

## Ancient Encounters

**Country(ies):** Egypt , Jordan

**Tour type:** Small Group

**Transport:** A/C minibus, internal flight & Nile cruiseboat, Bedouin jeeps

**Group size:** Min: 2 | Max: 18

**Days:** 16 days

**Start Location:** Cairo, Egypt

**End Location:** Amman, Jordan

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 15, Lunches - 5, Dinners - 6

**Highlights:**

Pyramids & Sphinx, Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), Nile cruise, Karnak, Luxor, Valley of the Kings, Hatshepsut, Medinat Habu, Philae, felucca sailboat, Foodie tour, Dana, Red Sea, Wadi Rum, Petra, Dead Sea, Wadi Mujib hike, Madaba, Mount Nebo, Jerash.



# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive into Cairo, transfer to hotel

Upon arrival our staff will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel for the start of your trip. They will help you settle in, introduce you to the local area, and explain tomorrow's arrangements.

**OVERNIGHT:** Cairo hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** Extra day in Cairo (5-star) - pre-tour Single room supplement (JOSGAE18)

## Day 2: Visit the Pyramids in Giza and the stepped Pyramid in Saqqara

Our Egyptian adventure begins with a journey back in time to the Giza Plateau, home to the iconic Great Pyramids. These magnificent structures, declared one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world by the Greeks, will leave you breathless with their sheer size and intricate construction. We'll explore the Pyramids of Giza, including the Great Pyramid of Khufu, and encounter the enigmatic Sphinx, standing guard over these ancient wonders.

But that's not all! We'll also delve deeper into Egypt's rich history with a visit to Memphis, the first capital of the ancient kingdom. Here, we'll come face-to-face with the colossal statue of Ramses II, a powerful reminder of the pharaohs who once ruled this land. Our journey continues to Sakkara, where we'll marvel at the Step Pyramid of Djoser, an architectural masterpiece that predates the Great Pyramids and offers a fascinating glimpse into the evolution of pyramid construction.

**OVERNIGHT:** Cairo hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Nile dinner cruise in Cairo

## Day 3: Early flight to Luxor. Morning visit to the West Bank of the Nile and Luxor Temple by night

This morning, we'll catch an early flight to Luxor, the ancient city of Thebes and a treasure trove of historical wonders. Get ready to be impressed as we begin our exploration of the Nile's West Bank, a place steeped in ancient Egyptian mythology and history.

Our first stop will be the Colossi of Memnon, two towering statues that have stood sentinel for millennia. Imagine the stories these giants could tell! From there, we'll venture into the Valley of the Kings, a hidden valley where pharaohs, including the legendary Tutankhamun, were laid to rest. We'll get to explore these elaborately decorated tombs and uncover the secrets of their fascinating past.

Next, we'll journey to the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, a magnificent complex built into the cliffs, dedicated to one of Egypt's few female pharaohs. We'll marvel at its grandeur and learn about the powerful queen who ruled over Egypt. Our West Bank adventure culminates with a visit to Medinat Habu, a temple complex adorned with vibrant and intricate hieroglyphics that depict scenes of ancient Egyptian life and mythology.

After a day of exploration, you'll have the afternoon free to unwind. Relax on board your luxurious 5-star Nile cruise ship, perhaps with a refreshing dip in the pool or a leisurely stroll on the deck. Or, if you're feeling adventurous, dive into the bustling atmosphere of Luxor's markets, where you can find souvenirs, spices, and local handicrafts.

As dusk settles over Luxor, we'll embark on a magical walking tour of the Luxor Temple. This magnificent temple, illuminated against the night sky, is truly a sight to behold. We'll wander through its towering columns and courtyards, learning about its rich history and religious significance.

**OVERNIGHT:** On board 5-star cruise boat

**MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 4: Explore Karnak Temple and continue sailing to Edfu

This morning, you'll have the opportunity to witness the sunrise over the majestic West Bank of the Nile from a truly unique perspective – a hot air balloon! Imagine drifting silently above the ancient landscape, the Valley of the Kings spread out beneath you as the sun paints the sky with vibrant hues. It's an experience that will stay with you forever.

After a delicious breakfast, we'll delve into the heart of ancient Thebes with a visit to the awe-inspiring Karnak Temple Complex. Prepare to be amazed by this sprawling complex, a city of temples within a city. Wander through the towering columns of the Great Hypostyle Hall, explore the numerous temples dedicated to various gods and pharaohs, and marvel at the intricate carvings and hieroglyphics that adorn every surface. Karnak truly lives up to Luxor's reputation as the world's largest open-air museum.

In the afternoon, we'll embark on a leisurely cruise up the Nile River. Settle in on the sundeck and watch as the scenery unfolds before you – lush green fields, traditional villages, and ancient monuments dotting the riverbanks. We'll pass through the lock at Esna, a fascinating feat of engineering, and continue on to Edfu, where we'll moor for the night.

Note: Nile cruise boat itineraries are subject to slight alterations en-route)

**OVERNIGHT:** On board 5-star cruise boat

**MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

**EXTRAS:** Hot air balloon in Luxor

## Day 5: Visit Edfu Temple and cruise to Kom Ombo & Aswan

After a leisurely breakfast on board, we'll disembark and head to the nearby Temple of Edfu. This remarkably well-preserved temple, dedicated to the falcon-headed god Horus, is a stunning example of Ptolemaic architecture. As you wander through its impressive courtyards, you'll be transported back in time, imagining the processions of priests and pharaohs that once graced these halls. Admire the intricate reliefs depicting scenes of Horus's mythology, and learn about the temple's important role in ancient Egyptian religious practices.

