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Connect Cairo, Egypt → Distance: 2,066 km → Flight Time: 3 hours, 25 minutes → Frequency: Daily

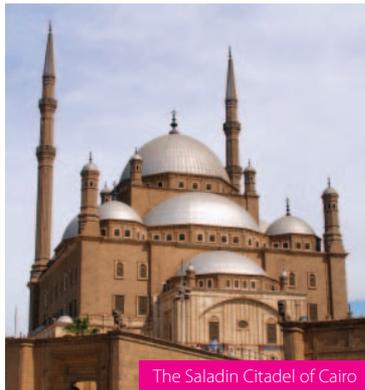
IT'S NO WONDER CAIRO IS KNOWN AS UMM AL-DUNYA ('MOTHER OF THE WORLD')

Hemmed in by the desert, with the Nile slicing through its heart, this city has said hello, and in turn waved goodbye, to a mind-boggling list of conquerors since being founded by the Fatimids in AD 969.

The district of Islamic Cairo hides a jumble of Mamluk mosques and monuments that illustrate the city's glorious zenith. To experience modern Cairo, dive straight into the vibrant street life of Downtown, overlooked by the crumbling *beaux-arts* façades of Khedive Ismail's genteel 'Paris-on-the-Nile'.

Forever restless and shape-shifting, this no-holds-barred city has its finger on

the pulse of both Africa and the Middle East. With its soundtrack of the muezzin's call to prayer, backed by the never-ceasing symphony of car horns, this truly is the city that never sleeps.



The Saladin Citadel of Cairo

GETTING AROUND



taxi

Taxis are cheap and easily hailed on the street (typical in-town fare EGP 5-10). All the new white a/c-cabs have working meters.



metro

Surprisingly speedy and efficient, the metro is the quickest way to zip around in the central city district (tickets are EGP 1 per journey).



walk

As long as it's not in the midday heat, the fascinating districts of Islamic Cairo and Downtown are best discovered on foot.



river bus

Hop on a river bus from Downtown's Corniche to check out the city from the Nile. Boats head out at 8am, 2pm, and 9pm.

01.00

Witness the experts of shimmy and shake at the Sheraton or Semiramis belly-dancing shows. The glimmering divas don't take to the stage until 2am, and the party doesn't end until the sun begins to rise over the Nile.

08.00

Have breakfast fit for a Pharaoh at Mena House Hotel with its window-seat view out to the Great Pyramids. Then walk off the feast by exploring the inner chambers of Pharaoh Khufu's masterpiece on the Giza Plateau.

11.00

Take a spectacular tour of the ancient world inside the Egyptian Museum. This Downtown architectural icon is the resting place of the dazzling golden glories of Tutankhamen's tomb as well as the Royal Mummies.

13.00

Al-Azhar Park provides panoramic views over the city's minaret-studded skyline. Stop for lunch at the Hilltop Restaurant, then wander through this lush swathe of greenery which was built over a mountain of medieval rubbish.

14.00

Take a seat in the Sultan Hassan Mosque. Built in 1356, the central courtyard's soaring beauty, dressed with dozens of hanging lamps, is one of the world's finest examples of the graceful simplicity of Islamic art.

16.00

Drink mint tea with the shopkeepers in the labyrinth of Khan El-Khalili. After haggling your heart out in the Mamluk-era *souks*, escape the hustle at Fishawi's Cafe with a hibiscus juice in hand.

17.00

Down at the Corniche hire a lateen-sailed felucca and drift out onto the Nile. Sit back on wooden deck and ponder Africa's greatest river as you glide effortlessly along the Nile's sinuous curves.

18.00

Combine dinner with a master-class in Egyptian home-cooking at Qasr Twenty. The secrets behind such classic dishes as *mahshi* and *molokhia* are all revealed at this cultural cooking school.

21.00

Zamalek is the place to head for stylish post-dinner drinks. On 26th July Street, La Bodega is a see-and-be-seen Cairo destination that boasts an elegant bar always buzzing with a hip cosmopolitan crowd.

23.00

Downtown's roads throng with crowds late into the night. Head to Midan Orabi for a prime-time seat on Cairo after-hours, where street-side cafés bustle with life backed by the soothing bubble of water pipes. ☒

→ Cairo's population is unknown. Ask a city taxi driver and they'll estimate anywhere between 12 and 20 million.