

Your passport to adventure

Hidden Treasures

Country(ies): Sudan

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C 4x4 vehicle & boat

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 16

Days: 10 days

Start Location: Khartoum, Sudan

End Location: Khartoum, Sudan

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 8, Dinners - 6

Highlights:

Capital city Khartoum, Sufi Whirling Dervishes, old souk of Omdurman, Naga & Mussawarat, Meroe Pyramids, Jebel Barkal, Nubian house in Karima, Nuri



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Khartoum

Upon arrival our staff will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel in Khartoum where they'll help you settle in and introduce you to the local area. An optional city tour is available if you arrive this morning.

OVERNIGHT: Khartoum hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Khartoum city tour & Dervish ceremony Single Room Supplement (SUSGHT) Extra day in Khartoum - pre-tour

Day 2: Khartoum to Karima

We'll leave Khartoum this morning and head northwards to visit the animal market on the outskirts of Omdurman. The market here sells different types of cattle, sheep and camels which are brought here from various parts of Sudan. Our journey then continues across the flat Western Desert, before we cross Wadi Muqaddam with its many acacia trees. We'll make a short stop at a local tea house, in effect a very spartan roadside service station used by local truck drivers for a meal and some rest. On arrival in Merowe we'll cross the Nile and arrive in the small town of Karima where we spend the night.

OVERNIGHT: Karima Nubian Rest House

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Karima, Necropolis of El Kurru and Jebel Barkal

Our tours today start with one of the Nubian desert landmarks, Jebel Barkal. These isolated red sandstone mountains have been considered holy since ancient times and can be seen from a far distance across the desert. Here we'll see a large temple dedicated to the Pharaohs of the New Reign and their patron Amon. Known as Amon's 'Pure Mountain', the equivalent of the Olympus of the Nubians, this was the heart of Nubian religion for more than 1,000 years. Along with the ruins of the main temple there we can see several sculptured granite rams that it is thought bordered a long avenue leading to a pier on the River Nile. The archaeological sites here are on the World Heritage list.

In the afternoon we will head south to the village of El Kurru to see one of the necropolisis of Napata, the ancient capital. The main tomb of interest here is excavated in the rock under some partially collapsed pyramids, and is decorated with images of the gods, Pharaohs and has various multicoloured hieroglyphic inscriptions. Our final visit today is to the fascinating site of an ancient forest with hundreds of petrified tree trunks. Sunset over the desert then rounds off the day.

OVERNIGHT: Karima Nubian Rest House

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Nile boat trip and the Pyramids of Nuri

After breakfast, we visit the market in Karima where we can have a real experience of daily life of the local Sudanese people. We'll then take to the water and board a small motorboat for a pleasant trip along the Nile to see the contrasts between the sandy stretches and cultivated islands. The 4th Cataract on the Nile is a little further north from here, where rocky granite formations speeded the waters up and formed many rapids which also impeded navigation. However, since the Merowee Dam was built in 2008 these scenic rapids are no more. After a picnic lunch we'll visit the archaeological site of Nuri which is home to many pyrmaids, among them one for the great Pharaoh Taharqa, who was part of the 25th Dynasty of Egypt.

OVERNIGHT: Karima Nubian Rest House

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Karima, visit Old Dongola

We have a long day on the road today, but busy with various different and interesting visits and encounters. After an early start we'll visit a very local and traditional market, before following the Nile to the archaeological site of Old Dongola. The site here comprises Coptic Christian churches with marbles columns as well as other ruins situated on the bank of the Nile. We are in the heart of the Nubian region here, and the local population live in small villages and speak a different language to the Arabs in Sudan. Women are not required to cover their faces and speak readily with foreigners and tourists. Several houses in these villages are painted with patterns of flowers, but most are completely white. We'll have our picnic lunch in one of the village houses with tea and coffee preprated by our Nubian host family. In the afternoon we'll return to Karima.