Back on board our comfortable cruise ship, we'll continue our journey up the Nile towards Kom Ombo, soaking in the ever-changing scenery. The pace of life along the riverbanks unfolds at a slower pace here, offering a captivating glimpse into traditional rural life in Egypt. Watch as farmers tend their fields using age-old methods, fishermen cast their nets into the flowing waters, and children play along the shore. It's a timeless scene that speaks to the enduring connection between the Egyptian people and the Nile River.

As we cruise, why not take some time for yourself to relax and unwind? Head to the sundeck and enjoy a refreshing dip in the plunge pool, perhaps with a cool drink in hand. Or simply find a comfortable spot to lounge in the sun with a good book, letting the gentle rocking of the boat and the warm breeze lull you into a state of pure tranquility.

Our next stop is Kom Ombo, where a truly unique temple awaits. Dramatically situated right on the banks of the Nile, this temple is unusual because it's actually dedicated to two gods: Sobek, the crocodile god, and Haroeris, the falcon god. We'll explore the temple's fascinating chambers and learn about the unique duality of its dedication. Don't miss the section where mummified crocodiles are on display - a testament to the ancient Egyptians' reverence for these powerful creatures.

With the fascinating Kom Ombo behind us, our cruise continues southward towards Aswan, the historic gateway to Nubia. Enjoy the remaining daylight hours out on deck, watching the sun cast long shadows over the river and the desert landscape as we approach this vibrant city. Perhaps you'll spot traditional felucca sailboats gliding along the water, or catch sight of a Nubian village with its brightly painted houses.

**OVERNIGHT:** On board 5-star cruise boat

**MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 6: Abu Simbel option. Sail the Nile on a traditional Felucca. Visit Philae Temple & Aswan Dam**

This morning, you have the incredible opportunity to embark on an optional excursion to the awe-inspiring Abu Simbel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that stands as a testament to the grandeur of ancient Egypt. We'll depart before dawn, making our way through the desert landscape. Our goal is to arrive in time to witness the magical moment when the rising sun illuminates the facade of the temples, casting a golden glow on the colossal statues of Ramses II. It's a truly unforgettable experience that captures the mystique and majesty of this ancient wonder.

If you choose to remain in Aswan, we'll step back in time and experience the magic of the Nile River firsthand with a leisurely sail on a traditional Felucca sailboat. Imagine yourself gliding along the legendary waters, the gentle breeze filling the sails as you soak in the stunning scenery of Aswan from a unique perspective. It's the perfect way to unwind and connect with the soul of Egypt before continuing our explorations (please note that if visiting Abu Simbel, the Felucca ride will be missed as these activities both take place this morning)

Our afternoon tour in Aswan takes us to the enchanting island temple complex of Philae, dedicated to the goddess Isis. We'll journey by boat to this picturesque island, where the temple complex, with its graceful columns and intricate carvings, seems to rise organically from the water. Philae remains one of Egypt's most romantic and picturesque sites, its beauty enhanced by its remarkable history. The entire complex was carefully dismantled and relocated to its current location following the construction of the Aswan High Dam, ensuring its preservation for generations to come.

Speaking of the dam, we'll also pay a visit to the impressive Aswan High Dam, a monumental feat of engineering that harnessed the power of the Nile and created Lake Nasser, one of the world's largest man-made lakes. We'll learn about the dam's construction and its impact on Egypt, both positive and negative, gaining a deeper understanding of this country's complex relationship with its lifeline, the Nile River.

**OVERNIGHT:** On board 5-star cruise boat

**MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

**EXTRAS:** Abu Simbel overland

## **Day 7: Morning flight to Cairo. Visit the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). Optional afternoon tours**

This morning, we bid farewell to Aswan and embark on a short flight back to Cairo, where we'll delve deeper into the heart of Egypt's captivating history. Our journey begins at the renowned Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), a treasure trove of ancient artifacts that spans millennia.

Accompanied by your expert Egyptologist guide, you'll embark on a fascinating journey through the museum's vast collection. Wander through the halls, each dedicated to a specific historical period, and marvel at the intricate sarcophagi, the delicate jewelry, and the imposing statues that bring ancient Egypt to life. Of course, no visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) is complete without gazing upon the treasures of Tutankhamun, including his iconic golden mask – a symbol of Egypt's enduring fascination. *Please note: While we will have dedicated time to visit the Museum highlights, the GEM holds one of the largest archaeological collections in the world and therefore it won't be possible to explore the museum in its entirety. If you wish to explore further, you have the option to add on our GEM re-visit package, which will allow you to return and explore at your leisure during your scheduled free time.*

This afternoon offers the freedom to explore Cairo at your own pace. Perhaps you'll wander through the bustling streets, soaking up the city's vibrant energy, or relax at a charming café, enjoying the warm Egyptian sunshine.

Alternatively, you can join an optional afternoon tour to explore the labyrinthine alleys of the Khan el-Khalili bazaar, a vibrant marketplace where the scents of spices and perfumes fill the air. Lose yourself in the maze of stalls, haggling for souvenirs, handcrafted jewellery, and traditional Egyptian crafts. It's a sensory overload that captures the essence of Cairo's vibrant soul.

