

An aerial photograph of a large, fortified monastery complex, likely the Monastery of Saint Pious the Younger in the Sinai Peninsula. The complex is built with light-colored stone and features a prominent central tower and a large courtyard. It is surrounded by a high wall and situated in a valley with a large, rugged mountain in the background. The sky is overcast.

# Tour of Biblical & Christian Egypt

**ICONOFILE**

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**Route of the Tour of Christian Egypt:**

The tour begins at Cairo, then proceeds south by train to Aswan. Departing from Aswan, we board a cruise ship and sail down the Nile River, visiting Pharaonic sites and ancient Christian monasteries en route. Next, we fly to Sharm El-Sheikh and on the next day visit Saint Catherine’s Monastery at Mount Sinai. We return to Cairo where we make day trips to visit monasteries and churches in Wadi Al-Natrun and Zafraana (Monasteries of Saints Anthony and Paul).

and it was there that these individuals devoted their life to God while living in the general community. Later, Christian monks, desiring to shed themselves of all distractions to their sacred worship of God, became hermits seldom encountering other people. A form of monasticism was created by Saint Amun in which “solitary” monks lived close enough to one another in cells within a few hours walking distance (that is, that one can walk after the meal of the ninth hour but before the setting sun) to offer mutual support as well as gathering together on Sundays for common services. It was Saint Pachomios who developed the concept of monks living and worshipping together in a community, called *cenobitic monasticism*. Soon the Egyptian desert blossomed with monasteries.

**Tour of Christian Egypt  
October 3–17, 2010  
15 Days**

This is a rare opportunity for artists, icon painters, clergy, students, instructors, collectors and anyone who loves masterworks of the ancient Christian art and architecture of Egypt. This specially arranged tour for small groups (usually not exceeding 30 persons) visits the most important Christian and Biblical sites, and includes major Pharaonic monuments of ancient Egypt.

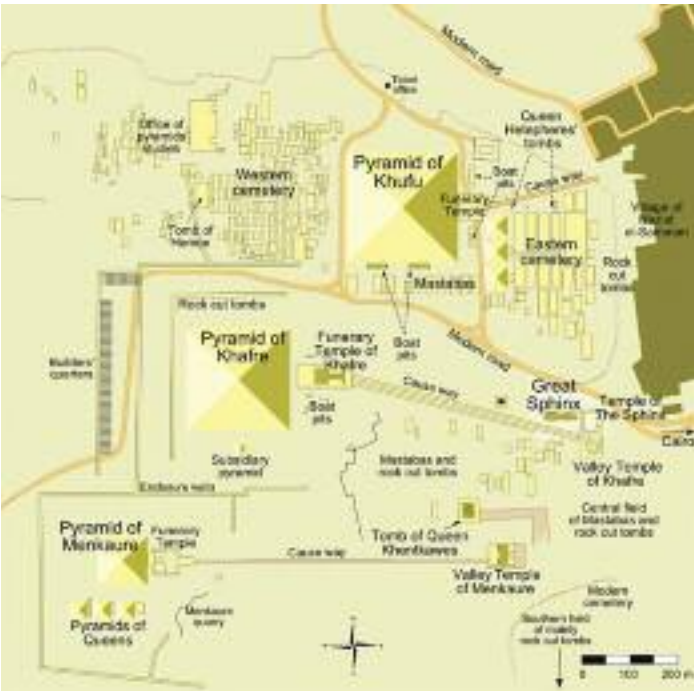
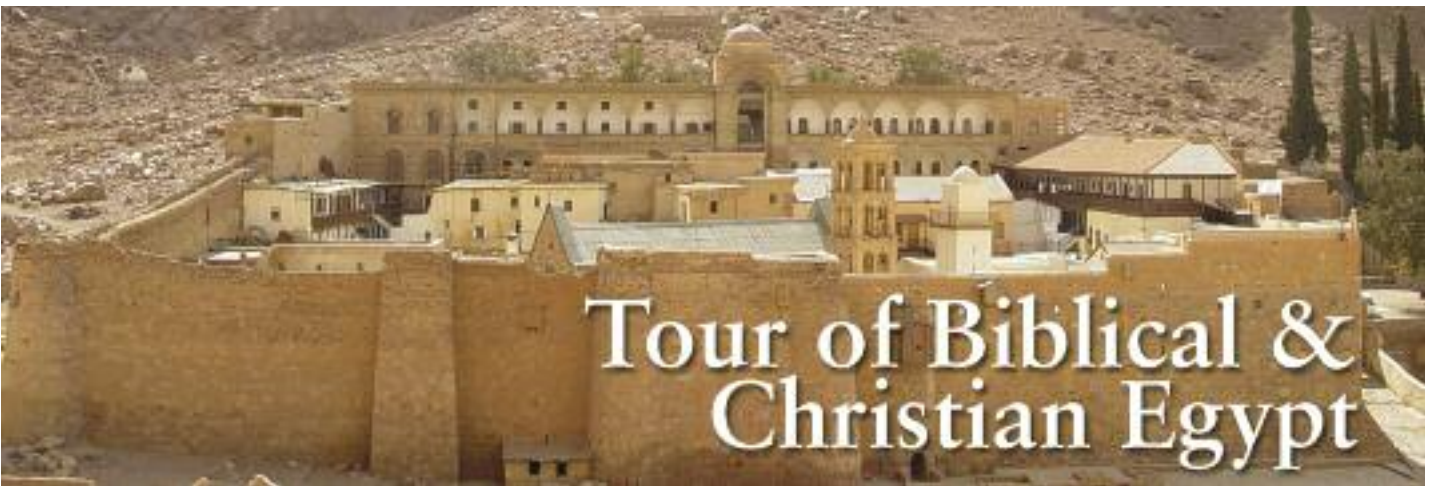
There are hundreds of Christian monasteries (both *cenobitic* and *hermitic*) and *kellia* (hermitic cells) in Egypt, but most have fallen into ruins. During the past few decades the Egyptian government has taken an interest in preserving these sites as historical monuments and archaeological work has begun. The importance of Egypt in the history of Christianity cannot be overestimated, especially in regards to Christian monasticism.

