

# THE TRAVEL CLUB

## *Pre-Departure Itinerary* **Highlights of Egypt & Three-night Nile Cruise** **Monday, March 7 - Friday, March 18, 2011**

From biblical epics like The Ten Commandments to swashbuckling fantasies like The Mummy, Egypt remains eternally exotic and mysterious. Travel with us and explore Egypt's most breathtaking landmarks and experience a three-night Nile cruise. While in **Cairo** you'll visit one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—**The Pyramids of Giza**—as well as the mysterious **Sphinx** and the Step Pyramid of Sakkara. You'll also spend time at the famous Egyptian Museum and the Khan el Khalili bazaar. The National Museum, the mysterious Library and the Catacombs of Kom-El Shokkafa await you in **Alexandria**, founded by Alexander the Great in 331 b.c. Relax with three days sailing down the **Nile**, the longest river in the world, visiting the **Temples of Karnak and Luxor**, the Valleys of the King and Queens, temples in Kom Ombo and Edfu and the **High Dam in Aswan**. With camcorder in hand, you'll star in your own epic adventure!

### **Includes**

- Round-trip regularly scheduled **Alitalia** flights from Boston to Cairo via Rome
- Inter-country flights: Cairo to Aswan and Luxor to Cairo
- Seven nights' five-star accommodations
- Three night five- star Nile River cruise in Outside cabins
- 25 meals: ten breakfast, five lunches, ten dinners
- Round-trip, private airport/hotel /dock transfers with assistance
- Services of a professional local Tour Manager

### **Trip Planner**

**DAY 1** Overnight flight from Boston  
**DAYS 2-4** Sofitel Sphinx, Cairo  
**DAYS 5-7** Cruise MS Iberotel Crown Emperor or Iberotel Crown Empress  
**DAY 8** Sofitel Sphinx, Cairo  
**DAYS 9-10** Sheraton El Montazah, Alexandria  
**DAY 11** Sofitel Le Sphinx, Cairo  
**DAY 12** Return flight to Boston

### **Rates**

**\$2,499** per person double occupancy  
**\$3,029** for single reservations  
Add \$425 for current taxes, fees charges and surcharges. Passport and Egypt visa required.

### **Features**

Cairo: full-day excursion to the Pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx and Step Pyramid of Sakkara, full-day excursion including visit to Egyptian Museum, Khan el Khalili bazaars; Alexandria: visit to National Museum and Catacombs of Kom-El Shokkafa, and the Library; visit the Aswan High Dam, the Unfinished Obelisk and the Philae Temple; Kom Ombo and the Sobek Temple, Edfu and the Temple of Horus, Karnak and Luxor Temples, the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens

## **DAILY ITINERARY**

### **March 7: Departure from Boston**

Depart from Boston on your overnight Alitalia Airlines flight to Rome. Dinner will be served on board. Relax and enjoy the in-flight entertainment.

### **March 8: Arrive Rome – connecting flight to Cairo**

Continental breakfast will be served before landing in Rome. Proceed to your connecting flight to Cairo. Upon arrival at Cairo airport you'll retrieve your luggage and clear customs. When you meet your Tour Manger he'll

assist you with obtaining your Egyptian visas right at the airport before transferring you by motor coach to your Cairo hotel. After check in you'll have some time to get acquainted with the area around the hotel before you join your fellow travelers for a welcome dinner at the hotel restaurant. *(D)*

### **March 9: Cairo**

After breakfast your Tour Manager will lead you on a fascinating tour of ancient Egypt. On this full-day excursion you'll view:

**The Great Pyramid of Giza** – also called the Pyramid of Khufu and the Pyramid of Cheops, is the oldest and largest of the three pyramids in the Giza Necropolis, it is the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and the only one that survived substantially intact.

**The Great Sphinx** – with its lion's body, human face and royal beard, stands on the Giza Plateau on the west bank of the Nile and is the largest monolith statue in the world.

**The Step Pyramid of Sakkara** – dating back to 2700 BC, it is one of the oldest stone structures in the world. Today you'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant and dinner at the hotel. *(B, L, D)*

### **March 10: Cairo**

A full day excursion is in store for you today featuring visits to the Egyptian Museum, the Citadel of Saladin, Mohamed Ali Alabaster Mosque and the Khan El Khalili bazaars.

**The Egyptian Museum** – this famous museum houses, not surprisingly, the greatest collection of Egyptian antiquities in the world, ranging from prehistoric era to Greco Roman period.

