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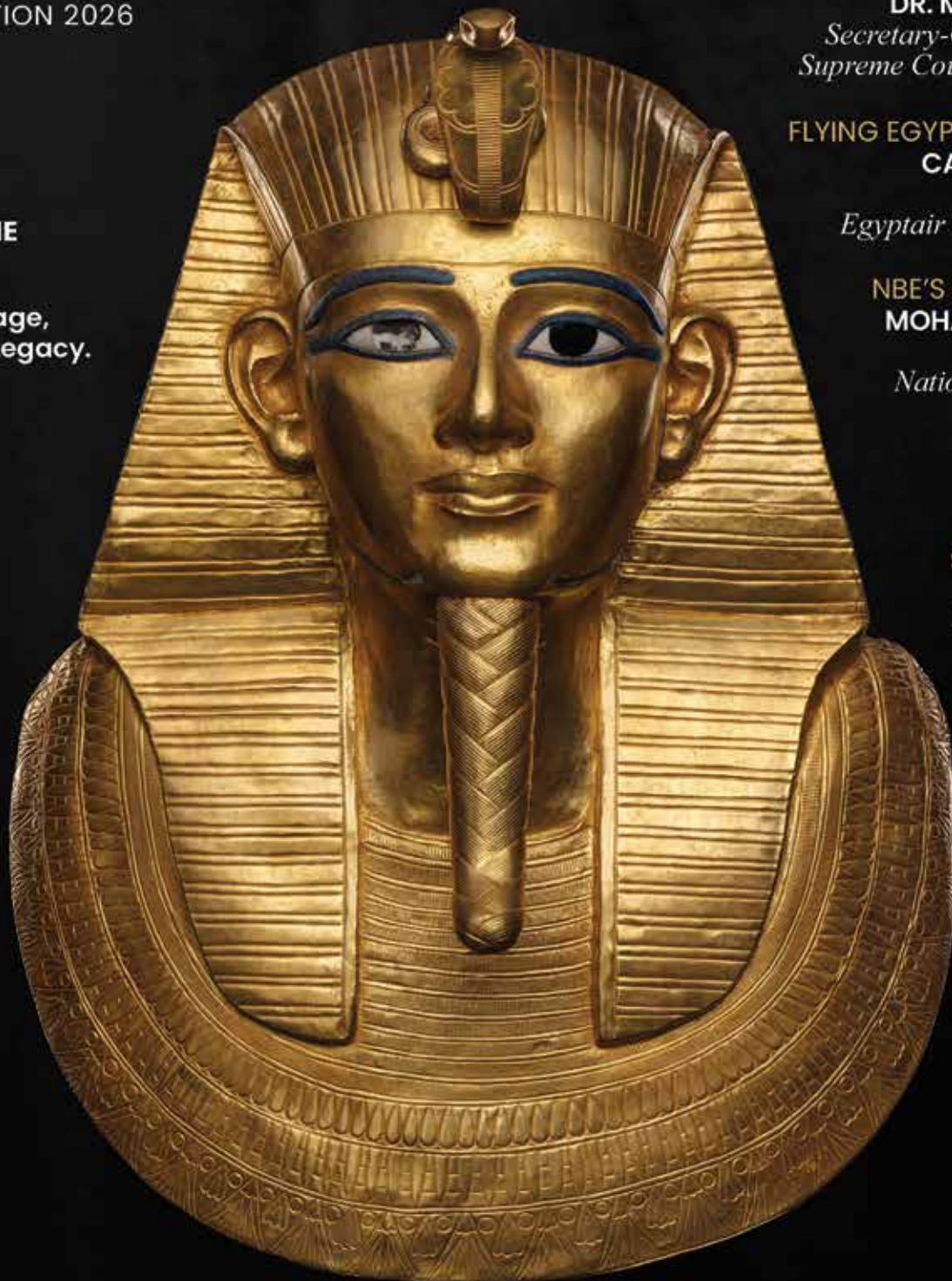
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Celebrating  
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**H.E. SHERIF FATHY**

*Minister of Tourism & Antiquities*

GUARDING A CIVILIZATION

**DR. MOHAMED ISMAIL**

*Secretary-General of Egypt's  
Supreme Council of Antiquities*

FLYING EGYPT TO THE WORLD

**CAPT. AHMED ADEL**

*Chairman of  
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NBE'S STRATEGIC ROLE

**MOHAMED EL-ETREBY**

*CEO of  
National Bank of Egypt*



**OLD CAIRO,  
SEEN DIFFERENTLY**

*A WALK WITH  
DR. TAREK EL-GINDY*

**BRING  
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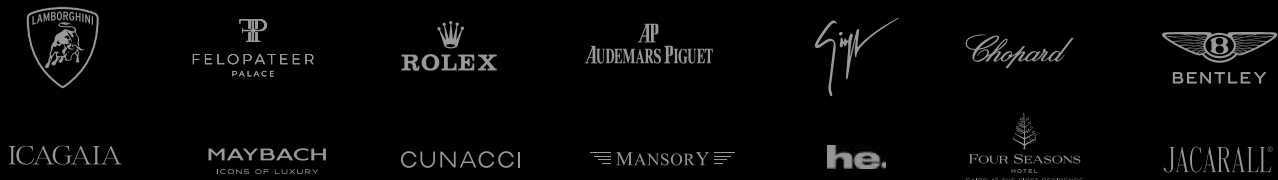
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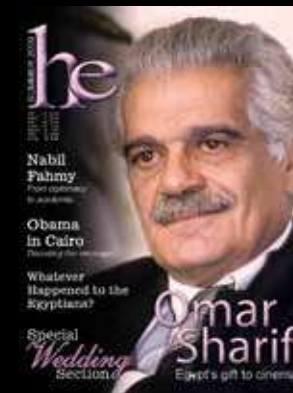
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Home to the Middle East's largest aqua park with 85 water slides and 50 pools, the city also features over 25 restaurants and bars offering global cuisines, along with more than 1,500 comfortable rooms for all types of travelers.

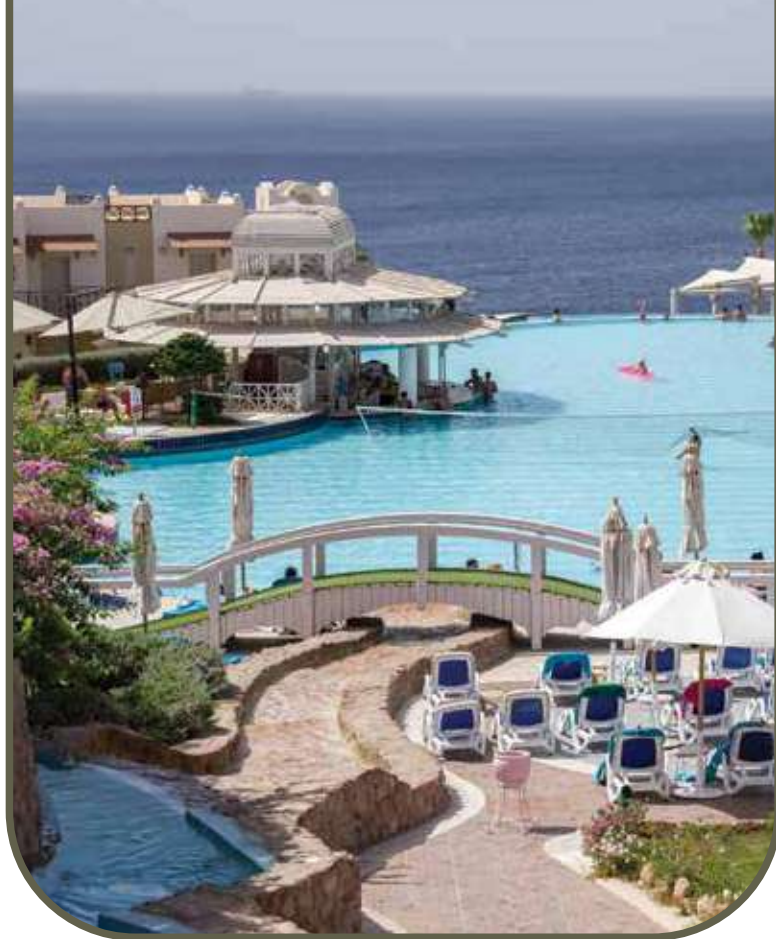
Beyond the water attractions, guests enjoy nonstop entertainment including pumper boat rides, VR experiences, Midway Street games, and a full schedule of day and night activities. The highlight is the nightly Neverland Show a spectacular performance set against a museum-inspired backdrop.





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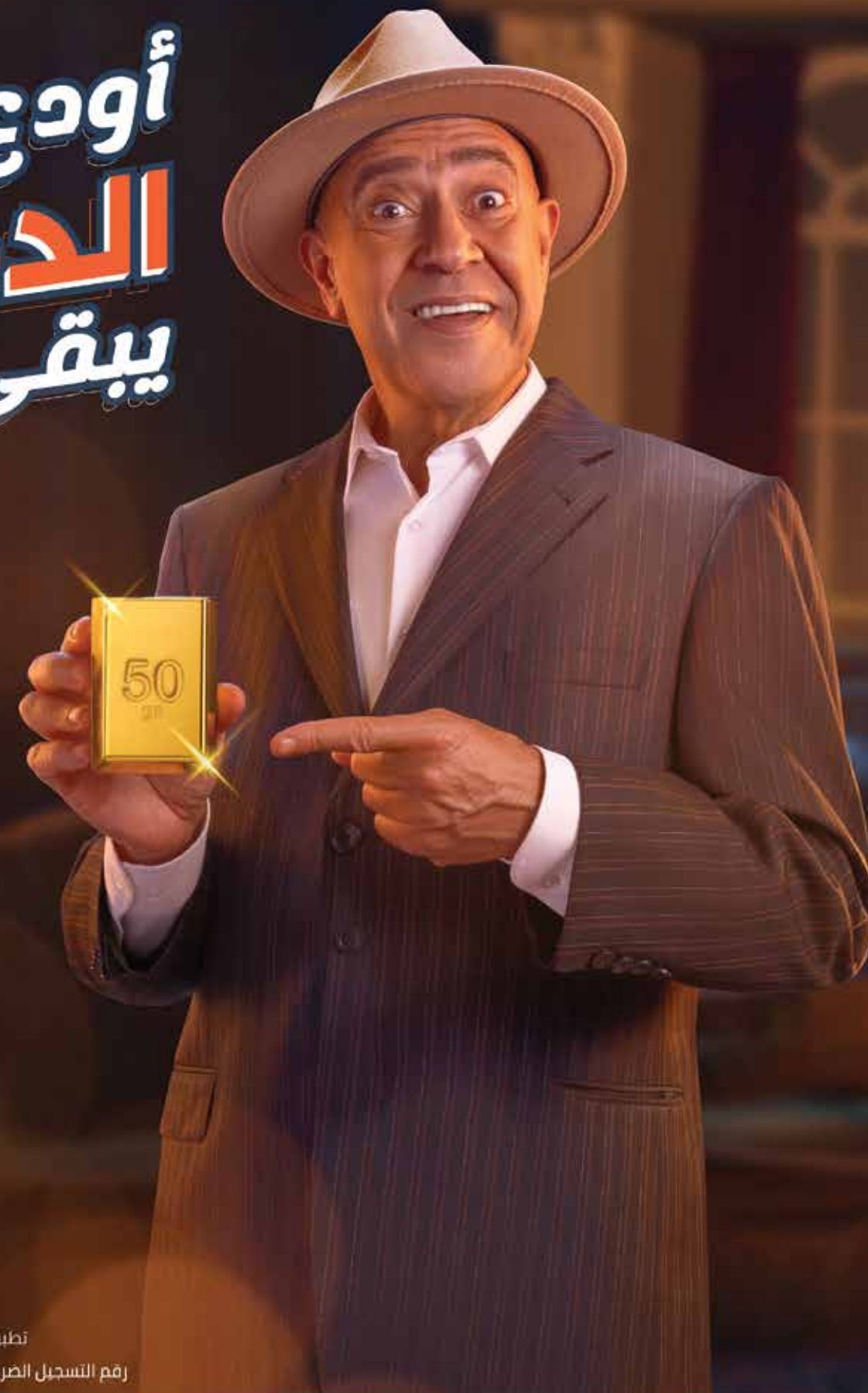
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## Dear Readers,

There are **MOMENTS OF PRIDE** and honour that people and nations experience throughout their lives, whether it is victory in a war, a citizen winning the Nobel Prize or an athlete earning an Olympic medal.

In Egypt, we experienced an unparalleled sense of pride with the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum last November and we were not alone in this feeling; the entire world shared with the Egyptians the pride, admiration, and awe inspired by this monumental event.

In parallel with the major tourism and cultural renaissance that Egypt has been witnessing recently, the least we could offer at *HE magazine*, being a leading publication for the past 26 years, is this special issue dedicated to ancient Egyptian civilization and antiquities.

In this issue, we conducted an important interview inside the Grand Egyptian Museum with the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Mr. Sherif Fathy. He kindly accompanied *HE Magazine* on a fascinating and breathtaking tour of this great cultural landmark.

We also did not forget the roots of museums in Egypt: the historic Egyptian Museum located in the heart of Cairo at Tahrir Square, a place that still holds countless secrets. Through a remarkable journey across time during our interview with Dr. Mohamed Ismail, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities, we jointly rediscovered the “Silver Pharaoh,” Psusennes I the owner of the second golden mask.

No discussion of the revival of tourism would be complete without a successful national carrier, EgyptAir, which has spared no effort in developing itself and embracing every possible means to keep pace with Egypt’s major tourism renaissance. In this issue, Captain Ahmed Adel, Chairman of EgyptAir Holding Company, shares valuable insights into the company’s serious and ongoing steps in this direction.

The beauty of Egypt’s civilization and history is not confined to museums and ancient temples alone; it extends to the streets of Old Cairo, rich with historic buildings, mosques, churches, and temples linked to captivating stories. Some of these stories are brought to life in this issue by Dr. Tarek El Gindy, engineering consultant and passionate history and antiquities enthusiast, who takes us on an enjoyable tour aptly titled “A Walk with Tarek.”

You do not have to be Egyptian to feel this pride; a genuine love and respect for Egyptian civilization is enough to share it with us.

*We wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year.*



HE MAGAZINE PUBLISHER,

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# BUILDING THE FUTURE OF TOURISM

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE  
MINISTER OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES  
**H.E. SHERIF FATHY ATTIA**

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**T**he Grand Egyptian Museum has finally opened its doors, and Egypt's tourism sector is riding a wave of unprecedented growth. In this exclusive interview, the Egyptian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Sherif Fathy Attia, reveals the challenges of orchestrating a world-class opening, the bold plans to transform the Giza Plateau into a premier cultural destination, and the innovative strategies driving a nationwide tourism boom.

He Magazine had the honour of sitting down with Minister Attia to discuss everything from reviving Nile cruises and yacht tourism to repatriating thousands of Pharaonic artifacts, offering readers a fascinating glimpse into how Egypt is positioning itself as a global hub of heritage, culture, and unmatched diversity.

**The grand opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum filled us with pride and admiration. Many organizations and individuals worked hard to honour Egypt's history. What challenges did you face leading up to the opening? Is there anything you would have liked to change that day?**

The inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum was a historic event, showcasing years of dedication and effort. More than 40 heads of state, government officials, and business leaders from around the world gathered to celebrate this significant occasion.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi provided the Grand Egyptian Museum with unparalleled support. In return, we were fully committed to ensuring that both the museum and its opening ceremony met world-class standards.

The world was watching closely as the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum approached. Orchestrating an event that exceeded global expectations was our first challenge; creating an event truly worthy of Egypt and its unparalleled heritage, a top-notch celebration that could reflect the depth of our history and the brilliance of our future. Achieving this level of excellence would not have been possible without the tireless contributions of everyone involved. We succeeded.