According to tradition, Christian monasticism began in Egypt with Saint Anthony. The first person to be given the title of “monk” in written history was in Egypt,

The tour is accompanied by English-speaking guides at all times. There is some free time for independent activities, such as shopping and sightseeing, while on the tour.

The tour price includes accommodations, most meals, transportation within Egypt, transfers, as well as admission to archaeological sites, museums, churches and monasteries.

The description of the tour itinerary on the following pages is subject to change without notice.



The tour will visit the only remaining Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the great pyramid of Giza (Pyramid of Khufu).

### Day 1

You are greeted at the airport and taken to the hotel where you will stay that evening.

### Day 2

Breakfast is followed by a bus trip to the ancient ruins of **Memphis**, considered to be the ancient capital of Lower Egypt. Memphis was under the protection of the god Ptah, the patron of craftsmen. His temple, Hout-ka-Ptah (meaning “Castle of the ka of Ptah”), was one of the most prominent structures in the city. The name of this temple, rendered as Αἴγιπτος (Ai-gy-ptos) by the Greek historian Manetho, is believed to be the etymologi-

cal origin of the modern English name Egypt.

As part of the ruins in the Memphis area, you visit the **Great Pyramids** and Sphinx of Giza. These magnificent structures are the only remaining monuments of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. During lunch, we discuss the journey made by the Holy Family and the traditional route that led them across the Giza Plateau and what it must have been like for them to see the Pharaonic tombs, structures that must have filled them with both marvel and disdain. You next visit history’s first pyramid, **Sakkara** (also spelled Saqqara), and

ponder life at its enormous necropolis.

Dine that night at the hotel’s restaurants (optional) or you may choose from the many local restaurants.

### Day 3

Following breakfast, you begin the day with a tour of the **Egyptian Museum**. Here you are guided on a tour of the relics of Ancient Egypt that have a strong connection with Christianity. You will see Pharaonic symbols used by modern day Christians and hear about ancient rituals used even today in church services.

After lunch you finish the day’s tour with a visit to **Al-Khalili Bazaar** (Khan el-Khalili, Arabic: **بازار الخليلي**), a major souq in the Islamic district of Cairo. (A souq [Arabic: **سوق**, also souk, suk, sooq, souq, or suq] is a commercial quarter in an Arab or Berber city.) The

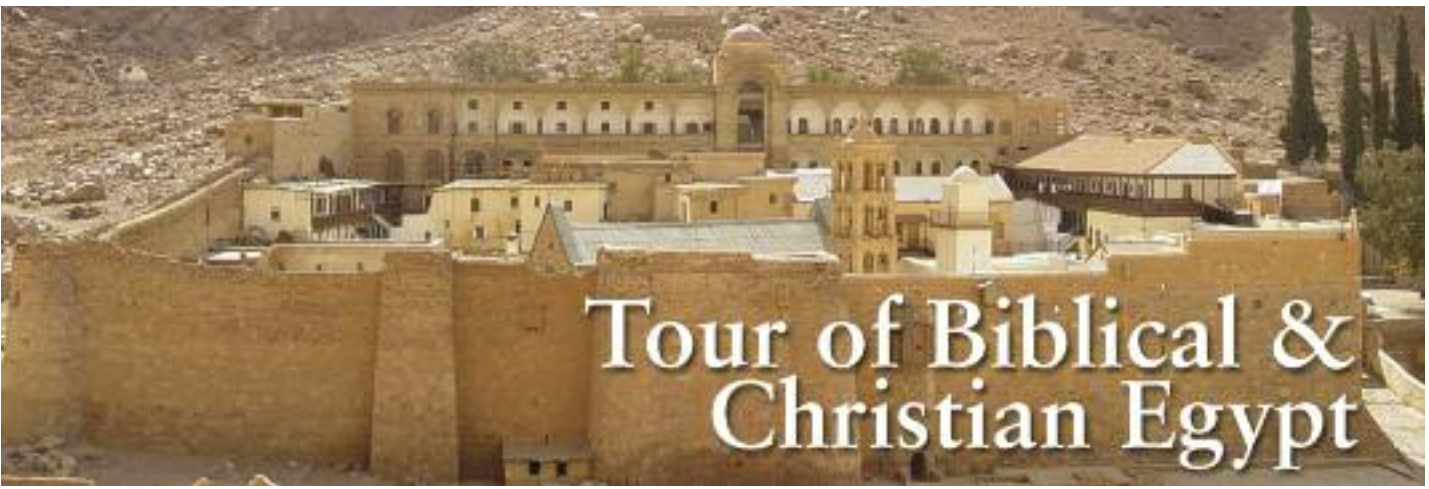


Al-Khalili Bazaar (Khan el-Khalili), Cairo’s main attractions for tourists and Egyptians alike.

bazaar district is one of Cairo’s main attractions for tourists and Egyptians alike. In addition to shops, there are cafes (maqha or qahwah, depending on dialect), restaurants and street food vendors throughout the market. The cafes are generally small and quite traditional, serving Ara-



The Great Sphinx, situated on the Giza Plateau facing due east, is of the fourth dynasty, although the date of its construction is uncertain. The head of the Great Sphinx is believed to be that of the pharaoh Khafra.



The Hanging Church, the most famous Coptic church in Cairo, is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and also known as Sitt Mariam or Saint Mary's Church.

bic coffee and usually offering *shisha* (the common term for hookah in Egypt). A famous hang out there is the Qahwet el Fishawy cafe, where they serve one of the best shisha in Egypt.

Time permitting, you visit the Monastery of Saint Simon on Muquattam where the relics of Saint Simon the Tanner (Sama'an el-Dabbagh), the saint associated with the story of moving the Mokattam Mountain in Cairo, during the rule of Fatimid Caliph Al-Muizz Li-Deenillah in the 10th century, are kept.

