Egypt in 10 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Pyramids, the temples of Upper Egypt, feluccas and coral reefs: ten days lets you travel through five thousand years of history without sacrificing downtime. This itinerary starts in Cairo, flies south to Aswan, heads out to Abu Simbel, sails down the Nile to Luxor and ends on the shores of the Red Sea. Here is the plan day by day, with the travel times to expect.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Cairo and the Pyramids of Giza (night : Cairo)
After you arrive, stay on the Giza side if you can, to be at the foot of the pyramids as soon as the site opens. The next morning, explore Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure, then the Sphinx, before the heat and the crowds build. In the afternoon, move on to the Grand Egyptian Museum, close to the plateau, whose vast galleries trace pharaonic history and display the treasures of Tutankhamun. If you still have energy, continue to Saqqara and the Step Pyramid of Djoser, around forty minutes' drive away and often quieter. In the evening, a felucca ride on the Nile gives a calmer first view of the megacity, which never really sleeps.

Day 3 · Islamic Cairo, then a flight to Aswan (night : Aswan)
Spend the morning in historic Cairo. Climb up to the Citadel of Saladin and the Mosque of Muhammad Ali, whose terrace overlooks the city, then head down to Al-Azhar Mosque and Al-Muizz Street, lined with restored Mamluk mosques and palaces. Finish at the Khan el-Khalili bazaar for tea in one of its historic cafés and a little shopping, haggling with a smile. If time allows, the Coptic quarter and its ancient churches round off the picture nicely. In the late afternoon, take a domestic flight of about an hour and a half to Aswan, where the slower, gentler Nubian atmosphere is an instant contrast with the capital.

Day 4 · The temples of Abu Simbel (night : Aswan)
The alarm goes off very early: Abu Simbel lies about three and a half hours' drive south of Aswan across the desert, and you leave before dawn to arrive at opening time. A short flight is also available, more expensive but less tiring. The two temples carved into the cliff by Ramesses II, one for himself and the other for his wife Nefertari, are among the most striking in Egypt. They were dismantled and rebuilt higher up in the 1960s to escape the waters of Lake Nasser. Take time to read the scenes of the Battle of Kadesh. Return to Aswan in the early afternoon for a well-earned rest.

Day 5 · Aswan, Philae and the feluccas (night : Cruise boat in Aswan)
In the morning, take a boat to the Temple of Philae, dedicated to Isis and also moved to a neighbouring island when the dams were built. Its setting, surrounded by water and granite boulders, is one of the loveliest in the valley. Have a look at the High Dam, then the Unfinished Obelisk, still lying in its quarry. In the afternoon, board a felucca to sail around Elephantine Island and the botanical garden on Kitchener's Island, before visiting a Nubian village of painted houses on the west bank. Then board your cruise boat, which stays moored in Aswan for the first night.

Days 6-7 · Cruising the Nile to Luxor (night : Cruise boat)
The boat sails north down the river. The first stop is Kom Ombo, a double temple dedicated to the crocodile god Sobek and the falcon god Haroeris, with its small museum of mummified crocodiles. Further on, Edfu is home to the Temple of Horus, one of the best preserved in Egypt, with its monumental pylon and intact sanctuary. Between visits, enjoy the sun deck as palm groves, villages and sugar cane fields slide past. Passing through the Esna lock is a curious experience. You reach Luxor on day 7: in the afternoon, visit the vast Karnak temple and its hypostyle hall, then Luxor Temple, superb once lit up after dark.

Day 8 · Luxor's West Bank (night : Luxor)
Cross the Nile at sunrise, when hot-air balloons sometimes drift over the West Bank. Start with the Valley of the Kings: the entry ticket covers several tombs, while some, such as those of Tutankhamun or Seti I, require an extra ticket. The colours of the paintings, intact after more than three thousand years, are astonishing. Continue to the Temple of Hatshepsut, set against the cliffs of Deir el-Bahari, then the Colossi of Memnon. If you still have energy, the Tombs of the Nobles and Medinet Habu are quieter. Leave the boat and spend the night in Luxor, in town or on the more peaceful West Bank.

Days 9-10 · Rest and snorkelling on the Red Sea (night : Hurghada)
About four and a half hours' drive across the Eastern Desert takes you from Luxor to Hurghada, on the Red Sea. After a week of temples, it is time for turquoise water: coral reefs can be reached from the beach in some bays, or by boat trip to the offshore islands, with a mask and snorkel or on a guided dive. Parrotfish, clownfish and sometimes turtles are there to greet you. On the last day, enjoy a morning swim before heading to Hurghada airport, which has plenty of flights to Europe. If your flight home leaves from Cairo, a domestic flight of about an hour gets you there easily.

Getting around

Domestic flights between Cairo, Aswan, Luxor and Hurghada save precious time. The sleeper train also links Cairo and Aswan in around twelve hours. Between Aswan and Luxor, a three-night cruise is the most enjoyable option; the road, in three to four hours, is also possible. For Abu Simbel, book your transfer or flight in advance. In Cairo, ride-hailing apps make getting around much easier.

When to go

From October to April, temperatures are pleasant everywhere, with cool nights in December and January. This is also high season: book the cruise and flights early, especially for Christmas and Easter. From May to September, the heat often tops 40°C in Aswan and Luxor, so sightseeing happens at dawn. The Red Sea, meanwhile, is good for swimming almost all year round.

Practical information

Egypt

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/egypt/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	none
Currency	Egyptian pound (EGP)
Languages	Arabic
Plugs	type C, F · dialling code +20 · UTC+2 (+3 in summer)
Emergencies	police 122 · ambulance 123 · fire 180

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

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