

EASE THROUGH EGYPT FROM THE DESERT TO THE NILE



Cairo – Abu Simbel

Egypt isn't only pyramids, temples and tombs. Veer off the normal Nile-hugging tourist route to explore the Western Desert oases beyond.

FACT BOX

Carbon (kg per person): 65
 Distance (km): 2079
 Nights: 14
 Budget: \$-\$\$
 When: Nov-May

1 Cairo

The country's capital is one of the best places to get your fill of Ancient Egypt at the Pyramids of Giza and Egyptian Museum. Then move forward in time to explore the city's Coptic Christian heritage, and get lost amid the Mameluke era's muddle of mosques and mausoleums.

🚌 Take an Upper Egypt bus from Cairo Gateway (Turguman) Bus Station to Bawiti, in Bahariya Oasis (2 daily; 5hr). Alternatively, minibuses leave when full from El-Monieh Bus Station in Giza (4hr).

2 Bahariya Oasis

Bahariya Oasis is the gateway to the White Desert's moonscape of surreal, wind-sculpted chalk-rock cliffs and spires, and the glistening, rock-pitted plateau of the Black Desert.

🚌 Take an Upper Egypt bus to Mut in Dahkla Oasis (2 daily; 4hr).

3 Dahkla Oasis

Surrounded by dunes and sprinkled with hidden hot springs and palm-shaded villages, Dahkla is quintessential slow-paced oasis life. Don't miss the fortified mudbrick town of Al-Qasr and the painted tombs of Qarat Al-Muzawwaqa.

🚌 Take an Upper Egypt bus to Al-Kharga (2 daily; 3hr).

4 Al-Kharga Oasis

The main town of Al-Kharga Oasis isn't a looker, but beyond stand the mural-covered tombs of Al-Bagawat's early-Christian necropolis, and a dunescape overlooked by Roman forts and Ancient Egyptian temples.

🚌 Take an Upper Egypt bus to Asyut (3 daily; 3hr 30min) then a train from Asyut Station to Luxor (8 daily; 4hr 30min).



ABOVE: NILE FELUCCAS, ASWAN



ABOVE: VALLEY OF THE KINGS, LUXOR

5 Luxor

Temples and tombs galore await in famed Luxor. Marvel at burial-chamber art in the Valley of the Kings and gaze at giant-sized wall reliefs depicting pharaonic triumph at Medinat Habu. Afterwards, crane your neck at colossal columns in Karnak's Hypostyle Hall.

🚆 Take the train to Aswan (7 daily; 3hr 15min).

6 Aswan

Aswan is Egypt's most laidback town, a place to kick back and toast Nile sunsets with *shisha* (water-pipe) and *karkaday* (hibiscus drink) after strolling the Nubian villages of Elephantine Island and relaxing on a felucca boat trip.

🚌 Take the bus to Abu Simbel (8am daily; 4hr).

7 Abu Simbel

Most travellers only come on a day trip, but overnight in sleepy Abu Simbel and you get Ramses II's triumphant temples to yourself. Salute the pharaoh's colossal likeness standing sentinel, then wander column-studded halls wrapped in boastful reliefs relaying his victories.

🚌 Take the bus back to Aswan (daily; 4hr), then train to Cairo (9 daily; 13hr). Alternatively, fly to Cairo from Aswan (3 daily; 1hr 20min).

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ALTERNATIVES

📌 Extension: Dendara

Tag on an extra day in Luxor and visit Dendara, 4km southwest of Qena. Walk through the Temple of Hathor's interior of blue-tinged reliefs, glared down upon by Hathor-head column capitals, and you'll understand why Egypt's ancient gods were so revered.

🚆 Take a train from Luxor to Gena (10 daily; 1hr 15min) then a taxi to the site. Or arrange a taxi all the way from Luxor.

📌 Diversion: Felucca to Kom Ombo from Aswan

See Egypt at its most lush and tranquil and get a close-up of Nile life on a multi-day felucca trip. Sail downriver from Aswan, passing mudbrick Nubian villages and palm-fringed banks backed by desert dunes. It's two days/one night to reach the Temple of Kom Ombo, dedicated to gods Horus and Sobek.

📌 Felucca trips are usually arranged directly with felucca captains in Aswan.