You are free to enjoy dinner at the hotel where you will spend the night or a local restaurant.

#### Day 4

Following breakfast at the hotel, you board the bus for a full-day guided tour of **Old Cairo**. Within Old Cairo are

the ancient churches of Abu Sarga, the Hanging Church of the Virgin Mary, and the Church of Saint Barbara the Martyr. This district also contains a citadel named the Fortress of Babylon, the Convent of Saint George, the Coptic Museum and the Ben Ezra Synagogue. You first visit the



Icon of *Saints Sergius and Bacchus*, c. 1300, tempera and gilding on linen and wood, 42 x 28 cm, Probably from Monastery of the Syrians, Coptic Museum, Cairo.

famous Hanging Church with its important collection of icons. The **Hanging Church** (El Muallaqa, Sitt Mariam) derives its name from its location atop the southern tower gate of the fortress with its nave suspended above the passage. Founded in the 3rd or 4th century, the present structure dates from the 10th or 11th century.

Next, you visit **Ben Ezra Synagogue**, which was built on a church named after the angel



Decorated niche, Fresco, Bawit, Monastery of Saint Apollo, 6th or 7th century, Coptic Museum.

Gabriel and marks the spot where Moses was believed to have been found by Pharaoh's daughter. Then you visit **Abu Sarga**, the oldest church in Egypt dating back to the 5th century, dedicated to the Saints Sergius and Bacchus. Relics of

the saints are kept in Abu Sarga. The church owes its fame to having been constructed upon the crypt of the Holy Family where they stayed for three weeks during their sojourn in Egypt.

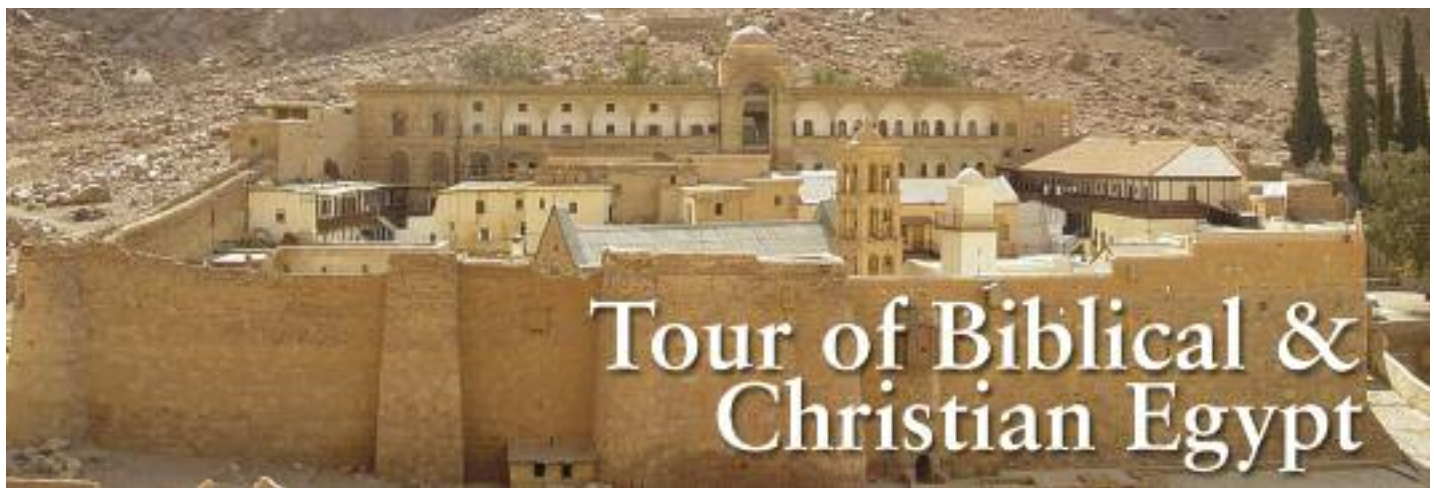
Following lunch, the tour continues at the **Coptic Museum**, housing the world's largest collection of Coptic artwork. Here you find stelae (2nd to 5th centuries) from Kom Abou Billou, which style and iconography mark the transition between Pharaonic art and Coptic art. In the evening, you have dinner before boarding an overnight train to Aswan.

#### Day 5

After breakfast on the train, you arrive in Aswan where you check in to the five-star Nile Cruise. You begin sightseeing on the cruise by visiting the **Aswan High Dam**, Egypt's



The first pylon of the Temple of Isis on the island of Agilka (originally built on the island of Philae).



The ruins of the Monastery of Saint Simeon was at one time one of the largest monasteries in Egypt built during the 7th century.

contemporary example of building on a monumental scale.

Then it is a brief sail to the majestic **Philae Temple** on the Island of Agilka, dedicated to the goddess Isis. Philae is an island in the Nile River and the previous site of an Egyptian temple. The temple was dismantled and relocated to a nearby island, Agilka, after being partly flooded for half a century by the first Aswan Dam. Monuments of various eras, extending from the Pharaohs to the Caesars, occupy the area. Two churches, a monastery, the ruins of a Temple of Augustus, and a large Roman city gate were left where they stood on the submerged island of Philae and not transferred to Agilka.

Next, you take a *felucca* (Arabic: **فكوكولف**, a traditional wooden sailing boat used on the Nile since antiquity) to visit **Elephantine Island**. Afterward

you embark to west bank where you visit the ruins of the **Monastery of Saint Simeon** (Deir Anba Hadra), one of the largest Coptic monasteries in Egypt with perhaps thousands of residents. Begun in the 6th century, it is believed that most building took place in the 7th century. Dedicated to Anba Hadra, a bishop of Aswan and a saint of the late 4th century, you reach the monastery by camel (about 15 minutes), about 2,000 meters from the west bank opposite the southern tip of Elephantine Island.

You finish the day visiting to the **Granite Quarries**, which supplied the ancient Egyptians with most of the hard stone used in pyramids and temples, and still hold a huge unfinished obelisk. Dinner is served on board your cruise ship.