**The Citadel of Saladin** – located on a high hill that overlooks the old city of Cairo, this fortress was built in 1170 AD.

**Mohamed Ali Alabaster Mosque** – located in the Citadel, it is the largest such structure built during the first half of the 19th century and its great dome and towering minarets give the Citadel a romantic, oriental quality.

**Khan El-Khalili bazaars** – one of the most interesting bazaars, not only in Egypt, but also in the whole Middle East. It was named after Prince Jaharkas Al-Khalili, who was one of the powerful Mamluke Princes in the 14th century. It is famous for its unusual, typically oriental souvenirs, and handmade crafts. The atmospheres of this traditional market, together with the labyrinth layout of the streets, gives visitors a glimpse into what medieval markets once were like.

Lunch is included at a local restaurant and dinner at the hotel. *(B, L, D)*

### **March 11: Cairo – Aswan – embark on Nile Cruise**

This morning you will be transferred to the Cairo airport for your domestic flight to Aswan. Upon arrival in Aswan your tour manager will assist you in visiting the High Dam, the Unfinished Obelisque and the Philae Temple. In the afternoon transfer to the five star cruise ship MS Iberotel Crown Emperor or MS Iberotel Crown Empress to begin your 3-night cruise. *(B, L, D)*

**High Dam** – the world famous High Dam was an engineering miracle when it was built in the 1960s. It contains 18 times the material used in the Great Pyramid of Cheops. The Dam is 11,811 feet long, 3215 feet thick at the base and 364 feet tall. Today it provides irrigation and electricity for the whole of Egypt and, together with the old Aswan Dam built by the British between 1898 and 1902, 6km down river, wonderful views for visitors. From the top of the two-mile long High Dam you can gaze across Lake Nassar, the huge reservoir created when it was built, to Kalabsha temple in the south.

**Unfinished Obelisque** – the unfinished obelisk is the largest known ancient obelisk. It is not known which pharaoh created this structure. It is nearly one third larger than any ancient Egyptian obelisk ever erected. If finished it would have measured around 42 m (120 feet) and would have weighed nearly 1,200 tons.

Archeologists speculate that it was intended to complement the so-called Lateran Obelisk which was originally at Karnak and is now outside the Lateran Palace in Rome. The obelisk's creators began to carve it directly out of bedrock, but cracks appeared in the granite and the project was abandoned. The bottom side of the obelisk is still attached to the bedrock. The unfinished obelisk offers unusual insights into ancient Egyptian stone-working techniques, with marks from workers' tools still clearly visible as well as ocher-colored lines marking where they were working.

**Philae Temple** – Philae Island was a rocky island in the middle of the River Nile, south of Aswan. It was called in Hieroglyphic “Apo” which means Ivory. It was also known by the Greek “Elephantine”, most probably because it was an important centre of trade, especially for ivory. The Ancient Egyptians built a beautiful and magnificent Temple on this island for the Goddess Isis, but the Temple became submerged after the first Aswan dam was built in 1906, and it was not until the seventies that many nations attempted to save the Temple. All these countries, together with UNESCO, selected a suitable place, but they had to wait until the completion of the

High Dam, in 1971, which would stabilize the level of the water around their chosen island. The new island was called Egilica (also called Agilika), and it was completely reshaped to imitate Philae Island as closely as possible.

### **March 12: Nile Cruise**

Today you'll sail to Kom Ombo to visit the Sobek Temple and Edfu to visit the Temple of Horus. You'll enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner aboard ship. *(B, L, D)*

**Kom Ombo and the Sobek Temple** – this temple is unique because it is in fact a double temple, dedicated to Sobek the crocodile god, and Horus the falcon-headed god. The layout combines two temples in one with each side having its own gateways and chapels. Sobek is associated with the wicked god Seth, the enemy of Horus. In the Horus myth the allies of Seth made their escape by changing themselves into crocodiles. Sobek's chief sanctuary was at Kom Ombo, where there were once huge numbers of crocodiles. Until recent times the Egyptian Nile was infested with these animals who would lay on the riverbank and devour animals and humans alike. They believed that as a totem animal, and object of worship, it would not attack them. Captive crocodiles were kept within the temple and many mummified crocodiles have been found in cemeteries, some of which can be seen in the temple sanctuary today.

**Edfu and the Temple of Horus** – Edfu was a flourishing and its most important monument is the Temple of Horus, which is considered to be one of the most beautiful and best-preserved temples in Egypt. The Temple, dedicated to the falcon-headed god Horus, has a Pylon that is considered the highest among surviving Temples in Egypt today. It is 37m high and is decorated with battle scenes, representing King Ptolemy VIII smiting his enemies before the God Horus.

