

# HARVARD

ALUMNI TRAVELS



## EGYPT & THE ETERNAL NILE

October 27 – November 10, 2025

### PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Accompanied by an expert Egyptian guide, this singular small group journey through antiquity travels from vibrant Cairo and the Great Pyramids to Abu Simbel and Ancient Nubia for a fascinating cruise on Lake Nasser. Then: a classic voyage along the Nile from Aswan to Luxor before returning to Cairo.

## SCHEDULE BY DAY

*B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner*

### MONDAY, OCT 27

DEPART U.S. CAIRO, EGYPT

We depart on our overnight flight to Cairo.

### TUESDAY, OCT 28

ARRIVE CAIRO

We arrive in the Egyptian capital and transfer directly to our hotel. As guests' arrival times may vary greatly, we have no group activities or meals planned..

Overnight: *Sofitel Cairo Nile el Gezira*

### WEDNESDAY, OCT 29

CAIRO

This morning we encounter the Giza Plateau and its three famed pyramids, including the Great Pyramid (or Pyramid of Cheops), which ranks among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. A truly awe-inspiring sight, the Great Pyramid was built around 2600 BCE, and at more than 450 feet tall, was the tallest man-made structure on earth for nearly 3,800 years. In front of the Pyramids stands the serene Sphinx, whose leonine body and human face were carved almost entirely of one piece of limestone and submerged by desert sands for thousands of years. We spend time visiting the pyramids, seeing them up close and marveling at their 4,600-year longevity.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we reach Old Cairo – so named because the ancient Roman fort

named Babylon stood here – the city's oldest section that is a maze of medieval streets, Islamic mosques, minarets, and domes. We begin at 5th-century St. Sergius, the oldest church in the area. Inside, 12 columns representing the 12 Apostles separate the nave from the aisles. We also visit el-Muallaqa, the "hanging church" built over the bastions of a Roman gate. Believed to date from the 7th century, the church features a ceiling that resembles an ark, and a carved marble pulpit considered the finest in Egypt. Another stop today is St. George's Church, dating to the 10th century and built on top of an ancient Roman tower. Famed as the only round church in Egypt, St. George's still functions as an active house of worship and ranks as Egypt's principal Greek Orthodox church. After a long day of exploration, we return to our hotel late afternoon. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Overnight: *Sofitel Cairo Nile el Gezira (B, L)*

### THURSDAY, OCT 30

CAIRO / ABU SIMBEL / EMBARK LAKE  
NASSER CRUISE

It's a very early morning as we set off for a flight to Aswan where we board a motorcoach for the 3½-hour ride across a corner of the Sahara to Abu Simbel. We board our ship for lunch together then visit this site with an inspiring history. When the Aswan High Dam was built in the 1960s to control the mighty Nile, it was expected to double the country's hydroelectric supply. But in the course of creating one of the world's largest manmade lakes (Lake Nasser), the resultant flooding had the potential to destroy most of the native Nubian villages found here, as well as a number of irreplaceable monuments in the lowlands, among

them Abu Simbel. To preserve these monuments, the Egyptian Department of Antiquities, in conjunction with UNESCO, embarked on a rescue project beyond the scope of anything that had ever before been attempted: they dismantled several ancient sites, stone by heavy stone, and rebuilt them on higher ground.

We see the results of these efforts at Abu Simbel, a massive complex of temples guarded by four colossal statues of Ramses II, each more than 60 feet high. Inside, the walls are covered with incredibly well-preserved murals depicting scenes of Queen Nefertari and her court, and of King Ramses in battle. This is truly an astonishing place; one we are glad was preserved for posterity. After our visit, we have an afternoon at leisure aboard our ship. As the desert sun goes down, we return to Abu Simbel and experience a sound-and-light show amid the massive statuary here. Then we return to the Prince Abbas in time for dinner on board.