#### Day 6

After breakfast on board the cruise ship, you depart for an early day trip to **Abu Simbel**.



The Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel, completed in 1264 BCE and dedicated to Ra-Harakhty, Ptah and Amun, features four large statues of Ramses II on the facade.

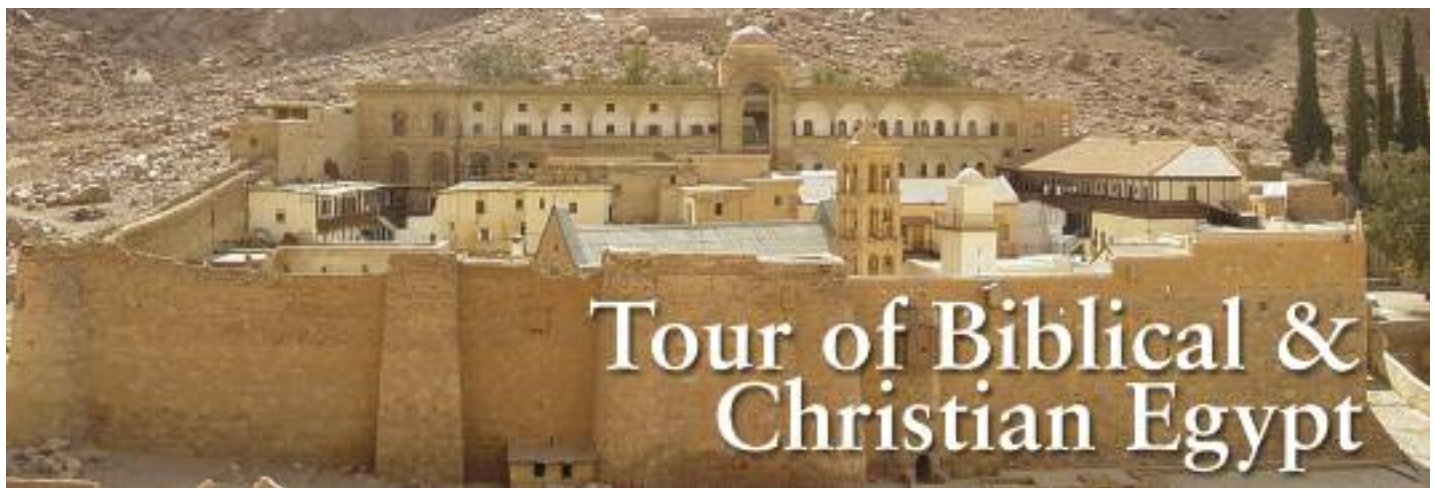
There you visit the Great Temple of Ramses II consisting of four seated colossal statues of Ramses II carved into the mountain. The two temples of Ramses II and his wife Nefertari at Abu Simbel are each fronted by colossal statues up to 20 meters high and are famed as the most impressive

monuments of ancient Egypt. Not only are the two temples at Abu Simbel among the most magnificent monuments in the world but their removal and reconstruction was an historic event in itself.

Then you sail to **Kom Ombo** to visit the beautiful temple



View of the forecourt and Outer Hypostyle Hall from the southwest at Kom Ombo.



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Pylons of the main Temple of Horus at Edfu.

dedicated to the crocodile-god Sobek and the falcon-god Haroeris. The temple stands at a bend in the Nile between Edfu and Aswan where in ancient times sacred crocodiles basked in the sun on the riverbank. The temple dates from about 180 BCE during the Ptolemaic era with additions made in Roman times.

After lunch you continue the journey sailing to **Edfu**. There you visit the Temple of Horus, where you have the opportunity to explore the largest preserved temple in Egypt. Edfu means “Retribution Town,” where the enemies of the god Horus were brought to justice. The site was the traditional location of the mythological

battle between the gods Horus and Set, and its sandstone Ptolemaic temple, dedicated to Horus, is the best preserved of all the temples of Egypt. You have dinner and spend the night in Edfu.

## Day 7

After breakfast on board the cruise ship, you sail to Luxor via **Esna**, a city located on the west bank of the Nile, about 55 km south of Luxor. You visit the temple of Esna, dedicated to the triad Khnum and Neith and Hak, and remarkable for the beauty of its site and the magnificence of its architecture. Built of red sandstone, its portico consists of six rows of four columns each, with lotus-leaf capitals, all of which however differ from each other. You arrive in Luxor (ancient Thebes) in the evening where you have dinner and spend the night.

## Day 8

After breakfast you begin sightseeing on the west bank of the



The Colossi of Memnon formerly stood guard at the entrance to Amenhotep's memorial temple.