**OVERNIGHT:** Cairo hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Khan-el-Khalili bazaar walking tour Nile dinner cruise in Cairo

## Day 8: Fly to Amman, free time

We transfer you to Cairo airport today to board your flight to Jordans busy capital of Amman (not included). Once you arrive in Amman, one of our staff will be there to meet you before taking you to your hotel. We'll have some time to settle in before being introduced to the local area and we'll also arrange tomorrow's collection time.

You have the rest of the day to explore Amman independently.

Note: the Cairo-Amman flight is left out of the set tour price as it is often more cost effective for you to include this flight as part of your main international flight ticket. We are happy to book all your international flights, just this Cairo-Amman flight, or none of them at all, whichever works best for you. Direct flights are available with both Egypt Air and Royal Jordanian Airlines - all transfers in Cairo and Amman are included.

**OVERNIGHT:** Amman hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 9: As-Salt, Amman City and Local Food Tasting

Our first visit today is to the hilltop town of As-Salt, around 40 minutes drive from Amman. As-Salt was an important trading link between the Jordan Valley and Eastern Desert, and once the capital of Amman. The town developed its old Islamic architecture using yellow limestone, which was the finest at the time and many impressive buildings can still be seen today, as well as tiny narrow streets packed with shops and stalls. Today the town provides an example of religious and cultural friendship between the local Muslim and Christian

population and we take a walking tour on its self-designed 'Harmony Trail' to learn more about the town and local life in Jordan.

In the afternoon we continue with a city tour of Amman. Amman is rich in history, dating back many millennia. Archaeological discoveries have uncovered remains from the Neolithic period as well as the Hellenistic and late Roman to Arab Islamic Ages. We'll start by making our way to the Citadel - the former home of the ancient Temple of Hercules, The Umayyad Palace, the Byzantine Church before we make our way to the 6000-seater Roman theatre, which was built during the Roman Period. The ancient theatre is still in use today, playing host to numerous cultural events.

Whilst in Downtown Amman, we also include a food tasting tour. During the tour we'll try several different dishes (which will vary from departure to departure), starting with a snack of either Manakish (with its various toppings of egg, white cheese or za'atar) or a classic falafel sandwich. Perhaps the Jordanian national dish of Mansaf, slow cooked lamb with rice and yoghurt sauce. Finally we'll try one of the cities famous desserts like Knafeh from one of the popular local sweet shops.

**OVERNIGHT:** Amman hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 10: Dana Biosphere Reserve hike. Drive to Aqaba**

Today, we'll make our way down the Desert Highway, to the Dana Biosphere Reserve where we'll stop for a relatively easy hike in the beautiful scenery and hills of the reserve. This is Jordan's largest nature reserve, and there are great views of the valleys and hills on the various trails around the restored Dana village. Spring is a particularly lovely time to visit with the terrain surprisingly green and full of flowers. We'll stop for an included picnic lunch and take a walk before continuing on to the Red Sea city of Aqaba where you'll have a free evening (and morning tomorrow).

**OVERNIGHT:** Aqaba Resort

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 11: Free morning in Aqaba and overnight Wadi Rum Bedouin Camp**

This morning is free for you to relax beside the red sea, explore Aqaba or enjoy the many water sports which Aqaba has to offer. The crystal blue waters and colourful reefs around Aqaba offer some of the Red Seas best diving. Morning boat trips to go snorkelling on the nearby reefs are available too.

After joining our arrivals from Egypt this afternoon, we leave Aqaba and drive into the spectacular desert scenery of Wadi Rum where friendly Bedouin hosts are ready to greet us at a comfortable camp beneath the towering rocks and cliffs. We spend the evening and night relaxing at the camp and enjoying a delicious traditional Jordanian meal which normally includes the option of 'Zarb' a Jordanish dish normally comprising of Lamb and Chicken that is cooked underground in Bedouin style. Options this evening include a sunset camel ride or star gazing with telescopes.

**OVERNIGHT:** Wadi Rum Bedouin Camp

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 12: A jeep safari and Bedouin experience in Wadi Rum, travel to Petra

After breakfast in the camp, we take a jeep safari through the sands and beneath the towering 'jebels' of Wadi Rum, stopping to climb sand dunes and to see some of the strange rock formations, including a spectacular rock bridge.

We'll also do some local activities inspired from the Bedouin traditions, walking with a local shepherd with his sheep and goats to a Bedouin tent.

We can also join in and learn about other traditional Bedouin activities such as shearing the sheep & goats' hair, milking, grinding grains, making bread and roasting coffee until our lunch is ready. Finally, after really getting a feel for nomadic Bedouin life, we return by jeep to our camp and then drive to Petra.

You have the option for a spectacular and atmospheric introduction to Petra tonight, with the Petra by Night tour. Here you walk through the Siq to the Treasury, the whole way being atmospherically lit up by hundreds of candles.

**OVERNIGHT:** Petra hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 13: Reverse-route mountain hike to Petra via Little Petra

Today is all about exploring the Nabatean site of Petra. It was once the ancient capital of the Nabataean commercial empire until the Romans finally took over in 106AD. For a long period of time, Petra was forgotten - except by the local Bedouins - before it was rediscovered in 1812 by Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. Petra can be found at the edge of the Wadi Aruba desert, where canyon walls and towering hills make it virtually impossible to reach, except via a narrow cleft in the rock, known as the Siq. There are very few free-standing buildings in Petra, as the Nabateans chose to carve their dwellings into the multi coloured sandstone cliffs. Petra has become one of Jordan's main tourist attractions and the Jordanian Government is well aware of this. The tourism infrastructure in the adjoining village of Wadi Musa is booming, though, thankfully, once you enter through the Siq, the site is protected, there aren't that many touts or souvenir sellers, and all the building feels miles away.