Overnight: *M/S Prince Abbas (B, L, D)*

## **FRIDAY, OCT 31**

**LAKE NASSER CRUISING – KASR IBRIM / AMADA / WADI EL-SEBOUA**

We are in the heart of ancient Nubia, the kingdom that bordered southern Egypt during antiquity and was Egypt's gateway to Africa. Though heavily influenced and often ruled by Egypt, Nubia had a culture and history distinct from that of its more powerful neighbor. It had its own kings, some of which were cooperative with modern Egypt's, while others were competitive. While Nubia has long been incorporated as a part of modern Egypt, some Nubians have struggled to maintain their cultures and traditions, much of which are now dying out because of assimilation and changing times.

During breakfast, we sail to the settlement of Kasr Ibrim, the last vestige of Nubian culture still in its original location. After a brief visit during which we learn about this ancient settlement from aboard the ship (it's prohibited to go ashore here), we continue on to Amada, where we tour the 18th-dynasty Temple of Amada, built during the reign of Tutmosis III and the oldest surviving Lake Nasser temple. Amazingly, in order to preserve its fragile paintings, the temple was moved to its current location in its entirety, not block by block as with the other Nubian temples. During lunch,

we cruise to Wadi el-Seboua where we explore the reconstructed Dakka temple, dedicated to Thoth, the god of wisdom and justice, and where we spend the night. Tonight, we dine aboard our ship.

Overnight: *M/S Prince Abbas (B, L, D)*

## **SATURDAY, NOV 1**

**LAKE NASSER CRUISING – WADI EL-SEBOUA / VALLEY OF THE LIONS / ASWAN**

We spend this morning in Wadi el-Seboua touring the Valley of the Lions with its striking avenue of sphinxes. This afternoon, we cruise to Aswan, the city where Agatha Christie wrote the famous *Death on the Nile*. We enjoy lunch and dinner together on board. Late this evening, we arrive in Aswan and spend the evening on board.

Overnight: *M/S Prince Abbas (B, L, D)*

## **SUNDAY, NOV 2**

**DISEMBARK / ASWAN / EMBARK NILE CRUISE SHIP**

We disembark our ship early this morning in the desert lands of Aswan and set out to visit New Kalabsha, site of Kalabsha Temple, the largest freestanding Nubian temple of them all, which was moved and reconstructed here from Old Kalabsha when Lake Nasser's rising waters threatened the site. This sandstone temple dedicated to Mandulis, the Nubian god of religion, preserves Egyptian and Greek history; both languages are carved into the temple walls. After exploring the site, we return to our ship for breakfast then bid farewell to the crew as we embark on a tour of the Aswan High Dam. Considered a miracle of engineering when completed in 1965, the dam required some 18 years of work. Numbers tell part of the story: it stands 11,811 feet long, 364 feet tall, and at its base is 3,215 feet thick. For some context, 18 times more material was used to construct the Aswan High Dam than to construct the Great Pyramid at Giza. But in addition to doubling Egypt's electrical supply, the dam's construction – and subsequent creation of Lake Nasser – also caused the relocation of up to 90,000 Nubians from their homeland.

Next, we visit the Temples of Philae on the island of Agilkia. Before the Aswan Dam was built, the temples, originally located further upstream, were submerged by Nile flooding for six months each

year. But in much the same manner as Abu Simbel, the Philae ruins were dismantled and reconstructed on Agilkia, which was landscaped to resemble antiquity's Sacred Island of Isis. The oldest part of the temple dates from the 4th century BCE, though construction continued until the 3rd century CE. We visit the Hall of Nectanebo, the oldest part of the complex, along with the Outer Temple Court, the Temple of Isis, and the beautiful Osiris Chambers, decorated with bas reliefs of Isis, her sons, and other deities. Our temple touring in Aswan complete, we board the second ship of the tour, our floating hotel for our four-night stay on the Nile. After lunch on board, we embark small feluccas, replicas of ancient Nile sailboats, for a relaxing afternoon sail. We admire the river scenery as we make our way slowly down the Nile, passing close by the Botanical Gardens on Kitchener's Island, named after British Army officer Lord Kitchener who served as Consul General of Egypt from 1911 to 1914; and Elephantine Island, with its huge granite rocks. Our sailing excursion complete, we return to our ship, where we enjoy dinner together.