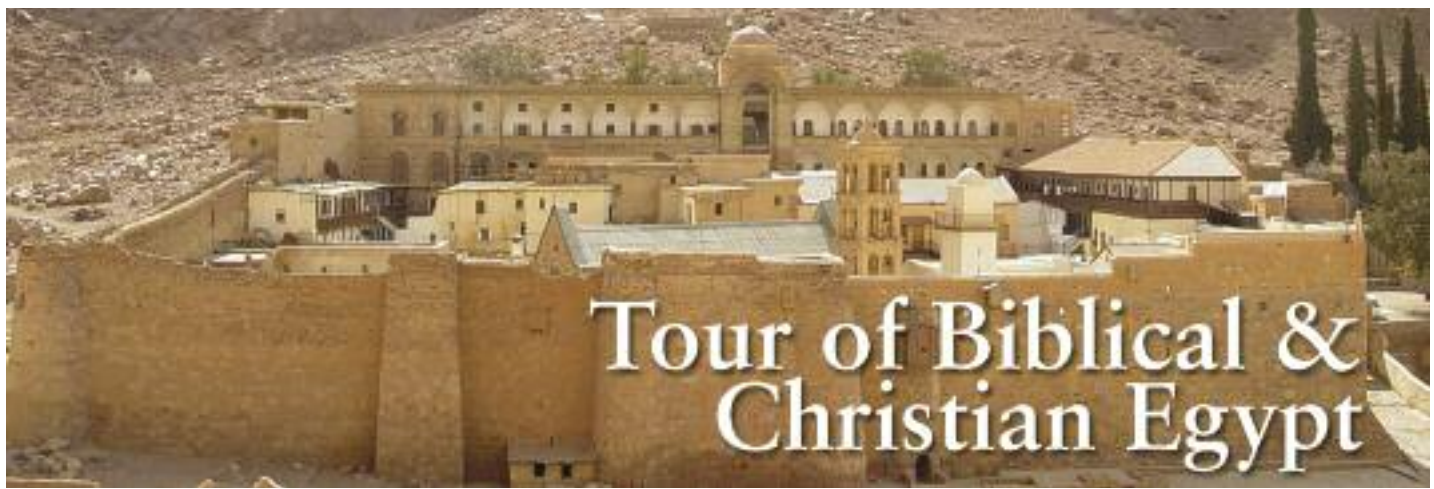
Nile. Your first stop is the **Colossi of Memnon**, two massive stone statues of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. For 3,400 years they have sat in the Theban necropolis across the Nile from the city of Luxor. Next you visit the **Valley of the Kings**, Wadi el-Muluk (Arabic: **كولملا اي دادو**), where tombs were built for the Pharaohs and powerful nobles of the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt, including the tomb of King Tutankhamun. Next you visit the **Valley of Queens**,



View of the Temple of Hatshepsut.



Valley of the Kings where the tombs of the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt are located.



# Tour of Biblical & Christian Egypt



View of Luxor Temple at night.

where you have the chance to visit at least one more tomb. Afterwards you visit the **Temple of Hatshepsut**, the focal point of the Deir el-Bahri (“Northern Monastery”) complex of mortuary temples and tombs. The temple dedicated to Hatshepsut (ancient Egypt’s only female Pharaoh) rises out

of the desert plain in a succession of terraces and merges with the sheer limestone cliffs surrounding it. It was converted into a now uninhabited Christian monastery.

After lunch, your sightseeing begins with a tour of **Luxor Temple**, the great temple com-



Avenue of the Sphinxes connecting Luxor Temple to Karnak Temple.

plex dedicated to Amun, a creator god often fused with the sun-god Ra into Amun-Ra. Luxor Temple is huge in scale—it once housed a village within its walls—and has several pylons (monumental gateways). The temple is famous for its pillars that are in the form of a bundle of papyrus. No less than five churches were built within the confines of the Luxor Temple during the Byzantine period.

Next, you continue the tour at the **Karnak Temple**, one of the greatest places of worship in

history, built over more than a thousand years by generations of Pharaohs. The great Hypostyle Hall is a forest of giant pillars, covering an area larger than Notre Dame Cathedral. You have dinner and spend the night in a hotel at Luxor.

## Day 9

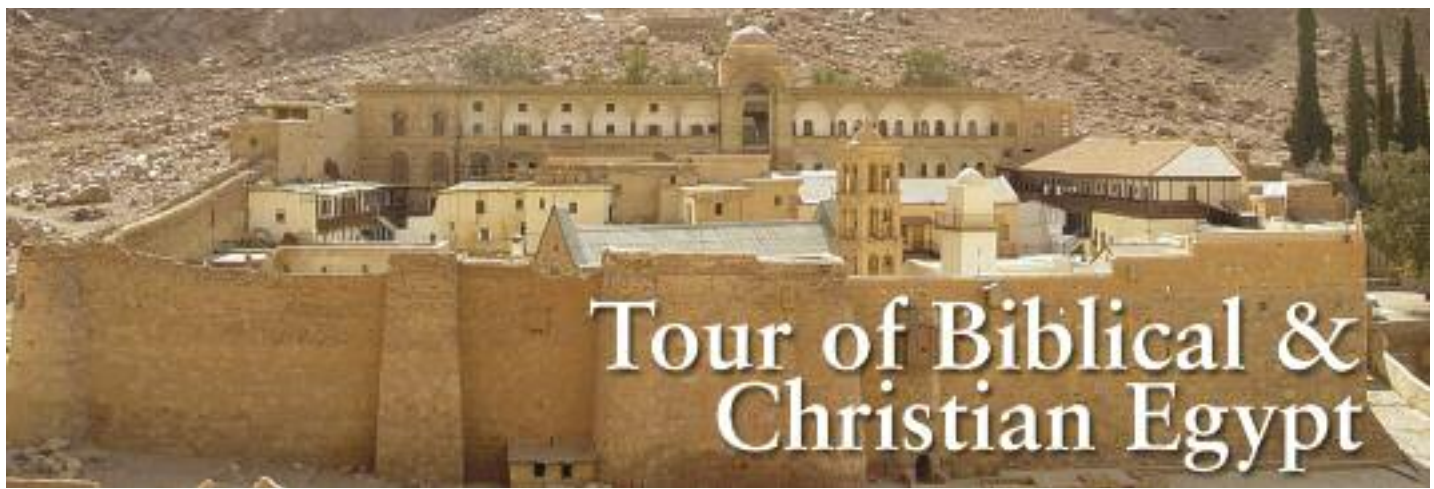
After breakfast, you ride three hours by bus to the **White Monastery** or the Monastery of Saint Shenute (Deir al-Abyad, Deir Anba Shinuda) at Sohag, named so for the limestone walls of the surviving church, which in some ways



View of the Great Hypostyle Hall in the Temple of Karnak.



Interior view of the ruins of the “White Monastery” (Monastery of Saint Shenute) located near Sohag on the Nile north of Luxor.