The second challenge was to ensure our guests had a seamless and memorable experience, which requires precision and coordination. The nation executed this magnificently, as our guests confirmed.

I wouldn't change a thing; everything was perfect. Since the GEM opened, visitor numbers have impressively increased. Our focus now is on sustaining an unforgettable experience. A key lesson from the soft opening was managing visitor density. Regulating flow is about ensuring every visitor can comfortably enjoy the space.







**What follows the opening? Will there be an annual global event attracting celebrities and officials to Egypt regularly?**

The Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) has begun hosting prestigious events since its soft opening and will continue to offer a vibrant events calendar year-round.

More than just a showcase for ancient Egyptian treasures, the GEM aims to be a leading cultural hub and an academic institution. It will host international seminars, conferences, and scholarly gatherings in archaeology and heritage studies.

My hope is for the GEM to become the heart of Egyptology worldwide. Preparations for a major global scientific event are already underway for next year, positioning the GEM as a significant cultural landmark.

**There has been much discussion about private sector tourism projects around the museum to support and benefit from it. What are the key projects, and when will they start? Are there any independent projects by the Egyptian government?**



We are preparing a master plan to transform the area surrounding the GEM and the Giza Plateau, from Sphinx International Airport to Dahshur, into a premier tourism destination.

This plan involves upgrading infrastructure, developing tourism services, enhancing mobility networks, and building hotels and restaurants while respecting the area's historical and cultural significance.

All developments will adhere to UNESCO standards to preserve the site's authenticity and integrity. The plan includes both private-sector investments and government-led projects, with a focus on sustainable economic benefits for the local community.

Additionally, we are considering the expected increase in tourists to Cairo, particularly due to the Grand Egyptian Museum, and ensuring an appropriate mix of accommodation options, including hotel rooms and luxury residential units.

**His Excellency Minister Sherif Fathy, a former Chairman of EgyptAir with extensive aviation**

**experience, is overseeing the development and modernization of Egyptian airports to match Egypt's tourism boom. What is the timeline for these plans?**

Connectivity is crucial for tourism, as over 95% of our inbound visitors arrive by air. Ensuring robust air connectivity through a strong national airline and modern airports is essential for the sector's resilience and competitiveness.

My extensive experience in aviation, managing airlines like EgyptAir and serving as Minister of Civil Aviation, provides valuable insights into our aviation challenges and opportunities.

The Ministry has developed a roadmap to transform Egypt's aviation sector by expanding terminals, modernizing airports, enhancing the EgyptAir fleet, and fostering international partnerships in airport management. The collaboration we currently have established with the Ministry of Civil Aviation has led to significant improvements.

Our country promotes an open skies policy at most airports, with



Cairo International Airport being an exception due to operational constraints. We aim to unlock Cairo's airport potential, including Sphinx International Airport.

With a clear strategy and committed priorities, our country is dedicated to developing an aviation ecosystem that supports and sustains our growing tourism sector.

**Egyptian ports are essential for yacht tourism, much like airports. Is the Ministry of Transport solely in charge of these ports, and what strategies are in place to boost yacht tourism?**

Egyptian ports play a vital role in the country's economy, fostering the expansion of yachting tourism alongside airports. The Ministry of Transportation is responsible for managing port infrastructure and maritime regulations, while the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities focuses on promoting yachting tourism.

Our strategy aims to position Egypt as an attractive yachting destination through a series of key initiatives. We participate in global yacht shows, like

the Monaco Yacht Show, to highlight our unique coastline and marina facilities. Additionally, we develop promotional content that showcases the beauty and safety of the Red Sea and Mediterranean coasts.

We also run high-impact advertising campaigns, such as the "Sail to Egypt" campaign, in leading international magazines and on digital platforms to reach the global yachting community.

**Egypt has many underutilized antiquities and tourist sites, some of which are not open to visitors. Is there a plan to develop and maximize these sites?**

The Ministry prioritizes the protection and preservation of Egypt's antiquities, viewing them as a vital national treasure and a key part of the nation's identity. We focus on safeguarding archaeological sites, even if it means closing them temporarily for long-term preservation, prioritizing their well-being over potential financial benefits from visitation.

Simultaneously, we strive to upgrade services at archaeological



sites and museums, allocating resources based on visitor volume and site needs. To enhance visitor experiences and generate sustainable revenue, we partner with private companies to manage operations at key sites, reinvesting profits into maintenance and restoration. Successful collaborations, like those at the Giza Plateau and the Grand Egyptian Museum, set the stage for further development of Egypt's cultural heritage.

**You are renowned for your strong will to recover Pharaonic artifacts outside Egypt. What methods are you using to achieve this?**

Another pillar of our strategy is combating the illicit trafficking of antiquities. Egypt's antiquities are not merely historical artifacts, they are a national treasure that must be safeguarded for future generations.

Egypt remains steadfast in reclaiming any of its artifacts that were smuggled illegally out of the country, and we employ different tactics and carefully tailored approaches, allowing us to respond effectively to each circumstance.





We have a thorough national strategy supported by legislation, security measures, diplomacy, and international cooperation. The Egyptian government has undertaken significant legislative reforms. Key amendments were introduced to the Antiquities Protection Law, strengthening penalties for theft, trafficking and illegal export of antiquities. In some cases, penalties now reach life imprisonment and multimillion-pound fines, making the legal deterrent far more effective.

The General Department for Antiquities Repatriation at the Supreme Council of Antiquities operates around the clock, monitoring international auction houses, online marketplaces, and museum acquisitions. It works closely with national authorities and international partners to verify provenance and establish the legal framework required for repatriation.

In parallel, we have reinforced the role of specialized archaeological units at all land, sea, and airports. Their work has been instrumental in preventing the illicit export of antiquities before they leave the country, ensuring that Egypt's cultural heritage remains protected and preserved.



Diplomatic and consular coordination is another cornerstone in the country's repatriation efforts. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our embassies and consulates worldwide to pursue repatriation cases through diplomatic channels and legal cooperation. The Ministry also works closely with the office of the Attorney General.

Egypt has also signed multiple bilateral agreements with international partners, including the United States, Italy, Switzerland, Cyprus, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, to combat illicit trafficking and facilitate the return of cultural property.

Our cooperation extends to international law enforcement bodies and heritage organisations, including UNESCO, INTERPOL, and ICOM. Through these partnerships, we exchange intelligence, share expertise, and strengthen Egypt's global standing in protecting cultural heritage.

Importantly, these efforts extend to treasures from all eras, not just ancient Egyptian antiquities. Our commitment is to protect and preserve the full spectrum of Egypt's rich cultural heritage, ensuring it remains

a source of pride and knowledge for generations to come.

Over the past decade, Egypt has repatriated nearly 30,000 artefacts. These numbers demonstrate the effectiveness of our approaches.

This is not only about recovering objects; it is about safeguarding a civilization's identity and ensuring that future generations experience their heritage where it truly belongs.

**Egypt has experienced a significant tourism boom, how this will impact the expected number of tourists the country aims to attract?**

We expect to end this year with around 19 million tourists, a 21% increase from 2024. This speaks volumes about the growing global confidence in Egypt as a safe, secure, and attractive tourism destination.

We are optimistic about sustaining this momentum. Our target is not just about increasing numbers; it is about ensuring sustainable, balanced growth across all segments of the tourism industry. To sustain this growth, we are now focusing on two key pillars: the first is expanding accommodation capacity across all segments, from fixed and floating hotel resorts and lodges to the growing holiday homes market.

We are also conducting comprehensive capacity studies to assess each destination's accommodation needs, ensuring investments are aligned with growth potential.

These studies will form the foundation of a national accommodation plan, serving as a strategic guide for hotel development and tourism investment across Egypt.

The government is actively working to attract new investments by launching incentives to support the renovation of existing hotel rooms and stimulate further expansion.

Discussions are also underway to introduce additional incentives for the construction of new hotels across Egypt.

In parallel, the expansion strategy includes increasing the number of floating hotels and promoting innovative accommodation models, such as holiday homes and Dahabiyas, which are expected to account for approximately 20% of the required room capacity.

The second pillar focuses on enhancing connectivity, both internationally, by strengthening links with key source markets, and domestically, by improving travel between Egyptian cities and destinations, to facilitate easier journeys and elevate the overall visitor experience.

We also have a very successful Aviation Incentive Program, which has significantly helped attract new markets to Egypt by supporting airlines that consider Egypt a vital destination. It also supports and encourages the operation of charter flights from target markets. Through this program, the ministry also offers incentive packages to boost tourism to

specific destinations or during certain periods, such as those provided to airlines operating flights to Luxor and Aswan in the summer.

The Aviation Incentive Program drove substantial growth in air traffic from May to September 2025 compared with the same period in 2024. Flight volumes increased by 24%, passenger numbers rose by 25%, and airline seat capacity expanded by 25%, surpassing all established targets.

**The Nile cruise sector has started to recover after years of stagnation. How is the ministry supporting this sector?**

The Nile cruise industry is one of Egypt's most distinguished and valuable tourism products and revitalising it is a strategic priority for the Ministry. We are implementing a comprehensive set of measures to ensure that the sector's recent recovery is sustained and translated into long-term growth.

Our first focus is on expanding Egypt's floating hotel capacity, particularly following the introduction of long-haul Nile cruise itineraries between Cairo and Aswan. These new routes, which pass through the governorates of Minya, Assiut, and Sohag, offer a unique, extended visitor journey that enhances the overall experience.

These itineraries also increase visitation to archaeological sites and museums across Upper Egypt, enhance access to points along the Holy Family Trail in these governorates, and promote local handicrafts, customs, traditions, and cuisine.

We place a strong emphasis on improving the quality, safety, and competitiveness of the Nile cruise product. This includes the continuous upgrading of existing marinas and moorings; the construction of new facilities; ongoing training and







development of floating hotel crews, with shorter intervals between training cycles to maintain high service standards; and regular review and enforcement of civil protection and safety protocols to ensure the well-being of both vessels and passengers.

To ensure smooth and safe navigation, the Ministry is working closely with all relevant authorities to reliably maintain navigational buoys along the Nile, remove aquatic plants that may affect their stability, perform continuous dredging to eliminate obstacles that could impede vessel movement, and strictly oversee that all operating vessels possess the necessary tourism licenses across all sections of the river, especially between Luxor and Aswan.

**The Tourism Promotion Authority aims to revitalize sectors like cultural, sports (including diving), medical, yacht, and religious tourism. What is its strategy for developing these sectors to achieve tangible results?**

The Ministry's vision is to showcase Egypt's 'Unmatched Diversity', emphasizing the wide range of tourism experiences available, including cultural, beach, spiritual, eco, adventure, and medical tourism. We collaborate with our partners to ensure each tourism product reaches its full potential and attracts visitors worldwide.

The Egyptian Tourism Authority's 'Unmatched Diversity' campaign positions Egypt as a unique destination where history, culture, and adventure come together. Our approach leverages a dynamic, data-driven marketing strategy that focuses on enhancing our digital presence and utilizing AI tools for targeted messaging.

We aim to expand into new markets through co-marketing campaigns with international tour operators and by participating in major tourism exhibitions, including ITB, WTM, and ATM. Organizing exhibitions abroad and hosting familiarization trips for travel professionals and influencers also play key roles in our strategy.

Our goal is to position Egypt as the world's leading destination with unmatched diversity in the coming years.

**He Magazine is celebrating its 26th anniversary and is proud to be the only magazine available for three months in EgyptAir's business class lounges at Cairo International Airport, as well as on select international flights. What message would the Egyptian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities like to share with readers to encourage people from around the world to visit Egypt?**

It is always a pleasure to connect with readers worldwide. Egypt is truly the Country of 'Unmatched Diversity', and this is more than just a slogan; it reflects our reality.

In Egypt, travellers can experience a unique blend of timeless heritage, stunning landscapes, pristine beaches, and vibrant culture, all in one destination.

I encourage all Egyptian readers to be ambassadors for our country, sharing the narrative of Egypt's unmatched diversity and warmly inviting others to explore our rich history and contemporary spirit.

To the international audience, I warmly invite you to discover a destination that surprises and inspires. Egypt is ready to welcome you to experience its unmatched diversity. ●



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# GUARDING A CIVILIZATION

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF ANTIQUITIES  
**DR. MOHAMED ISMAIL KHALED**

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**S**tepping into the old Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square feels less like entering a building and more like crossing a threshold in time. Its high ceilings, marble floors, and quiet, dignified aura embody a spirit no modern structure can replicate. This is the museum generations of Egyptians grew up imagining whenever they heard the word “antiquities”, a place that has safeguarded the nation’s treasures for more than a century.

On a recent visit, He Magazine had the privilege of exploring its halls with Dr Mohamed Ismail, the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, whose lifetime of work has been dedicated to preserving and interpreting Egypt’s ancient soul. As he guided us through the galleries, he stopped before a masterpiece many visitors underappreciate: the golden funerary mask of Pharaoh Psusennes I, an object he believes deserves to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the world-famous mask of Tutankhamun.

What followed was a sweeping conversation about legacy, rediscovery, and the future of Egypt’s oldest museum, one that continues to evolve even as it remains an icon of the past.

## THE FORGOTTEN MASK Psusennes I THE KING WHO RULED EGYPT 3000 YEARS AGO

1047–998 BC



“Seen without glass, without distance, and without mediation, the funerary mask of Psusennes I reveals itself as one of the greatest masterpieces of ancient Egypt — deserving recognition alongside the most celebrated icons of the pharaonic world.”

he. magazine





divine authority. However, Psusennes I's mask is notably more austere and restrained in its decoration, lacking the extensive inlays of lapis lazuli and colored glass that characterize Tutankhamun's more visually opulent mask. This stylistic simplicity does not imply lesser status; rather, it reflects the political and economic realities of the Third Intermediate Period. While Tut's mask embodies the exuberance of New Kingdom wealth, Psusennes I's mask emphasizes dignity, tradition, and continuity, reminding us that royal power endured in different forms even as Egypt's resources and artistic priorities evolved. Psusennes I's silver sarcophagus stands as one of the most striking and often misunderstood symbols of royal wealth in ancient Egypt. As Dr Mohamed Ismail explained, during Psusennes I's era, silver was considered more valuable than gold, largely because it was not naturally abundant in Egypt and had to be imported through long-distance trade networks. Gold, by contrast, was relatively accessible through mines and therefore more familiar to Egyptian craftsmen. The decision to entomb Psusennes I in a coffin made almost entirely of solid silver was not an artistic coincidence, but a deliberate statement of his supreme royal status. In this context, silver functioned as the ultimate prestige material, elevating the burial beyond even the famed golden tomb of Tutankhamun.

## Psusennes I, the Second Mask

Dr Ismail led us toward one of the museum's most overlooked marvels: the exhibit of Psusennes I. Standing before the gleaming silver sarcophagus, he explained that "the tomb was found was pure silver and in beautiful condition, one of the rarest finds". It was discovered in 1940, at the height of the Second World War, a period that unintentionally obscured its global impact. Despite the extraordinary craftsmanship and brilliance of Psusennes' gold funerary mask, he noted that its fame never matched that of Tutankhamun. "The reason why Psuennes' gold mask discovery didn't reach the levels of King Tut's was that it occurred during the Second World War, so a lot of the headlines were diminished as a result". Yet as he gestured toward the mask, its artistry refined and its presence commanding, he made it clear that Psusennes deserves recognition equal to that of Egypt's most celebrated boy king.

