



Egypt Land of Moses, monuments and mummies



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Right: Pyramids are one of the great achievements of Egypt



Ancient Egyptian society

The concept of Maat was all important for the ancient Egyptians. Balance, order and harmony were essential to a well-ordered society. These were the values of Maat and it was the duty of the ruler to ensure that the laws of Maat were followed. The ruler was also responsible for maintaining the balance of Maat. The ruler was also responsible for maintaining the balance of Maat. The ruler was also responsible for maintaining the balance of Maat.



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Egyptian Religion

The main religion in ancient Egypt was polytheistic. The gods were represented by statues and were worshipped in temples. The gods were also represented by symbols and were worshipped in symbols. The gods were also represented by symbols and were worshipped in symbols.



Pyramids of Giza



Terror, temples and ancient texts

These ancient texts were found in the tombs of the pharaohs. They were written in hieroglyphs and were used to record the lives of the pharaohs. The texts were also used to record the lives of the pharaohs.

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Below: The king was regarded almost as a god and was worshipped as such by his subjects

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Dedication: For Luke

'The blessed land'

Egypt, the fabled land of romance, intrigue, mystery and terror, but above all of fabulous wealth and glittering gold. Since Napoleon's invasion in the 1790s, and the incredible discovery of Tutankhamun's intact tomb in the Valley of the Kings in 1922, the world has been increasingly drawn to books, films, museums and exhibitions that focus on the land of the Pharaohs.

In the centre of a garden nestles a rectangular pool containing lotus and other exotic water plants. The air is filled with heady and fragrant perfumes intoxicating the senses, emanating from jasmine, oleander, mimosa and dwarf chrysanthemums. Encircling them are pomegranate, date palm and sycamore fig trees, all producing a magnificent effect. The palace of a king or the dwelling of a noble would have included numerous luxuries including beautiful gardens, where the owners could be indulged, with servants waiting on their every need. However, the harsh truth was that in the royal court intrigue was ever-

present and assassination a possibility; the battlefield was violent and all faced the reality of life under an unrelenting sun, where disease, danger, the displeasure of the gods, and an early death were all too common.

Here, the abundance of buildings, temples and royal mummies enable us to come face to face with the ancient Egyptians. But Egypt is not by any means a squeezed lemon. Who can tell how many more thrilling finds await the diligent archaeologist on site, or the historian in the museum or university? As these come to light, they will help to perpetuate interest in the 'blessed land', as it was known in ancient times; they will also fuel the knowledge of those who love and study the Bible, for Egypt played a major role in the story of the patriarchs and early Israel.

Through the pages of this Travel Guide, whether at home or in Egypt, we will explore this ancient world of beauty and mystery.

Facing page:

The River Nile has been enjoyed and used since earliest times



1 Red and Black lands

Egypt is the greatest oasis in the greatest desert in the world. In ancient times it stretched from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the First Cataract at Aswan in the south, a distance of 1207 km (750 mi) by river

In Egypt, the River Nile glistens in the intense sunlight, whilst groves of dates, palms and tamarisk give protection to multitudes of bright flowers that bloom with rich and intense colour. The cliffs at the edge of the desert, seen to such good effect in the west at Luxor, glow and shine with deep and rich hues at sunrise and sunset. The night sky is ablaze with the glory of stars and planets.

The ancient Greeks were Egypt's first tourists and after 500 BC began to write about this strange land at a time when Egyptian civilization was drawing towards the close of its three thousand year existence. Alexander the Great, and his general Ptolemy, artificially preserved the culture in their own way. Under the Romans it faded rapidly and was stamped out completely by the Arab invaders of AD 639 to 646. The glories of Ancient Egypt were largely hidden from view for fourteen hundred years, from the fall of Rome to Napoleon's expedition of 1798. Then, in the early nineteenth century, explorers and the first diggers began to unearth the magnificence

of the ancient past—the land of myth became the land of wonder.

Egypt is on the northeast shoulder of Africa, bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, which the ancient Egyptians called the 'Great Green', deserts to the south and west and the Red Sea to the east. It consists geographically of two areas, the northern one, including the Delta closest to the Mediterranean Sea, called Lower Egypt, and the southern area called Upper Egypt (Isaiah 11:11).