Exterior view of the ruins of the "Red Monastery" (Monastery of Saint Bishoi) located near Sohag.

resembles the pylons of Pharaonic temples. The monastery, founded by the uncle of Saint Shenouda, Saint Pigol, and, at its peak, housed some 4,000 monks and nuns. What survives of the original monastery is only the basilica-style church. Here was once a great library that may have even been the greatest Coptic library in Egypt, which codices today are scattered about the world in different libraries and museums. Next, you visit the nearby **Red Monastery** or the Monastery of Saint Bishoi (Deir al-Ahmar, Deir Anba Bishoi), one of the most

famous Christian monasteries in Egypt about three kilometers north of the White Monastery. Its name is derived from the color of its construction material, consisting of brick, which distinguishes it from its nearby neighbor. Otherwise, this monastery is architecturally similar to the White Monastery and most likely its construction dates to the same period—the fifth century.

After your visit of the monasteries of Sohag, you return to your hotel in Luxor.



A spectacular sunrise panorama atop Mount Sinai.



Map of the trail ascending Mount Sinai and the vicinity of the Monastery of Saint Catherine.

### Day 10

After breakfast, you leave the hotel and board a plane to **Sharm El-Sheikh** on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. This day you pause from the nonstop sightseeing tour for some leisure time at the beach or by the swimming pool in the resort. You have dinner at the resort on the Red Sea.

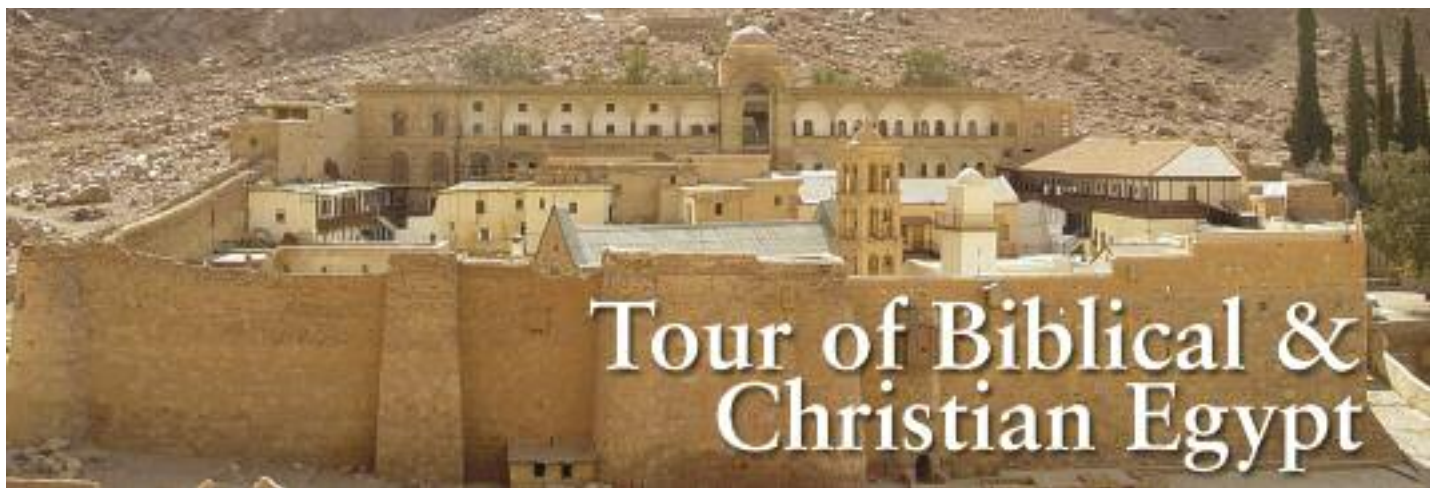
### Day 11

In the morning, you check out of the hotel for the three hour bus ride to Mount Sinai. You check into the hotel and have dinner there.

### Day 12

Athletic travelers will welcome the arduous climb in the footsteps of Moses up to the sum-

mit of **Mount Sinai**. The climb begins at about 2:00 a.m. from Saint Catherine's Monastery, based at 1,500 meters, and takes about four hours to reach the summit of Mount Sinai at 2,285 meters above sea level. One can walk all the way up or bargain with the Bedouins for a camel ride that goes to Elijah's Pass situated about 3/4 of the way up. From the pass it's another hour up the stone stairway to the summit. After reaching the summit just before sunrise, you find the breathtaking panorama of one of the most famous regions of the Holy Lands where God revealed his law to man. Descending Mount Sinai is no less interesting, as it goes



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The Monastery of Saint Anthony located near the Red Sea is Egypt's oldest inhabited moanstry.

down the “3,000 Steps Path” via Stephanus Gate leading to Saint Catherine’s Monastery with an extraordinary view of the monastery. Those not inclined to climb the mountain can spend the night at the hotel.

After a box breakfast, you begin the tour of **Monastery of Saint Catherine** to see its extensive library of ancient documents, see icons and hear the stories of the monastery as

only the monks can tell them. After lunch you board a bus for the trip along the west coast of the Sinai peninsula. The 8-hour bus ride along the Gulf of Suez is interrupted by a visit of the **Monastery of the Seven Girls** in the Biblical Rephidim (Wadi Feiran) an oasis in the Sinai peninsula. The monastery (also known as the Monastery of Moses) is located on a spring in the middle of the oasis where Joshua defeated the Amalekites. Next,



The Monastery of the Syrians is one of the many active monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun of Egypt.

you continue riding north along the gulf until you reach the Ahmed Hamdi Tunnel, which goes under the **Suez Canal**. You cross under the canal to view the locks on the other side in the city of **Suez**. Finally, you continue your journey south to Ain Sukhna.

## Day 13

After breakfast in the resort area of **Ain Sukhna**, you ride the bus to the monasteries of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony on the shores of the Red Sea. As you leave for the drive to the Red Sea, you wonder about the spiritual beliefs that drove Saint Anthony to build so many great monasteries like those you see on the shore of the sea. You arrive at **Monastery of Saint Anthony** (Deir Mar Antonios), the oldest inhabited monastery in Egypt, which lies at the foot of Al-Qalzam Mountain, founded in 356 CE just after the saint’s death and is the oldest active monastery in the world. Next, you visit the **Monastery of Saint Paul**. It dates to the 5th century and was founded in memory of one of Egypt’s greatest saints and anchorites, Saint Paul the Anchorite, who is said to have lived in a cave for a period of some 80 years over which it was built. Monks at these famous monasteries tell you about the life of this famous saint, known as history’s first hermit monk. You return by bus to the hotel in Cairo.



