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Public Holidays in Egypt

	2023	2024
Coptic Christmas Day	7 January	7 January
Revolution Day	25–26 January	25 January
Coptic Easter Sunday	16 April	5 May
Spring Festival	17 April	6 May
Eid al-Fitr	22–24 April	10–12 April
Sinai Liberation Day	25 April	25 April
Labor Day	1 May	1 May
Eid al-Adha	28 June–1 July	16–19 June
June 30 Revolution Day	30 June	30 June, 4 July
Islamic New Year	20 July	8 July
23 July Revolution Day	23, 27 July	23, 25 July
Birth of the Prophet	28 September	16 September
Armed Forces Day	6 October	6, 10 October

**Islamic holidays are subject to change based on sightings of the moon.*

Shipping and Removals in Egypt

There are a number of international shipping and removal companies offering competitively priced quotes for shipping services to Egypt.

Shipping to cities other than Cairo will be more difficult and expensive, but is still feasible. We recommended that small, expensive items be brought in personal luggage or air freight as Egyptian customs has a reputation for allowing items to go missing. It is also a good idea to insure expensive shipped goods and to do so through a company other than the one used for shipping to ensure complete and honest coverage.

That said, it is often much cheaper to buy new items from within Egypt than to ship them from another country. This will not only save on shipping costs, but also on any imposed duty or taxes on imported goods. Electronics and furniture are taxed exceptionally highly, but can be bought cheaply in Egypt.

Banned items for shipping to Egypt

Egypt has a strict policy in place for bringing in items that are offensive to the Muslim culture. Be sure to check the government lists or phone the nearest Egyptian embassy prior to shipping. Narcotics and drugs, cotton, firearms and birds, or any bird byproducts, are also banned from shipping to Egypt, and the amount of cigarettes, alcohol and perfume or cologne, among other things, that can be brought into the country are strictly regulated.

Shipping pets to Egypt

Those bringing pets to Egypt should be aware that they will need a health certificate from a valid government veterinarian in their home country. This must not be older than two weeks, and the pet may still be subject to examination upon arrival in Egypt. Pets must also have had all their vaccinations, including rabies.

There are a number of animals that are banned from being brought into Egypt, including birds and reptiles. Expats should contact their Egyptian embassy for more information about this.

Cost of Living in Egypt

While the cost of living in Egypt is somewhat higher than that of its North African neighbours, it does compare favourably with nearby Middle Eastern destinations such as Oman and Qatar.

Large cities like Cairo, favoured by expats, tend to attract a higher cost of living than smaller towns. In the Mercer Cost of Living Survey for 2023, Cairo was ranked as the 217th most expensive city out of 227 cities surveyed. This rank is a drop of more than 60 places, indicating that life in Cairo has become more affordable when compared to other locations surveyed.

Cost of accommodation in Egypt

Expats will find that accommodation prices vary according to area, and of course, the size and quality of accommodation. Living in large cities will generally push the price of rent up, while expats living in smaller towns or rural areas will find lower prices. Apartments in the city centre are also more expensive than those in outlying suburbs.

Cost of transport in Egypt

The price of petrol in Egypt is generally affordable, but can be prone to sudden spikes in cost. Public transport is attractively priced. Taxis are also affordable and the price of a trip can be negotiated with the driver, although Westerners may find it difficult to secure the same rate as locals.

Cost of food and entertainment in Egypt

Food, drink and clothing can consume as much or as little of the household expenses as an expat's lifestyle demands. Cooking at home with local ingredients, eating out locally a few times a month and avoiding budget-blowing fine dining restaurants will allow a comfortable standard of living on a reasonable budget.

Local goods are reasonably price, but imported products are costly and should be avoided if possible. Expats should explore local bazaars and markets to find inexpensive local goods.

Cost of education in Egypt

Public schools in Egypt can be attended free of charge, but many expat parents prefer to send their children to an international school. These schools tend to have high fees, so they may not be suitable for expats on a budget or those whose salary packages don't include education expenses.

Cost of living in Egypt chart

Prices may vary depending on product and service provider. The list below shows average prices for Cairo in September 2022.

Accommodation	
Three-bedroom apartment in city centre	EGP 8,811
Three-bedroom apartment outside of city centre	EGP 5,222
One-bedroom apartment in city centre	EGP 4,429
One-bedroom apartment outside of city centre	EGP 2,758
Shopping	
Eggs (dozen)	EGP 29.27
Milk (1 litre)	EGP 19.26
Rice (1kg)	EGP 16.58
Loaf of white bread	EGP 11.92
Chicken breasts (1kg)	EGP 97.82
Pack of cigarettes (Marlboro)	EGP 50
Eating out	

Big Mac Meal	EGP 90
Coca-Cola (330ml)	EGP 6.25
Cappuccino	EGP 42.84
Local beer (500ml)	EGP 35
Three-course meal for two at mid-range restaurant	EGP 500
Utilities	
Mobile-to-mobile call rate (per minute)	EGP 0.19
Internet (uncapped ADSL or cable average per month)	EGP 345
Basic utilities (per month for small apartment)	EGP 616
Transportation	
Taxi rate (per kilometre)	EGP 3.50
Bus/train fare in the city centre	EGP 6.50
Petrol/gasoline (per litre)	EGP 9.46

Doing Business in Egypt

For those unfamiliar with the culture and economic landscape of the country, doing business in Egypt can be a daunting and somewhat frustrating process. Expats who wish to be successful in Egyptian business will need to spend some time learning and understanding the local culture and cultivating solid relationships with their local counterparts.

Every step of the business process in Egypt takes almost twice as long as it would in the West, so we recommend expat entrepreneurs leave plenty of time for negotiations and possible setbacks. Those moving to Egypt to set up a business should arrange meetings as far in advance as possible, even before arriving in the country. It is also important to confirm the meeting close to the time.

Fast facts

Business hours

Sunday to Thursday, from 9am to 5pm. This can vary between businesses, and hours may differ during Ramadan.

Business language

The official language in Egypt is Arabic, but English is also widely spoken and understood in the business world.

Dress

Smart and conservative, especially for women. First impressions are important in Egypt and are strongly influenced by how a person presents themselves, so dressing well is essential. Men should wear dark-coloured, lightweight suits and women should ensure that any skirt or dress they wear falls below the knees and that their shoulders and arms are covered.

Gifts

It is customary to exchange gifts in Egypt. Gifts should be wrapped, well presented and of a high quality, and should be given with the right hand. Gifts are not usually opened in the presence of the giver. Avoid giving flowers as these are associated with particular occasions like illness or weddings.

Gender equality

Women are underrepresented in Egyptian companies, but expat women are usually respected in business circles. That said, they will be expected to dress and behave more conservatively than they would in the West.