Overnight: *M/S Sun Ray (B, L, D)*

### **MONDAY, NOV 3**

#### **NILE CRUISING – KOM OMBO / EDFU / LUXOR**

This morning, we sail to the ancient trading town of Kom Ombo, which sat on the great caravan route from Nubia. Here we see outstanding Nile views from an unusual double temple, dedicated both to the crocodile god Sobek and to the falcon god Haroeris (Horus the Elder). After returning to our ship, we sail on to Edfu where we explore the Temple of Horus, considered Egypt's best-preserved ancient temple (having spent centuries buried beneath desert sands). Construction of the complex began under Ptolemy III in 237 BCE and was completed nearly 200 years later; the temple's remains were not discovered until 1900. We see the 12 enormous columns that stand in front of the Great Halls, and stop to admire the wall inscriptions in the Hall of Consecrations. We return to our ship for lunch and this afternoon's cruise to Luxor (our final sail) as we enjoy afternoon tea along the way. Tonight, we attend the Captain's welcome cocktail party wearing traditional Egyptian galabeya. Late this evening, we arrive at Luxor where we dock.

Overnight: *M/S Sun Ray (B, L, D)*

### **TUESDAY, NOV 4**

#### **NILE CRUISING – LUXOR / WEST BANK**

This morning, we set out on an exploration of the Luxor West Bank, a region that surpasses even Cairo in the number and importance of its ancient sites. We begin at the haunting Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens, an isolated valley holding the tombs of more than 50 New Kingdom monarchs and nobles, each in a tomb constructed underground in an attempt to mirror the underworld. For many years, Egyptians inhabited this vast City of the Dead to protect the tombs from grave robbers – though sadly, some of the tombs were indeed looted over the centuries. What remain, however, are some of the most magnificent paintings seen anywhere in Egypt. The tombs were filled with sand, which not only protected everything inside, but also served as a sort of embalming element for the paintings, preserving them from the wind and sun. Today some of the paintings have been covered by glass for further protection. To visit all the tombs would be impossible; our tour director will select some of the most interesting for us to see. We then visit the dramatic Temple of Hatshepsut, dedicated to one of the few female pharaohs; and the enormous Colossi of Memnon, two 64-foot-high statues that once guarded the gates of a mortuary temple. A traditional Middle Eastern belly dancing performance accompanies dinner on board tonight.

Overnight: *M/S Sun Ray (B, L, D)*

### **WEDNESDAY, NOV 5**

#### **NILE CRUISING – LUXOR / EAST BANK**

Today we explore the East Bank, beginning at Karnak. Here we tour Luxor Temple, where the statue of Amun-Ra, the Sun God and God of Creation, would travel in a procession from Karnak Temple for festivals held during annual flood season. Over the years, more rulers built onto the temple, including Tutankhamun, Ramses II, and even Alexander the Great. We visit the Great Court of Ramses II, the Temple of the Theban Triad, and the obelisk, whose twin stands in the Place de la Concorde in Paris. We then move on to the even more splendid Karnak Temple, which was under construction for some 1,500 years. It comprises the three main temples of Amun, Mut, and Montu, as well as smaller enclosed temples and several outer temples located a short distance north of Luxor. We also

see the temple's enormous pylons, the Temple of Ramses II, the Great Hypostyle Hall, and the two Obelisks of Hatshepsut. We then return to our ship where we dine together tonight.