OVERNIGHT: Karima Nubian Rest House

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Karima - Ghazali Monastery - Meroe

After crossing a bridge over the Nile this morning we enter the Bayuda Desert, an area bounded by the loop formed by the Nile between the 4th and the 6th Cataract. The desert here is characterised by sharp black basalt mountains, most of them volcanic and typically cone-shaped. En-route we will visit the Monastery of Ghazli. We're also likely to come across isolated groups of Bisharin Nomads. They live in small family groups with their caravans and herds of camels and donkeys close to isolated water wells in huts made of intertwined branches.

Later we'll cross the NIIe again using a local ferry boat, or ponton. These ferry crossings can be great fun, with the boats busy with people, vehicles, camels, goats and donkeys. After crossing the river, all of a sudden we'll get our first view of over 40 pyramids, some perfectly preserved, located on the top of a hill. This is the Royal Necropolis of Meroe, which will be our focus tomorrow.

Note - the Wadi Abu Dom track is possible only if we have a minimum of 2 vehicles - if we have a very small group with only 1 vehicle we will take a different route on tar roads.

OVERNIGHT: Meroe Pyramids permanent tented camp

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Exploring the Necropolis of Meroe, Royal City and other sites

This morning is dedicated to a visit and tour of the Meroe pyramids. This will include the Royal Necropolis of Meroe, which sits on hills covered by yellow sand dunes around 3km from the Nile. Several of the pyramids stand out particularly, with their sharp shapes edged against the clear sky. Each pyramid has its own funerary chapel with bas-reliefs decorating the walls showing the King's life and offerings to the gods. If it is open, we will also visit the Tarabil School which we support as part of our responsible tourism activities. After a coffee break at the local village of Kabushia we will visit the Sun Temple, the Western Necropolis and the Quarries of the Meroitic civilization. Finally we'll enjoy sunset at the Pyramids.

Note - we may not be able to visit the ruins of the Royal city, which was closed by UNESCO to evaluate damage caused by a flood of the Nile.

OVERNIGHT: Meroe Pyramids permanent tented camp

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Meroe to Khartoum via Mussawarat & Naga. Dervishes ceremony

We'll leave the Meroe Pyramids this morning and head southwards back towards Khartoum. On the way we'll visit the site of Mussawarat which sits in a beautiful valley, surrounded by hills. The ruins of a large and important temple are visible here. The temple's main feature is its 'Great Enclosure' which is made up of many boundary walls and constructions surrounding a temple built in the 1st century A.D. Our next stop is then at Naga, one of two centres that developed and thrived during the Meroitic period. Here, amidst a typical Saharan rocky and sandy environment, we find a temple dedicated to Apademak from the 1st century A.D. This is a wonderful building which various bas-relief decorations depicting the Pharaoh, noblemen, the god with a lion's head, and several other ritual images. Close by is a small and rather odd construction, known as the 'kiosk' which has columns and arches, and where we can pick out Egyptian, Roman and Greek styles all in the same building. Our final visit is to a temple dedicated to Amon which has many statues of rams and beautiful gates decorated with more bas-reliefs. Finally we finish our loop through northern Sudan by returning to Khartoum.

After checking in, and before sunset, we will head to the tomb of the Sufi leader Ahmed al Nil to see the fascinating and impressive Dervishes Ceremony (note - this is only possible on Fridays and if we arrive back into Khartoum in time to leave the hotel by 3pm).

OVERNIGHT: Khartoum hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Khartoum City Tour. Nuba wrestling

After a leisurely breakfast we start our sightseeing by crossing the confluence of the Blue and White Nile rivers near the Presidential Palace. In 1885 General Gordon was beheaded here by the Mahdi's troops. We'll then reach the old capital of Sudan, Omdurman, where we'll see the Mahdi's Tomb from the outside, the interesting Khalifa's House, home to a small museum about the Mahdyia (closed for refurbishment in 2022). We should have a little time to explore Omdurman's colourful souk before we take a pleasant boat ride to see the confluence of the Nile rivers. In the afternoon we'll visit the National Museum which hosts many important historical items and houses two beautiful temples in its gardens. These were rescued by UNESCO and moved here when Lake Nasser was flooded. (Note - the inner part of the museum was closed for refurbishment in 2022, but the temples in the garden should still be available to visit).