We have most of the day available today to explore this ancient city, though as an added bonus, we'll be exploring Petra via the back-route which starts at Little Petra. Before embarking on our hike into Petra, we'll explore the small but equally interesting site of Little Petra, or Siq al-Barid. From here we'll take a short jeep ride to the start of the mountail trail which links Little Petra to the Monastery and main site of Petra.

The back-route into Petra makes for an interesting and much less crowded way of visiting, and what's more, you'll be rewarded with incredible mountain views towards the Holy Land. Whilst hiking the back-route you'll still have the opportunity to see all of the same monuments visited on the normal route, with the addition of Little Petra and the Monastery. The route starts with the ascent of a number of rock hewn steps and paths which straddle the mountain edge. After reaching a plateau, there is an opportunity to stop for refreshments at a small cafe from where you'll have some fantastic photo opportunities. From here the path continues until you'll have a glimpse of 'Ad-Deir' (or the Monastery) where you can have a well deserved rest before descending down into the main site of Petra.

Once in Petra the valley opens out, and you'll see tombs carved into the rock on both sides. You'll get a glimpse of the ruined Roman amphitheatre and colonnaded streets. As we continue through the ancient city of Petra, we'll

eventually reach The Khazneh (Treasury) which is probably the most familiar monument of Petra.

Whilst the back-route hike into Petra isn't particularly difficult, as a number of ascents/descents and a significant number of steps are required, this route is only suitable for those who have no issue in hiking in this type of terrain for a minimum of 2-3 hours as far as the Monastery and then a further few hours walking on sandy terrain, whilst exploring the main site of Petra.

For those with less mobility or who are worried about the distance, horse carriages are available for around 20JD (USD 28) for an agreed period of time (only available within the main site of Petra, not on the hiking route). We do not recommend riding the horses that are available.

**OVERNIGHT:** Petra hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 14: Dead Sea road to Wadi Mujib - Siq Trail Hike. Dead Sea 'swim'**

After enjoying breakfast in Petra, we'll head north along the Dead Sea road to Wadi Mujib, where we'll hike along the exciting Siq Trail. Along the way we'll be rewarded with great views of the Salt Flats at the southern end of the Dead Sea. As we continue along the shores of the Dead Sea we eventually reach the visitor centre of Wadi Mujib. You'll have time to have lunch here (not included) before entering the water and embarking on the hike.

Descending down into the gorge we enter the Wadi Mujib Nature Reserve where between months of April and October (see note below for periods outside of this) it's possible to take an exciting hike through the shallow waters that fill the gorge. Along the way you'll climb up small waterfalls where steps have been installed to make it easier, until eventually you'll reach the end of the gorge where you can relax beneath a large waterfall. The entire hike generally takes 2 to 3 hours roundtrip.

We highly recommend bringing along a dry-bag (so your camera or mobile phone don't get wet) and water shoes. It is possible to hire a dry bag at the visitors centre for around US\$7.00 and purchase water shoes for US\$7.00).

Note: In the months from November to March, when it isn't possible to hike along the Siq Trail, we'll include a visit to the Baptism site in Bethany. This is a relatively recently excavated site believed to be the biblical 'Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan' where John baptised Jesus Christ. Several churches, caves and pools dating from Roman and Byzantine periods have been discovered here. Both Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI have visited. An electric minibus takes you from the visitor centre to the three sites: Tell Mar Elias, the Baptism Pools and John the Baptist's Church.

After a day of activities, we'll make our way down to our resort right on the banks of the Dead Sea, where you have some free time to swim - or rather float - in its incredibly salty waters and to relax by the hotel pool. Don't forget a newspaper or magazine for your iconic Dead Sea photo!

**OVERNIGHT:** Dead Sea hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 15: Madaba, Mount Nebo and Roman Jerash**

After a restful night we head to nearby Madaba, where we'll marvel at the Byzantine mosaics and the 'Madaba Map' - which is the oldest preserved map of the Holy Land. From Madaba, we'll make our way to Mount Nebo, the place where the prophet Moses looked across the Promised Land and is also his burial place. On a clear day,

which is most of the time, you get great views towards Jericho and beyond from here.

Our final visit of the day is to the ancient city of Jerash - known for being one of the largest and well-preserved Greco-Roman cities outside of Europe. Once we arrive in Jerash, we'll visit the Forum, explore its Roman colonnaded streets, the Nymphaeum and the Temple of Artemis - built on one of the highest points in the city.

We end our day with a return drive to Amman, where we'll spend our final night in Jordan.

**OVERNIGHT:** Amman hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 16: Amman, free time, departure airport transfer**

Your time is free in Amman today until we pick you up from your hotel and transfer you to the airport for your departure. Further sightseeing tours are available today if you have a late afternoon or evening flight, including a trip to the Baptism Site at Bethany on the Jordan River. This tour also connects well with several of our Egypt and Israel tours; please contact us for ideas and help with connections.