Greetings

The most common greeting is a handshake. Close associates may kiss one another on the cheek. If a male expat greets a woman, it is best to wait for her to initiate a handshake and, if she doesn't, greet her with a slight nod of the head instead.

Business culture in Egypt

Relationships

A lot of emphasis is placed on forming strong personal relationships between business associates. In Egypt, people prefer to do business with those they are familiar with. For expats this means investing time into forming relationships and building trust with potential business partners. Networking is important in Egypt and expats should call upon their local contacts for useful introductions and references.

Meetings

When meeting a business associate for the first time, expats shouldn't expect to get straight down to business, as Egyptians prefer to take some time to get to know colleagues. It is best to wait for the Egyptian business partner to steer the conversation in the direction of business.

Negotiations

Expats will find that the key to doing business in Egypt is patience. This is especially true when it comes to negotiations. Business meetings are slow and lengthy. Egyptians are tough negotiators and will rarely settle for the initial terms of a contract. Avoid being hostile and pressurising other parties during negotiations, as this will create distrust. **Hierarchy**

The business environment in Egypt is hierarchical. Status and titles are held in high regard. People in Egypt should be addressed by their title followed by their surname. If no clear title exists then it is sufficient to use Mr or Mrs.

Keeping face

The concept of maintaining face is important in Egypt and it is not appropriate to humiliate colleagues and associates. Honour is highly valued in both the business world and wider Egyptian society. Even in the business world, a person's word is their bond and to go back on a verbal agreement makes one look dishonourable. Follow through with any promises made during business negotiations as this will show trustworthiness.

Dos and don'ts of business in Egypt

- Do take the time to get to know business associates on a personal and professional level. Business relationships in Egypt are based on familiarity and trust.

- Do not make promises that cannot be kept. Honour is highly valued in business.
- Do dress well for business meetings. Appearances and first impressions are important.
- Do not expect to do business during Ramadan as business comes close to a standstill during this time
- Do make direct eye contact during negotiations as it is seen as a sign of honesty and sincerity

Work Permits for Egypt

The process for acquiring a work permit for Egypt can be complicated and Egyptian authorities are inefficient at times. Luckily, employers will usually take care of the bulk of the paperwork involved in applying for a work permit. The process can take months, however, so expats should plan accordingly.

Because work permit applications require the participation of the expat's employer, it is not possible to obtain a work permit without a solid job offer from an employer in Egypt.

In addition to a work permit, some expats will also need a visa prior to arrival in Egypt. The required paperwork for the various visa categories can change frequently and varies according to the applicant's nationality, so any applications are best handled by an agency or through one's hiring company.

Applying for a work permit for Egypt

Before expats and their employers can begin the process of applying for a work permit, they will need to get clearance from the relevant authorities in Egypt and the employee will need to undergo an HIV test.

A work permit application form along with numerous supporting documents from both employer and employee are required for a work permit application. In some cases, additional documents may be requested. Once expats have secured a work permit for Egypt, it is usually valid for a year, after which it will need to be renewed.

Expats will also need a residence permit in order to stay in Egypt legally. Once obtained, it is typically valid for either one, three or five years.

**Visa regulations and requirements for work permits are subject to change at short notice and expats should contact their respective embassy or consulate for the latest details.*

Pros and Cons of Moving to Egypt

With so many things to consider when moving abroad, it's all too easy for future expats to become overwhelmed. Being fully prepared in terms of what to expect can make the transition a bit less jarring. To give expats-to-be a jumpstart on this process, here are our pros and cons of moving to Egypt.

Accommodation in Egypt

+ PRO: Lots of options

From sprawling villas to upmarket studio apartments, there's plenty of variety in Egypt's property market. Families and single expats alike should have a fairly easy time finding something that's right for them and that fits into their budget, particularly if they're being paid in foreign currency like US dollars. Those earning in the local currency will have fewer options, but with a little effort should be able to find something suitable.

Lifestyle in Egypt

+ PRO: Incredible sightseeing opportunities

From the manmade wonder of the pyramids of Giza to the awe-inspiring Sphinx, expats in Egypt have some of the world's most sought-after tourist attractions right on their doorstep.

- CON: Not a particularly lively nightlife scene

Due to the prevalent conservative culture of Egypt, partying and drinking isn't a big part of the social scene. While there certainly are nightclubs and bars to be found, these are few and far between, so it can take a bit of searching to find a good spot.

Culture in Egypt

+ PRO: Friendly locals

Egyptians are known for being welcoming to strangers and will always be up for having a chat or helping someone out. It follows that expats who are similarly open and kind will likely make fast friends with locals.

- CON: It can be difficult to adjust

The patriarchal culture prevalent in Egyptian society can be a shock to expats. Western women in particular often have a hard time adjusting to this as they find themselves the object of stares and catcalls in Egypt. Generally, the best way to deal with this is to ignore it. In a case where an expat woman feels unsafe, she shouldn't hesitate to ask for help from a local woman.

Getting around in Egypt

- CON: Chaotic driving

With one of the world's highest road accident casualty counts, Egypt is a dangerous place to drive. Local drivers are often unpredictable and will often act without signalling, making it difficult for other drivers to react in time. Rather than braving the chaos of driving in Egypt, we recommend expats instead make use of taxis and public transport or hire a personal driver.

+ PRO: The Cairo metro

Though much of Egypt's public transport can be uncomfortable, the metro in Cairo is efficient, fast and well priced. Those outside of Cairo are out of luck when it comes to this convenient public transport experience, as this is the country's only metro.

Education in Egypt

- CON: Local education unlikely to be an option for expats

Public education in Egypt is generally of a low quality, and the language of instruction is Arabic. For this reason, most expats prefer to send their children to international schools.

+ PRO: Range of international schools

A variety of international schools are spread throughout Egypt's major cities, offering parents some choice when it comes to selecting their preferred curriculum. Giza and Cairo in particular have a large selection of international schools.

- CON: High fees and extra costs

Aside from already-pricey annual school fees, parents will often be expected to shoulder additional costs for things such as uniforms, extra-curriculars, textbooks and school excursions.

Accommodation in Egypt

Many expats moving to Egypt do so for work, with Cairo being the country's most popular city for expats. Some of the companies or schools that host expats will supply accommodation in Egypt or provide an allowance as part of the agreed salary. This is something to consider negotiating into a contract if it is not already included.

Those without assistance from their employer in finding accommodation should consider hiring a real-estate agent to navigate the language barrier and the local property market in order to find the perfect home in Egypt. Alternatively, one could go it alone. Make sure to bring someone along to translate if need be.

Types of accommodation in Egypt

There is a range of property options for expats moving to Egypt. Most find homes in dedicated expat areas, either in the form of apartments or villas.