Above: Kemet, the black favoured land, and Deshret, the red feared land

Facing page: The Sphinx on the Giza plateau is one of the most famous landmarks in the whole world. The face of the sphinx is probably that of Djedefre a 4th Dynasty Pharaoh and son of Khufu



The river of life

The Greek geographer Hecataeus famously wrote that ‘Egypt is the gift of the Nile’. The Nile is like a strand of precious blue set against the tawny-coloured desert. Any vegetation that sprouted, and all livestock that grazed, were dependent on its waters for their existence. Almost one hundred years ago Rudyard Kipling wrote: ‘Going up the Nile is like running the gauntlet before eternity. Till one has seen it, one does not realise the amazing thinness of that little damp trickle of life that steals along undefeated through the jaws of established death. A rifle shot would cover the widest limits of cultivation; a bowshot would reach the narrower. The weight of the desert is on one, every day and every hour.’

That ‘little damp trickle’ is 6,670km (4,160mi) in length, making the River Nile the longest river in the world. The Nile has two main tributaries: the White Nile and the Blue Nile. The White Nile rises in the great lakes of Africa, and flows from southern Rwanda through Tanzania, Lake Victoria, Uganda and Southern

Sudan. The Blue Nile starts at Lake Tana in Ethiopia flowing into Sudan from the southeast and the two parts join near Khartoum the capital of Sudan. This means that less than a quarter of the Nile flows through Egypt, creating the fertile green valley from 1.6km (1mi) to 32km (20mi) in width through the desert. However the flow of water in ancient times was not always consistent and nilometers were set up to gauge the flow so as to help in ascertaining the prospects for a rich or poor harvest. This rise and fall is reflected in Amos 8:8.

The annual inundation usually occurred between the months of July and October, then the planting of crops could take place in the deep rich black mud and silt between November and February, yielding a harvest between March and June, when hopefully the whole process would begin again. If the river flow was not as expected it could result in flood or famine; either way, disaster would loom, especially if provision had not been made for this eventuality (Genesis 41:29–30). Water from the Nile was directed to the fields

through channels of decreasing size, and the smallest could be opened or closed by moving mud with the foot. This explains the seemingly curious statement in Deuteronomy 11:10 about foot irrigation.

By the time of Ptolemy I, 305 to 285 BC, Egypt supported a population estimated to be seven million people. The land was rich and fertile, and difficult to attack when Egypt was at the height of her power; it would eventually provide Rome with a third of its corn.

The desert of death

In contrast to the lush river valley, the western desert had an evil reputation with hot dry winds blowing across the sand, which dealt with the unwary in dramatic fashion; more than one army was swallowed up, disappearing completely: Cambyses, the Persian king lost his army as

it marched to Siwa c 520 BC. However, the Delta—a triangle of low-lying green land about 150 miles in each direction from the river—and the coastal regions of Egypt, have high temperatures and humidity in the summer with heavy rains in the winter. A hot scorching wind called the *Khamsin* blows across the Delta between March and May, which in the days before air conditioning would leave people fatigued and irritable. Egypt’s variable climate encouraged many diseases to flourish (Deuteronomy 7:15), and Moses warned the Israelites that if they were not faithful to God, he would afflict them with these diseases (Deuteronomy 28:60). Today, however, the climate of Egypt is beneficial to many, and the warm Mediterranean breezes give the country a year-round growing season making it a suitable place for the tourist.

Ancient names to describe Egypt

The ancient Egyptians gave various names to the Land:

Tawy = the two lands, upper and lower Egypt.

Ta Mery = the beloved land. The ancient people were not obsessed with death but desired the next life to be a perfect replica of this one, so the survival of the body was imperative for the soul to exist in the next life.

Kemet = the black

land. The black land after the inundation of the Nile when the black deposit was sown with seed and a harvest could then be guaranteed.

Deshret = the red land, the endless desert to the east and west. This is where the goddess Sekhmet dwelt, the place of fear and fire.

The dryness of arid wastelands along the Nile Valley naturally dried out human and animal remains, and mummification

developed naturally. The desolate regions surrounding Egypt established natural borders that were fairly easy to defend, and perilous to enter. Except in the Delta, where, if any walked away to the east or west from the river until they needed water, they would have died of thirst before they could walk back again for a drink, a fact not lost on the Hebrews (Exodus 17:3).