Psusennes I's gold funerary mask invites inevitable comparison with the iconic mask of King Tutankhamun, yet the two reflect very different historical contexts. Both masks are crafted from gold and display the timeless symbols of Egyptian kingship, the Nemes headdress, false beard, and idealized facial features meant to convey



During our visit, He Magazine was granted rare, special access to the exhibit, offering an intimate look at these extraordinary artefacts beyond the standard public experience. In an exceptional gesture, the museum staff carefully removed key items such as Psusennes I Funerary Mask and Psusennes I Silver Coffin from their protective boxes, allowing us to photograph them and fully appreciate their craftsmanship, scale, and material presence, details often lost behind glass. This level of access not only enriched our coverage but deepened our understanding of the objects' historical and cultural weight. We extend our sincere thanks to Dr Ali Abdel Halim, General Secretary of the Old Museum, whose support and cooperation made this exclusive access possible, and whose commitment to sharing Egypt's heritage continues to elevate how these treasures are documented and presented to the world.





## The Appeal of the “Old” Museum

Later, sitting down, we began by asking Dr Ismail about the unmistakable feeling one gets when stepping into the old Egyptian Museum, an atmosphere distinctly different from the new one. He smiled, describing it as “iconic and the one you picture when you think of the word museum”. Built in 1902, it was the first museum ever constructed in Egypt and is more than 130 years old today. Unlike many of Egypt’s museums, which occupy former palaces or fortresses, this building “was always built to be a museum, not converted into one”. In its early decades, every artefact discovered across the country was first brought here to be stored, studied, and catalogued, allowing the museum to serve as the central hub from which treasures were later distributed to new institutions as they opened. When asked about the scale of its collection, he explained, “It has over 100,000 artefacts”, noting that while many remain in storage, “you see an extensive amount here”.

## From Old to Gold

When the Grand Egyptian Museum opened, it naturally captured global attention, so we asked Dr Ismail

what steps were being taken to keep the old museum relevant and vibrant. He explained that the plan had been drafted long before the new museum’s inauguration. “Of course there is”, he said. “There were plans drafted when the big museum was initially about to open. This museum will never close as its relevancy is still very important and stores a lot of artifacts”. Central to this vision is a renewed focus on Psusennes I, whose gold funerary mask he described with pride: “People like to speak about King Tut’s Mask, but this one is equally as impressive and will be a centrepiece of the museum, that and the history of gold in ancient Egypt”. He confirmed that the institution will soon be known as “The Gold Museum”, a name chosen because “it’ll have an amazing amount of gold artefacts”. Alongside its golden masterpieces, the museum will also highlight Ancient Fine Arts, “ancient paintings, statues, busts of old kings and leaders, all of this will be located here”, as well as a dedicated section for animal mummification. “There are a lot of animals from ancient times mummified, and it was a significant thing for people to do so back then” he said, explaining that even house pets such as cats and dogs were mummified and buried in Saqqara. Their recent exhibition in China featured several of these examples,

and “the crowd was very intrigued”. With these three pillars, Psusennes’ treasures and pharaonic gold, ancient fine arts, and mummified animals, the old museum is poised to reinvent itself while honouring its storied past.

With more than 50,000 artefacts on display, we asked Dr Ismail how long it would realistically take for someone to see everything inside the old museum. He laughed gently, explaining, “Yeah, nobody can visit the museum and see it all in a day; it would take 4 or 5 days to truly see every single artifact on display”. He outlined the building’s structure with the precision of someone who knows every corner by heart: the first level features objects spanning the earliest chapters of ancient history through the Roman period. In contrast, “the second level contains the gold and the mummified animals”. Together, the two floors create a journey so extensive and rich in history that a single visit can only scratch the surface. While walking around, we noticed some sections where a picture is displayed instead of the actual artefact, with a note stating that it is currently on display abroad at another museum. Do actions like these promote tourism to Egypt, or do people just want to see the artifact elsewhere and leave it at that? Well, we did an expo in Shanghai



that attracted 2.7 million visitors”, Dr Ismail explained. “Our statistics showed that following the expo, there was a noticeable increase in Chinese tourists visiting Egypt. These exhibitions have a significant impact on our tourism; they spark interest not only in our museums but also in iconic sites such as the Pyramids, Luxor, and Aswan. It awakens their inner Egyptologist and adventurous side.”

## Pyramids, Lost Artefacts and Egyptology

A topic that continues to spark curiosity online is the age-old question: How were the pyramids built, and have we finally unravelled the mystery? According to Dr Mohamed Ismail, “The conclusion is that any pyramid’s base starts as a square, proper structures are in place under the ground, then it gets built on levels”, he explained, noting that before construction begins, “the tomb is first built, storage, etc”. This

underscores that planning started long before the visible pyramid was built. When asked about transporting the massive stones, Dr Ismail elaborated, “They would get the stones from Tora, they would dig them and shape them there first, then transport them across the Nile. Tora is close to Saqqara, they would wait till the Nile flooding period to transport, as it would make transportation much easier”. He further described how the blocks were raised above previous levels, “They would use a ramp made of mud and sand and spray water to make it slick, they used wooden pillars to place them properly, and we have descriptions of such”. This careful planning, ingenious engineering, and clever use of natural conditions allowed the ancient Egyptians to create one of humanity’s most enduring and awe-inspiring architectural achievements.

The question of Egyptian artifacts abroad touches on national pride, heritage, and the enduring effort to reclaim the country’s lost treasures.

When asked about Egyptian artifacts that are no longer in the country, Dr Mohamed Ismail was unequivocal. “Every artifact that was taken from Egypt was done unlawfully, and must be returned”, he stated firmly. “It’s important for Egyptians to be able to see their heritage”, he added, emphasizing the cultural and national significance of these objects. In the past, it had been argued that Egypt lacked the facilities to properly house such treasures, but Dr Ismail dismissed this claim. He explained that Egypt now has the largest and most state-of-the-art facility to house artifacts, with the highest security in the world, so that argument is no longer valid. He also clarified that not all artifacts abroad are unlawful, noting that Egypt has agreements with museums, such as the one in Turin, Italy, that allow for a 50/50 trade of artefacts discovered with their assistance. The museum in Turin, officially called the Egyptian Museum, reflecting a long-standing collaboration that benefits both countries while respecting ownership rights.



Even today, Egypt continues to reveal its ancient secrets, often hiding treasures just beneath the foundations of modern life. When asked how much more could still be discovered, Dr Mohamed Ismail reflected on Egypt's unique historical landscape. "One thing always holds, Egyptians live next to the Nile, the desert was always considered the red lane to the Egyptian or the dangerous land because danger would always come from there", he explained. This geographical reality shaped settlement patterns over millennia, and as Egypt developed, people often built on top of existing structures. "That's why when Egypt develops, people build on top of what other people have built, that's why when someone digs into his home, he'll find artefacts, on top of



another house or temple that existed in the past", he added. The result is a country where history lies literally beneath modern life, with artefacts waiting to be rediscovered even in the most unexpected places.

### Passion Into Career

Dr Mohamed Ismail's journey to becoming one of Egypt's leading antiquities experts began with an international education that shaped his perspective on Egyptology. When asked why he pursued his doctorate in Egyptology in Prague, Dr Mohamed Ismail explained that the field is global. "Egyptology is an international study; the people who began it were in the West", he said. The discipline quickly spread across France, England, Germany, and the United States, and while Egypt also developed programs, "a lot of the strong schools for the subject were in the West". He highlighted the influence of Cherni, a renowned Egyptologist who began his studies in England and later established the subject in Prague. Dr Ismail completed his own PhD under Uslav Berner, a specialist in pyramids, gaining expertise that would inform his work preserving and interpreting Egypt's ancient heritage.

Even for a seasoned Egyptologist like Dr. Mohamed Ismail, some discoveries stand out as both thrilling and perilous, moments that define a career spent uncovering the secrets of ancient Egypt. When asked about a standout moment in his career, Dr Mohamed Ismail recounted a daring excavation at a pyramid in Abu Seed. "We were digging into a pyramid in Abu Seed; it was the first time anyone had dug into it, although it was first found in the 1860s. The dig site was fresh, around 2019", he explained. The pyramid's broken and unstable condition had deterred

previous explorers, leaving its secrets untouched. "We were trying to figure out how many tombs were inside, what the pyramid was about. We found a huge hidden spot inside a massive storage area and uncovered damage caused around the time of the last kingship. We found an oil lamp inside, and the damage was caused by people trying to rob the tomb. It seems the robbers saw just massive white walls and assumed if they broke them, maybe there would be something behind." He described how the pyramid's retaining walls and structural instability made the excavation especially perilous: "Pyramids are built using retaining walls, and due to the recklessness of their breakage, the pyramid collapsed on itself." Reflecting on the experience, he called it "probably a defining moment of my career because it was such a huge discovery and was also dangerous due to the instability of the structure and rocks falling".

For Dr Mohamed Ismail, every artifact in Egypt's collection tells a story that connects the past to the present, but some hold a special place in his heart. When asked what artifact holds the most personal significance to him as Head of Egyptian Antiquities, he admitted there were countless. "There's too much to list, but for example, the Doriti Statue for King Khafra," he began. "The statue shows the figure of the King in his splendour; the same image can be found on the 10 pound bill. The Horus that protects the king and hugs him is highly symbolic. It shows they were loved and capable of ruling. Our history is rich and beautiful, and Egypt will remain strong and beautiful". For him, the statue embodies not only the artistic mastery of ancient Egypt but also the enduring spirit and pride of a civilization that continues to inspire. ●

## Where Modern Hospitality Meets Authentic Comfort

Discover a new level of comfort through our signature locations in Cairo & New Alamein

### Blend of modern elegance and warm, attentive service.

In Cairo, the Gewan Hotel Cairo – Heliopolis stands as a prime destination for both business and leisure travelers, combining a Strategic location with contemporary design and exceptional guest comfort.

The brand's expansion extends proudly to the New Alamein City, where Gewan now features three unique seaside properties, Each redefining coastal living through spacious accommodations, elevated privacy, and refined resort-style experiences along Egypt's Mediterranean shoreline.

With a growing footprint and a commitment to excellence, Gewan Hotels is shaping a new benchmark for premium hospitality in Egypt.

### Gewan Hotel Cairo

Is conveniently located in the heart of Heliopolis, one of Cairo's most elegant and prestigious residential and commercial areas. Perfectly positioned to offer seamless access to the city's key destinations, the hotel is just minutes away from City Stars Mall, and the Cairo International Convention Centre. Located only 8 km from Cairo International Airport and 12 Km from downtown Cairo, it effortlessly connects business, culture, and comfort.



**Gewan Palace** is a distinguished luxury hotel featuring 86 meticulously designed accommodations, with unit types include spacious Two-Bedroom and Three-Bedroom Apartments, Duplexes, Chalets and Royal Villas.

Guest amenities include two swimming pools, a pristine open beach, and an exclusive clubhouse. The hotel is strategically located 7 km from North Square Mall at the heart of New Alamein, 55 km from Alamein International Airport and 96 km from Borg El Arab International Airport.

**Gewan Resort** offers 425 luxurious accommodations, including rooms, suites, chalets, twin houses and villas.

Guests can enjoy our expansive aqua park, two swimming pools and an open beach. The resort is located just 7 km from north square mall at the heart of New Alamein, 55 km from Alamein international Airport and 96 km from borg El Arab international airport.



**Gewan White beach** With an authentic brand and state of the art architecture, We proud ourselves as Egyptian's first and fast growing hotel.

An extraordinary resort located at New Alamein city that combines the magic of the Egyptian traditions and the new vision for the future of the Mediterranean beach surrounded by wonderful natural attractions. We are surrounded by all services and airports like; the Alamein International Airport is situated 45 km away, Borg El Arab International Airport is situated 95 km away and Sidi Abdulrahman city is situated 10 km away.



## FOUR SEASONS HOTEL CAIRO AT THE FIRST RESIDENCE

WELCOMES NEW GENERAL MANAGER

# BELAL AL-KADRY

*A dynamic leader arrives to usher  
in a bold new chapter for one of  
Cairo's most iconic luxury hotels.*



**F**our Seasons Hotel Cairo at The First Residence proudly announces the appointment of Belal Al-Kadry as its new General Manager, bringing to the storied Nile-side and Pyramids landmark a spirited blend of global expertise, heartfelt leadership, and an unwavering passion for elevating the guest experience. With more than 25 years of distinguished hospitality experience, Belal steps into the Four Seasons property ready to infuse fresh energy into the hotel that first introduced the Four Seasons brand to the Middle East and North Africa.

Belal's hospitality journey began at Sheraton Kuwait, where his natural affinity for people and his fascination with creating memorable guest moments inspired a lifelong career. That early spark grew into an impressive track record across Starwood, Hilton, and Marriott International, where he held leadership roles at some of the region's most prestigious properties including The Ritz-Carlton, Doha; Sharq Village and Spa, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel; Sheraton Grand Doha; and several major hotels within Qatar and

Kuwait. His path later expanded to Saudi Arabia's visionary Sindalah NEOM development, where he oversaw a cluster of Marriott luxury properties, contributing to one of the world's most ambitious hospitality destinations.

Belal's approach to luxury is rooted in authenticity. "Luxury is not just a standard; it's a legacy, and every guest deserves to feel and resonate with it," he says. His guiding belief is equally inspiring: "Love what you do and do it wholeheartedly. When your heart is in your work, every guest feels it."

Now at the helm of Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at The First Residence, Belal is excited to lead a team he calls "passionate, talented, and deeply connected to the spirit of Egyptian hospitality." Overlooking the Nile and known for its timeless elegance, the hotel enters a compelling new chapter under his leadership, one defined by craftsmanship, heartfelt service, and moments that speak to the soul.

With Belal Al-Kadry's guidance and leadership, Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at The First Residence stands poised to elevate its legacy of luxury with renewed vision, warmth, and purpose in the region. ●



## WHEN LUXURY MEETS *HISTORY!*

For guests eager to dive into Cairo's rich cultural heritage and timeless wonders, Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at the First Residence is the perfect retreat in the heart of Giza. Just moments from the legendary Pyramids of Giza and only 25 minutes from the spectacular new Grand Egyptian Museum, the hotel offers thoughtfully curated private tours that make every discovery feel magical. After a day of exploring Egypt's ancient treasures, drift over to the hotel's First Nile Boat, where you can dine right on the river. From vibrant Brazilian flavours to elevated Pan-Asian dishes and sun-kissed Mediterranean cuisine.

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# ALAM AL-ROUM

## A NEW GLOBAL DESTINATION ON THE MEDITERRANEAN



**A** new chapter in Mediterranean living is unfolding on Egypt’s North Coast. At the heart of the New Administrative Capital, a visionary partnership was sealed between the New Urban Communities Authority and Qatari Diar—ushering in one of the region’s most ambitious coastal transformations to date.

With an investment value approaching **USD 30 billion**, the development of **Alam Al-Roum** promises to elevate the North Coast into a global destination—celebrated for its pristine turquoise waters, expansive landscapes, and year-round lifestyle appeal. Witnessed by His Excellency Dr. Mostafa Madbouly, Prime Minister of Egypt, this partnership stands as a testament to the growing synergy between Egypt and Qatar, and their shared ambition to ignite sustainable economic growth through landmark projects.

### Where Vision Meets World-Class Living

Stretching across 4,900 acres and 7.2 kilometers of untouched Mediterranean shoreline, Alam Al-Roum is designed to set a new benchmark for integrated urban living. More than just a development, it is a complete ecosystem—crafted to offer residents and visitors an elevated lifestyle that harmonizes luxury, nature, and convenience.

#### The destination will bring to life:

- High-end residential communities with premium waterfront living
- World-class hotels and resort experiences
- A landmark international marina, complemented by two internal marinas
- Golf courses, artificial lagoons, and expansive leisure zones
- Signature retail, dining, and entertainment districts
- Cutting-edge infrastructure, from power stations to water desalination facilities
- Essential community services including schools, universities, hospitals, and government facilities

With 60% of the land devoted to residential neighborhoods, 15% to services, and a generous 25% to green spaces, roads, and public areas, Alam Al-Roum is engineered to flourish as a sustainable, vibrant destination all year long.