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Extra day in Amman - post-tour

### **Included:**

- Egypt: 3 nights accommodation in 5-star hotels, 4-night 5-star Nile cruise from Luxor to Aswan
- Jordan: 5 nights in 3 to 4-star hotels, 2 nights at resorts in Aqaba and the Dead Sea & overnight Bedouin camp in Wadi Rum in comfortable tents
- Felucca sailboat experience in Aswan
- The Back Route hike into Petra
- Siq Trail Hike in Wadi Mujib
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- All transport and transfers in private AC vehicles (plus Bedouin jeeps in Wadi Rum)
- Sightseeing tours as detailed in the itinerary
- Services of an English speaking tour leader and local guides in Jordan
- Domestic flights in Egypt (Cairo-Luxor, Aswan-Cairo)
- Services of a local Egyptologist guide in Egypt
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

### **Excluded:**

- International flights (available on request)
- Cairo to Amman flight (available on request or bookable with your international flight ticket)
- Egypt Visa fees (available on arrival for US\$25 for most nationalities)
- Jordan Visa fees (free visa available with your Jordan Pass - see tour notes)
- Travel insurance (mandatory, [get quote here](#))
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Entrance fees in Egypt (allow approx. US\$135)

- Entrance fees (discounted package included in the Jordan Pass, available in advance for JD70)
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tipping kitty in Egypt (allow US\$80) plus tour guide tips
- Tips in Jordan
- Hotel gala dinners (see Tour notes)
- Any other items not mentioned above

## Notes

### **Hotel Gala Dinners:**

Many of Egypt's hotels and Nile cruise boats arrange a very special gala dinner with entertainment in the evening on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Payment for these is often optional on Christmas Eve (24 Dec) but normally compulsory on New Year's Eve (31 Dec), whether you attend or not. Prices can range from around US\$50 to over US\$180 per person in 5-star hotels. Final decisions on prices and whether dinners are compulsory are made relatively close to the time. We aim to always select hotels that make their Gala Dinners optional, though this is not always possible, especially for New Year's Eve. Gala dinner prices are therefore not included in our prices above, but will be added to your booking if they become required. Please budget accordingly. More information is available on request.

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## Hot air balloon in Luxor

Min numbers: 1

This popular optional tour starts early in the morning so that you experience the sunrise over the Valleys of the Kings & Queens, temples and desert. We endeavour to use the earliest flights of the day as they are timed to fit with the rising sun, this means that times may vary. You get around 1 hour in the air.

The price of this option is approximately \$170.00. Please note that this option is only available to be booked locally, via your tour guide who will also advise you of the current price.

## Alexandria day trip

Min numbers: 1

Alexandria is about 2.5 hours drive, north of Cairo on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. This ex colonial city is the second largest in Egypt and our visit will include the Roman amphitheatre with its twelve semi-circular marble tiers, the Catacombs of Kom al-Shoqafa which is the largest Roman cemetery in Alexandria, Pompey's Pillar, Fort Qaitbey (from outside), the famous modern library before returning to Cairo. If time allows you can tour inside Fort Qaitbey and we may also visit the Montazah Palace gardens. Lunch at a seafood restaurant is included. As the tour takes a full day you will either need a late evening flight departure on the last day of the tour to be accommodated it, or to add an extra day to the start or end of your trip.

Prices are based on a minimum of 2 travellers choosing the option. Solo traveller supplements apply. Entrance fees to sites visited are not included (budget approx. USD 28)

## Cairo city tour

Min numbers: 1

This half day guided tour of Cairo begins with Islamic areas including the Citadel of Saladdin, boasting the famous Alabaster Mosque of Mohammed Ali. Then we head onto the Coptic area of Cairo where the Romans constructed the fortress of Babylon. The church of St. Mary was built over the ruins of two towers of the fortress whilst it is more commonly known as the Hanging Church next stop is St. Sergius which is said to be the resting place of the Holy Family. The tour finishes at the Khan-el-Khalili bazaar. The entrance fees budget covers the Coptic Museum, the Citadel and the Sultan Hassan Mosque. Depending on your day, you may not have time to visit all of these.

Entrance fees to sites visited are not included (budget approx. USD 22)

Prices shown are based on a minimum of 2 people travelling. Solo traveller supplements apply.

## **Abu Simbel overland**

Min numbers: 2

The temples built by Ramses II at Abu Simbel are one of Egypt's highlights, and have a fascinating story behind them to go with their impressive size. When Lake Nasser was flooded, the final water level was going to submerge several temples, the most important of which being Abu Simbel. The temple was therefore dismantled completely and rebuilt further up the hillside where it sits today. The temple stands today as a testament to Ramses II and the great building prowess of the ancient Egyptians, as well as to modern engineering. We depart Aswan very early in the morning (around 4am), with the aim of getting to Abu Simbel to see the temples in the light of the rising sun. We then have a guided tour with one of our Egyptologists and some free time before we drive back to Aswan (approx. 3 1/2 hours drive each way, with around 2 hours at the temples). The tour itinerary is designed so you will not miss any other activities if you choose this option.

Note - we choose the overland route to get to Abu Simbel as the flight times there are unreliable and the journey using the flight is much more segmented (you get more rest on the coach), not to mention it is much more expensive to fly.

Entrance fees to the site (approx. US\$17, 50% for children) are not included in the option price and should be paid locally. A minimum of 2 people is required to operate this option.