In the early evening we will hopefully enjoy a final highlight, the Nuba Wrestling competitions in Khartoum North. This is a fascinating sport, traditional in the Kordofan region of Sudan, and teakes place on Fridays, Saturdays and Wednesdays (Note - the event was paused during Covid times, but hopefully will resume).

The order of visits in Khartoum may change or be moved to a different day according to museum opening hours and other local factors.

OVERNIGHT: Khartoum hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch

EXTRAS: Extra day in Khartoum - post-tour

Day 10: Khartoum, departure airport transfer

We transfer you to the airport from your hotel around 3 hours before your flight departure time. If you have booked a full night's hotel accommodation then your day is free until we transfer you to the airport for your onward flight.

OVERNIGHT: N/A **MEALS:** Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Included:

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service (on tour days)
- Services of a local tour leader throughout
- All sightseeing tours as per itinerary
- Mineral water outside Khartoum
- Boat excursion on the Nile (life jackets will be provided)
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Visa invitation letter for most nationalities

Excluded:

- International flights (available on request)
- Arrival taxes
- Sudan visa fees (an invitation letter will be provided)
- Additional paperwork for Visa on Arrival service if required (US\$220, payable in Khartoum)
- Travel insurance (compulsory available from Encounters Travel)
- Entrance fees to archaeological sites, photo permits and local passport registration (EUR 300)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for tour leader & driver
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

The section of this tour out of Khartoum operates in two directions on different dates - either starting with Meroe, or starting with Karima. The same sites and overnight stops are maintained, just in the opposite order. Please see the Dates & Prices notes for the direction that applies to your tour.

From 1 Jan 2024 the tour will shorten by one day to 9 days, with Day 4 in Karima in effect removed. All the same sites will be visited however, with the tour of the Nuri Necropolis moved to Day 6. The Nile boat trip currently on Day 4 will no longer be included but may be available as an option to add locally.

Options

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.

Single Room Supplement (SUSGHT)

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 rowards the supplement will be refunded. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

Extra day in Khartoum - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds a full night in the hotel at the end of your tour on Day 9 or on future days, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (the standard tour price covers day-use only in the hotel up go around 11pm). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room supplements apply.

Extra day in Khartoum - 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.

Soleb extension (3 days)

Min numbers: 1

This 3-day extension visit Wawa and included tours to the Temple of Soleb & Island of Sai along with the rock engravings at Tombos and picturesque Nubian desert villages. An escort guide is provided from 6 passengers upwards. If fewer passengers select this option then an escort driver with local assistance will run this extension. The itinerary runs as shown below. Prices shown are based on 4 or more travellers booking this extension; a

slightly higher price will be due for 2-3 travellers and for those requiring a single room.

Day 9 - Karima to Wawa, via Kerma & Tombos

Today we drive west through the Nubian Desert. We reach the Nile and we cross the Bridge to Dongola city, we continue north on the western side of the Nile on the new asphalt road that crosses part of the Western Desert which in some areas has some nice granite formations. We reach the Temple of Soleb. Here we have our picnic lunch in the house of the guardian of the temple. After lunch we drive a further half hour north to then cross the Nile on a fisherman boat to reach the Island of Sai an important archaeological area where we can find ancient remains from Kerma civilization, Egyptian and Christian culture. During the navigation to the island we may hope to see Nile crocodiles on the shore of the river. After the visit we return to main land and drive back to the house where we will spend the night.. (B,L,D)

Nubian house in Soleb

This is a typical Nubian house with some rooms with 4 beds each, verandas with other beds, 2 long drop toilets, 1 naturally sun heated water shower. There is a generator working for a couple of hours, so people can charge the batteries from their cameras. A kitchen and a room for the driver is also available. The food will be prepared by our cook. The sleeping bags with sheets and mosquito nets are provided by our organization. Single rooms cannot be guaranteed