There are many benefits that come with living close to other expats. Having someone to ask for advice and being around others who have experienced the same challenges make it easier to adjust to life in the country as it's likely to be culturally different to an expat's own.

Expats tend to earn higher salaries than the local community, and hence live in more affluent areas. In these areas, one can expect a wide range of amenities.

Finding accommodation in Egypt

Egypt is a word-of-mouth society. A recommendation goes a long way and is the best way to find a good service provider. The many expat forums and blogs on the internet make it easy to get advice before even moving to Egypt.

Real-estate agents vary in their resourcefulness and ability. The companies with the most employees are not necessarily the best or the most reliable. We recommend expats ask around within the expat community for a few names and numbers of agents that have proved to be responsible and professional and stick to those. This can also help to avoid companies that are known to rip off expats.

Renting accommodation in Egypt

Leases

Leases in Egypt can be anywhere between one month and a couple of years in length. Expats should shop around to find the best deal that works for them.

It is important that expats renting property in Egypt have a proper written contract and never make a verbal agreement. Expats should insist that a contract is written in English. Reputable estate agents will ensure any Arabic documents are duly translated into English.

House rules

Expats may find that rental contracts in Egypt differ quite markedly from the standard contracts they would be accustomed to in their home country. It is possible that a rental agreement may stipulate what types of visitors the tenant is allowed to entertain and whether overnight guests are permitted.

Some landlords forbid the free mixing of men and women in their properties overnight and there have been instances of expats finding themselves in breach of these terms unintentionally. It's therefore quite important that expats read the contract carefully and fully understand their responsibilities and those of the landlord or agent. Expats can ask that any ambiguous elements of the contract be clarified.

Deposits

In order to secure a rental home, expats may be obligated to pay a number of months' rent upfront in addition to a deposit, which is generally at least one month's rent. Expats should therefore ensure they have sufficient funds available, and should also take appropriate security precautions to avoid being scammed. Reputable estate agents can be helpful in this regard. In addition, expats should always view properties in person before making payment.

Fees

The agent and landlord may require expats to pay an agency fee equivalent to one month's rent. Some agents do not charge this fee but expats should find this out before using their services.

Utilities

Utility bills are nearly always the responsibility of the tenant in Egypt and will be an additional expense on top of monthly rental costs. Be sure to enquire as to the approximate costs and keep them in mind while budgeting. Hold onto all invoices, bills and receipts as proof that these have been paid in case it is requested by the landlord.

A Brief History of Egypt

Ancient Egypt:

- Ancient Egypt, one of the world's oldest civilisations, emerged around 3100 BCE along the banks of the Nile River.
- The Early Dynastic Period (3100-2686 BCE) witnessed the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under the pharaoh Narmer.
- The Old Kingdom (2686-2181 BCE) saw the construction of monumental pyramids at Giza, such as the Great Pyramid of Khufu.
- Pharaoh Djoser's reign introduced the first step pyramid at Saqqara, marking a shift in architectural style.
- The Middle Kingdom (2055-1650 BCE) brought stability and the development of art, literature, and trade.
- Pharaoh Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh, ruled during the New Kingdom (1550-1070 BCE) and expanded Egypt's trade and influence.
- Pharaoh Akhenaten attempted to establish a monotheistic religion centered on the worship of the sun god Aten during his reign.
- Tutankhamun, a famous pharaoh, ascended to the throne at a young age and is known for his tomb's discovery, filled with treasures.
- Ramses II, also known as Ramses the Great, reigned for 66 years during the 19th Dynasty and left a significant architectural legacy.
- The Iron Age brought external invasions, including the Libyans, Kushites, Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks.

Ptolemaic and Roman Period:

- The Ptolemaic era (305-30 BCE) witnessed the blending of Egyptian and Hellenistic cultures under the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty.
- Cleopatra VII, the last pharaoh of Egypt, formed alliances with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony in her struggle for power.
- Egypt fell under Roman rule in 30 BCE after the suicide of Cleopatra, marking the beginning of the Roman period.
- Christianity spread in Egypt during the Roman era, and the country became an important centre for early Christian thought.

Early Islamic Period:

- In 641 CE, Muslim Arabs conquered Egypt and introduced Islam, leading to the decline of Christianity and the rise of Arab culture.

- The Fatimid Caliphate (969-1171 CE) established Cairo as its capital and constructed iconic landmarks like Al-Azhar Mosque.
- Salah al-Din (Saladin) became the first Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt in 1174 CE and successfully repelled the Crusaders from the region.
- The Mamluks, a Turkic slave caste, ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517 CE and defended the region against Mongol invasions.

Ottoman Rule and Modernization:

- In 1517, the Ottoman Empire gained control of Egypt, ruling it for over 400 years. Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798, sparking interest in Egyptology and contributing to European influence in the region.
- Egypt's modernization efforts began in the late 19th century under the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha and his successors.
- Egypt gained nominal independence from the Ottomans in 1914 but remained under British influence.

British Occupation and Nationalism:

- In 1875, Egypt's financial crisis reached a critical point, and Ismail was forced to sell Egypt's shares in the Suez Canal to the British government.
- British occupation began in 1882, with Egypt becoming a protectorate, with the British effectively controlling the country's administration, military, and finances.
- The British occupation sparked resistance movements and nationalist sentiments among Egyptians, which grew stronger over time and eventually paved the way for the Egyptian Revolution in 1919.
- During British control, Egypt witnessed the growth of a national press, the formation of political organisations, and the emergence of intellectuals and nationalist leaders who laid the foundations for future struggles for independence.

Modern Egypt:

- In 1922, Egypt gained nominal independence, but British influence remained significant.
- King Fuad I became Egypt's first monarch following independence, ruling until 1936. King Farouk succeeded Fuad I in 1936 and faced increasing political corruption and social unrest during his reign.
- World War II (1939-1945) brought significant changes to Egypt, as it served as an important Allied base and witnessed clashes with Axis forces in North Africa.
- In 1952, the Egyptian Revolution took place, led by a group of military officers known as the Free Officers Movement. They overthrew King Farouk and established a republic. The

charismatic Gamal Abdel Nasser emerged as a prominent leader and became Egypt's second president in 1956.

