



WORLD DISCOVERY
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

Into the White Desert



The surreal landscape of the White Desert

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cairo.

On arrival in Cairo you will be met by a representative of World Discovery who will organise your Egyptian visa and assist you through immigration and customs. You will then be taken by private car direct to your hotel.

DAY 2 – Pyramids, Sphinx and Solar Boat Museum.

Your hotel is located close to the Pyramids of Giza. After a leisurely breakfast, you will meet your World Discovery guide and spend the morning visiting this last surviving wonder of the ancient world. View the three monumental pyramids of Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinus, and also the nearby Sphinx, dating from 2,500 BC, whose familiar outline is known to everyone yet whose purpose and meaning still remain a mystery. An added bonus this morning is the included entrance to the Solar Boat Museum. Located at the foot of the Great Pyramid of Cheops, this purpose-built building houses the unique 140-foot ancient Egyptian boat which was discovered in pieces on this spot as recently as 1954 and carefully reconstructed over a period of 14 years. The afternoon is free, with the option of visiting the site of ancient Memphis, first capital of the unified Upper and Lower Egypt (3,200 BC), and the funerary complex of Zoser at Saqqara, including the superb Step Pyramid, described by one historian as the "beginning of architecture". This evening there is the option of attending the spectacular Sound and Light performance at the Pyramids.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 3 – The Egyptian Museum.

Drive into Central Cairo for your visit to the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities. Whilst perhaps lacking the clarity of presentation of more modern establishments, this grand old building is unmissable, and contains the finest collection in the world of ancient Egyptian artefacts, including the astonishing array of treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamun. For an additional fee you may choose to visit the Royal Mummy Room containing the bodies of such legendary pharaohs as Tuthmosis II, Seti I and Ramses II. Return to your hotel in Giza for lunch, or you may choose to stay on in the city and enjoy an optional excursion to Old Cairo; we have a choice of 3 itineraries: (a) The Citadel of Saladin, Mosque of Mohamed Ali and the famous Khan al-Khalili bazaar, (b) Islamic Cairo, including the glorious Ibn Tulun Mosque and (c) The Coptic Museum and Gayer-Anderson House.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 4 – Fly to Aswan to join your Nile Cruise. Aswan Sightseeing.

After breakfast transfer to Cairo Airport for the flight to Aswan. On arrival you will be met and transferred direct to your cruise ship at its mooring on the eastern banks of the Nile. This first class cruise ship will be your home for the next 3 nights. In the afternoon you will visit the High Dam, and also the superb Temple of Philae, rescued from the rising waters of the lake by UNESCO and painstakingly reconstructed on its own new island. Philae was the centre of the cult of Isis, and the magnificent Temple of Isis dominates the site. Pay a brief visit to the Northern Quarries to view the Unfinished Obelisk before returning to your cruise ship. Overnight in Aswan.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner.

DAY 5 – Sail via Kom Ombo and Edfu to Luxor.

In the morning sail to Kom Ombo to visit the unusual, totally symmetrical, temple dedicated to two gods – the falcon-god Haroeris (Horus the Elder) and Sobek, the crocodile god. The temple is in a beautiful setting overlooking the Nile. Continue sailing to Edfu where you will step ashore to visit the Temple of Horus, the largest and best-preserved Ptolemaic temple in Egypt. The entrance to this awesome complex is guarded by two elegant black granite statues of the falcon-god Horus, son of Osiris. Return to the M.S. Sun Ray and sail through the Esna Lock to Luxor. As ancient Thebes, Luxor was the capital of Egypt's New Kingdom (1550-1069 BC) and has attracted tourists and travellers since Greek and Roman times with its incomparable wealth of monuments.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner.

DAY 6 - Valley of the Kings and Western Thebes. Luxor and Karnak Temples.

In the early morning cross the Nile to visit the magnificent archaeological remains of Western Thebes. You will visit three tombs of the pharaohs in the famous Valley of the Kings (the selection of tombs open for visiting varies from time to time). For an additional fee, payable on the spot, you may visit the most famous tomb of all – that of the boy-king Tutankhamun, sensationally discovered in 1922 by Howard Carter. During your morning on the Western bank of the Nile you will also visit the Valley of the Queens and the monumental Temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari. In the afternoon there are included visits to the two great Pharaonic temples of the East Bank. The vast temple complex of Karnak is quite simply overwhelming, covering more than 100 acres. At its heart lies the enormous Temple of Amun with its colossal Hypostyle Hall of 137 columns and its sacred lake. The XVIIIth Dynasty Temple of Luxor, located close to the Nile in the centre of town, is built on a smaller scale, but many consider it more beautiful than Karnak. Approached through an avenue of sphinxes, the temple contains some excellent reliefs and its Colonnade of Amenophis III is renowned for the elegance of its giant papyrus columns.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner.

DAY 7 - Into the Western Desert.

Disembark from the M.S. Sun Ray after breakfast. Today you will be driven through the Western Desert to the oasis of Dakhla. The journey will take you via the XVIIIth Dynasty Temple of Hibis and the fascinating Necropolis of Bagawat, a Christian burial ground dating from between the third and seventh centuries. Overnight in Dakhla.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 8 - Dakhla. Al Qasr.

Just outside Mut, the 'capital' of Dakhla oasis, lies the well-preserved Islamic settlement of Al Qasr, built on Roman foundations and acknowledged as the longest continually inhabited site in the oasis. To walk through Al Qasr's narrow maze of streets and alleyways is to step back to medieval times; you will discover a blacksmith's forge, an antique waterwheel (or *sagqiya*) and a donkey-powered grain mill. The town's Ethnographic Museum contains artefacts and photos from all the oases in the Western Desert. The mud-brick Nasr el-Din mosque has a 21-metre minaret typical of Ayyubid architecture (12th century). You will also visit the tombs of el-Mozwaka, dating from Pharaonic times. Overnight in Dakhla.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 9 - Continue to the White Desert.

Your journey today will take you north from Dakhla through the remote Western Desert, to reach the oasis of Farafra, whose inhabitants live entirely from cultivating dates and olives. After a short stop for lunch continue to the incredible White Desert. In this surreal landscape the wind has fashioned the chalk monoliths into weird and wonderful shapes that loom above a dusty plain littered with shells and crystals. The colours change dramatically as the day wears on, and are particularly dramatic at dusk and sunrise. You will spend the night at a private campsite in the desert.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 10 - Drive via Bahariya Oasis to Cairo.

Return to Cairo via Bahariya Oasis, a key agricultural centre in Pharaonic times. Visit the old town, the Benantui tombs, the temple of Alexander and the famous Golden Mummy at the Bahariya Museum. You will reach Cairo in the late afternoon.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 11 – Fly back to UK.

Morning free. In the afternoon transfer to the airport for your homeward flight.

Meals included: Full breakfast.