Right: The River Nile has been the life blood of the country since ancient times



Right: Pyramids are one of the great defining images of Egypt



Ancient Egyptian society

The concept of *Maat* was all-important for the ancient Egyptians. Balance, order and harmony were essential to a well-oiled society. Hard work was the lot of many and is revealed in the mortal remains of Egyptians. Ideally the next life would have fields that were blessed with no pests or failed harvests, and would be the perfect representation of *Maat*. In Predynastic and early Dynastic times (see Glossary on page 112), before the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, the rulers of Upper Egypt were called *nesw*, meaning ‘he of the sedge’, a grass-like herb, translated as ‘King of Upper Egypt’ or ‘King of the South’. By contrast, the rulers of Lower Egypt used the title *bit*, meaning ‘he of the bee’, because of the proliferation of bees amongst the flowers, translated as ‘King of Lower Egypt’ or ‘King of the North’. In later times, after the union of Upper and Lower Egypt, the rulers used the title *nesw-bit*, which meant ‘he of the sedge and the bee’, which is conventionally translated as ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt’ or ‘King of the South and North’.

Daily life was organised along a set pattern with Pharaonic Egypt being divided into forty-

two administrative districts or nomes. They considered the ben-ben stone, (see the Box: Noah and the ben-ben stone on page 11) replicated the place where the first rays of the sun hit the earth and it was pyramid in shape. It formed the top of Pyramids and Obelisks (see Glossary on page 112). Society followed this pattern, as it became an increasingly important symbol in the land.

The importance of *maat* can be seen in the order of society, the one responsible for maintaining or regaining *maat* was the king (pharaoh) and he was at the pinnacle of life on earth.



Above: The King's authority revealed in the magnificent throne of Tutankhamun

Noah and the ben-ben stone

As a sacred bird of the city of On (Heliopolis), the Egyptian benu-bird was the prototype for the Greek phoenix and was connected with the sun and rebirth. In the pyramid texts it appears as a yellow wagtail, but in the Book of the Dead (see page 92) it is represented as a kind of grey heron. According to the Heliopolitan Tradition, the world began as a watery chaos

called Nun, from which the sun god Atum (‘the All’ or the ‘Complete One’) emerged on a mound. Atum is said to have flown over the primeval waters as a bird, before coming to rest on a rock, or primeval mound (the ben-ben) that rose from the waters. The hieroglyphic script uses the image of a heron perched on a stick to write the word, ‘flood,’ and the benu-bird presides over the flood.

This myth could have been based on

the episode of Noah recorded in Genesis 8 where he sent out two birds, the raven and the dove, to determine if the worldwide flood had receded. This was a rebirth for the world, as everything apart from the Ark and its inhabitants had been destroyed. As the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (in modern day Turkey), the first view that Noah and his family had of the dry earth (Genesis 8:13) may have been a mountain peak—hence the pyramid shape?

Egyptian bureaucracy was complex, and the centre of the maze was the institution of kingship, so it was vitally important to have not only a strong king but also powerful, wise and cunning advisors to maintain the stability of the country.

Egyptian Religion

The State religion was concerned with maintaining the divine order of *maat* to keep chaos at bay. Temples and priests served as a perpetual reminder that order was to be maintained for the good of the people. Religion dominated every aspect of life, and as the pinnacle of society, the king came to be regarded as the son of the god Ra on earth, (see page 118 for the chief gods of Egypt) and the chief prophets

in the temples were among his most trusted advisors (Exodus 7:1–2).

Women, unusually for the ancient world, were on a legal equal footing with men, including wage earning. Another demonstration of the equality of the sexes was that men and women both wore makeup and earrings, (Exodus 32:2–4). Plenty of moisturiser was applied to the face and most people shaved



off all body hair to combat the problem of head lice, ticks and other afflictions. When Pharaoh (from *per-aa* Great House) commanded that Joseph was to be released from prison, to make himself acceptable at court Joseph shaved and changed his clothes (Genesis 41:14). The cost of clothes was prohibitive for most, so the majority of people owned only an over garment with a couple of changes of loincloth.



Above: Nilometers used to measure the flood levels of the river each year

Food and drink

Basic food came from or near the Nile, and meat could include goat, mutton or pork (though the latter not for the priests). The poorer end of society existed on bread, onions and other salad, whereas those with a better lifestyle could enjoy wildfowl, ducks and geese, with a favourite dish of the upper classes being crispy duck roasted in honey.

People drank water from wells or straight from the Nile (Exodus 7:24), though river water had to be drawn with care as, not only fish, but also hippopotamus, crocodile, and water snakes inhabited the Nile. At times the water was not only unpalatable but also dangerous as it contained many harmful organisms (unknown to the Egyptians) and residues. The young king Tutankhamun preferred white

wine, but most people drank beer, which meant they went through life in a slightly intoxicated state. It was brewed from barley and bread and had the consistency of vegetable soup so it had to be strained or drunk through a straw. Cough drops, mouthwash and chewing gum were also invented in Egypt.