### A Shared Commitment to Growth

The signing ceremony brought together distinguished leaders from both nations, including senior Qatari and Egyptian ministers and the executive leadership of Qatari Diar. Their presence underscored

the project’s political backing and regional significance.

Prime Minister Madbouly described the agreement as “*a major investment partnership between our two brotherly nations*”, emphasizing the alignment between President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in driving economic cooperation and unlocking future-forward opportunities.

His Excellency Abdullah Al Attiyah, Minister of Municipality of Qatar and Chairman of Qatari Diar, highlighted the project’s transformative impact: “*This strategic investment reinforces our confidence in the Egyptian economy and elevates the North Coast into a world-class destination.*”

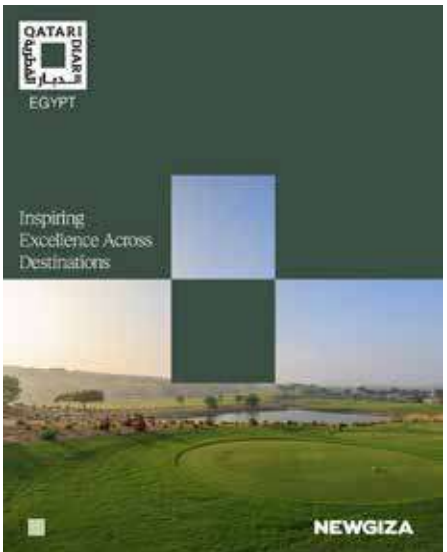
Beyond its architectural and touristic value, Alam Al-Roum is expected to generate over **250,000 direct and indirect jobs**, catalyzing growth, empowering local communities, and boosting private-sector participation.

### A Catalyst for Egypt’s Future Coastal Landscape

For Qatari Diar, Alam Al-Roum represents a defining milestone in its long-standing presence in Egypt, joining iconic landmarks such as The St. Regis Cairo, CityGate New Cairo, and New Giza.

For Egypt, it marks another significant step toward unlocking the full economic and touristic potential of the Mediterranean coastline.

As Egypt continues to welcome foreign investment through structured and forward-looking policies, developments like Alam Al-Roum are shaping a new national narrative—one of innovation, partnership, and sustainable prosperity. ●





# NBE'S STRATEGIC ROLE IN THE GEM'S GLOBAL RISE

## CAPITALISING ON EGYPT'S LEGACY AND INVESTING IN EGYPT'S VISION

IN A CHAT WITH **MOHAMED EL-ETREBY** ON WHY THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM STANDS AT THE CENTER OF NBE'S STRATEGIC VISION

**T**he National Bank of Egypt holds a solid legacy that dates back to its foundation in 1989, pioneering the release of the first banknotes in Egypt whilst simultaneously undertaking the responsibility of a central bank. In 1960, it became nationalized where its ownership was transferred to the state and from the mid-1960s onwards it became responsible for issuing and managing investment certificates for the government which further strengthened its position as one of the most significant banks in Egypt.

To top things off, NBE has made significant contribution to a lot of philanthropic causes supporting healthcare, education, economic empowerment, in addition to heritage, culture and the environment. NBE has developed public schools across Egypt, combating poverty by paying off debts through the Al-Gharimeen program supporting bread-winning women, as well as persons with disabilities (PwD), to list just a few of these philanthropic initiatives. The bank has also significantly contributed to improvements in healthcare including developing fully equipped university hospitals and developing training for nurses to ensure patients are able to receive the best treatment.

By December 2023, the NBE had served nearly 20 million customers

which has been supported by the NBE having 665 branches, offices and units nationwide according to figures published in June 2024. In 2024, Global Finance named the NBE as the Safest Bank for the fifth year in a row, which further strengthened the reliability of the bank and continued to build its reputation as Egypt's best retail bank. The NBE has won several distinguished awards including the Top 50 Banking Brands 2025 and Elan Awards 2025. Global Economics named NBE as the Best Retail Bank and also awarded Most Secure Bank Digital Transformation in 2025. NBE also has an extensive international presence including the branches in the United Kingdom, Sudan, United States of America, China, the United Arab Emirates and Ethiopia.

In coordination with the Talaat Moustafa Group (TMG), the National Bank of Egypt has contributed to the development of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) where the Talaat Moustafa Group provides the resources for the large-scale development of the museum backed by the investment from the National Bank of Egypt. The bank has also worked closely with the Mansour Group, Ezz Steel, Hassam Allam Holding and the Administrative Capital for Urban Development in the formation of one of Egypt's most iconic museums.



*We have had the pleasure of conducting an interview with the Chief Executive Officer of the National Bank of Egypt, Mohamed El-Etreby, with over 35 years' experience in banking and appearing on the Forbes' Middle East's Top CEOs list, he shares why this project has been so significant for the bank and the history of a nation with such unique heritage.*

**The Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) stands as a symbol of national pride, how does NBE's support reflect its role in preserving Egypt's heritage and future prosperity?**

First and foremost, I have to say the Bank prides itself on its strategic partnership with the Grand Egyptian Museum — one of the most significant cultural and civilizational projects in the world, it is the largest museum in the world dedicated to a single civilization, showcasing tens of thousands of archaeological artifacts and historical treasures that document more than 650,000 years of human history.

This museum does not merely display artifacts that reflect Egypt's rich heritage; it also serves as a symbol of civilizational dialogue between the past and the present. As the oldest bank in Egypt, we are proud to be a part of history in the development of a museum that reinforces the country's reputation as one of the most captivating nations globally.

**As one of Egypt's leading banking figures, how do you view NBE's role in supporting a national landmark like the Grand Egyptian Museum?**

The National Bank of Egypt affirms that its partnership with the Grand Egyptian Museum reflects its ongoing national role in supporting projects that embody Egypt's civilizational leadership and strengthen its position as a global cultural destination. Supporting such an iconic project allows us to help safeguard Egypt's history whilst also supporting economic development, cultural exchange, and the country's position as a leading destination on the world stage.

**From your perspective, how does NBE's partnership with the Grand Egyptian Museum reflect the bank's vision for Egypt's cultural and economic future?**

The National Bank of Egypt's support for this project stems from its belief in the vital role of culture in building individuals, strengthening national identity, and opening new horizons for cultural tourism — which, in turn, contributes to the national economy. For over a century NBE has been a pillar of Egypt's economic and social progress. Hence, we regard our support to the GEM a national allegiance and bridge to future generations. Being involved in this project aligns with our vision for Egypt's prosperous future, one which involves sustainable growth and global leadership.

**What makes the GEM unique?**

It is the largest archaeological museum in the world dedicated to a civilization that influenced the development of the modern world including writing and record-keeping as well as medicine and mathematics. What truly sets it apart is not just the scale, but the way it combines cutting-edge technology, world-class conservation, and immersive visitor experiences to bring Egypt's heritage to life.

This museum does not merely display artifacts that reflect Egypt's rich heritage; including the complete Tutankhamun collection as well as a 3200 year old statue of Ramesses II, it also serves as a symbol of civilizational dialogue between the past and the present and a reflection of global allegiance between nations.

**What does it mean for Egypt?**

In addition to being the homecoming of a whole civilization under one roof and standing as a bridge between past and future, the GEM is now a new global landmark. This creates a cultural and economic renaissance anchoring Egypt as a hub for culture and tourism thereby attracting millions of tourists. By doing so, the museum boosts the

local and national economy as well as inspiring investments in infrastructure, hospitality, and other related sectors. Ultimately, the GEM protects Egypt's rich history whilst also charting a path toward growth and innovation.

**How does NBE envision its role in the GEM, beyond the inauguration and investment?**

The National Bank of Egypt's support for this project stems from its belief in the vital role of culture in building individuals, strengthening national identity, and opening new horizons for cultural tourism — which, in turn, contributes to the national economy.

We consider this support a national duty and a message to future generations on the importance of preserving our unique heritage and ensuring it occupies the global stature it truly deserves.

The National Bank of Egypt affirms that its partnership with the Grand Egyptian Museum reflects its ongoing national role in supporting projects that embody Egypt's civilizational leadership and strengthen its position as a global cultural destination. ●





A Word From

# OMAR TANTAWY

General Manager of  
**Marriott Mena House, Cairo Hotel**



**F**or more than a century, Marriott Mena House, Cairo Hotel has stood as the crossroads of Egypt's extraordinary past and vibrant present.

Nestled at the foot of the great Pyramids of Giza, our hotel occupies one of the most iconic locations in the world—where history, culture and breathtaking scenery meet in perfect harmony.

With the recent opening of the GEM, as the world's largest archaeological museum, cultural tourism is being redefined offering a deeply immersive experience for travelers passionate about history, art, and archaeology.

The increased visitation will benefit the entire hospitality industry, especially properties like ours that are ideally located. We expect a surge in demand for high-quality accommodations, as well as an uplift in local restaurants, tour operators, and cultural sites.

This cultural renaissance will be supported by infrastructure enhancements, improved transportation, modernized public spaces, and expanded services, elevating the visitor experience. Additionally, the GEM's innovative approach, using advanced technology and immersive exhibits, will bring ancient history to life in ways never seen before.

At the Marriott Mena House, we have taken great care to preserve the soul of this historic landmark while embracing the conveniences of modern hospitality. We have maintained key architectural elements that reflect our storied past, ensuring our guests feel the essence of history once they arrive.

The Marriott Mena House Cairo Hotel has long been the destination of choice for those inspired to walk in the footsteps of kings, presidents, and pharaohs. Nestled within 40 acres of lush gardens and offering breathtaking views of the Pyramids, the Royal Lodge has captivated travelers for over 150 years.

The hotel's 331 elegantly appointed rooms and suites, four distinctive

restaurants and lounges, and versatile indoor and outdoor event spaces embody a remarkable fusion of ancient heritage and 21st-century innovation.

Our identity is deeply rooted in the legacy of the historic Mena House Hotel, complemented by the refined standards of Marriott International. This unique blend offers guests a one-of-a-kind experience where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury.

The exciting new era of tourism will further elevate the guest experience, reinforcing Egypt's cultural significance on the world stage and enriching the journeys of our international guests. ●



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## EGYPTAIR'S ROLE IN EGYPT'S TOURISM RENAISSANCE

# HIGH ALTITUDE AMBITIONS

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
EGYPTAIR HOLDING COMPANY CEO  
CAPTAIN AHMED ADEL

INTERVIEW BY: AMR SELIM  
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**T**ourism is the key driver of Egypt's recent growth, with a powerful surge touching nearly every sector of the nation. The influx of millions of visitors exploring its ancient heritage, vibrant cities, and coastal escapes has created an unprecedented demand for stronger infrastructure, modernized services, and globally competitive standards. Among the pillars rising to meet this challenge is EgyptAir, the national carrier and a longstanding symbol of the country's identity, connectivity, and ambition. Leading this transformation is Captain Ahmed Adel, the CEO of EgyptAir holding company. With an extensive background in aviation management and a career spanning decades within the sector, he is uniquely positioned to guide the airline into its next era. His position at the helm of the nation's flagship carrier provides him with unparalleled insight into the realities of increased tourism, the pressures and opportunities it brings, and how EgyptAir is evolving to serve a rapidly expanding global audience.

The unprecedented boom in Egypt's tourism sector has placed EgyptAir at the centre of a national transformation, demanding rapid expansion, modernization, and infrastructural resilience. When asked how EgyptAir is gearing towards that, Captain Ahmed explained, "The developments happening across Egypt are a benefit to us as a large company, but they also put pressure on us to grow, to expand, and to match this momentum. Tourism numbers are at historic levels, and EgyptAir has embarked on one of the biggest development plans in its history to meet this challenge," he explains. "We are expecting the arrival of 24 to 26 new aircraft in 2026 and 2027, reaching a total of 34 new planes by 2030. We're

also renewing and refurbishing 19 narrow-body aircraft interiors, adding two wide-body planes, and implementing major upgrades across our catering, ground handling, and repair services." EgyptAir is not simply reacting to the tourism wave but positioning itself as one of its primary engines, expanding fleet capacity, modernizing passenger experience, and strengthening every supporting branch of its operations. In his view, the pressure is required and welcome. The airline's role

extends beyond transport; it is an essential arm of the nation tasked with securing both short-term needs and long-term strategic readiness.

Rumours circulating on social media suggested that EgyptAir had cancelled its new aircraft orders, raising public concern at a time when the airline is undergoing major expansion. Clarifying the subject, Captain Ahmed stated, "To clarify, the purchase has already been completed; we are not in the process







of buying; the deal is done,” he said firmly. “We are currently in the EIS phase, entry into service, and starting January 2026, we will receive five Airbus A350-900 aircraft, which are top of the line. After 37 years as a pilot, I can tell you Airbus technology is state-of-the-art. In 2026, we’ll also add eight Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, which are among Boeing’s most innovative models. From 2026 to 2030, new planes will arrive every year alongside a full refurbishment of existing cabins, from planes we already have in service” Despite the rumours, the reality is the opposite. EgyptAir is moving ahead with one of the most extensive fleet upgrades in its history, a plan aimed at meeting rising demand and delivering a more modern passenger experience.

Technical challenges are inevitable in modern aviation, but EgyptAir’s

response to Airbus’s recent system issue offers a revealing look at how the company handles crises. Recounting the situation, Captain Ahmed said, “In developing an aircraft, the level of technology and sophistication means issues can arise,” Captain Ahmed explained. “When this happened with a plane in Mexico, an issue no one had ever seen before, Airbus acted with full transparency. Within hours, they halted all aircraft of that model until it was resolved. We immediately prepared on our side, got to work at 7 am Saturday, identified our 15 affected planes with our team of expert aircraft servicemen, and coordinated with Airbus. Once the directive dropped, each aircraft was serviced in three hours. Our teams work 24/7, 365 days a year, and the process ran without disturbance.” Speaking on those involved, Captain Ahmed said, “The teams at EgyptAir

worked tirelessly, knowing they’d be the backbone of resolving the issue,” Captain Ahmed noted. “The President of Airbus in the Middle East personally coordinated with us, and our crews executed the plan seamlessly. It was remarkable to see how quickly everyone, from our maintenance teams to the broader flight community, came together to solve the problem efficiently and safely.”

As Egypt experiences a surge in tourism, passenger expectations have risen, placing greater demand on service quality across airports. Captain Ahmed emphasizes, “Our teams put in a lot of effort to ensure our services are top class globally. They’ve proven that no matter how difficult the task, EgyptAir continues to improve. Reaching the next level requires big moves and projects, and we have plans to enhance services

across all EgyptAir airports. Within the next five years, passengers will experience integrated, digitally advanced systems designed to make travel seamless and streamlined. With websites, apps, and AI integration, everything will be organized organically over time; implementing it all at once wouldn’t work.” Rather than rushing technology in, they’re building systems that grow naturally with the airline and its passengers. It’s a reminder that improvement isn’t just about flashy upgrades; it’s about planning, timing, and ensuring that every touchpoint of the passenger experience feels effortless.

Airport access and regulations vary across Egypt, shaping how airlines plan their operations. Captain Ahmed notes, “What people might not realize is that nearly all airports in Egypt, except Cairo, operate under an open-skies unilateral system. Airlines can use these airports without a bilateral agreement that has been in place for a long time to support tourism. Cairo Airport is different because of existing bilateral agreements with European companies, which require careful coordination to maintain mutual benefits.” Egypt is unique in allowing open skies, making most airports accessible, and encouraging travel. Cairo remains a carefully managed hub due to its critical role in international connections and agreements. Looking ahead, there is growing interest in developing airports such as Alamein and Sahel El Shamali into year-round destinations. Captain Ahmed explains, “This isn’t something I personally make decisions on, but the government has ambitious plans that will make us all proud as a nation. I can assure you that everyone involved has put together a plan that will be immaculate when executed.”