## **Request a quote for Amman to Cairo flight**

Min numbers: 1

This flight is a required part of the tour. It is left out of the set tour price as it is often more cost effective for you to include this flight as part of your main international flight ticket. We are happy to book all your flights, just the Amman-Cairo flight, or none of them at all, whichever works best for you. UK residents will need to book their own flights. Direct flights are available with both Egypt Air and Royal Jordanian Airlines. You can fly at anytime during the day - all transfers in Amman and Cairo are included. If you add this option to your booking, we will get back to you with a quotation for this flight.

## **Saqqara, Dashour & Memphis**

Min numbers: 1

This half day guided tour on the outskirts of Cairo tour provides more insight into the history and evolution of pyramid building, and of the Egyptian civilisation. Our tours are based in the area of ancient Memphis, a former capital of Egypt. First we'll visit Saqqara, a huge desert necropolis which was built for the kings and nobles of the Old Kingdom. Here we see Zoser's 'step' pyramid and the adjacent Imhotep museum where we learn more about Memphis and the history of the region. Next we head to Dashour to see one of the next attempts at pyramid building. Dashour's moniker of the 'bent pyramid' shows they still had a bit to learn, but this is a fascinating site and the pyramid still has much of its original limestone cladding. We'll then return you to your hotel.

Prices are based on a minimum of 2 people choosing the option. Entrance fees to the sites visited are not included (budget approx. USD 21). Solo traveller supplements apply.

## **Camel Ride in Wadi Rum**

Min numbers: 1

This option adds on a fun sunset or sunrise camel ride through the Wadi Rum desert.

## **Extra day in Cairo (5-star) - pre-tour**

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note:** Single room and peak season supplements apply.

## Single room supplement (JOSGAE18)

Min numbers: 1

This group tour is based on twin-share accommodation. If you are a single traveller and would like to guarantee yourself a single room throughout the tour, please add this option onto your booking. If you are happy to share a room, please let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you pay your balance, then 50% of the single room supplement fee will be payable. If a room share becomes possible after you have paid your balance then your payment towards the supplement will be refunded. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

**Note:** Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

## Felucca to Hotel upgrade

Min numbers: 1

If you would like some more comfort in place of sleeping on the deck of the felucca, then this option provides an extra night in a hotel in Aswan instead. You then rejoin the rest of the group after they finish on the felucca. Your time is free in Aswan, but additional sightseeing tours are available locally on request. Single room supplements apply.

## Pyramids Camel Ride

Min numbers: 1

Experience the Giza Pyramids from a unique vantage point with an optional camel ride. This excursion takes you across the desert to a scenic view point, offering panoramic views of the pyramids. Capture memorable photos and enjoy the desert landscape.

## Cairo Sunset Felucca

Min numbers: 1

Take a relaxing felucca ride on the Nile at sunset. See Cairo's landmarks from the water as the sky changes colour. Enjoy a peaceful break from the city, and get great photo opportunities of the skyline. This trip offers a calm way to experience the Nile and create memorable moments of your time in Egypt.

The price of this option is based on a minimum of 2 travellers, single supplements may apply when this tour is operated for just 1 passenger.

## Cairo Tower inc.transfers

Min numbers: 1

Experience breathtaking panoramic views of Cairo by night with an optional evening visit to the iconic Cairo Tower. This trip includes convenient round-trip transfers from your hotel, ensuring a comfortable and hassle-free journey. Ascend to the tower's observation deck and witness the city's glittering skyline, the Nile River, and the illuminated landmarks stretching into the distance.

**Please note:** The Cairo Tower entrance fee is not included and is approximately \$8. Pricing is based on a minimum of 2 passengers, a single supplement applies when this tour is operated for just 1 adult.

## **Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) Visit**

Min numbers: 1

Elevate your Egyptian exploration with an unmissable optional guided visit to the awe-inspiring, brand new Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) in Cairo. This monumental museum is a landmark achievement, eagerly anticipated for years, and now ready to share its treasures with the world. We will provide comfortable and convenient return transportation directly from your accommodation to the museum, allowing you to relax and anticipate the wonders ahead without the hassle of navigating Cairo's bustling streets.

Upon arrival, you will embark on an enlightening tour led by an expert guide. They will bring the wonders of the GEM to life, providing fascinating insights into Egypt's rich and captivating history and navigating you through its vast collections. Your guide will highlight the most significant artefacts, ensuring you don't miss the key exhibits, including colossal statues, intricate jewellery, and the famed treasures of Tutankhamun, all presented in a state-of-the-art setting befitting their historical importance. This guided experience will deepen your understanding and appreciation of the splendours on display.

Please be aware that the entrance fee to the Grand Egyptian Museum is not included in the cost of this optional excursion. As of the time of publication (Dec 2025), the standard entrance fee is approximately \$31 per person.

Don't miss this exceptional opportunity to be among the early visitors to what is destined to become one of the world's most important cultural institutions, all while benefiting from the knowledge and passion of a dedicated guide. Secure your place on this excursion and prepare for an unforgettable and insightful encounter with the splendours of ancient Egypt in a truly twenty-first-century museum.

## **Karnak Sound & Light Show**

Min numbers: 1

Experience the magic of Karnak Temple at night with a captivating sound and light show. This optional extra includes convenient round-trip transport from your hotel, ensuring a hassle-free evening as you witness the ancient wonders illuminated against the Egyptian sky.

Pricing is based on a minimum of 2 passengers travelling together. Supplements may apply when this option is operated for just 1 passenger.

## **Siwa Oasis Extension (3 Nights)**

Min numbers: 1

Discover the wonders of Siwa Oasis on a 4-day optional tour from Cairo, featuring ancient sites, unique natural landscapes like salt lakes and desert springs, and cultural experiences before returning to Cairo.