### **March 13: Nile Cruise**

Today's journey on the Nile will bring you to Luxor, where you'll visit the Karnak and Luxor Temples, the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens. Enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner aboard ship. *(B, L, D)*

#### **Karnak and Luxor Temples** –

**Karnak**: a vast open-air museum and the largest ancient religious site in the world. Karnak is probably the second most visited ancient site in Egypt, second only to the Giza Pyramids near Cairo. It consists of four main parts, of which only one is accessible for tourists and the general public - the Precinct of Amon-Re. This is also the "main" temple part and by far the largest part. The three other parts are closed to the public. There are also a few smaller temples and sanctuaries located outside the enclosing walls of the four main parts, as well as several avenues of ram-headed sphinxes connecting the Precinct of Mut, the Precinct of Amon-Re and Luxor Temple. The key difference between Karnak and most of the other temples and sites in Egypt is the length of time over which it was developed and used. Construction work began in the 16th century BC. Approximately 30 pharaohs contributed to the buildings, enabling it to reach a size, complexity and diversity not seen elsewhere. Few of the individual features of Karnak are unique, but the size and number of features is overwhelming.

**Luxor**: Luxor temple was dedicated to the Theban Triad of Amun, Mut, and Khons and during the New Kingdom was the focus of the annual Opet Festival, where a cult statue of Amun was paraded down the Nile from nearby Karnak Temple. Construction work on the temple began during the reign of Amenhotep III in the 14th century BC. Horemheb and Tutankhamun added columns, statues, and friezes, and Akhenaten had earlier obliterated his father's cartouches and installed a shrine to the Aten – but the only major expansion effort took place under Ramesses II some 100 years after the first stones were put in place. Luxor is unique among the main Egyptian temple complexes in having only two pharaohs leave their mark on its architectural structure. The temple fell into disrepair during the Late Period and Alexander the Great claims to have undertaken major reconstruction work "to restore it to the glory of Amenhotep's times" in the 320s BC. During Rome's domination of Egypt it was converted into a centre for the imperial cult. By the time of the Arab conquest, the temple was largely buried underneath accumulated river silt, to the extent that the Mosque of Abu Haggag was built on top of it in the 13th century, where it still remains in-situ today.

**The Valley of the Kings** – the official name for the site was "the Great and Majestic Necropolis of the Millions of Years of the Pharaoh, Life, Strength, Health in The West of Thebes", or more usually, the Great Field. It stands on the west bank of the Nile, under the peak of the pyramid-shaped mountain Al-Qurn. It is separated into the East and West Valleys, with most of the important tombs sited in the East Valley. The Valley was used for primary burials from approximately 1539 BC to 1075 BC, and contains some 64 tombs, starting with Thutmose I and ending with Ramesses X or XI. The tombs are numbered in the order of 'discovery' from Ramesses VII (KV1) to the recently discovered KV63, although some of the tombs have been open since antiquity, and KV5 has only recently been rediscovered. A number of the tombs are unoccupied, the owners of others remain unknown, and

some are merely pits used for storage. Perhaps the most famous discovery of modern Western archaeology was made here by Howard Carter on 4th November 1922, with clearance and conservation work continuing until 1932. King Tutankhamun's tomb was the first royal tomb to be discovered that was still largely intact (although tomb robbers had entered it), and was, until the discovery and excavation of KV63 in 2006, considered the last major discovery in the valley.

**The Valley of the Queens** – in ancient times, it was known as ‘the place of the Children of the Pharaoh’. Located near the better-known Valley of the Kings, this was where many of the royal queens of the 18th, 19th and 20th dynasties together with many princes and princesses were buried along with various members of the nobility. The tombs of these individuals were maintained by mortuary priests whom performed daily rituals and provided offerings and prayers for the deceased nobility. This necropolis is said to hold more than eighty tombs, many of which are stylish and lavishly decorated a fine example of this being the tomb of Ramesses the Great's principle queen, Nefertari. QV66 is the most lavishly decorated tomb in the valley. The tombs were built according to patterns from the Valley of the Kings, but on a smaller scale. Most of the tombs are very simple, as well as uninscribed. The general layout is long corridor with antechambers and the burial chamber at the end.