- Nasser pursued a policy of Arab nationalism, nationalising the Suez Canal in 1956, which led to the Suez Crisis and military intervention by Britain, France, and Israel.
- Nasser's leadership promoted social reforms, land redistribution, industrialization, and the construction of the Aswan High Dam.
- Nasser played a key role in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement and sought to unite Arab nations against Israeli aggression.
- Nasser's sudden death in 1970 resulted in Anwar Sadat assuming the presidency. Sadat pursued a policy of economic liberalisation, known as the Infitah, which aimed to attract foreign investment and open up the economy.
- In 1973, Egypt launched a surprise attack on Israel in what became known as the Yom Kippur War, leading to initial Egyptian military success and eventually paving the way for peace negotiations.
- Sadat made a historic visit to Israel in 1977 and signed the Camp David Accords in 1978, establishing peace with Israel and securing the return of the Sinai Peninsula. • Sadat's efforts for peace were met with opposition from radical groups, and he was assassinated in 1981 by Islamist extremists during a military parade.
- Hosni Mubarak assumed the presidency and governed Egypt for nearly three decades, focusing on economic reforms but facing criticism for his authoritarian rule and human rights abuses.
- In 2011, the Egyptian Revolution erupted, driven by widespread discontent, demands for democracy, and opposition to Mubarak's regime.
- The revolution led to Mubarak's ousting, marking a significant turning point in Egypt's modern history.
- Post-revolution, Egypt experienced a period of political transitions, including the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and the election of Mohamed Morsi as Egypt's first democratically elected president in 2012.
- However, Morsi's presidency was short-lived, as he was deposed by a military coup in 2013, led by then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.
- El-Sisi became president in 2014 and has since implemented economic reforms but faced criticism for restricting political freedoms and human rights.
- Egypt continues to grapple with political challenges, social change, and economic development as it seeks stability and progress in the 21st century.

Weather in Egypt

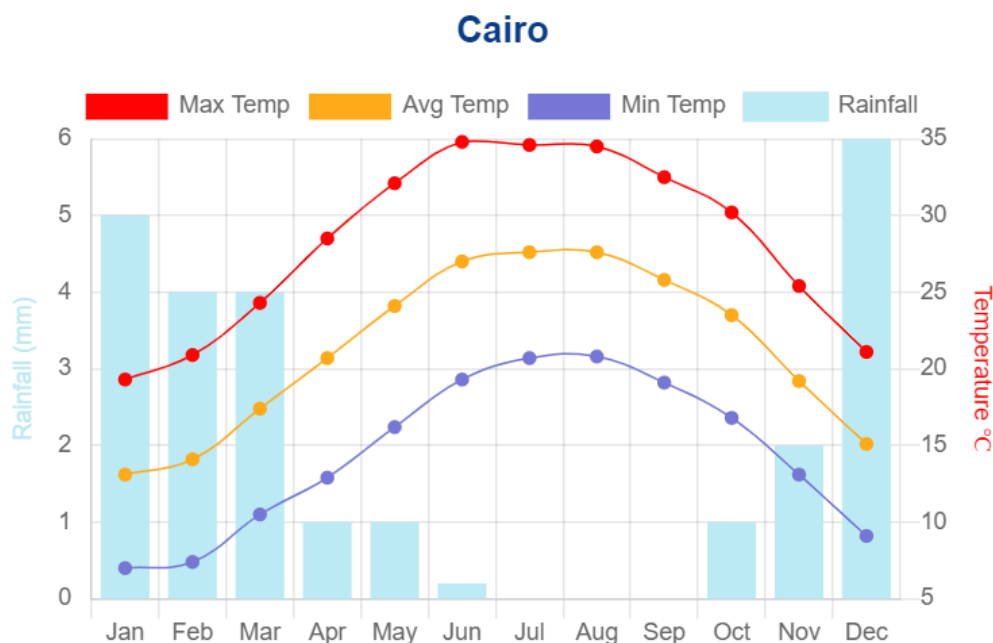
Expats planning to relocate to Egypt can take long-johns and winter jackets off the packing list. The country is situated nearly entirely in the Sahara Desert, with the exception of the narrow strip of coastline that borders the Mediterranean, and the climate is therefore hot and dry pretty much year-round.

The blistering heat of summer (June to August) is slightly more tolerable in the coastal region, but the average maximum temperature in this area is still 30°C (86°F). Expats living inland will experience much hotter summer temperatures, with 40°C (104°F) being standard in the warmest areas such as Aswan and Luxor. In winter, temperatures fall back down to a more bearable 20°C to 26°C (68°F to 79°F), and this time of the year also brings rainfall to the coast.

Expats should note that, typical of a desert climate, nighttime temperatures in Egypt can drop considerably despite the intensity of the heat during the day. This is especially true of mountainous areas and expats should be sure to have some light but warm layers on hand.

One unique component of weather in Egypt is the *khamasīn*. This hot spring wind begins to sweep across northern Africa towards the end of March and peaks over April and into May, lasting about 50 days. Sand and dust are picked up by high winds and tend to irritate eyes and obscure visibility. These winds are largely responsible for the drastic increase in temperature in some cities during this time of year. The *khamasīn* can cause temperatures to soar as high as 45°C (113°F), and this can make conditions especially dangerous.

The weather in Egypt can be hard to adjust to and expats should take measures to stay hydrated. It is important to drink only bottled water, though, as tap water is not safe to drink everywhere in the country. Sunscreen and light breathable clothing are also recommended, and if possible, it's best to stay indoors during the hottest hours of the day.



Education and Schools in Egypt

Education in Egypt is divided into a general schooling system and an Islamic schooling system known as the Al-Azhar system. General education consists of public, private and international schools.

Egypt has the largest education system in Africa and the government has been working to improve the standard of schooling available. There are frequent reforms to the education system, with some measures praised while others have been widely criticised.

Public education is free for all children, but public schools in Egypt remain at a low standard overall and expats are unlikely to consider them. Luckily, there are many good international school options across the country, particularly in Cairo and Alexandria.

Public schools in Egypt

Public education in Egypt begins with the basic education phase, consisting of kindergarten (age 4 and 5), primary school (age 6 to 12), preparatory school (13 to 15) and secondary school (15 to 18).

In Egyptian public schools, the language of instruction is Arabic. This, in combination with the low quality of education offered, leads many expat families to opt for private or international schools instead.

Private schools in Egypt

Some private schools in Egypt follow a curriculum similar to that taught at public schools, but these schools tend to have better facilities and teachers, so children will generally get a better education here than at a public school. On the other hand, some schools teach alternative curricula, based on particular educational or religious philosophies.

International schools in Egypt

International schools in Egypt are private schools that teach a foreign curriculum. The most commonly taught curricula are that of the UK, USA and the International Baccalaureate, but there are also many more options including French, German, Canadian, Pakistani and others.

These schools are frequently oversubscribed and some are academically selective so it's best to start the application process as far in advance as possible. Before committing, parents should also be aware that international school fees tend to be extremely high. While the benefits are usually worth the hefty price, it's important to first ensure that it can fit into the budget. If moving to Egypt for work purposes, it's a good idea to try and negotiate an education allowance into their relocation contract.

