,200	\$1,500–3,500
Tipping budget (7 days)	\$80–120	\$100–150	\$150–250

7-day trip total estimate (per person, sharing, mid-range, excluding international flights):

Budget: \$600–900 · Mid-range: \$1,000–1,600 · Luxury: \$2,000–4,000+

Entrance fees note: Egypt has reformed its ticketing system significantly since 2022. Separate tickets are required for the Giza Plateau, each pyramid interior, the GEM, and most Luxor tombs. Your guide manages all tickets. Budget approximately \$10–20 per person per site day in fees.

Chapter 6

What to Pack for Egypt

Clothing

- Lightweight trousers (2–3 pairs)
- Long-sleeve shirts (linen or cotton)
- T-shirts for under layers
- Light scarf or shawl (religious sites)
- Comfortable walking shoes / trainers
- Sandals for hotel / felucca
- Sunhat with brim
- Light fleece or jacket (winter evenings)

Toiletries & Health

- High-SPF sunscreen (50+)
- Lip balm with SPF
- Hand sanitiser
- Rehydration sachets (heat precaution)
- Antihistamines (dust / sand)
- Personal medications (extra supply)
- Travel insurance documents (printed)

Documents & Money

- Passport (6+ months validity)
- Egypt e-Visa (printed + digital)
- Travel insurance details
- Emergency contacts (written down)
- USD cash (\$200–300 for tips & fees)
- Bank card (notify bank before travel)

Tech & Comfort

- Universal power adapter (Type C/F)
- Egyptian SIM card (buy at Cairo airport)
- Portable phone charger / power bank
- Refillable water bottle
- Small daypack (for site days)
- Camera (phone is sufficient for most)
- Downloadable offline maps (Maps.me)

At the sites

- Small bills for tipping (20, 50 EGP notes)
- Snacks for early-morning site days

What not to bring: Drones (prohibited at all archaeological sites without advance written permit — confiscation on sight). Excessive valuables. Revealing clothing for city and site days.

Chapter 7

The Sites — What to See First

Listed in the order most first-time visitors encounter them on a Cairo → Luxor → Aswan itinerary.

Site	Location	Time	Why It Matters
Giza Plateau	Cairo	2–3 hrs	The Great Pyramid of Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. The last surviving Wonder of the Ancient World. Arrive before 8am.
Grand Egyptian Museum	Cairo	2–3 hrs	Tutankhamun's complete 5,000-object collection. Opened 2023. Best air-conditioning in Egypt.
Saqqara	30km S of Cairo	2 hrs	Step Pyramid of Djoser — oldest complete stone building in the world (2650 BC). Almost never crowded.
Dahshur	40km S of Cairo	1.5 hrs	Bent Pyramid + Red Pyramid. The transition from step pyramid to true pyramid. Interior of Red Pyramid accessible.
Coptic Cairo	Cairo	1.5 hrs	The Hanging Church, Ben Ezra Synagogue. Roman-era fortress quarter. 4th century Christian heritage.
Khan el-Khalili	Cairo	1–2 hrs	The great bazaar of medieval Cairo, continuous since 1382. Al-Muizz Street for Islamic architecture.
Valley of the Kings	Luxor West Bank	2–3 hrs	63 royal tombs from 1539–1075 BC. Standard ticket: 3 tombs. Add Seti I (extra ticket) for finest paintings.
Hatshepsut Temple	Luxor West Bank	1–1.5 hrs	Deir el-Bahari mortuary temple. Three colonnaded terraces against a vertical cliff. Arrive by 8am.
Karnak Temple	Luxor East Bank	1.5–2 hrs	Largest religious structure ever built. 134 columns in the Hypostyle Hall, the tallest at 23m. 1,500 years of construction.
Luxor Temple	Luxor East Bank	1–1.5 hrs	Best visited at dusk — the illumination system is excellent. Avenue of Sphinxes reopened 2021.
Abydos	160km N of Luxor	2 hrs at site	Temple of Seti I — finest painted reliefs in Egypt. Most visitors skip this. Most Egyptologists say don't.
Deir el-Medina	Luxor West Bank	1.5 hrs	Village of the Valley of the Kings artisans. Intimate painted tombs. Almost never crowded. Profoundly moving.
Philae Temple	Aswan	1–1.5 hrs	Dedicated to Isis. Reached by motor launch — the approach across the water is part of the experience.
Abu Simbel	280km S of Aswan	2 hrs at site	Two temples of Ramesses II cut into a cliff (1264 BC), relocated by UNESCO. Leave Aswan at 5am.