## **Philae Sound and Light Show**

Min numbers: 1

Experience the magic of Philae Temple at night with a captivating sound and light show. This optional extra includes convenient round-trip transport from your hotel, ensuring a hassle-free evening as you witness the ancient wonders illuminated against the desert sky.

Pricing is based on a minimum of 2 passengers travelling together. Supplements may apply when this option is operated for just 1 passenger.

## Nubian Village Visit by Boat

Min numbers: 1

Embark on a captivating journey along the Nile and immerse yourself in the vibrant culture of the Nubian people. This optional day trip, departing from Aswan, offers a unique opportunity to experience traditional Nubian life.

Board a motorboat and sail upriver, enjoying breathtaking views of the Nile's picturesque scenery. Arrive at a colourful Nubian village, where you'll be welcomed with warm hospitality. Explore the village's distinctive mud-brick houses, adorned with bright colours and intricate designs.

Discover the rich history and traditions of the Nubian people, learning about their unique customs and way of life. You'll also have the chance to browse local handicrafts and souvenirs, supporting the village's artisans.

This optional excursion provides an unforgettable glimpse into Nubian culture, offering a peaceful and authentic experience away from the bustling city of Aswan. Return to Aswan by boat.

## Petra by night (local payment)

Min numbers: 1

This magical experience takes you in through the narrow and winding Siq to the Treasury at the entrance to Petra. The whole route and the sand in front of the Treasury is lit up by numerous candles creating a beautiful and atmospheric sight. While at the Treasury you'll also enjoy some traditional Bedouin music and tea.

Pricing includes your entrance ticket and any transfers required to and from your hotel. Please bring a flashlight/torch with you for this trip as the path through the Siq is rough underfoot in places and while there are candles all the way, a torch provides extra assurance against mis-stepping.

**Please Note: This is a local payment option, payment will be collected by your tour guide whilst in Jordan.**

## Petra Kitchen - Cooking Class

Min numbers: 1

Enhance your Petra experience with a delightful evening immersed in Jordanian culture and cuisine at the renowned Petra Kitchen. This popular optional activity offers a fantastic opportunity to participate in a hands-on cookery class, working alongside local chefs and women to prepare a range of traditional Jordanian dishes. You'll learn about local ingredients, master authentic techniques, and discover the secrets behind delicious regional specialities, typically culminating in enjoying the multi-course feast you've helped create together. It's a fun, interactive, and social way to spend an evening after exploring the wonders of Petra.

Please note that spaces for the Petra Kitchen Cookery Class are limited and it is exceptionally popular. Therefore, pre-booking is essential to guarantee your participation, and we strongly recommend securing your spot well in advance to avoid disappointment due to high demand.

## Wadi Rum Astronomy Experience

Min numbers: 1

Venture into the heart of Wadi Rum's captivating desert landscape after nightfall and witness a celestial display like no other. Far from city lights, the vast, clear skies above this ancient valley reveal a breathtaking panorama of stars.

Join our optional astronomy tour and embark on a journey through the cosmos. Our expert guides will illuminate the constellations, planets, and deep-sky objects visible to the naked eye, sharing fascinating insights into their mythology and scientific significance.

Experience the profound silence and tranquility of the desert night as you gaze upon the Milky Way's shimmering expanse. With the aid of powerful telescopes, you'll delve deeper into the universe, observing distant galaxies and nebulae with remarkable clarity. This is an unforgettable opportunity to connect with the cosmos and appreciate the sheer scale and beauty of the night sky in one of the world's most spectacular natural settings.

## **Wadi Rum Hot Air Balloon Flight**

Min numbers: 1

Enhance your Wadi Rum visit with an optional hot air balloon flight. Experience a sunrise view of the 'Valley of the Moon' from above. Observe the desert landscape as the sun rises, providing unique photographic opportunities. Flights are early morning, conducted by professional pilots, and subject to weather conditions. Bookings are confirmed the evening before. A full refund is provided if the flight is cancelled due to adverse weather conditions.

## **Wadi Rum Quad Bikes**

Min numbers: 1

Unleash your adventurous spirit and explore the magnificent desert landscapes of Wadi Rum on an exhilarating quad biking excursion. This optional activity puts you in control of your own All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV), allowing you to navigate the sandy plains and weave between the iconic towering rock formations under the guidance of local experts. 1 Feel the thrill as you power through the stunning scenery of the 'Valley of the Moon', accessing unique viewpoints and experiencing the vastness of the desert in a truly dynamic way. It's a perfect add-on for those seeking an adrenaline rush and a different perspective on Wadi Rum's breathtaking beauty.

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## 1. Accommodation

The hotels used on this tour are rated at the 3 and 4-star level in Jordan, and 5-star level in Egypt. This gradual increase is intentional to improve your comfort as your time away goes on. Local star ratings may vary from international standards but we ensure we use some of the best hotels available at the level stated.

Accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will have a private double room.

A friendly local homestay is included for one night in Rasoun village. Accommodation here is in shared rooms holding up to 4 people. There are a number of homes in the village that will accommodate guests, so depending on our final group size we may split across several houses. We will all eat together in one house with the hosts, who will also provide a tour of the village. All beds and bedding are provided. Bathrooms are separate and shared but quite basic. Overall you can expect a simple but comfortable, and very welcoming experience with good food and interesting insights into local village life in rural Jordan.