Overnight: *M/S Sun Ray (B, L, D)*

## **THURSDAY, NOV 6** **DISEMBARK / LUXOR**

We may wish to rise early this morning and view the West Bank of "the world's greatest open-air museum," as Luxor has been called, from above in an optional hot air balloon ride. (At the time of printing, the cost of the 45-minute balloon ride is approximately \$120USD per person). Later this morning, we disembark our Nile ship and visit Luxor Museum, housing relics discovered at Luxor. Among the museum's notable artifacts: the mummies of pharaohs Ahmose I (reigned ca. 1539–1514 BCE) and Ramses I (reigned 1292–1290 BCE); items from the pharaoh Tutankhamun's renowned tomb; and statuary from the New Kingdom era (ca. 16th–11th century BCE). Then we enjoy lunch together before transferring to our hotel where we have the afternoon and evening free. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Nile Palace (B, L)*

## **FRIDAY, NOV 7** **LUXOR / CAIRO**

Early this morning, we transfer to the airport for the flight to Cairo. Upon arrival, we navigate the exotic Khan el-Khalili bazaar, Cairo's most popular and believed to be the largest in the Middle East, if not the world. Here we can visit artisans who have passed down their skill from generation to generation, perfecting all types of crafts including wood, perfume, leather goods, and glassware. There are bargains to be had on almost every corner, but shoppers are expected to barter hard for them. After exploring Khan el-Khalili, we check in to our hotel. Lunch and dinner are on our own.

Overnight: *Sofitel Cairo Nile el Gezira (B)*

## **SATURDAY, NOV 8** **CAIRO**

Today we visit some of the finest sites in Egyptian antiquity, beginning this morning at the open-air

museum at Memphis, Egypt's first capital. The history of Memphis stretches so far back into history that its origins have been lost to time; the city was already in existence during the reign of Iry-Hor, the pharaoh of Upper Egypt during the 32nd century BCE and one of the earliest historical figures known to mankind by name. Once a magnificent city ruled by legendary King Menes who united Upper and Lower Egypt, Memphis is now a pleasant remnant of long-ago times, with sculptures, a Sphinx, and a limestone colossus of Ramses II. Our next stop is at nearby Sakkara, a necropolis used for more than 3,000 years to bury Old Kingdom royalty – and still largely unexcavated today. Much of Sakkara's splendor remains and can be seen in the Step Pyramid, which was once the largest stone structure ever built. The Step Pyramid forms the center of a remarkable funerary complex, which includes a broad "hypostyle" hall (a structure whose roof is supported by columns), a great court, and stone altars representing Upper and Lower Egypt. We return to our hotel midday; this afternoon is at leisure for further independent exploration or relaxing and enjoying our hotel's amenities. Lunch is on our own today. Tonight, we celebrate our adventure along the Nile at a farewell dinner at our hotel.

Overnight: *Sofitel Cairo Nile el Gezira (B, D)*

## **SUNDAY, NOV 9** **DEPART FOR U.S.**

Very early this morning, we transfer to the airport for our return flight to the United States.

Meals: *B*

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## **OPTIONAL EXTENSION:** **JORDAN: PETRA & AMMAN** NOVEMBER 9 – 12, 2025

### **SUNDAY, NOV 9** **CAIRO / AMMAN / PETRA, JORDAN**

This morning we board the 1½-hour flight to Amman, where we then board a motorcoach for the drive to Petra. Along the way, we visit the important pilgrimage site of Mt. Nebo, where Moses was buried overlooking the Jordan Valley. We see the site's 4th- and 6th-century Byzantine churches, the first of which was built to

commemorate Moses' death. We visit the churches and enjoy the view over the Jordan Valley. Afterwards, we arrive in Madaba, "City of Mosaics," whose chief attraction is a mosaic map of Jerusalem and the Holy Land dating to the 6th century. Originally created from more than two million colored stones, the map today remains relatively well preserved despite its advanced age. After visiting this ancient masterpiece and having lunch together here, we continue on to Petra, reaching our hotel this evening. Dinner is on our own tonight.