As Egypt’s tourism and international connectivity expand, the airline is actively identifying destinations with growing demand. When asked what the process for selecting new destinations is and where we might expect to fly soon, Captain Ahmed explains, “We fly to approximately 85 destinations around the world. We begin by selecting routes with high yield, then expand to other places showing strong or emerging demand. Opening new destinations is purely based on demand. Once we receive the new Airbus A350-900s, we plan to start flying to the West of America, Los Angeles and Chicago, which wasn’t feasible with our older planes. For Los Angeles, we’re aiming for the second term of 2026. We’re also exploring increased trips and new routes to the Far East, studying their feasibility carefully.” Fleet expansion directly enables route growth, which might be difficult with older planes due to higher maintenance costs. This ensures the airline can meet rising passenger demand while maintaining operational efficiency.

The global aviation industry has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years, from the COVID-19 pandemic to geopolitical conflicts in Europe, forcing airlines worldwide to navigate severe losses. When asked if Egyptair has resumed making a profit, Captain Ahmed confirms, “Short answer, yes. The minister mentioned in a news interview that we have made record-breaking profits, the highest the company has ever seen in either Egyptian or foreign currency. Many of these situations were unforeseen; no one could have predicted that one day every plane in the world would be grounded. Yet the industry has shown it can adapt and bounce back. With our efforts, projections, and ongoing developments, we anticipate continued growth and

expect large numbers of travellers to choose Egypt. I was at an expo in London, and people were extremely happy for us and excited by what we’re doing.” EgyptAir’s remarkable rebound isn’t just a testament to the company itself; it reflects the resilience of the entire aviation industry and the strength of the community that keeps it running.

EgyptAir’s domestic pricing strategy is highly dynamic. As Captain Ahmed Adel notes, “Ticket prices are constantly adjusted to ensure fairness; if they are too high, seats go unfilled, but if they are too low, demand overwhelms capacity. This fluid system, influenced by platforms like booking websites and apps, mirrors the flexibility seen in the hotel industry.” EgyptAir carefully tunes its pricing to match demand, maintaining a crucial balance.

Cargo shipping is another area in which EgyptAir is actively developing to meet the country’s growing trade and tourism demands. Captain Ahmed Adel explains, “We have two forms of cargo shipping, including belly cargo. When there are fewer passengers, the extra belly space helps increase revenue. We’re converting three AB 330-200s into dedicated cargo planes, and two more will follow under our new plan. There are enormous opportunities ahead, from shipping Egyptian-made products to meeting global demand, and our network is poised to grow and strengthen.” EgyptAir isn’t just thinking about passengers; they’re thinking about the movement of goods as a key part of Egypt’s economic growth. By converting planes and expanding their cargo network, they’re turning untapped potential into real revenue, while also supporting local producers and connecting Egypt to markets worldwide.





Egypt has long cultivated a unique culture of aviation, producing pilots who are recognized for their skill and dedication. When asked what makes Egyptian pilots different, Captain Ahmed Adel explained, “There is a lot of truth to it because we’re a nation that has a massive infatuation with flight. After 37 years, whenever I’m flying, it feels like I’m young, and it’s always an adventure. To reach the level of our pilots here in EgyptAir, you need to pass one of the most rigorous training programs in the world. You integrate yourself with Boeing, with Airbus, with simulators. You keep studying and testing over and over until you reach our industry level.” With a history steeped in aviation, from early pioneers to modern military and commercial achievements, Captain Ahmed Adel emphasizes that “with such a history, you can’t help but be invested in it,” reflecting the deep-rooted national passion for flight that shapes every Egyptian pilot.

Even the most experienced pilots face moments that test their skills and composure. When asked about what his most difficult moment was in the air, Captain Ahmed recalls, “Over 37 years, I’ve faced quite a few challenges, but one that stands out was in 2006 on a flight to Kuwait. I had an issue with one of the gears on that plane, and it was my first trip on it after completing training. Thankfully, my co-pilot was exceptional, and together we handled the situation efficiently.” Even for a seasoned pilot like Captain Ahmed, handling a gear issue mid-flight required seamless coordination and trust between him and his co-pilot, demonstrating that every successful operation in the sky relies as much on collaboration as it does on individual skill. ●

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A Word From

## MOTEIA ISMAIL

Chairman of  
**Concorde El Salam Hotels**

*The Grand Egyptian Museum  
Repositions Egypt at the  
Forefront of Global Tourism*



**E**gypt celebrates a landmark moment with the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum, the world's largest cultural and archaeological complex. This exceptional project reflects the brilliance of ancient Egyptian civilization and the ingenuity of modern Egyptian engineering, bringing together over 100,000 artifacts, including the complete Tutankhamun collection, in a spectacular architectural masterpiece.

Moteia Ismail, Chairman of Concorde Hotels, described the museum as a national achievement that symbolizes the determination and creativity of the Egyptian people. He emphasized that the opening marks a new chapter in Egypt's cultural legacy and strengthens its position as a leading global tourism destination.

Ismail noted that the museum's inauguration is expected to significantly boost international tourism flow to Egypt, attracting millions of visitors eager to explore its unique design and extraordinary archaeological treasures. This surge is also anticipated to increase hotel occupancy, expand flight routes, and enhance Egypt's foreign currency revenues.

He added that the opening comes in parallel with extensive development of Egypt's infrastructure, including roads, airports, and transportation networks, ensuring that the country presents this global event at the highest international standards. The Grand Egyptian Museum, he affirmed, reflects the modern image of Egypt—dynamic, competitive, and fully capable of leading in the fields of culture, tourism, and sustainable development. ●





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The Sheraton Cairo stands at a pivotal point, balancing its heritage with the demands of the modern traveler. As General Manager **Mohamed Farouk** explains, “Sheraton Cairo is truly an iconic landmark—a living part of the city's history. In this exciting new era for tourism, our mission was simple: honor that historical glory while integrating every modern comfort. The result is a seamless, vibrant fusion. This dedication ensures that guests who explore the wonders of Egypt can then return to a distinctly new Sheraton—welcoming, modern, and utterly sophisticated.”



For Business travelers, Sheraton Cairo Hotel and Casino redefined business elegance with Skylight, the exclusive collection of meeting spaces located in the North Tower on the 23rd floor, offering breathtaking Nile views and the latest in meeting technology and design.

The Sheraton Cairo Hotel & Casino remains an iconic fixture on the Nile, with a dining and nightlife scene that perfectly bridges Cairo's heritage with contemporary global trends. The hotel is a destination for gourmands and socializers, boasting diverse venues: **Giannini's** offers upscale Italian elegance, while **El Mawardia** immerses guests in traditional Egyptian fusion. For a modern perspective, **Botanica25** provides a 360-degree Nile view and innovative, botanical-focused cocktails. Completing the array are **Sapporo** for vibrant Japanese cuisine and **Rawi Restaurant**, which revives local traditions for all-day dining before transitioning into a lively night spot.

***The Sheraton Cairo is not just a witness to history—it is continuously shaping the standard for timeless hospitality. ●***

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WALK WITH TAREK

# OLD CAIRO SEEN DIFFERENTLY

A WALK WITH DR. TAREK EL-GINDY  
ACROSS THE VERY ESSENCE OF EGYPT

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY: MOHAMED FATHI  
WRITTEN BY: MAHMOUD EL DEMERDASH  
VIDEO EDITOR: MOHAMED AHMED



**W**hen people think of Egyptian antiquity, they often imagine artifacts or monumental relics left by the ancestors of today's Egyptians. But Egypt's cities, being so ancient, are themselves living museums, littered with historical sites from countless eras.

Take Cairo, for example. Founded as the city of Fustat in 621 AD, it has been developed and reshaped by each major historical period. Layer upon layer, each generation that called it home added to the city's character, making it a capital and epicentre for whatever was important at the time. Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Golden Age, Enlightenment, and Modern Era influences all blend together, often unnoticed by the average passerby. This is the Cairo Dr. Tarek El-Gindy, a prominent Egyptian construction engineer and businessman with a diverse portfolio of endeavours, walks through.

One of his favourite pastimes is wandering through Cairo. On the surface, these walks lead him to hidden historical corners, places unnoticed by the casual passerby, known only to locals or dedicated historians. But beneath that, his walks serve a deeper purpose; a cathartic journey into the very fabric of the Egyptian experience. The people, the sounds, the sights, the smells, the stories, every interaction, every echo of the past and pulse of the present reveal another layer of what Egypt truly is.

He walked so often, and with such quiet passion, that many of his friends, Egyptian and foreign alike, soon found themselves following in his footsteps. Thus, was born "Walk with Tarek", a group chat created by fellow walkers, to organize and ritualize this weekly event to satiate the appetite of the curious of mind.

We at He Magazine were invited to join one of these walks to experience the event firsthand and deepen our appreciation for the city we call home.

## The Start

The event began promptly at 10:45 AM with a text message, gathering participants at the civilian tunnel in front of Al-Azhar Mosque. The group assembled in the heavy, historic air of Old Cairo, a mix of Egyptians and foreigners, many from Europe.

Regular attendees know how punctual Tarek El-Gindy is; he leads the walks with precise timing, rarely accommodating latecomers. Today, however, we were lucky: Dr. Tarek allowed a prominent Egyptian participant a few extra minutes, as he was arriving with tamaia sandwiches to fuel the walkers before the upcoming cardio session. The sandwiches were absolutely delicious, providing a much-needed boost of energy for the long walk and the historic exploration that lay ahead.



## Mosque of Abu al-Dhahab

Our first stop was right beside us: the Mosque of Abu al-Dhahab. Completed in 1774 CE, it was commissioned by Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, an Egyptian Bey and Mamluk of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, served as the main ruler of Ottoman Egypt between 1772 and 1775.

The mosque was part of a larger religious and charitable complex that included a madrasa, library, takiya (Sufi lodge), sabil (water dispensary), hod (water trough), and latrines, making it one of the last major architectural complexes of its kind built by the Mamluk Beys of Egypt.

Dr. Tarek shared the fascinating story of Muhammad Abu al-Dhahab's political manoeuvring: he betrayed his superior, Ali Bey, by siding with the Ottomans when Ali Bey attempted to assert independence and later killed him when Ali Bey tried to regain control. Dr. Tarek also pointed out interestingly, the prince built this mosque to assert the crown's authority over the clergy, incorporating a balcony that reaches up to the location where the khutba (sermon) is delivered, a bold architectural statement of power.

We continued down El Butneya, a very historic neighbourhood in the area, passing the bustling bazaar, before taking a left onto Mohammed Abdu Road into the older, more residential area. Along the way, we passed the Qaytbay Caravansary and stopped at a small but fascinating print shop: Abdelzaher's Atelier.

The significance of this place lies in its preservation of centuries-old craftsmanship. Here, notebooks are still printed using traditional methods, with each page pressed and bound by hand exactly as it was hundreds of years ago. The atelier also sells ink and vintage writing utensils, and even offers customization of notebook covers, allowing visitors to create a unique, personalized piece of Cairo's artisanal history.







### Tomb's of Prophet Benjamin & Muhammed ibn Abi Bakr

We continued deeper into the neighbourhood, taking a right into a quieter, more residential area. Dr. Tarek guided us through the narrow streets, pointing out hidden historical gems along the way. Our first remarkable stop was the tomb of Prophet Benjamin, the son of Prophet Jacob and brother of Prophet Yusuf, tucked inconspicuously among the surrounding buildings. Dr. Tarek explained that while several disputed sites claim to be his resting place, this one remains a significant and untouched historical location.



A little further down, Dr. Tarek led us to the tomb of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, the son of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. He shared the tragic history of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, who was an Arab Muslim commander and governor of Egypt, killed in 658 CE (38 AH) during the First Fitna. Dr. Tarek detailed the brutal events: when forces sent by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, led by Amr ibn al-As, seized Egypt, Muhammad was defeated, captured, and, according to early Islamic historians such as al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir, killed in a manner meant to humiliate him, with his body placed inside a dead donkey and burned.

### Tarboosh Store and the Historic Wood Workshop

Dr. Tarek guided us further and pointed out a small store we were passing by, dedicated to producing traditional tarboosh hats using historic methods and antique machines. He also showed us the significance of the shop's display of original posters from the 1920s, commemorating the Egyptian revolution against the British and featuring the face of Saad Zaghloul, who would later become Prime Minister of Egypt in 1924.



Turning right, we came across Egypt's oldest wood-cutting and processing facility, in operation since medieval times. Outside, massive logs were stacked like monuments to the craft. The patron invited us to explore freely, and walking inside felt like stepping into history. The old wooden roof looked fragile, and the sawdust-covered floor felt like walking on clouds. In the adjacent room, artisans were hard at work crafting wooden products ranging from bowls to chairs, demonstrating centuries of skill passed down through generations.

While walking through with Dr. Tarek, we came across the first Hanafya in Egypt, a historic water facility built to help people perform wudu. At the time, the king wanted to introduce this practical innovation for public use, but it faced opposition from some of the clergy, who argued that the Prophet had only performed wudu using natural running water. However, one school of thought supported the king's idea, embracing the use of such facilities. This school eventually became known as the Hanafite school of Islamic law, shaping centuries of religious practice in Egypt.



### Khan al-Khayamiya

Proceeding further, Dr. Tarek led us past an old refuelling station built by Qaid-Bey, explaining how merchants historically used it to rest and feed their camels and horses while conducting trade or staying in nearby inns.

Soon, we entered Khan al-Khayamiya, the famed street of Egyptian appliqué textile art, known for its vibrant decorative fabrics that trace their origins back to Ancient Egypt. Dr. Tarek pointed out the different designs, from intricate geometric patterns to floral motifs and traditional arabesques, each reflecting centuries of craftsmanship.

Walking through the Khan, it was impossible not to be captivated; the vivid colours, delicate stitching, and variety of wares created a visual feast. Dr. Tarek encouraged us to observe how artisans carefully balanced tradition with creativity, turning a simple textile into a living piece of Egyptian heritage.

### Bab Zuweila

We continued our walk and arrived at Bab Zuweila, one of the three remaining medieval gates of historic Fatimid Cairo and among the city's most iconic architectural landmarks. Dr. Tarek guided us around the gate, explaining its rich history and significance.

Named after the Zuweila tribe, whose members served as elite soldiers in the Fatimid army, Bab Zuweila is a fortified southern gate built in the 11th century (circa 1092 CE) during the Fatimid Caliphate. It served as a major entrance to the southern part of the walled city and remains the best preserved of Cairo's historic gates.

The gate features two distinctive twin minaret towers, which visitors can climb to enjoy panoramic views of Old Cairo. Dr. Tarek shared that historically, Bab Zuweila was a site for public ceremonies, executions, and military displays, and it also marked the route for caravans departing to Mecca for Hajj, linking the city to the broader Islamic world.







## Entering the Gates: Al-Mu‘izz Street and Surrounding Landmarks

As we passed through Bab Zuweila onto Al-Mu‘izz Street, Dr. Tarek led us along the historic thoroughfare, pointing out landmarks that often go unnoticed. On our right stood Sabil Nafisa al-Bayda, a historic public water fountain built by Nafisa al-Bayda, an influential and wealthy woman in 18th-century Ottoman Egypt. She was the wife of Ali Bey al-Kabir, the powerful Mamluk ruler who sought Egyptian independence from the Ottomans. Dr. Tarek explained that the sabil is located where she once sold sugar and other goods in the market and is admired for its Ottoman-Mamluk fusion architecture, featuring decorative marble, carved wood, and intricate mashrabiyya screens. He also shared how Nafisa corresponded with Napoleon and was later placed under house arrest to limit her influence after a regime change.

On our left stood the Sultan Al-Mu‘ayyad Sheikh Mosque, a major Mamluk-era mosque built in the early 15th century, showcasing the grandeur of Cairo’s Islamic architectural heritage.