The Monastery of Saint Bishoi is the most eastern extant monastery in the Wadi al-Natrun.

## Day 14

After breakfast, you board the bus for a voyage north to **Wadi al-Natrun**. It is here that you will see the magnificent monasteries of Scetis: **Monastery of the Syrians** (Deir al-Surian), **Monastery of the Romans** (Dier al-Baramose), **Monastery of Saint Bishoi** (Dier al-Anba Bishoi) and, if permission is granted, the **Monastery of Saint Macarius** (Deir al-Abu Magar or Deir al-Anba Makaryus). These are functioning monasteries where you meet monks who present the history of these incredible bastions of spirituality. You return to the hotel in Cairo, where you are free to choose your own dining.

## Day 15

The final day of the tour you depart from Cairo.



TRAVEL TIPS AND ADVICE

## Before You Leave

# Tour of Biblical & Christian Egypt

### Documents

Do not forget to bring your airline tickets, visa and passport. Make photocopies of all your travel documents, such as passport, visa and airline tickets, and place these in a separate bag other than the one in which you will carry the originals.

### Flight from the U.S.

We suggest that you use a carry-on bag for important documents (passport, etc.), and some things that you might use on the flight (books, magazines, clothing, medications, cosmetics, etc.). Airport “film-safe” X-rays may damage your film, especially film over 800 ASA. Bring a lead-lined, X-ray safe, film pouch available at most photo specialty stores and ask airport security personnel to manually inspect the contents.

### Baggage and Weight Limitations

On international flights most airlines allow you to check two standard-size pieces of luggage and take one carry-on bag that can fit safely under a seat. Most carriers restrict you to a maximum of 50 pounds (23 kg) per bag, and not exceeding 62 inches (157 cm) when you total length+width+height for checked-in luggage. Check with the airline for their specific rules that may apply. If your luggage exceeds this amount you will be required to pay additional fare.

### What to Bring with You

Bring any medications that you use in their original containers, cosmetics you regularly use, film, batteries (for digital cameras, video cameras, etc.), personal hygiene products, special items (i.e., extra pair of contact lenses) and personal dietary preferences (i.e., low fat

breakfast cereal, sugar substitutes, etc.). Consider bringing these items: vitamins, energy bars, bandages, sunglasses and sunscreen. Also consider bringing hand wipes or a sanitary wash to clean your hands before meals.

We highly recommend bringing a student-style backpack to carry camera equipment, tissues, bottled water, etc. On your return, it can either be folded into your suitcase or used, if the suitcases are filled.

Be sure to bring plenty of batteries for cameras and, if you run low, don't wait until you are in a major tourist area to buy them. They will be expensive, along with anything else you may need at the tourist hotspots.

### Dietary Restrictions

If you have any dietary restrictions, you must let us know in advance, otherwise we cannot guarantee that we will be able to satisfy those requirements during the tour.

### Clothing

During the time of your visit, temperatures may range from 86° F. (30° C.) to a cool 64° F. (18° C.) at night, so bring loose and flowing garments that are not only modest, but practical in a hot climate. For clothing, we recommend cotton or cotton and synthetic blends, as all synthetic materials tend to be hot. Protect your head and neck from loss of moisture. Bring a hat to protect yourself from the heat of the Egyptian sun. Above all travel light. Get wheels for your luggage and leave heavy items at home. Sunglasses are also a must as the sun there is very bright.

Everyone says bring good, comfortable shoes because you will be doing a lot of walking and temple floors are far from

even. We will tell you the same, but do not bring the sort with air pockets in the soles (such as those typically found in expensive tennis shoes). They burst in the heat and will be ruined.

### Appropriate Attire

Although casual clothing is appropriate at all times in tourists hotels and busy tourist areas, shorts and tops exposing arms and shoulders are not appropriate for men and women in non-touristic locations. Women should always dress modestly outside of tourist hotels. Many locations we visit on the tour are operating churches and monasteries. Sports clothing, such as sweats and shorts, are clearly inappropriate. Women may be required to wear a head covering, such as a scarf, and must avoid wearing pants while visiting churches. Some churches will not allow entry to women wearing short sleeve or low cut blouses and short skirts. On the tour, you may want to dress up for dinner or special events, if available.

### Electrical Devices

The standard for electrical sockets in Egypt is 220 volts, 50 Hertz and require a round, type C, 2 parallel prong plug.

## Traveling in Egypt

# Tour of Biblical & Christian Egypt

### Weather

Throughout Egypt, days are commonly warm or hot, and nights are cool. Egypt has only two seasons: a mild winter from November to April and a hot summer from May to October. The only differences between the seasons are variations in daytime temperatures and changes in prevailing winds. The temperatures in Cairo during the month of October can vary from a warm 86° F. (30° C.) to a cool 64° F. (18° C.) at night. A few of the places we will visit can experience warmer temperatures over 90° F. (32° C.) during the day. Dress for warm, sunny weather during the day, but bring warm clothing and dress in layers for the evening, especially for the climb to the top of Mount Sinai. Hats and sun block are a necessity.

### Food and Drink

In Egypt, dining out can range from stand-up snack bars to luxurious five-course meals. Most meals are provided on the tour, but there will be dinners that are optional and you will have the option to choose where to dine out. You can find small, inexpensive establishments that serve good Egyptian food for only a few pounds.

Don't drink the tap water, do not eat vegetables washed in the water, or drink tea obtained outside of tourist hotels. If you become ill, go to a pharmacy. Without a prescription you can get good medication to fight most common ailments. In most places in Egypt, the pharmacists are about as good as the doctors when it comes to medications and there are excellent doctors in major cities. We recommend purchasing bottled water from hotels or recommended stores, rather than drinking

water from local fountains or refreshment stands.