Special-needs education in Egypt

While Egypt has recognised a need for inclusive education and support for students with different educational needs, this is still sorely lacking in the education system. This has mostly boiled down to a lack of understanding and awareness in Egypt around special needs and disability.

That said, a new curriculum for children with special educational needs has been launched and hopefully this will lead to inclusive mainstream schooling where children with special educational needs receive the support they need while being taught alongside their peers.

There are a number of schools specifically for children with special educational needs in Egypt that parents can consider. Some international schools also offer additional support, but expat parents should find out exactly what this entails before enrolling.

Tutors in Egypt

Parents shouldn't struggle to find a tutor for their child in Egypt. Tutors are available for support in specific subjects, learning Arabic or adjusting to a new curriculum. There are many online tutor companies that parents can consider, most of which offer online or at home private tutoring. Private Tutors Egypt is an example of one such company.

International Schools in Egypt

Most expats in Egypt send their children to one of the country's many international schools. Though fees tend to be high, international schools can ease the adjustment process for expat children as they are able to continue with their home-country curriculum in their home language.

This also allows for an easy transfer to schooling back home, if need be, and culminates in highly respected school-leaving qualifications including the likes of the British A-Levels, the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the American High School Diploma.

There are a number of international schools in Egypt for expats to choose from, offering a diverse range of curricula. Most of these are in Cairo, Giza and Alexandria.

International schools in Egypt

American International School in Egypt

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: American and International Baccalaureate

Ages: 3 to 18

Website: www.aisegypt.com

British Columbia Canadian International School

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: Canadian (British Columbia)

Ages: 4 to 18

Website: www.bccis.ca

The British School of Egypt

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: English National Curriculum, Cambridge IGCSE and A-Levels

Ages: 2.5 to 17

Website: www.bse.edu.eg

Canadian International School of Egypt

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: Canadian (Ontario)

Age: 3 to 18

Website: www.cise-egypt.com

El Alsson British and American International School

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: American, English National Curriculum, Cambridge IGCSE and A-Levels

Ages: 3 to 18

Website: www.alsson.com

Hayah International Academy

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: American and International Baccalaureate

Ages: 3 to 18

Website: www.hayahacademy.com

Heritage International School

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: Canadian (Manitoba)

Ages: 4 to 18

Website: www.heritageinternationalschool.com

International British School of Alexandria

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: English National Curriculum, Cambridge IGCSE and A-Levels

Ages: 3 to 18

Website: www.ise.edu.eg/ibsa

Kent College West Cairo

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: English National Curriculum, Cambridge IGCSE, A-Levels and International Baccalaureate

Ages: 3 to 18

Website: www.kentcollegeegypt.com

Oasis International School

Gender: Co-educational

Curriculum: International Baccalaureate

Ages: 3 to 18

Website: en.ecoleoasisinternationale.com

Visas for Egypt

Expats wanting to travel to Egypt will need a valid passport and possibly a tourist visa, depending on their nationality. Many nationals need only purchase a visa on arrival at an airport in Egypt.

Expats travelling to Egypt to work or study will need to obtain a residence permit, as these activities are not permitted on a tourist visa.

Tourist visas for Egypt

The tourist visa for Egypt is valid for up to 90 days with a maximum stay of 30 days during this period. While nationals of some countries do not require a tourist visa when travelling to Egypt, other nationalities will need to get a tourist visa upon arrival at an airport in Egypt. These options don't apply to all countries, however, and nationals of some other countries will need to apply for a tourist visa in advance of travelling to Egypt. It may be possible to do this online, via Egypt's eVisa system, which can be accessed [here](#).

Expats should check with their local Egyptian embassy or consulate for the most up-to-date information on nationality requirements regarding tourist visas for Egypt.

Residence permits for Egypt

Expats planning to stay in Egypt for work or study purposes will need to acquire a residence permit and, if in employment, a work permit. Residence is generally granted for one, three or five years.

Work permit applications are made separately from applications for residence permits. The process is a long and arduous one and expats must have secured employment before they can apply for their work permit. Extensive documentation is required for a work permit application, so it's important to do thorough research beforehand on all that's required.

**Visa regulations and requirements for work permits are subject to change at short notice and expats should contact their respective embassy or consulate for the latest details.*

Transport and Driving in Egypt

Transport and driving in Egypt are important issues for expats to consider. While driving in Egypt can be dangerous and chaotic, the country does have an extensive road network and expats should be able to travel by car or by bus between most cities.

That said, expats should bear in mind that Egypt has one of the highest incidences of road fatalities in the world, and should take extreme caution when driving. In fact, when travelling long distances, we recommend travelling by rail, river or air.

Public transport in Egypt

The public transport system in Egypt is extensive and affordable. It's relatively easy to get around the country by train or bus. That said, it's worth mentioning that public transport is not always the most comfortable way to travel in Egypt.

Buses

Numerous bus routes in Egypt connect the country's major cities, but many of these intercity buses can be overcrowded and uncomfortable. Fortunately, deluxe buses also exist on some routes between certain cities. They cost more but the tickets are still relatively inexpensive and well worth the inclusion of air conditioning, on-board toilets and in some cases, WiFi.

Tickets can be purchased at bus stations or on the bus itself, although it is better to book tickets in advance to guarantee a seat on busy routes. There are almost always inspectors on the bus so expats should ensure that they have paid the correct fare and are carrying their passports in case the bus stops at a military checkpoint.

Local buses also operate within cities and most cities will also have minibus services available.

Trains

Egypt's train network is operated by Egyptian State Railways and is affordable and extensive, covering thousands of kilometres. Some trains have air conditioning – these trains are divided into first- and second-class. Trains without air-conditioning have second- and third-class compartments. **Metro**

Cairo is home to a metro system; one of only three fully-fledged metro systems in all of Africa. The metro has more than 60 stations and carries millions of passengers a day. The metro is fast, reliable and convenient. The two middle cars of each train are usually for women only.

Boats

Those who want to travel via something more exciting than a bus or a train should consider taking a boat down the Nile River. Expats can travel on a traditional felucca or on a cruise ship or steamboat.

Taxis in Egypt

Taxis are widely available in Egypt's major cities. Expats should try and form a relationship with a trusted taxi driver so that they always have someone reliable to call if they need to be somewhere quickly or need a driver for the day. Taxis are usually white and blue or yellow and black.

Another good option is using a ride-hailing app such as Uber. This minimises miscommunications and gives the passenger more control over the route and rate.

Driving in Egypt

Driving in Egypt can be daunting. For this reason, some companies provide employees with a driver, but many people still choose to drive themselves and some employers even cover defensive driving lessons to better equip expats for driving in Egypt.