Continuing along Al-Mu‘izz Street, Dr. Tarek guided us past numerous historic buildings, including the Shrine of Sidi Muhammad al-Baghdadi, a small but significant Sufi shrine. Dr. Tarek explained that al-Baghdadi was a respected Sufi sheikh whose title reflects a lineage or connection to Baghdad, a common practice among travelling scholars and mystics.

Our next stop was the Al-Aqmar Mosque (Jāmi‘ al-Aqmar), a Fatimid masterpiece built in 1125 CE from the tombs of ancient times by Al-Ma‘mun al-Bata’ihi, vizier of Caliph al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh. Dr. Tarek highlighted its unique façade, the first in Cairo to be aligned with the street while keeping the prayer hall oriented toward the qibla. The façade is decorated with interlaced Kufic inscriptions, rosettes, geometric patterns, and symbolic medallions representing the Fatimid Imams, including a famous round medallion above the door featuring the names Muhammad and Ali, emphasizing Shi’a Fatimid ideology. As we entered the courtyard, pigeons circled gracefully in a counter-clockwise motion, muting the sounds of the bustling street outside and creating a serene spot to pause and reflect, a moment of inner peace amidst the city’s historic vibrancy.



## The Synagogue of Moses Maimonides

Continuing our walk, Dr. Tarek led us into Cairo’s historic Jewish Quarter, an area where the gold trade still thrives, and mobile connections are often unreliable. Here, we came across the Synagogue of Moses Maimonides, currently undergoing renovations, so tourists were unable to enter.

Dr. Tarek explained that the synagogue is a historic Jewish site in Fustat, closely associated with Moses Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), the renowned medieval Jewish philosopher, legal scholar (halakhist), and physician who served under Saladin. Inside, it reportedly houses one of the oldest Torah scrolls ever found, and beneath the synagogue are said to be the living quarters where Maimonides resided during his time in Cairo.

After passing the synagogue, Dr. Tarek guided us toward the old workshop where the Kaaba’s cover was made until the mid-1900s, pointing out how this area preserves centuries of artisanal tradition.



## The Church of Haret Zuweila

Continuing our walk, taking a right, Dr. Tarek led us to the Church of Haret Zuweila, also known as the Church of the Virgin Mary in Haret Zuweila. One of the oldest and most historically significant churches in Coptic Cairo, it dates to the 8th–9th century. Between 1400 and 1520, this church even served as the residence of the Coptic Pope.

Upon entering, it was immediately clear that the church is still active and well-maintained yet not heavily visited by tourists. Dr. Tarek guided us downstairs, where we could hear the soothing sound of a running stream, part of the fountain and water system beneath the church, creating a serene atmosphere.

The church’s massive wooden roof, Dr. Tarek explained, was built to resemble Noah’s Ark, a striking feature of its architecture. Inside, a rich collection of icons adorned the walls, including depictions of the Virgin Mary, Archangel Michael, saints, and martyrs, some dating back several centuries. An upper floor is dedicated to St. George (Mar Girgis), adding to the church’s layered spiritual and historical significance.







## Mosque of Amir Baybars al-Jashankir

Nearing the end of our walk, Dr. Tarek guided us past the Mosque of Amir Baybars al-Jashankir, a historic Mamluk-era mosque built between 1306 and 1310 during the reign of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, just before Baybars briefly seized power.

Dr. Tarek explained that Baybars al-Jashankir (d. 1310) was a powerful Mamluk amir who briefly became Sultan of Egypt. His title, al-Gashankir, meaning “the taster,” reflected his palace role of ensuring the sultan’s food was safe from poison. Although he was eventually overthrown and executed, Baybars left a legacy of impressive civic and religious institutions, including this mosque, which stands as a testament to the architectural and social ambitions of Mamluk rulers.

## Ending the Walk

We concluded our journey at Bab al-Nasr (The Nasr Gate), one of Cairo’s historic city gates, built in 1087 CE during the reign of Fatimid Caliph Al-Mustansir Billah. Standing there, framed by the northern part of historic Cairo and its surrounding Fatimid monuments, we could feel the centuries of history converge around us, a defensive gateway that once welcomed traders, pilgrims, and armies alike.

As the walk came to an end, we felt invigorated, our bodies warmed by exercise and our minds enriched with stories spanning a millennium. In just three hours, we had touched the layers of Egypt’s soul, ancient, medieval, and modern, interwoven with the lives of those who shaped it. Witnessing different religions and cultures coexist in such proximity, we realized that for centuries, identity was shaped not by division, but by a shared heritage as Egyptians.

For Dr. Tarek, there is no place on Earth where walking reveals history the way it does in Egypt. Nowhere else do the streets themselves speak. It’s not just the monuments or the architecture, it’s the people, their stories, their context, and the way every corner gives you a reason to stop and listen. In Egypt, you don’t search for history. You collide with it.



One turn, an old craftsman tells you how his craft has survived for centuries. Another corner and a shopkeeper explains why the wall of his store is built from recycled stones of a forgotten structure. A passerby near Bab Zuweila casually recounts how a children’s song was created by a historical figure whose building is right next to you. A man in the Jewish Quarter tells you a rumour his grandfather heard about Maimonides writing in a basement room. These micro-stories are priceless. You can’t buy them, and you can’t script them. They are the living texture of Cairo.

Then there’s the life around you, the smell of roasted sweet potatoes, the man selling gooseberries from a wooden cart, the vendors who have set up their markets beside mosques for hundreds of years, continuing practices that started in the very eras those monuments were built.

The sounds, the scents, the warmth of strangers who tell you their history as if you’re family; this is Egypt’s magic. It is a living dialogue between the past and the present, a daily reminder that Egypt’s heritage is not locked behind museum glass. It walks beside you, speaks to you, and feeds you.

At He Magazine, we often write about identity, heritage, and the meaning of belonging, but nothing prepared us for what we felt while walking through Cairo with Dr. Tarek. We believed we understood our connection to Egypt, its history, its culture, its spirit, but that walk revealed how little we had truly grasped until we experienced it firsthand. Egypt lives. Its history breathes. And as the stories, the streets, the scents, and the centuries unfolded around us, a realization struck with overwhelming clarity: this is our inheritance, our bloodline, the soul to which we have always been anchored.

For the first time, we experienced Egypt not as an idea or a memory, but in its totality, vivid, immense, immaculate. The magnitude of the moment felt almost impossible to capture in words, too layered and too alive to be neatly contained on a page, as if the very soul of Cairo refuses to be reduced to ink.

And it wasn’t just one of us who felt this transformation; all of us at He Magazine, privileged to take that walk together, found our love for Egypt, already deep and unwavering, growing even stronger. Our appreciation didn’t simply increase; it rooted itself more deeply in our identity and reinforced why we do what we do. For us, this experience was profound; for Dr. Tarek, it was simply another Friday. ●





# SEMIRAMIS INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

A CENTURY OF HERITAGE, HOSPITALITY, AND MODERN LEADERSHIP

The former Semiramis Hotel, opened in 1907, was a renowned hotel known for its grandeur and opulent interiors including a grand staircase draped in red carpet, magnificent chandeliers, life-size ebony sculptures, and the majestic aura of Louis XVI décor. Located overlooking the Nile Corniche and situated a stone's throw away from the Egyptian Museum, the hotel had a long-standing reputation amongst both Egyptian and international elite circles. Throughout its operational period, the hotel was open exclusively in the winter season which resulted in thousands of distinguished guests including royalty, aristocrats, and diplomats who selected Semiramis Hotel as their winter retreat. During both World Wars, the hotel was occupied by the British Army due to its strategic location. The hotel served as headquarters, a hospital, a space for troops to find some comfort. It was also important for key conferences including the 1921 Cairo Conference. After World War Two, the hotel began to operate year-round and became the first hotel in Cairo to install elevators. It also opened Cairo's first European-style nightclub, a rooftop restaurant with a dance orchestra was introduced in 1946 and subsequently launched the Night & Day café in 1960. In 1974, the decision was made to demolish the hotel to replace it with a new, more modern hotel resulting in the distribution of antique furnishings,



carpets, crystals and porcelain pieces as well as other items being auctioned including a complete bedroom suite. Although it was the end of an era, the hotel rebirthed itself as Semiramis InterContinental on the same revered site, reclaiming its rightful place as a landmark of Cairo.

**Semiramis InterContinental Hotel**

An historic landmark situated on the banks of the River Nile Semiramis InterContinental Hotel has a long-standing history of being one of the most iconic hotels in Cairo known

for its hospitality and for being the city's most prominent social and conference hubs.

The hotel features elegantly appointed rooms and suites, each overlooking either the historic cityscape or the Nile, which all include minibars, tea and coffee-making facilities, international direct dialling, complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi, and six dedicated non-smoking floors. There are also four exclusive floors reserved for Club InterContinental business guests, alongside a state-of-the-art 24-hour business centre

located within the meetings destination, Pavillion Semiramis. A luxurious spa situated in the hotel perfect for enjoying relaxing treatments, a fitness centre and an outdoor swimming pool where visitors can take in views of the Nile whilst taking a dip.

The hotel's restaurants and bars offering an impressive culinary journey across Middle Eastern, Thai, Italian and international cuisines. Each restaurant consists of modern interior with authentic cultural elements and food crafted by an expert team of local and international chefs perfect for every palate. Birdcage captures the true spirit and flavours of Thailand, while Pane Vino brings the soul of Italy to life. Sushiramis introduces a fresh, contemporary concept featuring premium sushi and sashimi selections. At the historic Night & Day café, guests indulge in innovative global cuisine and live cooking stations, while Tea Garden serves as a chic social haven offering artisanal beverages and 'pâtisserie du jour'. The range of dining options has resulted in Semiramis InterContinental firmly establishing itself as one of Cairo's premier dining destinations, proudly recognized with numerous TripAdvisor accolades.

The renovated Cleopatra Ballroom is one of Egypt's largest and most versatile conference venues, and featuring state-of-the-art audiovisual technology, including a full-sized permanent stage. Three additional event spaces — Nefertiti, Babylon, and the newly renovated Teeba overlooking the Nile — offer elegant options for mid-sized celebrations and meetings. For corporate gatherings, the Semiramis Pavilion presents a modern business environment that blends contemporary design with advanced technology. To further suit the needs of its guests, the hotel has an underground parking garage and an onsite shopping arcade available, as well as 24-hour room service, laundry services, and valet parking. ●



**SAMEH SOBHY**

GENERAL MANAGER OF  
SEMIRAMIS INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

Sameh Sobhy has had a longstanding career with InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) starting in 1987 as part of the Sales and Marketing team. Subsequently he has held several senior positions including Hotel Manager, Resident Manager and Executive Assistant Manager spanning 26 years before he was promoted to the role of General Manager of Semiramis InterContinental in April 2013 making him the first Egyptian to manage the hotel ensuring the hotel maintains its high standards and esteemed reputation. Sameh has been recognized for his excellence in hotel management one of them being awarded 'Best General Manager' granted by the Minister of Tourism among five-star hotels in the Cairo Governate, an award that was tied to World Tourism Day. His tenure in this role has also seen the hotel celebrate significant achievements and recognition in the hospitality industry. His commitment to ensuring excellent standards at the hotel are continuously displayed, has led him to be a key part of the hotel's day-to-day operations ensuring guests are able to receive the best experience in one of Cairo's most historic and iconic hotels.

Semiramis InterContinental is the perfect balance between history and luxury combining state-of-the-art facilities with outstanding management resulting to deliver a premium experience for all guests. The hotel is the perfect accommodation for tourists exploring Cairo, families, events and business executives as well as visitors that enjoy dining in one of the many restaurants on site. ●



# FROM PHARAOHS TO FOREIGN LANDS **LOST** **EGYPT'S ~~STOLEN~~** **TREASURES**

WRITTEN BY: MAHMOUD DEMERDASH

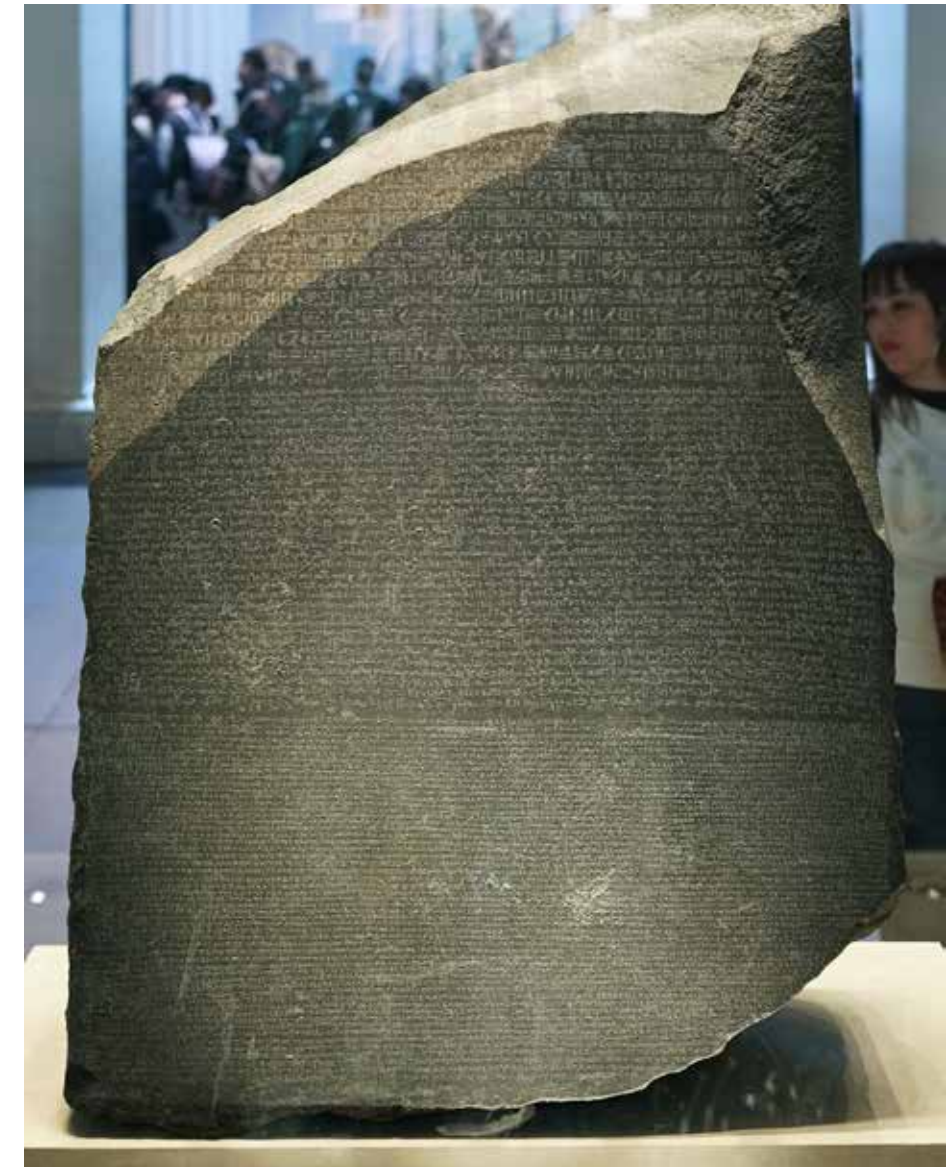
**E**gypt's history is so rich that the absence of certain artifacts might seem negligible amid its vast heritage; however, given the immense cultural and historical value of every piece of Egypt's past, their loss is deeply and unmistakably felt. For more than a century, some of the nation's greatest treasures have resided outside their homeland, displayed in European and American museums as symbols of empire rather than integral pieces of Egyptian identity. This reality is particularly poignant today, as Egypt opened the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), the largest archaeological museum on earth, to the world. The GEM has become a powerful statement of the country's readiness to reclaim its cultural narrative and celebrate its heritage on Egyptian soil. Yet, many of its most famous artifacts remain abroad, removed during colonial excavations, ceded under questionable 'agreements' or simply taken when Egypt lacked the power to resist. Their absence is not just physical; it is an emotional and potent reminder of an injustice that persists to this day from actions taken an age ago. As Egypt enters a new era of cultural restoration and national pride, the conversation around these artifacts has become more urgent than ever, raising critical questions about ownership, identity, and the long journey toward bringing Egypt's lost history back home. There are several notable items currently absent from home that stand out for their importance or sentimental value, and their absence is certainly felt.

