

# Comment: Touring Egypt in August – Are you mad?

“It will be boiling hot and might not be safe” was the response from most when I announced this year’s family holiday plans.



It was very hot, but we were safe and we had the most amazing holiday imaginable. We travelled with friends and we self packaged with the help of Explore.

Our tour of Egypt included visits to Cairo, Aswan, Luxor and Hurgada. From camel trekking, visiting numerous temples and landmarks, sailing and sleeping on a felucca, to snorkelling in the Red Sea the holiday was an amazing exploration of one of the most fascinating and beautiful countries on earth.

From day one there was a noticeable lack of tourists. By lack of tourists I mean there was no one around. Not until we arrived at the resort of Hurgada.

Aside from the Red Sea resorts, Egypt is not considered safe to visit and the media has not exactly helped entice tourists back since the revolution 4 years ago, however in reality, we had no reason to ever be concerned for our safety.

Exploring The Great Pyramids of Giza is an experience of tremendous proportions. The architectural ingenuity by those who build these magnificent structures is mind blowing and the sheer size of them takes your breath away.

The kids, four teenagers, were in awe of the place and it set us up for other magnificent experiences in the capital to come such as the Egyptian Museum, the Citadel and the City of the Dead.

While one might find Cairo is a noisy crazy city, don't ever be scared to venture out. The locals are friendly and keen to engage. Just mind the traffic, not that you could miss it, as everyone literally hoots their horns non stop.

We all agreed that Aswan must be one the most beautiful places on Earth. It's where the Nile starts its journey, the water is crystal clear, the banks are lush, the setting of the town stunning.

Our guide, Hamada, proved himself an expert in every way and thus started seven days of story telling, fun, insight and conversations so interesting it felt like we had known each other forever.

Magical moments during our stay on the Nile included camel riding in the desert and a visit to St Simeons Monastery; sailing down the Nile on a felucca, swimming in the Nile with the local kids; picking fresh dates on the river banks; sleeping in the open air and being softly woken at dawn by the call to prayer from a mosque in the distance. These memories will live on for a long time.

Arriving at Luxor reminded us once again that no one else was around to take in the sights. We did not see a single river cruise ship sailing on the Nile. Not one. Occupancy in the hotels in both Aswan and Luxor was less than 5%.

Visits to Valley of the Kings, The temple of Karnak and the temple of my favourite ancient Egyptian, Hatshepshut, were fascinating beyond words. During our visit the new Suez Canal opened.

I hope with all my heart this will bring new prosperity to a country which in every way need and deserve our attention. I for one shall return again and again.

*Charlotte Lamp Davies is the Vice President, Travel and Hospitality - Europe for DataArt. She travelled to Egypt in August for two weeks in a group comprising of four adults and four children with Explore*

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