Chapter 8

Practical Egypt: Money, Visa & Health

Visa

Most nationalities require an Egypt e-Visa, available at visa2egypt.gov.eg. Cost: approximately \$25 USD. Apply at least 7 days before travel. Print a copy and download to your phone.

Currency

Egyptian pounds (EGP). ATMs widely available in tourist cities. Use bank ATMs for the best exchange rate. Carry small notes (20, 50 EGP) for tips and vendors. As of early 2026: approx. 50–55 EGP per 1 USD.

Drinking water

Do not drink tap water. Bottled water is available everywhere (approx. 5 EGP / 1.5 litre). Use bottled water for brushing teeth. Hotel and tourist restaurant ice is generally safe.

Health

No vaccinations required to enter Egypt. Hepatitis A and Typhoid are commonly recommended by travel clinics. No malaria risk in standard tourist areas. Consult your doctor 4–6 weeks before travel.

SIM card

Buy an Egyptian SIM at Cairo Airport arrivals (Vodafone Egypt, Orange Egypt, Etisalat). A 30-day data package with 20GB costs approximately \$5–8 USD. Your guide will help you set it up.

Electricity

Type C and Type F sockets (European standard). 220V. Bring a universal adapter if your country uses a different plug. USB sockets are standard in all mid-range and luxury hotels.

Tipping

Expected and meaningful. Budget 100–200 EGP per day for your guide (\$2–4 USD), 50–100 EGP for your driver. Carry small notes throughout the day.

Emergency contacts

Tourist Police: 126 (national hotline). Ambulance: 123. Egypt Emergency: 112. Save your hotel and guide's phone numbers before leaving your accommodation each day.

Chapter 9

Your Pre-Trip Checklist

3–6 months before

- Decide duration and itinerary structure
- Book international flights
- Book tour operator / private guide
- Book Nile cruise if including (sells out)
- Purchase travel insurance
- Check passport expiry (6+ months needed)

4–8 weeks before

- Apply for Egypt e-Visa
- Book hotel accommodation
- Visit travel medicine clinic
- Notify bank of overseas travel
- Book Abu Simbel if Feb 22 or Oct 22 visit

1–2 weeks before

- Confirm all bookings with guide
- Download offline maps (Maps.me + Egypt)
- Print e-Visa + travel insurance
- Pack and test daypack for site days
- Exchange some USD for tips on arrival

Day before departure

- Confirm airport transfer with guide
- Charge power bank
- Download WhatsApp (guide communication)
- Save hotel + guide phone numbers offline

At Cairo airport

- Buy Egyptian SIM card (arrivals hall)
- Withdraw EGP from airport ATM
- Meet driver with name board at arrivals

Chapter 10

Your Egypt Itinerary at a Glance

The 7-day structure that covers Egypt's essential sites without rushing any of them.

	Focus	What You See
Day 1	Arrival in Cairo	Airport transfer · hotel check-in · evening walk along the Nile Corniche
Day 2	Giza Plateau & the GEM	Pyramids + Great Sphinx (arrive 7:30am) · Grand Egyptian Museum (2–3hrs) · Sound & Light Show optional
Day 3	Saqqara, Dahshur & Old Cairo	Step Pyramid of Djoser · Red Pyramid interior · Coptic Cairo on return
Day 4	Luxor West Bank	Fly to Luxor · Valley of the Kings · Hatshepsut Temple · Colossi of Memnon
Day 5	Luxor East Bank	Karnak Temple (morning) · Luxor Temple (afternoon–evening) · Illuminated after dark
Day 6	Aswan	Fly to Aswan · Philae Temple by motor launch · High Dam · felucca on the Nile
Day 7	Abu Simbel & Departure	Depart Aswan 5:00am · Abu Simbel (arrive 8:00am) · return to Aswan · flight home

To extend to 10 days: Add Abydos + Dendera as a day trip from Luxor (+1 day), and include a 4-night Nile cruise replacing the Luxor–Aswan flight (+3 nights, covers Edfu and Kom Ombo).

Ready to plan your Egypt trip?

Our team responds within 2 hours. We'll match you with the right itinerary and Egyptologist guide for your group.

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