## THE ROSETTA STONE

*Discovered in 1799*

*Taken by the British in 1801*

*Currently located at the British Museum*



Discovered in 1799 near Rashid (Rosetta) in the Nile Delta by French soldiers during Napoleon's campaign, the Rosetta Stone is a pivotal artifact in Egypt's history. Carved in 196 BCE, it features a decree inscribed in hieroglyphic, demotic, and ancient Greek, a linguistic combination that proved essential for deciphering ancient Egyptian writing. Its discovery revolutionized Egyptology, allowing scholars, particularly Jean-François Champollion in 1822, to finally understand hieroglyphics after centuries, thus granting access to thousands of years of Egyptian records and culture. In 1801, Britain seized the stone from the French under the Treaty of Alexandria and transferred it to London, where it became the most visited artifact and a centerpiece of the British Museum. Egypt has made repeated formal requests for its return, particularly in recent decades. Still, the British Museum maintains that its acquisition was legal; the legality of which is highly questionable, given that it was seized by Egypt during the French occupation and subsequently taken by the French upon their defeat by the United Kingdom and that the artifact should remain part of a 'universal collection', a stance Egypt continues to challenge.



# THE BUST OF NEFERTITI

*Discovered in 1912*

*Taken by the Germans*

*Currently located at the Neues Museum in Berlin*



One of the most famous ancient sculptures in the world, the Bust of Nefertiti, was discovered in 1912 in Amarna, the short-lived capital city established by Pharaoh Akhenaten. Unearthed by a German archaeological team led by Ludwig Borchardt, the sculpture immediately stood out for its exquisite craftsmanship, lifelike proportions, and vivid colours, features that captured the artistic nature of the Amarna Period. Representing Queen Nefertiti, one of ancient Egypt's most influential figures, the bust became an iconic symbol of the period's beauty, power, and artistic mastery. It was taken to Germany shortly after its discovery, under excavation agreements that Egypt has long argued were manipulated or misrepresented, allowing the artifact to leave the country without proper consent. Since the bust of Nefertiti was unveiled in Berlin in 1924, Egypt has repeatedly demanded its return, but Germany has consistently refused. Over the decades, Egypt has tried negotiations, exchanges, political appeals, UNESCO involvement, and even threats to ban German excavations, arguing that the bust was taken under deceptive circumstances and legally and culturally belongs to Egypt. Germany, however, maintains that its export was lawful and now claims the artifact is too fragile to move. Despite renewed campaigns and mounting evidence that the original acquisition was misleading, German authorities and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation still hold firm, leaving the bust one of the most contested artifacts in the world. Today, the bust is housed at the Neues Museum in Berlin and is one of Germany's most celebrated treasures, serving as a centerpiece of the museum's identity, despite the artifact having no direct connection to Germany itself.

# THE DENDERA ZODIAC

*Discovered in 1799*

*Taken by the French in 1821*

*Currently located at the Louvre*



The Zodiac of Dendera, a large carved stone slab displaying the constellations of the zodiac, was discovered by Vivant Denon in January 1799. During his initial visit to the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, Denon entered a small stone chapel on the roof and found the large circular planisphere, or zodiac. Although he lacked time to sketch the artifact then, he returned later that spring to create a drawing, despite the planisphere being part of the ceiling and the chapel being almost completely dark. He published his drawing in his *Voyage* in 1802. Carved during the late Greco-Roman period, the Dendera Zodiac depicts an intricate celestial map blending traditional Egyptian symbolism with Hellenistic astronomical elements. The Zodiac is considered the earliest known complete representation of the classical zodiac signs in circular form. It offers rare insight into how ancient Egyptians understood astronomy, timekeeping, and their relationship with the cosmos. In 1821, French antiquarians, supported by colonial military presence, sawed the Zodiac out of the temple ceiling and transported it to France. The removal was done without Egyptian consent, causing structural damage to the temple and sparking early controversy about artifact theft. In France, the Zodiac became a sensation. Displayed first at the Bibliothèque Nationale and later in the Louvre, it was celebrated as proof of ancient Egypt's scientific sophistication and used to elevate France's cultural prestige during the height of European Egyptomania. In 2022, Egyptologist Zahi Hawass started a petition to bring the ancient work back to Egypt, along with the Rosetta Stone and other artifacts.



# THE MANY OBELISKS

*Currently located at Rome, Paris, London, Istanbul, and New York*



Egyptian obelisks, originally honouring pharaohs and Ancient Egyptian gods, are now found worldwide in major cities like Rome, Paris, London, Istanbul, and New York. Many were taken during the Roman Empire as spoils of conquest to decorate public spaces. More recently, the Luxor Obelisk was a 19th-century “gift” from Egypt’s ruler, Muhammad Ali Pasha, to France, but the transport and negotiations were highly complex. Similarly, Cleopatra’s Needle was presented to the United Kingdom in 1819 by Muhammad Ali Pasha as a diplomatic gesture, involving costly and dangerous transportation. Today, Rome alone hosts more Egyptian obelisks than modern-day Egypt, with these structures often becoming central landmarks in their new locations, such as the Luxor Obelisk at Paris’s Place de la Concorde and London’s Cleopatra’s Needle on the Victoria Embankment. The transfer of these monumental structures has generated long-standing controversy, primarily questioning whether they were gifts, diplomatic gestures, or coercive appropriations. For instance, while figures like Muhammad Ali Pasha officially presented Cleopatra’s Needle in London and France’s Luxor Obelisk, critics argue that the asymmetry of power at the time meant Egypt received little tangible benefit and lacked genuine negotiating leverage. The transactions primarily boosted the prestige of foreign nations. The question of whether Muhammad Ali Pasha truly had the authority to ‘gift’ Egyptian obelisks to foreign countries is complex and debated. On one hand, as the de facto ruler of Egypt in the early 19th century, Ali Pasha exercised broad political and administrative power, including over state property, which could consist of monuments like the obelisks. From this perspective, he legally ‘owned’ them in the context of his governance and could make diplomatic decisions involving them. On the other hand, these obelisks were national treasures with deep historical and cultural significance, dating back thousands of years to the pharaonic era. The argument would then be that such artifacts were not the personal property of a ruler, even one as powerful as Ali Pasha, and that their removal deprived Egypt of irreplaceable heritage. In essence, while he may have had legal control at the time, the moral and cultural legitimacy of giving away such monuments is highly questionable.



## Should we reacquire? Yes.

With such an immense wealth of ancient artifacts, the question naturally arises: should Egypt reacquire what was taken? Egyptian obelisks stand today in cities across the world; Rome alone has more ancient Egyptian obelisks than Egypt itself, and countless museums rely on Egyptian treasures as the centerpieces of their collections and landmarks. Many of these items are more iconic to their host nations than anything produced by those nations’ own ancestors. The core of Egypt’s argument is straightforward. These artifacts were removed during an era of aggressive colonial expansion, when European powers carved up the world and stripped cultures of their heritage. Egypt is a unique case because its history is unmatched in global influence; its symbols, monuments, and mythology shaped modern pop culture so profoundly that the very field of Egyptology emerged, fueling the Egyptomania that enabled so much of this extraction. Today, with international law, global cooperation, and a more ethical approach to cultural property, meaningful resolutions are not only possible but overdue. These artifacts are more than antiquities, they are symbols of identity, ingenuity, and continuity. They belong among the Egyptian people, inspiring future generations just as they inspired the world. ●



# NILE CRUISES

BY MÖVENPICK HOTELS & RESORTS

## MOVENPICK SS MISR



Originally built in 1918 for the British Royal Navy, the SS Misr began its life as a propeller steam vessel serving during World War I.

After the war, the vessel was decommissioned until the 1930s, when it was acquired by King Farouk. who converted the boat into his private royal yacht turned the Misr into a lavish floating palace, blending refined European elegance with traditional Egyptian design accents.

Following the 1952 Revolution, the yacht was retired once again and remained untouched for decades.

In the early 2000s, the SS Misr was meticulously restored by a private Egyptian company. The restoration preserved the ship's historic character while introducing modern comforts suited to luxury travel.

In 2006, the iconic SS Misr returned to the Nile as a five-star heritage cruise ship offering guests an exceptional journey that combines timeless history with contemporary sophistication.

The luxurious cabins aboard the SS Misr are a blend of opulence and classic design, reflecting the grandeur of the ship's royal heritage. Each cabin is thoughtfully designed with elegant furnishings, featuring 16 cabins and 8 suites, all designed with nods to the Louis XV and XVI eras, Art Deco, and influences from British and Ottoman styles, showcasing rich fabrics and intricate details that echo the vessel's historical significance. The spacious interiors are equipped with modern amenities while retaining a timeless charm, offering guests a comfortable and indulgent experience during their Nile cruise. All cabins and Suites have a private balcony that allow for breathtaking views of the Nile, enhancing the feeling of being immersed in the majestic landscape. The ship's overall design is a nod to its past, combining traditional Egyptian aesthetics with contemporary luxury.

SS Misr is a highlight, offers a diverse menu of culinary delights, including both local and international dishes, served in an elegant setting.

Some of the world's most notable individuals have been on board the SS Misr. From the days when the steam ship was kept for the private use of the Egyptian royal family to the present, Misr continues to charm internationally renowned figures:

*Mövenpick Nile cruise ships send you on a fascinating journey on one of the world's most famous and beautiful rivers. The Nile, the true gem of Egypt represents a true source of life, fertility and wealth of the ancient world and today. Cruise the Nile and explore the mysteries of 7,000 years of ancient Egyptian history.*



- Sir John Major: the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- Sir. Thomas Legg: a lawyer and was a high-ranking civil servant and member of the Queens Counsel

***The boat operates between Luxor and Aswan according to the following program:***

- Monday for 04 nights Luxor/Aswan
- Friday for 03 nights Aswan/Luxor

***All cabins and suites feature:***

- A private balcony overlooking the breathtaking view of the Nile
- A private bathroom with a bathtub.
- Air-conditioning.
- Hair dryer.
- Coffee Tray, Tea facilities and Espresso machines.
- Mini bar.
- LED TV 32-inch Satellite Marine.
- Internal telephone.
- Free Wi-Fi.
- Safe deposit box that can fit to Laptop.
- 2 life jackets.
- Personalized scent for the boat.

Through our sustainability initiatives and eco-conscious operations, we have replaced single-use plastic items with eco-friendly alternatives and feature Mövenpick sustainability wet amenities.

## MOVENPICK MS HAMEES



Mövenpick MS Hamees Nile Cruise is recognized as one of the largest and most luxurious vessels navigating the Nile. Known for its modern elegance, this five-star cruise ship is designed to provide an exceptional experience for guests

MS Hamees offers 66 spacious and elegantly designed cabins and suites, measuring from 21 to 40 square meters. Each unit is equipped with large French window offering a balcony-like experience.

Dining aboard the Mövenpick MS Hamees is a culinary journey in itself. The ship offers diverse buffets featuring a wide array of cuisines. The Mövenpick MS Hamees is dedicated to sustainable practices, the cruise has replaced all plastic amenities in cabins, kitchens, and lounge bars with environmentally friendly alternatives.

## MOVENPICK MS DARAKUM



The Mövenpick MS Darakum is one of the most luxurious cruise ships on the Nile, offering a unique blend of modern comfort and oriental design. Known for its Moroccan-inspired décor and spacious interiors, the ship provides a rich cultural experience while cruising the historic waters of the Nile.

The Mövenpick MS Darakum is the one and only branded Five Stars Super Deluxe Nile cruise operating the super long cruise program Aswan – Cairo with guaranteed sailing dates for the year, from Mid-February to Mid-November, it offers an unforgettable journey while cruising through 7,000 years of history and as the water goes down from Mid-November to Mid-February, the boat operates short cruise between Luxor and Aswan.

The boat offers 52 air-conditioned, spacious, and uniquely designed cabins and Suites. One of the standout features of the MS Darakum is its three spacious, yacht-style sundeck levels. Thoughtfully designed to reflect the elegance and openness of a luxury yacht, these decks offer ample space for guests to relax, enjoy the pool area, and take in the breathtaking panoramic views of the Nile.

The ship offers diverse buffets featuring a wide array of cuisines.

***The boat operates between Luxor and Aswan according to the following program:***

- Monday for 04 nights Luxor/Aswan
- Friday for 03 nights Aswan/Luxor

***All cabins and suites feature:***

- A private bathroom with a bathtub.
- Air-conditioning.
- Hair dryer.
- Coffee Tray, Tea facilities, and Espresso machines.
- Mini bar.
- LED TV 43-inch Satellite Marine.
- Internal telephone.
- Free Wi-Fi.
- Safe deposit box that can fit to Laptop.
- 2 life jackets.
- Personalized scent for the boat.

***The boat operates Short cruise between Luxor and Aswan as follows:***

- Monday for 04 nights Luxor/Aswan
- Friday for 03 nights Aswan/Luxor

***All cabins and suites feature:***

- Large Panoramic Window that can be partially opened.
- A private bathroom with a bathtub.
- Air-conditioning.
- Hair dryer.
- Coffee Tray, Tea facilities and Espresso machines.
- Mini bar.
- LED TV 43-inch Satellite Marine.
- Internal telephone.
- Free Wi-Fi.
- Safe deposit box that can fit to Laptop.
- 2 life jackets.
- Personalized scent for the boat.

As part of our commitment to sustainable practices, the cruise has replaced all plastic amenities in cabins, kitchens, and lounge bars with environmentally friendly alternatives.



MOVENPICK MS SUNRAY



The Mövenpick MS Sunray Nile Cruise stands as the only branded 5-star deluxe boat operating Thursday departures from Luxor and Monday departures from Aswan. Featuring a grand façade entrance and a high-ceiling lobby, the cruise blends traditional elegance with contemporary sophistication. With stylish interiors and spacious public areas.

MS Sunray features 62 beautifully designed, air-conditioned cabins and suites. Each unit is designed for comfort and relaxation, equipped with large panoramic window that partially open.

Dining on the Mövenpick MS Sunray is a treat for the senses. Guests can savor a diverse range of cuisines, served in buffet style, set menus, or under the stars at barbecues.

The Mövenpick MS Sunray is dedicated to sustainable practices. The cruise has replaced all plastic amenities in cabins, kitchens, and lounge bars with environmentally friendly alternatives.

MOVENPICK SB FEDDYA



SB Feddy is the one and only boutique branded international chain Dahabiya with Four Suites on the river Nile, making it the best choice for a family or group charter.

It is the closest experience to having your own private yacht.

The Movenpick SB Feddy is a boutique sailboat sailing the river Nile between Luxor and Aswan, offering fantastic shore excursions to explore the ancient Egyptian wonders.

The Four Suites are either with Private Panoramic Balcony or Private Patio.

The only which can sail with only one client and possibility to fix date upon request based on availability.

The only Dahabiya sails from and to Luxor not Esna, also the only provided on All-Inclusive basis.

*The boat operates between Luxor and Aswan according to the following program:*

- Thursday for 04 nights Luxor/Aswan
- Monday for 03 nights Aswan/Luxor

*All cabins and suites feature:*

- A private bathroom with a bathtub.
- Air-conditioning.
- Hair dryer.
- Coffee Tray, Tea facilities, and Espresso machines.
- Mini bar.
- LED TV 43-inch Satellite Marine.
- Internal telephone.
- Free Wi-Fi.
- Safe deposit box that can fit to Laptop.
- 2 life jackets.
- Personalized scent for the boat.