Egyptians drive on the right-hand side of the road, and road signs are usually in both Arabic and English and are fairly similar to road signs used in Europe.

Expats need to be extra vigilant when driving in Egypt as there are many road hazards to contend with. These include a lack of stop signs and traffic lights, drivers' disregard for lane markings, and obstructions in the road. Drivers are also likely to encounter stationary vehicles in the middle of the road, trucks driving the wrong way down one-way streets, and minibuses stopping suddenly to allow passengers to disembark in the middle of the road. Drivers in Egypt are also reluctant to use their headlights in the dark and are also not consistent about indicating before turning. It is best to avoid driving at night if possible.

Moving to Egypt

While Egypt's rolling desert landscape and iconic ancient pyramids are on many a travel bucket list, the country isn't the most obvious choice for expats looking to relocate. In reality, though, Egypt has just as much to offer expats as it does tourists.

Living in Egypt as an expat

Those who move to Egypt tend to be engaging, active, adventurous and interested in connecting with communities and interacting with Egyptian culture and people. Teachers, writers, volunteers and NGO workers are all interwoven into Egyptian society, making for a truly interesting expat experience.

That being said, expats considering moving to Egypt should pay special attention to the country's safety and political situation. Though not characteristically unsafe, riots and violence have been a problem in the country at times. Women used to Western culture often find the transition to Egypt's somewhat patriarchal society difficult, although far less so than other Islamic countries.

For the most part, though, Egypt makes for a unique expat destination, and it is usually curiosity or love that draws expats to stay rather than financial promise or luxury living. Although the country has its business incentives, it isn't an internationally recognised industrial centre. Still, entrepreneurs may find new emerging markets and opportunities, as the country is actively promoting itself on a global front.

Expats should have no problem finding suitable accommodation in Egypt. Options range from simple studios to fully furnished condos and large villas. Getting around in Egypt can be an adventure as there are varied modes of transportation available, from overcrowded buses and minivans to first-class trains. A modern subway system helps commuters get around Cairo and avoid traffic congestion. Expats without the patience to deal with public transport in Egypt always have the option of hiring a car with a private driver.

Cost of living in Egypt

Expats will be glad to know that the cost of living in Egypt is rather low. While rent is cheap and transport is generally affordable, an expats choice of lifestyle certainly impacts their monthly budget. Buying local groceries, shopping at markets and eating out at local restaurants will certainly save expats some cash, but those who prefer to buy familiar imported products and eat out at expensive international restaurants or hotels will have to spend a pretty penny to do so.

Expat families and children

Those moving to Egypt with children will be pleased to find that there are a number of good international schools in the country. Most of these are in Cairo and offer students the opportunity to continue studying the school curriculum of their home countries.

Expats looking for some family fun will have plenty of options when it comes to the number of ancient historical and cultural sites they can visit in Egypt. Those looking to spend some time in nature will also discover a range of options for day trips to nearby islands, beaches and parks. The country has also catered to its young population with water parks, aquariums and other great family-friendly attractions.

Climate in Egypt

Situated almost entirely in the Sahara desert, the weather in Egypt to be hot and dry. The blistering heat of summer is slightly more tolerable in the coastal region, but the average maximum temperature in this area is still 30°C (86°F). Expats living inland will experience much hotter summer temperatures, with 40°C (104°F) being standard in the warmest areas such as Aswan and Luxor. In winter, temperatures fall back down to a more bearable 20°C to 26°C (68°F to 79°F), and this time of the year also brings rainfall to the coast.

Ultimately, expats moving to Egypt with a sense of curiosity and adventure are most likely to have an interesting and satisfying experience. For those with an open mind, Egypt holds much to discover.

Fast facts

Population: More than 105 million

Capital city: Cairo (also largest city)

Neighbouring countries: Egypt spans two continents. Most of Egypt is in Africa, but the landbridge formed by the Sinai Peninsula extends into Asia. Egypt is bordered by the Gaza Strip and Israel to the northeast, the Red Sea to the east, Sudan to the south, and Libya to the west.

Geography: Egypt's landscape is mostly desert with a few oases. It is also home to the famous Nile River, one of the world's longest rivers.

Political system: Unitary semi-presidential republic

Major religions: Islam with a Christian minority

Main languages: Arabic

Money: The Egyptian Pound (EGP) is divided into 100 piastres. ATMs are common in Egypt's larger cities but may be harder to find in smaller towns. To open a bank account in Egypt, expats may need to present a work permit or other proof of long-term residence in the country. Requirements may vary from bank to bank.

Tipping: 10 percent in restaurants

Time: GMT +2

Electricity: 220V, 50Hz. Standard plugs are European two-pins.

Internet domain: .eg

International dialling code: +20

Emergency contacts: 122 (police), 180 (fire) and 123 (ambulance)

Transport and driving: Cairo has a well-developed public transport system, including a metro, buses, trams and trains. Other cities may have fewer options, and public transport throughout Egypt tends to be crowded and uncomfortable. Cars drive on the right-hand side of the road.

Banking, Money and Taxes in Egypt

Expats often find banking and managing taxes in Egypt frustrating. While there are plenty of Egyptian banks available, expats often prefer to open accounts with international banks that have a presence in Egypt such as HSBC or Citibank.

Dealing with the bureaucracy at Egyptian banks is difficult and fees for even the most basic services are high. To make matters worse, banking hours in Egypt are limited with most branches closing at 2pm.

ATMs are readily available throughout the country. Restaurants, shops and major attractions in Egyptian cities will accept international credit card payments.

Money in Egypt

The currency used in Egypt is the Egyptian Pound (EGP). It is divided up into 100 piastres.

- **Notes:** 25pt, 50pt, 1 EGP, 5 EGP, 10 EGP, 20 EGP, 50 EGP, 100 EGP, and 200 EGP
 - **Coins:** 25pt, 50pt and 1 EGP
-

Banking in Egypt

Poor exchange rates, hefty fees and constant service charges sully the reputation of local banking in Egypt. Luckily, there are many international bank branches in the country, and these offer modern amenities such as internet and phone banking, as well as easy access to ATMs. Expats who already have an account with one of these banks in their home country will find it fairly easy to set up an account in Egypt.

Businesses in Egypt will often pay employees directly through bank deposits at a certain bank, taking away the choice, or hassle, of selecting a bank.

Opening an account is straightforward. Required documents may vary from bank to bank but expats are likely to need their passport, residence permit and an initial cash deposit. Many banks will also require proof of employment and proof of address.

Taxes in Egypt

Egypt has double-taxation avoidance agreements with a number of countries. Expats are liable for income tax in Egypt and they may also pay tax on their worldwide income, depending on whether they are classified as a resident for tax purposes.

