THE PYRAMIDS, THE NILE, & ANCIENT EGYPT

FEBRUARY 19 - MARCH 2, 2020

Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara
Pyramids of Giza sound & light show
Egyptian Museum
Karnak & Luxor temples
4-night cruise on the Nile
Valley of the Kings
Temples of Edfu & Kom Ombo
Aswan High Dam
Visit to the home of a Nubian local
Felucca boat ride
Abu Simbel temples
**DAY 1  WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19**

**FLIGHT TO CAIRO**

Our journey begins as we transfer to the airport for our overnight flight to **Cairo, Egypt**.

*Note: The airport location and airline will be confirmed no sooner than 9 months before departure. Friends Club trips typically fly out of Chicago, Des Moines, or Cedar Rapids.*

**DAY 2  THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20  CAIRO**

A country rich in wonders and mysteries awaits us. Upon arrival, we will get our visas and transfer to the hotel for a three-night stay in **Cairo**.

Settle in, grab a bite to eat, and rest up for our Egyptian adventure!

**DAY 3  FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21  CAIRO (BL)**

Our day begins with a relaxing morning before we discover the earliest known Egyptian pyramids found at **Saqqara**. The burial ground features numerous pyramids, including the world-famous **Step Pyramid of Djoser**. Built by Imhotep for King Djoser of the 3rd Dynasty, it is considered to be Egypt’s first pyramid. We’ll also visit the tombs of significant noble men where paintings and decorations have been preserved over the course of time. Up next is **Dahshur** to see more ancient pyramids before we return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure. We’re in for a real treat this evening as we venture to the **Pyramids of Giza for a spectacular sound and light show**. The pyramids will come alive with bright colors, lasers, and projections as the Sphinx “narrates” the history of the ancient Egyptians. It will be an entertaining introduction to the last remaining Wonder of the Ancient World!

**DAY 4  SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22  CAIRO (BL)**

Today’s adventure will start at the **Egyptian Museum** where our guide will take us through the history of Pharaonic Egypt. The museum is home to 120,000 Egyptian artifacts such as mummies, jewelry, sculptures, and many items from the tomb of King Tut. Please note that if the **Grand Egyptian Museum** is opened by the date of our tour, we will visit the new museum instead! The main attraction of this $1 billion archaeological museum will be the exhibit on King Tut, which will mark the first time that all 5,000 artifacts found inside his tomb are displayed together. The exhibit will paint a complete picture of the life and death of the king, showcasing everything from his famous gold death mask to the clothes he wore and the chariots he rode in. Lunch will be enjoyed in Al-Azhar Park with outstanding views of surrounding Islamic architecture. We will then **visit one of the most famous mosques in Cairo** and explore the exciting **Kahn el-Khalili bazaar** before returning to the hotel for the evening.

**DAY 5  SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23  LUXOR (BLD)**

Following breakfast, we head back to the **Pyramids of Giza** for a closer look at the Great Sphinx and the three pyramids dedicated to Khufu, Khafre, and Mankaure. We’ll stand on the highest point of the plateau for a panoramic view of the area and then have the opportunity to enter one of the site’s smaller pyramids. Up next is the **Valley Temple of Khafre**, the **Great Sphinx**, and the **Giza Solar Boat Museum**. The museum houses the solar boat thought to have been built to transport Khufu to the afterlife. After our visit, we will continue on to the airport for our flight to **Luxor**, where our overnight accommodations and dinner as a group await.

**DAY 6  MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24  LUXOR (BLD)**

Enjoy a quiet morning before our visit to the amazing **Karnak Temple**, once the largest and most important religious complex in ancient Egypt. It took nearly 2,000 years to complete and is an impressive sight to witness with its monumental gates, enormous pillared halls, and beautiful wall carvings. From here, we will settle into our cabins aboard the MS **Esplanade** for our **four-night cruise along the Nile River**. Lunch will be served on board followed by an afternoon at leisure to enjoy the sights from the sun deck. A visit to the illuminated **Luxor Temple** is in store this evening before we overnight in port.
DAY 7  TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25
NILE CRUISING  (BLD)
After breakfast, we will make our way to the west bank of the Nile River to discover the pharaoh burial grounds in the Valley of the Kings. The valley is home to more than sixty tombs of privileged nobles and royal figures from the New Kingdom that were stocked with enough food, drink, clothing, jewelry, furniture, and pets to keep the deceased satisfied in the afterlife. The most famous tomb is that of King Tutankhamen, which was discovered in the 1920s and is one of the most intact tombs ever found. We will have the opportunity to go inside three of the tombs, including that of Ramses VI, which is one of the most beautiful in the entire valley. Up next are visits to a Noble Man tomb; the village of Deir el-Medina that housed the tomb workers; and the house of Howard Carter, who discovered King Tut’s tomb. We will arrive back at the ship around noon and begin cruising south toward the lock of Esna to overnight in the harbor of Edfu.

DAY 8  WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26
NILE CRUISING  (BLD)
Today we’ll venture to the Temple of Edfu. This well-preserved temple is dedicated to the falcon-god Horus and was built in approximately 200 BC. Back on the ship, we will cruise southward to Kom Ombo and take a short walk from the harbor to the Temple of Kom Ombo. This temple is unique because of its double design, meaning all of the sanctuaries and halls have been duplicated to honor two different gods. The southern half is dedicated to the god Sobek, while the northern half is dedicated to Horus. Following our time at the temple, we will return to the ship and begin sailing to Aswan.

DAY 9  THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27
NILE CRUISING  (BLD)
Up first today is a visit to the Aswan High Dam to learn how it has changed life in the valley by controlling Nile flooding and providing irrigation during droughts. We’ll then continue on to the Philae Temple situated on a small island where the goddess Isis ruled after her husband, the god Osiris, was murdered by her brother according to ancient mythology. The unfinished obelisk in Aswan’s granite quarry will be our last stop before spending the rest of the afternoon at our leisure.

DAY 10  FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28
ASWAN  (B)
We will disembark the ship this morning and depart via motorboat for one of the Nubian villages where we have been invited to the home of a local to learn about the Nubian traditions and way of life. Our host will show us around the village before we continue by boat to the famous Hotel Old Cataract where Agatha Christie wrote some of her famous stories. We’ll check in for a two-night stay and gather for high tea on the hotel terrace.

DAY 11  SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29
ASWAN  (BD)
Today is a leisurely day and will include setting sail around the archipelago of Aswan in felucca boats. The view from the Nile is astounding with the greenery of the islands, the golden sand of the desert, and the tombs decorating the river banks! A stop at Kitchener Island will introduce us to a botanical garden filled with exotic and rare plants and trees. Following our time on the island, we’ll return to the hotel for a very special dinner.

DAY 12  SUNDAY, MARCH 1
CAIRO  (BD)
A morning flight will take us south to the famed Abu Simbel temples. The temples were built by Ramses II on the west bank of the Nile River in 1244 BC and are one of the most recognizable ancient sites in Egypt. In a remarkable engineering and rescue operation during the 1960s, the temple complex was dismantled and rebuilt on a higher hill to avoid the rising waters of Lake Nasser. This is an incredible opportunity to see these ancient relics, which are now one of the most renowned ancient Egyptian landmarks. We’ll then fly back to Cairo for a casual dinner and to reminisce about our trip.

DAY 13  MONDAY, MARCH 2
HOME
We’ll transfer to the airport for our flight home.
accepts your request, you must pay the variation fee and any costs associated with it.

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