Day 10 - Soleb - Ferry crossing - 3rd cateract - Sebu - Tombos

This morning we visit the Temple of Soleb, the most beautiful Egyptian temple of all Sudan, testimony of the New Kingdom in Nubia, with many walls rich in hieroglyphic inscriptions, bas-relief figures and many columns. We then drive south leaving the main road to reach the Nile and following it among some villages before arriving to the ferry. Here we cross the River to arrive to the Eastern bank just north of the rapids of the Third Cataract which used to be the third huge obstacle that the ancients Egyptians had to face when trying to sail on the Nile River. We walk up the hill to the ancient Ottoman Fort where we can have beautiful views of the cataract. In Sebu, right on the river bank of the Nile it is possible to visit one of the richest sites of rock engraving of all Sudan with hundreds of images from prehistoric to Egyptian times. We continue driving through the Nubian villages and among the huge rocks of the Third Cataract to the village of Tombos. Here there were the ancient granite quarries with the remains of a statue of the King Taharqa, simply left there in the desert about 2800 years ago and some interesting Egyptian stele engraved on the rocks. We spend the night in a local private Nubian house, with simple/basic rooms and sharing facilities, but clean and with a couple of western toilets and shower. Dinner and overnight stay. (B.L.D.)

Day 11 - Tombos - Kerma - Karima

A short drive this morning takes us to Kerma where we visit the majestic "Defuffa" the monument that characterizes Kerma civilization. Very interesting is the Museum created by the Swiss archaeological mission after the recovery of seven statues of the Black Pharaohs in 2003. We have time to visit also the Eastern Defuffa located in the middle of the Necropolis, but to reach we need to cross agricultural fields. In the afternoon we return to Karima (B.L.D.)

Day 12- Karima to Khartoum

Today we drive south along the tarmac road across the Western Desert. We stop for lunch in a simple "chai house" (a roadhouse where the local truck drivers stop for food and to rest) and in the afternoon we reach Omdurman where we can return to the interesting souk IF required by the group. Then we cross the Nile and check-in at the hotel where day use rooms will be available until 23.30. Dinner NOT included. (B.L.)

Day 13 - Departure airport transfer

Transfer to the airport for your international flight.

Khartoum 4-star hotel upgrade

Min numbers: 1

This option upgrades the hotel in Khartoum to the 4-star Grand Holiday Villa hotel. Single room supplements apply.

Formerly the Grand Hotel, this period hotel was built in the late 1800s and originally was the office of the famous British explorer Thomas Cook. This elegant historical building exudes an old world charm of the colonial era. The hotel is centrally located in the heart of Khartoum's commercial hub, and features 160 guest room. Overlooking the Blue Nile, it once hosted the rich and famous, including Queen Victoria and Sir Winston Churchill.

Khartoum 5-star hotel upgrade

Min numbers: 1

This option upgrades the hotel in Khartoum to the 5-star Corinthia hotel. Single room supplements apply.

The Corinthia Hotel Khartoum is an elegant structure of steel and glass located in the heart of Khartoum's commercial district. This luxurious hotel sits at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile and surrounded by exquisite landscaped gardens. Each of the hotel's 230 rooms and suites offer a spectacular panoramic view of Khartoum as well as the River Nile, and include a Mini bar, flat screen TV and free Wi-Fi.

1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the Sudanese 3-star level in Khartoum as well as comfortable guesthouses, Nubian houses and deluxe tented camps Meroe. Upgrades to higher level hotels in Khartoum are available on request. All bedding is provided in the tented camps. Sleeping bags are provided at the Nubian house on the Soleb extension.

Hotel accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will stay in a private double room.

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

2. 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, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our Sudan group departures to have a minimum of 2 and maximum of 16 travellers.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local Sudanese guides and reps wherever possible. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

3. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on Thursdays between October and April. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 4 travellers. If there are only 2 or 3 travellers per date we can still run the tour but an extra supplement will be due. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request.

Private and tailor-made tours are also available on any date; please contact us for details and prices.

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Note: Please <u>download an up-to-date copy</u> of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.