An expat is considered as a resident for tax purposes if they are resident in Egypt for a period of 183 days or more in a 12-month period. Tax residents pay tax on both their local and worldwide income.

Money earned from within in Egypt is taxed progressively up to 22.5 percent, depending on one's level of income.

Taxes are intrinsically complicated, especially for expats, and it is wise to hire a professional expat tax agency to help manage the process of filing in more than one country.

Working in Egypt

Most expats working in Egypt are based in Cairo. As Egypt's largest city, it is also the location with the most employment opportunities and plays host to a more conspicuous expat population.

That said, unemployment levels are high and expats may have a hard time finding a job. Still, there are a few positions where a foreigner may find a niche.

Job market in Egypt

Job types vary widely, but most expats don't move for the financial promise that makes other global destinations attractive. The most common occupation for expats working in Egypt is teaching, both in private schools and English language schools.

Volunteers and employees for NGOs make up another substantial part of the expat community. Other industries that draw expats are tourism, finance and media positions.

Finding a job in Egypt

It is far better to be hired from outside Egypt before relocating than to arrive in Egypt unemployed. If the latter is the case, the best bet for finding employment is through a personal connection.

Expats hired from overseas to work in Egypt often enjoy a higher salary paid in a foreign currency, while expat employees hired from within Egypt tend to be paid in the local currency and earn much less. Networking is an important part of the Egyptian business culture, which functions largely on the premise of personal contacts and recommendations.

Online job portals and local recruitment agencies are also a possible source of employment opportunities.

Work culture in Egypt

Business in Egypt is conducted in a formal yet friendly and personal manner. Punctuality and a smart appearance are important; suits and ties are worn by businessmen and women should dress modestly.

Expats in Egypt must be respectful of the local Islamic customs. Many Egyptian businessmen are not available during Ramadan, and as Friday is the Islamic holy day, the working week runs from Sunday to Thursday.

English is widely spoken and understood but a basic knowledge of Arabic will be appreciated. People with titles should be addressed using their title and surname. Business cards should be printed in both English and Arabic and if someone offers their card, expats should treat it with respect.

Frequently Asked Questions about Egypt

Expats moving to Egypt are sure to have plenty of queries and concerns about life in this North African country. Here are answers to expats' most frequently asked questions.

How safe is Egypt?

Although Egypt had a widely publicised period of civil unrest in 2011, the situation has improved in the years since. That said, we recommend that expats avoid the Sinai Peninsula as this area is still a safety risk. Expats should check official safety reports before travelling to Egypt to stay up to date on the current political situation.

Is Cairo really the only place to work?

It depends. Expats employed by NGOs tend to work all around Egypt and volunteers often do the same. There are some schools in other cities hiring teachers. For most business employment though, the jobs for expats are almost all in Cairo.

What is the treatment of women like in Egypt?

Expat women in Egypt may find that they attract an uncomfortable amount of attention from local men. Some of these men may have stereotypical ideas of Western women as promiscuous based on depictions in movies and popular culture. It may help to dress modestly and keep hair covered with a headscarf. Usually, men on the street will go no further than catcalls but, if feeling unsafe, expat women should be able to call on a local female passerby to assist.

Will I be able to drink alcohol in Egypt?

Though it isn't always easy to find, expats are free to indulge in a drink if the mood strikes them. Very little alcohol is produced locally and there are strict limits imposed on alcohol importation. Imported alcohol is also very expensive. If looking for somewhere to grab a drink, tourist or resort areas are the most likely places to find such establishments.

Healthcare in Egypt

The quality of healthcare in Egypt varies widely depending on whether one makes use of public or private services. Public healthcare is underfunded, and although the Egyptian government is taking steps toward improving the system, the effectiveness of the intervention remains to be seen.

In general, the country's medical facilities are substandard to those of many Western countries. For better quality care, expats should avoid public hospitals and opt for private care instead.

Unless familiar with a particular hospital, major operations should be done outside of Egypt. Often the best regional healthcare can be found in Dubai, and many wealthy Egyptians opt to travel to the UAE for this kind of specialist treatment.

Healthcare facilities in Egypt

There are hospitals throughout Egypt, from small clinics in rural areas to speciality hospitals with advanced facilities in Cairo. Indeed, most expats requiring more serious medical care will go to a hospital in Cairo. Expats should ensure they have adequate health insurance before seeking medical care in Egypt.

Public and private healthcare in Egypt

Egypt has a very limited national healthcare scheme and public hospitals in Egypt have faced serious accusations of negligence in the past. Expats may be eligible for free public healthcare but this system is not recommended and has an extremely low rate of usage even by low-income Egyptians.

Private hospitals can be found in Egypt's larger cities. Many are staffed by Western doctors who speak good English. That said, the standard of care in private hospitals can also vary widely, so expats should ask around for recommendations to ensure the best treatment. Costs can also add up quickly, so we advise expats to take out a good health insurance policy.

Health insurance in Egypt

Expats should have private medical insurance in Egypt for both routine and emergency care. Many hospitals will ask for cash directly instead of billing an insurance carrier, but patients should ask for all necessary paperwork to recoup any expenses paid out of pocket. Some hospitals and hospital groups will offer insurance for use in their facilities only. Many expats prefer insurance that includes treatment and evacuations to a different country in the case of a medical emergency.

Pharmacies in Egypt

Pharmacies in Egypt are in no short supply and expats should be able to find one that's convenient. Many medicines are available for purchase without a prescription, but expats who are dependent on their medication should nevertheless bring a supply with them from home.

Pharmacists in the larger cities should have a good command of the English language and will be able to recommend basic medicines to expats. Medication is inexpensive in Egypt, but expats should make sure they are buying something they have used before.

Health hazards in Egypt

One of the largest health concerns facing expats in Egypt is sanitation. Expats should take special care to only drink and cook with bottled water, and vegetables and fruit need to be washed thoroughly. It is best to avoid eating street food or buying juices off the street, but food and drink in hotels and restaurants should be perfectly fine.

Egypt has the highest rate of hepatitis C infection in the world. The virus is transmitted through blood-to-blood contact so expats should avoid contact with needles of dubious origin, including equipment used for tattooing.

Another health hazard in Egypt, especially in large cities, is air pollution. The quality of air in Cairo can be very poor due to industrial sites and traffic jams. Dust is a problem for people with respiratory conditions such as asthma. Expats should consult their doctor for advice on the best way to deal with this.

Pre-travel vaccinations for Egypt

Expats should check with their doctor whether they need any special vaccinations before travelling to Egypt, but should always have their routine vaccinations up to date, especially hepatitis A and typhoid.

Emergency services in Egypt

The emergency number in Egypt is 123, but if there is a serious emergency expats are advised to organise their own transport to a hospital or to call a private hospital directly and request an ambulance, as the public ambulance service can be unreliable.