Overnight: *Mövenpick Resort Petra (B, L)*

## **MONDAY, NOV 10**

### **PETRA**

Today we explore Petra, the "rose-red city, half as old as time" that was established around the 6th century BCE and eventually drew fame for its success in the spice trade and for its ingenious hydraulic engineering systems. Forgotten for more than a thousand years, Petra was rediscovered only in the 18th century; the central part of the city wasn't excavated until 1958. In fact, even today only a small fraction of this UNESCO World Heritage Site has been uncovered. But what we see here today is enough to astonish and astound even the most experienced traveler: monuments and buildings – temples, tombs, palaces, and dwellings – carved directly into cliffs of a solid mass of rock. Built as a fortress by the wealthy Nabateans, the city that once stood here housed nearly 10,000 people. The ruins are remarkably well preserved, giving us a true glimpse into the lives of those who lived and worked here. The architecture represents some of the most sophisticated of its time, and the variegated rock changes colors with the sun, transforming from a rosy pink to a golden yellow. It is, quite simply, a glorious sight.

We travel on foot, entering Petra by the breathtaking mile-long canyon leading to the site. At the end of the canyon (or siq), we are confronted with Petra's most revered and wondrous façade: Al-Khazneh. Translated as "The Treasury," this massive and ornately carved building was actually constructed as a mausoleum some two thousand years ago. The name "treasury" derives from the local tribes assuming it contained treasures from a bygone era. Among the other sites on today's itinerary: the 4,000-seat theater, the colonnaded street, the Temple of the

Winged Lions, and the Royal Tombs set high up into the cliffs. This afternoon, we enjoy lunch together at a restaurant within the archaeological park, then have free time to continue exploring Petra or to relax and have a drink in one of the beverage tents scattered throughout the site. After this full – and fulfilling – day of sightseeing, we return to our hotel late this afternoon. This evening we enjoy dinner together at our hotel.

Overnight: *Mövenpick Resort Petra (B, L, D)*

## **TUESDAY, NOV 11**

### **PETRA / AMMAN**

This morning we leave Petra bound for Amman, traveling the Desert Highway that was the region's original north/south road dating to Biblical times. The once and current capital and one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, Amman is known for its harmonious blend of ancient and contemporary architecture, and also for the countless relics of its Roman, Byzantine, and Arab past. Upon arrival we stop for lunch at a local restaurant to enjoy a falafel sandwich, a Middle Eastern specialty. Then we set off on a walking tour that takes us off the beaten tourist path and acquaints us with this lively Middle Eastern capital. We begin with the Ottoman-style Grand Hussein Mosque, built in 1924 on the site of an ancient temple in the heart of downtown Amman; then through the busy streets and vegetables markets to the Nymphaeum, a 2nd-century fountain hidden behind private houses and shops. Our next stop comprises another 2nd-century landmark, the 6,000-seat Roman Theatre, which is still used today for sporting and cultural events; and the ancient Citadel (El-Qala), which offers excellent views of the city from atop Jabal al-Qala'a, one of Amman's signature seven hills. After checking in at our hotel, the remainder of the day is free for independent exploration. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Overnight: *Grand Hyatt Amman (B, L)*

## **WEDNESDAY, NOV 12**

### **AMMAN / JERASH**

We travel today to the Roman ruins of Jerash, dubbed the "Pompeii of the East" for its splendid state of preservation. Because of its popular trade routes, Jerash flourished during the reign of Alexander the Great when it became part of the

Holy Roman Empire's Decapolis (the 10 major Roman cities of the East). After the Persian invasion of 614 and a series of consequential earthquakes, Jerash survived as nothing more than a small rural village until its rediscovery in 1925. Here we explore the colonnaded streets, theaters, churches, and temples that comprise the largest Roman site outside of Italy. We return to Amman mid-afternoon then dine together tonight at our hotel. Lunch today is on our own.

Overnight: *Grand Hyatt Amman (B, D)*

## **WEDNESDAY, NOV 12**

AMMAN / DEPART FOR U.S.

Very early this morning we depart for the airport for our flight to the U.S., where we connect with our return flights home.

Meals: *B*