The importance of Language

Arabic is the language used in Egypt today, although the picture language of the ancient Egyptians, known as hieroglyphics, is synonymous with its history. Ancient Egyptian is one of the oldest recorded languages (probably only Sumerian is older) and it has a documented history longer by far than any other. The work of the scribe was highly respected:

‘By day write with your fingers, recite by night. Befriend



Left: Palestine Railways train ticket from Haifa to Suez used by Corporal Harry Lambert on 11 January 1943

the scroll and the palette—it is more fulfilling than wine!’ Papyrus Lansing, from the New Kingdom.

Hieroglyphics.

Hieroglyphs are written in horizontal lines from right to left or left to right, downwards in columns, or curved around objects. Sometimes two sets of hieroglyphs will face each other. The direction in which to read an inscription often starts with a person, animal or bird, and the inscription would be read from the front of them.

Hieratic. This was used by the priests as an adaptation of the hieroglyphic script through most of its history, often used for administrative purposes and personal letters. For speed it was usually written in black ink (occasionally red to mark out a significant section), applied by means of a brush made out of a rush stem.

Demotic. This is the writing that the ordinary people used and the word means ‘of the people’. It can be traced from the Late Period down to late Roman times (c. 664BC to fifth century AD). Demotic is derived from the ancient Greek

demotika, meaning popular. The demotic record was used mainly for legal, administrative, and commercial purposes, although from the Ptolemaic period it was employed for literary, scientific and religious texts.

Coptic. This is the final stage of the language, after the old scripts went into decline during Egypt’s Roman and Christian periods. Coptic is derived from the Arabic *gubti* which is a corruption of the Greek *Aiguptious*, and simply means Egyptian. The Arabs used this term after the conquest of Egypt in the seventh century to denote the native inhabitants of the country, and it is still in use by the Copts.



Above: Tourists on a Nile cruise boat



Above: The train journey through the Red and Black land



Left: Hieroglyphics at Philae Temple

Bottom: Hieroglyphic writing from Luxor temple spelling out the name of Ramesses II

Through Egypt with the Bible

Egypt is mentioned throughout the Bible, from Genesis 12:10 to Revelation 11:8. According to Genesis 10:6 and 13, Mizraim the grandson of Noah and son of Ham is the ancestor of the Egyptians, and Mizraim is the name for Egypt in the Bible. In Arabic, Egypt is *Misr* after Mizraim,

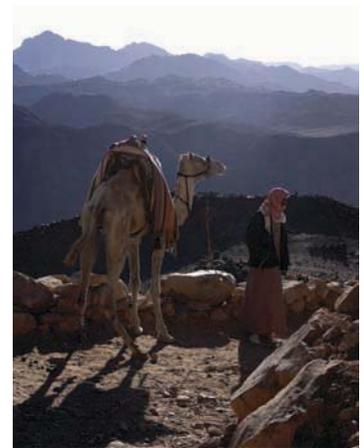
although Psalm 105:23 also calls it 'the land of Ham'. Some writers have suggested that the founder of



Above: Aerial photo of a farmhouse on the west bank of the Nile at Luxor. The style of house has changed little over the millennia

Egypt's first dynasty, Menes, was the same as Mizraim.

Egypt had a profound influence on God's people, the Israelites, and is referred to geographically, symbolically and spiritually, as the place both of refuge and oppression. This duality is first seen in the book of Genesis when Abram (later Abraham) was struggling to survive in a time of famine, and he made the long journey into Egypt to escape the severest part of the famine. He visited the country as a place of refuge but it became a place of captivity and oppression, for whilst there, Abram feared for his life and reasoned that the King (probably Khety II) was going to take his wife Sarai (later Sarah) for himself. When it was discovered that she was not Abram's sister but his wife, they were allowed to leave unharmed, (Genesis 12:10–20).



Above: Camels used for long-distance travel (Genesis 12:16 and Exodus 9:3). This one is in the Sinai peninsula

Joseph, famous for his so called 'coat of many colours', and the great-grandson of Abraham, was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers for twenty shekels, the price of a slave in the Middle Kingdom. The traders brought him to Egypt and he was sold on to Potiphar the captain of the royal guard. Nevertheless, Joseph did extremely well in handling Potiphar's business matters, but Potiphar's wife endeavoured to take advantage of Joseph who refused to cooperate with her wishes; as a consequence he was unfairly thrown into jail. After many years he correctly interpreted the dream of the king (probably Sesostris III) and was released and was eventually promoted to the second most important figure in the land, able to influence for good both state and family life (Genesis 37:12 to 47:12).