Safety in Egypt

Safety in Egypt has been an ongoing concern for expats since the events of the Arab Spring in 2011. Egypt was severely affected by anti-government and pro-reform protests and violent unrest that left hundreds of people dead. At the height of the instability, streams of expats and tourists fled the country, fearing a collapse of the state.

The political situation has since stabilised despite periodic surges in politically-motivated unrest. The regime has responded with a severe security crackdown. This has served to stabilise the political system and security environment, but has laid the platform for further instability over the longer term. The military crackdown has also stoked anti-government sentiment and further motivated non-state extremist armed groups to carry out acts of terrorism in the country. The violence has largely been focused on the North Sinai governorate.

Underlying socio-economic concerns, including poverty and unemployment among the youth, high commodity prices, shortfalls in certain basic goods and tensions between Christians and Muslims that periodically flare into communal violence, are also drivers of instability.

Crime in Egypt

Crime rates in Egyptian cities are moderate. Expats should take sensible precautions with their personal security and possessions.

Petty crimes, such as opportunistic theft, pickpocketing, bag snatching and street scams, remain a concern. As with violent crime, the issue is exacerbated by political developments and high levels of poverty and unemployment. The threat of being impacted by these crimes is elevated in crowded and busy areas, such as markets, transport hubs and areas frequented by foreigners.

Sexual harassment remains a pressing social grievance in Egypt. The verbal and, at times, physical harassment, of women by large groups of men has generated considerable debate and concern in Egyptian society. Female expats should travel in a group and avoid walking alone at night.

Protests in Egypt

Egypt has experienced high levels of civil unrest since 2011. The primary drivers of protests in Egypt include economic concerns, political developments and religious tensions. Areas in the vicinity of public squares, universities, city centres, courts and government buildings are considered potential protest hotspots.

Many gatherings are well publicised and expats should monitor local press closely for updates on planned events. The security impact on expats is largely incidental, but it's best to avoid all street gatherings as a precaution. In addition, expats should note that Egypt continues to experience elevated levels of labour-related strikes, which have sometimes severely impacted on business and state operations.

Road safety in Egypt

Road traffic fatalities are among the leading causes of death in Egypt. Poor driving standards, disregard for basic traffic laws, insufficient street lighting and poor law enforcement are cited as the main contributing factors. The threat extends to pedestrians, particularly in the larger urban areas. Caution is advised when crossing streets. When driving, it's best to adopt a defensive driving style.

Safety in the Sinai Peninsula

The overall security situation in the Sinai Peninsula is poor. While the region's major resort areas, such as Sharm el-Sheikh, are relatively secure thanks to a heavy security force presence, travel outside of tourist areas is not advised, particularly in the North Sinai governorate.

The situation in this part of the country remains tense and violence is ongoing. Expats are advised to avoid travelling outside of tourist resort areas in the South Sinai governorate and against all travel to the North Sinai governorate.

Embassy Contacts for Egypt

Egyptian embassies

- Egyptian Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 895 5400
 - Egyptian Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 20 7499 3304
 - Egyptian Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 234 4931
 - Egyptian Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 2 6273 4437
 - Egyptian Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 4 472 4900
 - Egyptian Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 12 343 1590
 - Egyptian Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 1 660 6566
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Foreign embassies in Egypt

- United States Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2797 3300 British
- Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2791 6000
- Canadian Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2461 2200
- Australian Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2770 6666
- South African Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2535 3000
- Irish Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2728 7100
- New Zealand Embassy, Cairo: +20 2 2461 6000

Culture Shock in Egypt

Life in Egypt is quite different to that in the West, and Western expats may experience a touch of culture shock. People are brusque one minute and incredibly helpful the next; many shops expect patrons to barter (the asking price being at least double the going rate); and power cuts are part of everyday life. Egypt can be frustrating, but its friendly people and fascinating culture more than compensate for these challenges.

Language and communication in Egypt

Arabic is among the hardest languages to learn in the world. The language has several dialects and Egyptian is but one. Many phrase books, dictionaries and even Google Translate do not differentiate between them. Westerners find learning numbers and speaking a few basic phrases straightforward though, and getting the gist of conversations by picking up on a few keywords will come with time.

Most Egyptians who deal with foreigners speak some English. That said, it isn't always easy to know if an expat has truly been understood by locals. 'Yes' often replaces 'I don't understand'. Locals strive to please and to earn a living. Sometimes, the best policy is to phone a friend who speaks Arabic and good English and ask them to act as a translator.

Egyptian abruptness shouldn't be interpreted as rudeness. Often someone is trying to be helpful, with the curtness being a result of poor English or a misplaced sense of urgency.

Expat women in Egypt

It's an unfortunate truth that some Egyptian men see foreign women as the answer to their suppressed dreams. Verbal harassments such as lewd or suggestive comments are a reality, and rape – although rare – does happen. The risk factor is lower in certain areas where expat women are more frequently seen and can blend in.

Recommended methods of dealing with this include avoiding eye contact, keeping conversations businesslike and not allowing physical contact. Walking with another woman can also help ward off unwanted attention, as can chatting about one's husband and several children (real or not), wearing a wedding ring, and refusing offers of food and drink from strangers.

Egyptians are friendly and, in a tricky situation, expat women can turn to a passing local woman for help. She will invariably be happy to assist. If travelling with a male friend, referring to him as a husband is better than calling him a boyfriend or partner. Appropriate dress can help avoid problems, but even traditionally dressed Egyptian women are hassled. There are women-only coaches on the Cairo metro and Alexandria trams.

The Egyptian Government is trying to address the issue of sexual harassment and end the various forms of gender-based violence in the country. While good work is being done, it may take time before any real change can be seen.

Meeting and greeting in Egypt

A handshake is common between men. When introduced to a group, it's customary to shake the hands of everyone present. Handshakes tend to be limp and prolonged and should include eye contact and a smile.

Family members and men who know each other well will kiss, touching cheek to cheek a few times. Advice varies for women meeting men for the first time. Some consider it correct for the woman to initiate the handshake; others feel this is too forward. A foreigner will have more leeway in this than Egyptian women. Courtesy, respect and a sense of humour will paper over any etiquette faux pas.

Religion in Egypt

The vast majority of Egypt's population is Muslim, with most being Sunni Muslim. A small percentage of the population is Christian. Religion is central to the social and legal framework of the country.

If expats find someone at prayer, it is polite to allow them to finish – this usually takes only a few minutes. The Muslim holy day is Friday, beginning at sunset the previous day. For Christians, the day of rest is Sunday, so it can be difficult to determine on which day a business will be closed. The best strategy is to find out definitive hours of a particular business ahead of time.

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