If you are inclined to consume alcoholic beverages during the tour, please bear in mind that you are in an Islamic country where few imbibe. While alcoholic beverages are available, they are expensive and sometimes difficult to find in some areas. You can bring up to two liters or purchase some at a duty free shop upon arrival and before exiting the airport in Cairo.

### Tipping

Tipping, what is known as *baksheesh*, or *ba'sheesh*, is common and expected in Egypt. Use the same rate as you are accustomed at home when tipping in Egypt.

Our tour guides, bus drivers and other tour personnel have the rigorous task of organizing and assuring the enjoyment and safety of everyone on the tour. They deserve a generous tip from participants and we encourage it.

### Money

Egyptian currency ranges from the 25 *piastres* (quarter pound note) up to a 1,000 pound note. Egyptian currency is of different sizes. The smaller the note denomination, the smaller its physical size. Egyptian coins duplicate the value of some of the Egyptian bills. There are 25 piaster and 50 piaster coins, but because of this duplication, many establishments in Egypt rarely have coins. In fact, the value of 25 piastres is so small that they are often difficult to find in either coin or bill, and businesses often round up the price of merchandise to the nearest pound.

Before climbing into a taxi or other mode of transportation, negotiate the price with the driver. Haggling with

vendors on pricing for merchandise is not only acceptable, but expected.

**Tip:** Carry plenty of small Egyptian notes, such as one pound and 50 piaster (half pound) notes for incidentals and tips.

### Passports and Visas

All visitors arriving in Egypt are required to be in possession of a valid passport. U.S. travelers can obtain their Visa upon entry to Egypt, and need not obtain visas prior to entry. However, there are some exceptions to this, so please check with the nearest Egyptian consulate or embassy in the U.S. The cost of the Visa is \$15 (U.S.) per person. Visa applications are normally passed out by airlines prior to landing at an Egyptian airport. Entry visas may be obtained from Egyptian Diplomatic and Consular Missions Abroad or from the Entry Visa Department at the Travel Documents, Immigration and Nationality Administration (TDINA). Please check with your nearest Egyptian Consular mission for more details concerning visa regulations applying to your citizenship.

### Health Recommendations

We do not recommend drinking tap water. Use bottled water for drinking, and even for brushing your teeth. Bottled water can be purchased in your hotel. On the street, drink cold beverages that are bottled or canned. You may want to avoid beverages with ice.

Wash hands often with soap and water, especially before meals. Do not eat food purchased from street vendors.

To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep your feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot. Do not handle animals.

## Traveling in Egypt

# Tour of Biblical & Christian Egypt

### Trains

Those who have traveled aboard European trains may be disappointed with trains in Egypt. They are adequate, but, for example, you will not find a restaurant car and the food is similar to what you find on airlines.

### Hotels

We have chosen four-star hotels for the tour, but this class of hotels varies in quality to some degree according to their location. In some of the remote areas we visit there are not many hotels from which to choose. For example, the Morgan Land Hotel is one of the few hotels in Saint Catherine's Village. This hotel has received both good and poor reviews. There are simply no great hotels there, but in order to climb the mountain we must stay there.

### Climbing Mount Sinai

When climbing Mount Sinai, which usually begins at about 2:00 a.m. in the morning, you have two options, one to climb all the way up on foot and the other to go halfway by camel. Please be aware that the climb to the summit is difficult for the elderly and individuals with physical limitations. Even on camel back, you can only ascend half way to the peak and riding a camel is not an easy proposition as they are much wider and less comfortable to ride than horses. Once you reach the pass, you must go on foot and we have literally seen the guides pushing older people up the trail. If you have a heart condition, breathing problems, etc., please be aware that, regardless of the stairs on the mountain trail, it is not an easy climb. That said, ascending the mountain is a wonderful experience.

### Preparing for the Climb

- Wear sturdy shoes and a hat, take matches or a lighter, sunscreen and a warm jacket for early mornings and evenings.
- Respect the right of pilgrims to a quiet, peaceful experience on the summit.
- Respect the sanctity of the landscape and leave no trace of your visit.
- Please dispose of your litter in the bins provided.
- Please use the available environmental and hygienic toilets.

The mountain trail begins at the mouth of Wadi El-Deir at Aaron's Hill (Nabi Haruun) and continues past the Monastery up the camel path to the top of Elijah's Basin, then follows the stairway to the summit of Mount Sinai. The trail descends back to Elijah's Basin and then continues down the stairway of Repentance to return to the Monastery.

The length of the trail is approximately 7 kilometers and will take 5 to 7 hours to complete depending on your fitness level. The trail follows the least strenuous route but is rocky in places and care should be taken especially when descending the stairway.

You are one of thousands who have set out to climb Mount Sinai (Jebel Musa). Pilgrims, travelers and visitors have been attracted to the sacred landscape of Mount Sinai for centuries. As you ascend the path the guide will identify the chapels, mosques and the other sacred sites you will see and also describe the dramatic events, such as the Burning Bush and the receiving of the Ten Commandments, that happened in this part of the Sinai desert about 3,500 years ago. For some the

ascent is merely a physical experience but for those who choose to understand the history of the Mount and respect its 1,600 year old monastic tradition, you will undoubtedly discover something more spiritual.

### Street Traffic

Be very careful when crossing streets in Egypt, especially in large cities, as drivers do not slow and stop for pedestrians. Find a traffic policeman to make a safe crossing. You will undoubtedly see Egyptians with broken arms and legs, the unfortunate results of having waded out into the worst of traffic.

### Street Vendors

A word about street vendors and tourist police in some areas of Egypt. Street vendors can be very insistent when hawking their merchandise to tourists to the point of harassment (the police may ask for tips to pose with them or to show you a special area of a monument). It happens in Egypt and there is not much we can do about it. In Luxor, the *caleche* drivers (four-wheel horse carriages) are obnoxious and at Giza there are many troublesome vendors, though much less than there once was. Do not let them spoil your time on the tour. If you are not interested, politely refuse and continue on your way.