In Wadi Rum we use a Bedouin camp located inside the Wadi Rum Protected Area. Accommodation is in permanent traditional goat hair tents with proper beds and all bedding provided. Bathrooms are separate, though some en-suite tents are also available and subject to availability you can upgrade to these locally if you wish. You can also bring a sleeping bag if you wish, and find a sheltered spot on the rocks on the edge of the camp and sleep under the stars.

Please see the Felucca note for more information on the overnight Nile felucca cruise.

One night is also included on a sleeper train in Egypt (see Transport).

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

### Gala Dinners

Many of Egypt and Jordan's hotels arrange a very special gala dinner with entertainment in the evening on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Payment for these is often optional on Christmas Eve (24 Dec) but may be compulsory on New Year's Eve (31 Dec), whether you attend or not. Prices can range from around US\$50 to over US\$150 per person. Final decisions on prices and whether dinners are compulsory are made relatively close to the time. We aim to always select hotels that make their Gala Dinners optional, though this is not always possible. Gala dinner prices are therefore not included in our prices above, but will be added to your booking if they become required. More information is available on request.

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## 2. Felucca Sailboat

This tour features an overnight felucca cruise. Feluccas are very basic traditional Nile sailboats and are a fun and relaxing way to travel down the river. You sleep on the deck of the boat (mattresses and some blankets are provided, but we suggest that you bring a sleeping sheet, blanket or light sleeping bag during the winter months of November-February). There are no toilet facilities on board, but you will be joined several times each day and at night by our support boat where a toilet and warm showers will be available. Mosquito nets are provided for use while you are sleeping but you should bring mosquito repellent for the evenings and early mornings. Your Nubian boat crew will cook all your meals while on board and entertain you in the evenings.

If you would prefer some more comfort in place of the felucca cruise, then an upgrade to an extra night in the hotel in Amman is available. You then rejoin the group the next morning after they finish on the felucca, and carry on with them to Luxor.

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## 3. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour.

In Jordan we use private AC minivans/minibuses for all the transfers and journeys throughout the tour, depending on the number of travellers in the group. The jeeps used in Wadi Rum are provided by the local Bedouins we work with, and while suitable for your desert safari, they may fall below the normal safety and quality standards for vehicles we use during the rest of our tours.

In Egypt we again use AC minivans/minibuses/coaches, many of which are fitted with speed limiters, and all are inspected and checked daily.

For the overnight train journey from Cairo to Aswan (approx. 12 hrs) this tour uses the overnight sleeper train. This train has private twin berth cabins with large seats and fold-down beds with sheets, pillow & blanket. The lockable cabins also have a washbasin and storage cupboard, and an airline tray-style evening meal and breakfast is included. If you wish you may upgrade this journey to an internal flight.

#### **Amman to Cairo flight**

The connecting flight from Amman to Cairo is not included in the price of this tour. It is left out of the set tour price as it is sometimes more cost effective for you to include this flight as part of your main international flight ticket. We are happy to assist with all your flights, just the Amman-Cairo flight, or none of them at all, whichever works best for you. Direct flights are available with both Egypt Air and Royal Jordanian Airlines. To try to keep the group together we recommend Egypt Air flight MS720 which departs Amman between 09.30 and 10.30, though if necessary you can fly at other times too - all transfers in Amman and Cairo are included.

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#### **4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides**

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, on our small group tours we won't ever put you in a full size coach packed with other people and just one guide. Having a smaller group size also allows us to stay in more interesting accommodation, like the homestay in Rasoun, and to include some activities and experiences that just wouldn't be possible with large numbers.

This tour has a minimum group size of 2, and maximum of 14 for the Jordan section, and 18 in Egypt where we may join with other travellers doing one of our Egypt only tours.

To accompany you on the tour in Jordan we provide an English speaking local tour leader/driver and specialist guides in Jerash, Amman and Petra. Groups of 5 or more will have both a driver and a professional guide throughout the trip. In Egypt a professional Egyptologist guide will accompany you for all the tours in Cairo, and then from Aswan to Luxor. We also have representatives in all the major towns/cities en-route who will look after the practical arrangements for the tour.

At Encounters Travel we only use local Jordanian and Egyptian guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

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#### **5. Activity level**

This tour includes several walks or hikes in Jordan and while you do not need to be super fit by any means, you should bring suitable footwear.

In the Ajloun Forest Reserve we will hike through scrubland and forest for several hours in the afternoon. The guide will vary the route and duration of the walk based on how everyone is feeling and the current weather.

In Dana Biosphere Reserve we'll take a short walk through the hills around the restored Dana village. Trails are generally always dry and a little rocky but we won't be taking one of the longer more challenging hikes here.

In Petra, you will be doing a lot of walking to explore the site. The minimum distance you'll walk, from the entrance to the Siq, through the Siq to the Treasury, through the site to the Theatre and Byzantine church, and then back out again, is around 8km. If you would like to hike up to the Monastery, or High Place of Sacrifice, you should expect to add another 2 or 3km, much of it up or down. You can take everything at your own pace, but do be prepared for a long day. Again comfortable walking shoes and a daypack are required.

There are no walks of similar durations on the Egypt section of the tour. However, access on and off the feluccas is by way of planks and steps, and you do need to be fairly mobile for this part of the trip.

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## 6. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on Saturdays throughout the year. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers and a maximum of 18. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request. Please do check our website for special offers on particular dates.

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**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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