

Girls On Tour – Egypt October 2009

October 2009

As we make our way slowly down the Nile towards Aswan I thought it was time I filled you all in on our trip so far. We have been away 1 week today but it seems like ages as we have seen so many things and been to so many amazing places. The girls are all having a wonderful time and it didn't take them long to get used to the mayhem of the traffic in Egypt especially with our driver Hamdy being as skilled as he is. We have been made to feel so welcome here in Egypt with several of the staff in the hotels and on the boat saying to me "welcome home" as they recognise me from previous trips. The girls are enjoying all that Egypt has to offer, history, culture, art, architecture, scenery and shopping.



The View from our hotel pool - Cairo



Alabaster Mosque - Cairo



Cairo Museum

We visited the Cairo Museum, the Alabaster Mosque, the Citadel and Old Christian Cairo including the Hanging Church which was built on top of palm trees and has no foundations. Our guide Hossam is with us for most of the trip and having him around as our "fixer" has been great. I think he will have his dance card full tonight at the Galebea Party with 8 "wives". He is a lovely young man who is very knowledgeable and has taken us to many places that even I haven't been to having visited Egypt 4 times. Hossam has shown us many of his favourite places and artifacts on our trip. He has taken the time to point out the intricate details and meaning of the texts and pictures in the temples and has really made the stories come alive for the girls and they love it. Each day we are becoming more and more familiar with the Pharaohs and Gods of Egypt. I have a wonderful group of ladies who are just amazed each and every time we see something new. We had a fantastic visit to the museum in Cairo visiting the masterpieces, including the Treasures of Tutankhamen but

what made it nice was the Hossam showed us his "top 5" favourite pieces and they were each beautiful pieces with wonderful stories attached to them. We visited the Mummy Room at the museum which all the girls did and I was glad. The girls are very attentive

and inquisitive and Pat in particular has become our secondary tour guide as she has an extensive knowledge of Egypt and the ancient customs and traditions. The locals are still excited when I speak to them in Arabic and when they say "good morning" in English I will answer them in Arabic and they are surprised and delighted. Some of us ventured into the markets in Luxor and had a great time in one of the shops buying heaps of stuff from the guy who has a sign outside that reads "No Bloody Hassle Fixed Price" and it was just that. We bought heaps of stuff and were very happy with both the quality and price. I bought things from him for 50 Egyptian Pounds that I know I paid 150 LE for last year so was very happy. We went to the Sound and Light Show at the Pyramids this time but I think in future we will see this at Karnak as in my opinion it is a much better show.



We had a full day tour of Sakkara, Memphis, the Pyramids at Giza and the Sphinx before driving north to Alexandria. After seeing the pyramids through the haze from our hotel the girls were finally able to see first hand how huge the Great Pyramids really are. We all went in to the Solar Boat display too which was great as it is the original boat that was found in kit form dating back 4,000 years. It will be moved to the New Egyptian Museum



Solar Boat found in a pit by accident beside the pyramid



that is being built on the Giza Plateau



which is scheduled to open in 2011 (Egyptian time). The camel owners have been moved on from the Step Pyramid at Saqqara so we

missed out on the "free" camel rides. Also at Saqqara we visited the Imhotep museum.



Imhotep was the architect and builder of the first pyramid, the Step Pyramid of King Djsoser (Zoser) and the museum has artifacts from the site and also some reconstructions of the tombs within the pyramid that are unsafe for the public to visit. At Memphis we visited the enormous statue of King Ramses II that was found at the old capital. The other one was on display in the centre of Cairo but has recently been moved to the new museum site at the entrance. It is a very imposing statue of a great man.



Roman Forum Alexandria

From here we drove to Alexandria where we stayed right on the ocean front of the Mediterranean at Montazah. In Alexandria we visited the Library of Alexandria, the Museum, the Roman Ruins, the Catacombs and Montazah Gardens containing the palace of King Farouk. Alexandria is a very cosmopolitan city and very different to Cairo. The Corniche (Esplanade) which runs for about 30kms is very busy and is where much of the nightlife takes places. Had another great day and then braved it down the desert road again.



On the drive back to Cairo our driver Hamdy needed a tobacco and caffeine fix so we stopped for him to have a smoke of the shisha pipe. We were all very intrigued and he explained to us in his broken English how it works. He is great and a very safe driver. Obviously he has learnt to drive in Cairo. They have a saying here, if you can drive in Cairo you can drive anywhere in the world.

From Cairo we flew to Luxor to join the Nile Cruise. This is a wonderful and relaxing way to enjoy the history and culture of Egypt. We started our Nile experience with a trip to the Valley of the Kings and to the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut. As usual it was hot, hot, hot on the West Bank. We visited 3 tombs, Ramses I, Ramses IV and Ramses XIV. The colours and detail in the tombs are wonderful and to see how well they have survived the sands of time is

amazing in itself. Sadly no cameras are allowed in the Valley of the Kings at all so we have no photos of us there. We all went down to see the Tomb of King Tutankhamen and to visit his mummy which is now on display. The Temple of Queen Hatshepsut has had more restoration work done to it and it is a wonderful temple complex to visit with beautiful colours and reliefs still visible.



Karnak Temple

After checking into our rooms onboard Ti Yi we had the rest of the day to relax and regroup and be ready to enjoy sailing the Nile River and enjoying life along its banks. The next morning we visited my most favourite temple in all of Egypt, Karnak Temple. I love the Great Hypostyle Hall and never cease to be awestruck by it each time I walk through. The girls loved Karnak and each time I bring ladies here they are always amazed at how enormous the pillars and the complex are. Hossam took us to a temple in the complex that I have never been to, I think it was built by Seti I but I'll have to "google it" to find out for sure. We had a wonderful time on the Nile cruise enjoying a Galebea Party on the 2nd last night and have just spent a lovely relaxing night in Aswan at the Isis Island Hotel. Yesterday after leaving the cruise we went to Abu Simbel an amazing temple complex built by Ramses II which is close to the Nubian border and overlooks Lake Nasser. It was great to have our own guide, Hossam with us as usually a trip



King Hossam with his harem

This was such fun and something new for the tour and something I would definitely repeat.



Nubian Village

We had a lovely sail around Awsan on a felucca which is a traditional Egyptian sailboat. This is always very relaxing and soothing and all the ladies enjoyed the serenity. After checking in to our hotel in Aswan it was time to bid Hossam goodbye and we were all a little teary I think.

to this site is rushed but this time we had plenty of time to visit all the rooms inside looking at the carvings and writings within. We are all able to recognize things that Hossam has told us about during our trip or that we have read about beforehand. A highlight of the trip was a trip to a Nubian Village where we went by boat along the First Cataract to the Nubian Village near the Old British Dam and where we were able to go inside one of the local homes and be shown around by the children, but this was not before we went back to school for a lesson in Arabic and Nubian. One of us got "the cuts" but she shall remain nameless.



Back to school



Inside a Nubian home

Well I hope I haven't missed too much. We are about to leave for the airport and fly to Cairo for the last 2 days of our trip so until next time.

Love and kisses

Judy and Girls from Egypt October 09



The Temple of Ramses II - Abu Simbel