### **March 14: Cruise ends – return flight to Cairo**

This morning your cruise will end and you'll disembark and head for the Luxor airport for your flight back to Cairo. You'll return to your Cairo hotel and enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. **(B, D)**

### **March 15: Cairo Wadi El Natroun – Alexandria**

Depart Cairo this morning for Alexandria. En route you'll stop at one of the most significant places in the Western Desert -- Wadi El Natroun. Later you'll arrive in Alexandria and enjoy a visit to the National Museum and the Catacombs of Kom-El Shokkafa. Upon arrival check into the Sheraton El Montazah. This evening enjoy dinner at the hotel restaurant. **(B,D)**

**Wadi El Natroun** – A natural depression in the desert consisting of salt lakes and salt flats. This place was important to the ancient Egyptian for the extraction of salt used in mummification and later became more important during the early era of Christianity as a commemoration of the Holy Family's passage through the valley. Egypt. Today it is the location of many monasteries groups dating back to the fourth century AD. Here you'll visit the Monastery of the Romans, the Anba Bishoy Monastery, the Monastery of the Syrian and the Monastery of St. Macarius. These represent some of the earliest Christian monasteries in the world and played a crucial role in the history of the Coptic Christian Church.

**National Museum** – contains about 1,800 artifacts that narrate the history of Alexandria throughout the ages, including the Pharaonic, Roman, Coptic and Islamic eras. There are also modern pieces, including 19th century glassware, silverware, chinaware and precious jewels, which provide a sense of the richness of the court of Mohammed Ali and his descendants. Mummies are shown in a special underground chamber (basement). Also, some of the items found during the archaeological underwater excavations in Alexandria are now on the same floor as the Greco-Roman artifacts.

**Catacombs of Kom-El Shokkafa** – Alexandria's most memorable monument, the catacombs date back to the late first century AD and are unique both for their plan and decoration which represents a melding and mixing of the cultures and traditions of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

### **March 16: Alexandria**

In the morning you'll visit The National Museum and the Catacombs of Kom El Shokkafa, Alexandria's most memorable monuments. These catacombs date back to the late first century AD and are unique both for their plan and its decoration which represents a melding and mixing of the cultures and traditions of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. **(B, D)**

### **March 17: Alexandria - Cairo**

Early check out of the hotel and today you will visit the Royal Library, Fort Qaitbey and have time for shopping before transferring by motorcoach back to Cairo. This evening enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel. **(B,D)**

**The Royal Library of Alexandria** – once the largest library in the world, it is generally thought to have been founded at the beginning of the 3rd century BC, during the reign of Ptolemy II. The library's collection was already famous in the ancient world, and became even more so in later years. It is impossible, however, to determine how large the collection was in any era. The collection was made of papyrus scrolls, and later,

parchment codices, which were predominant as a writing material after 300 AD, may have been substituted for papyrus. A single piece of writing might occupy several scrolls, and this division into self-contained "books" was a major aspect of editorial work. Mark Antony was supposed to have given Cleopatra over 200,000 scrolls for the Library.

No index of the library survives, and it is not possible to know with certainty how large and how diverse the collection was. It is likely, for example, that even if the library had hundreds of thousands of scrolls (and thus, perhaps, tens of thousands of individual works), that many of these were duplicate copies or alternate versions of the same texts. The library, or at least parts of the collection, were destroyed by fire on a number of occasions, however the details of the destruction (or destructions) remain a lively source of controversy.

**Fort Qaitbey** – located on the site of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the legendary Lighthouse of Alexandria, Fort Qaitbey is one of the gems of the Alexandria. The Qaitbay Citadel is considered one of the most important defensive strongholds, not only in Egypt, but also along the Mediterranean Sea coast. It formulated an important part of the fortification system of Alexandria in the 15th century A.D. The Citadel is situated at the entrance of the eastern harbor on the eastern point of the Pharos Island.

### **March 18: Flight to Boston**

Early this morning you'll transfer to the airport for your return flight to Rome and connecting flight to Boston. **(B)**

**Proof of Citizenship** is required for all trips outside the United States. U.S. citizens require valid Passport. Passports are the responsibility of each client.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This pre-departure itinerary is designed to give you an idea of how this itinerary is structured. We reserve the right to make any changes to your final itinerary if deemed necessary, at any time prior to departure.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This is not your final itinerary. You will receive final documents (itinerary, tickets (if applicable), etc.) approximately 2–3 weeks prior to departure. Although we try our best to ensure that information is accurate at the time of publication, we are not responsible for any error, omission, misprint or liability that results from the use (or misuse) of this information.