Each Suite with different color scheme and design either with Balcony or Patio .

All Suites have private bathroom with Showers, mini bar, hair dryer, LED TV with Marine Satellite, a safe deposit box that can fit to Laptop and Free Internet WIFI

The cruise is committed to sustainability, having replaced all plastic amenities with eco-friendly alternatives to reduce environmental impact, featuring Mövenpick Sustainable Wet Amenities.

Possibility to operate super long cruises

**Program:** SB Feddy offers a tailor-made program according to the clients request and availability and operates from 04 up to 07 nights Luxor/Aswan or Vice Versa.

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# TOP 5 DESTINATIONS IN EGYPT

## BEYOND HISTORY

WRITTEN BY: MAHMOUD DEMERDASH



**M**uch of this issue focuses on historical tourism, from the New Museum and the Old Museum to Nile Cruise tours and walking through the layered streets of Cairo. Egypt's ancient past is, without question, one of its greatest treasures.

However, Egypt offers much more than just history, especially for travellers who aren't primarily interested in the subject or are looking to balance culture with relaxation, adventure, and modern experiences. From bustling urban centres to serene desert escapes and vibrant coastal spots, the country presents a diverse range of destinations that surprise even seasoned visitors.

Here are the top five destinations in Egypt that showcase the country beyond its iconic monuments.



## CAIRO

Cairo is a city of remarkable contrast, where the ancient world, daily life, and modern creativity interweave seamlessly. It is a destination that rewards in-depth exploration, offering visitors a unique blend of history, vibrant culture, and contemporary experiences. At its core are the Pyramids of Giza, which remain among the world's most extraordinary and iconic sights. Today, the visitor experience is elevated beyond simple viewing, with cafés and rooftop lounges offering unparalleled views of these historic wonders over breakfast, coffee, or sunset drinks.

Beyond Giza, Cairo invites visitors to discover its diverse neighbourhoods and unique rhythms. A traditional felucca ride on the Nile offers a tranquil escape from the city's energy, while exploring districts such as Zamalek, Downtown, and Maadi reveals thriving art galleries, distinctive boutiques, and a dynamic dining culture. Cairo's markets are a vibrant sensory experience of colour, sound, and movement, where narrow alleys, handcrafted goods, aromatic spices, and daily life blend seamlessly to reveal the city's true spirit. At the heart of it all lies Khan El Khalili, Cairo's most iconic market, a centuries-old labyrinth of winding streets where gold merchants, traditional crafts, spice stalls, and historic cafés keep the city's trading heritage alive. Cairo's café scene is integral to its identity, ranging from historic literary establishments to sleek, modern speciality coffee houses that reflect the city's evolving lifestyle. For those seeking cultural enrichment, live music venues, theatres, and contemporary art spaces offer deep insights into Egypt's creative pulse.





*Nile Cruises photos courtesy of Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts*

## UPPER EGYPT

Upper Egypt offers a slower, more soulful journey through the country's timeless heart, where life intimately follows the rhythm of the Nile. Stretching from Luxor to Aswan, the region is defined by its fertile riverbanks, traditional villages, and largely untouched landscapes. Here, majestic temple silhouettes rise quietly above palm-lined shores, while graceful feluccas glide past vibrant fields and ancient sandstone cliffs. Upper Egypt is best experienced unhurriedly through peaceful Nile cruises, immersive village visits, and quiet moments observing daily life along the river. Nowhere is this deep sense of identity more evident than in the Nubian villages of Aswan, where brightly painted homes, distinctive architecture, unique music, and rich customs reflect a culture unlike any other in Egypt. Visiting a Nubian village offers an intimate glimpse into a cherished heritage shaped by the river, blending incredibly warm hospitality with bold colours and deep-rooted traditions. More than just a destination, it is an atmosphere that offers travellers a profound connection to Egypt's enduring culture, traditions, and deep sense of place.



## NILE CRUISES

Nile cruises offer one of the most immersive ways to experience Egypt, carrying travellers through the country's heart as the river's scenery unfolds at a gentle pace. Sailing between Luxor and Aswan, the journey blends comfort with discovery, passing ancient temples, traditional villages, and lush riverbanks that reflect life along the Nile. In Luxor, the experience reaches new heights with sunrise hot-air balloon rides, where temples and fields are revealed in golden light. Further south in Aswan, the cruise is complemented by vibrant spice and perfume markets, where colourful stalls and rich aromas capture the city's Nubian influence. More than just a journey between destinations, a Nile cruise is a seamless blend of adventure, culture, and calm.







# SIWA AND THE WHITE DESERT

Siwa and the White Desert offer a strikingly different side of Egypt, far from the bustling cities and Nile shores. Siwa Oasis, nestled near the western border, is a haven of palm groves, freshwater springs, and traditional Berber culture, where visitors can explore ancient ruins, salt lakes, and mud-brick villages. Just beyond, the White Desert presents an otherworldly landscape of chalk formations sculpted by wind and sand into surreal shapes, creating a natural gallery under vast, open skies. Together, Siwa and the White Desert offer an unforgettable escape into Egypt's desert beauty, tranquillity, and timeless wonder.



# RED SEA RIVIERA

The Red Sea Riviera, Egypt's premier coastal destination, offers an enticing mix of sun, stunning seas, and exhilarating adventures. This eastern stretch of coast is celebrated globally for its sparkling turquoise waters and immaculate sandy shores. A mecca for divers and snorkelers, the region boasts world-class coral reefs that explode with diverse and colourful marine life, offering an unparalleled underwater experience. Upscale resorts spanning from Hurghada down to Marsa Alam cater to every preference, providing everything from luxurious tranquillity to adrenaline-pumping water sports. Beyond the beach, nearby desert safaris and excursions provide an exciting contrast. Blending breathtaking natural beauty with genuine, warm hospitality and a wide range of activities, the Red Sea Riviera stands out as one of Egypt's most popular and versatile travel destinations.

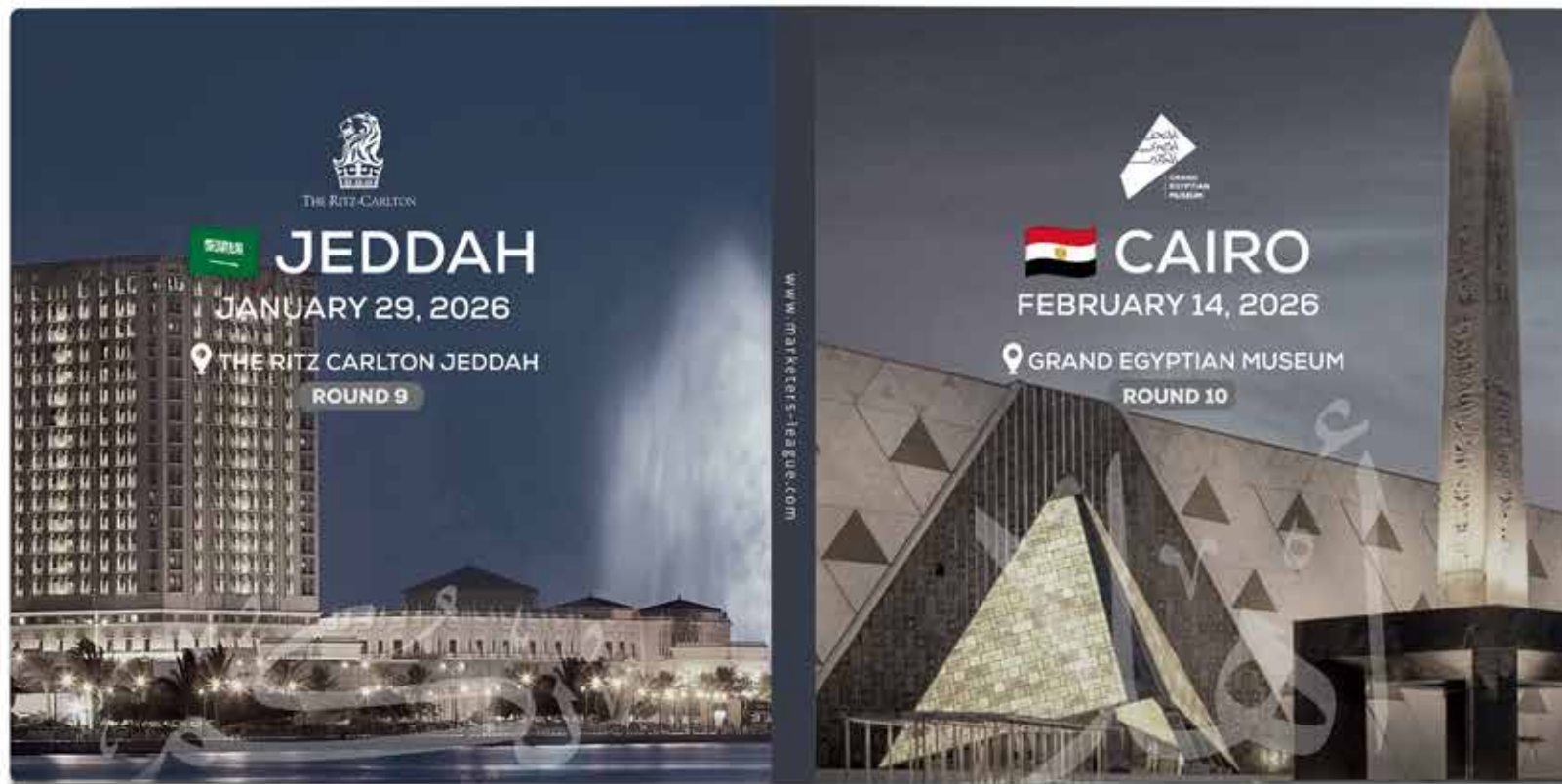






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# DESIGNING LEGACY

## THE STORY OF **SARIDAH**



### **SUNNY AL NOAMANY** ON TURNING EGYPTIAN HISTORY INTO LIVING ART

WRITTEN BY: SABAH AWAN

**S**aridah – stemming from the Arabic term *al-sard* meaning narration or storytelling is an art and design brand that redefines cultural design in Egypt by combining art with Egypt’s rich history. From the love story of King Ramses II and Queen Nefertari to The Mamluks, Saridah incorporates centuries old stories into beautiful products ranging from tableware and linens to games, each bringing history to life from an artistic perspective. In this interview, the founder Sanaa Al Noamany shares the stories behind the brand, the inspiration drawn from Egypt’s past, and the mission to bring heritage into everyday living.

#### **Could you please tell me a little about yourself. What is your background?**

Yes of course! I am a wife and mother to two beautiful daughters, and my family are my biggest inspiration behind starting Saridah. As a proud Egyptian woman, I have always felt it is important for my daughters to know their roots and be proud of their heritage which inspired me to start this brand. I have a bachelor’s degree in arts and integrated marketing as well as a minor in business and I have also achieved an MBA From Edinburgh Business School. I have always had an interest in art from a young age where I was always involved in various art competitions throughout my time in school, which has led my daughter to also develop an interest in art.

#### **What inspired you to start Saridah?**

My husband really wanted our daughter to have some passion for history, and I was also very concerned with my daughter honouring her identity as an Egyptian. These concerns led to me coming up with the idea of incorporating my daughter’s love of art, my creative flair and mine and my husband’s love of history to come up with Saridah. I started off by using paper instead of a placemat when having meals with my daughter where we would draw and talk about basic motifs. I first introduced her to the Ankh which we used to talk about and practice drawing on the placemat, we then moved onto Ain Horus – The Eye of Horus before talking about Bastet (or Bast), the ancient Egyptian goddess that represented protection, fertility and home life. Two years later when we visited the Pharaonic Village, I pointed out a cat to my daughter, and she corrected me and named the cat as Bast. I was very impressed

that she remembered the name after two years of drawing the Pharaonic cat and this led me to realise it is an excellent technique for learning for young children and I wanted to share this idea with others. Once I created some basic items, I visited a couple of bazaars where I sold my collection, and I had received excellent feedback on my products which led me to formalising the company before expanding my collection.

#### **How has your husband Tarek El Gindy’s interest in historic Cairo inspired your products?**

My husband has always had an interest in collecting rare books and looking after them to the point where he does not like his collection to be touched, so that they do not become damaged. This also links to his deep interest in history as well as Egyptology where not only does he attend excavations, but he also goes on weekly walks around Islamic Cairo where he makes new discoveries. He then comes home and is keen to share them with our children, and after hearing the stories I was interested in documenting them so that others can also learn about these discoveries but in a fun way. Sometimes I even take his photos and use them as inspiration for my drawings where I can incorporate an old heritage pattern and make it appealing for future generations retelling history with a contemporary touch.

#### **What is Saridah’s mission, and how has it evolved since the beginning?**

Saridah’s mission is to make history appealing for future generations and to educate all Egyptian homes with the basic understanding of motifs of different eras of Egypt. We focus on tackling history from the artistic side where we narrate stories about lifestyle, myths, beliefs and how they





contributed to art as we believe art is a dialogue that narrates key parts of history. Each piece has its own narrative, capturing our customers' interest and appealing to every generation.

### What recent projects or achievements are you most proud of?

I am proud of everything but the thing I am most proud of is the range of products that I have created as I am not tied to one specific category. I am also proud that I am able to help women not only decorate their homes but also educate their families. I am trying to make her house fun with the tumblers and games; I am trying to make her house elegant with the collections of linens and tableware for example the Ancient Egypt's Good Luck symbols placemat which was my first item that I released as part of my collection. I am also decorating her house and offering her house items that pique the interest of her guests such as the



King Ramses II backgammon which has a hand drawn pattern that has been handcrafted with an elegant, embroidered bag to go with it. I feel proud that I am moving along with the mother in every aspect of her home.

### What major milestones has Saridah reached since its launch?

I think for me the acceptance of the idea and the products is the biggest milestone I have reached, to think that an idea I had in my mind has been accepted by my customers has made me proud. Also, in a short period of time I have been recognised by a reputable newspaper Al Masry Al Youm where the article of my business was featured on the front page and I was also interviewed on a well-known programme known as 4 Sharia Sherif. I am also pleased to have my business featured in He Magazine which is also another major milestone as it is a magazine that has been in the market for over 25 years. I am also excited that my products are being featured in the gift shop at the Grand Egyptian Museum which I am hoping will be seen by visitors to the museum and can strengthen the reputation of my business.

### Are there any social, environmental, or cultural initiatives you're involved in?

As part of Saridah's mission, we have made sure we offer labour opportunities as part of our production process to various NGOs to ensure those that are less fortunate are given employment opportunities. We have previously worked with a breast cancer initiative where we were involved in spreading awareness and gathering cashback on our orders and we also made sure we donated to the cause.

*Saridah's products can be purchased at the gift shop at the Grand Egyptian Museum as well as various stores located in Egypt and online at [www.saridah.com](http://www.saridah.com)*

### What do you hope people feel when they bring a Saridah piece into their home?

I want the mothers to be proud of our products and for them to show their guests, not just store them away in a cupboard. I would be very happy if someone told me they are putting my backgammon set on their coffee table in the living room so that it can become a part of their daily life and they can share the product and its story with their guests. I also want to give mothers the opportunity to use my products to teach their families about Egypt's history, the very thing that inspired me to start this art and design brand.

### What are some of the stories behind some of your collections?

Our latest collection is based around the love story between Ramses II and Queen Nefertari which is an unusual love story as we do not hear love stories between Ancient Egyptian kings and queens very often. She was important to him as she shared his rule, and he treated her like a companion equally deserving of respect. She held the title "lady of two lands" which was a title typically given to kings not queens which shows evidence of his love for her. There are also affectionate inscriptions dedicated to her which are engraved in her temple – the Small Temple of Abu Simbel, one such statement is "the one for whom the sun shines". He also referred to her as "the lady of grace" which is another inscription found in her temple. The inspiration behind this collection links to the Grand Egyptian Museum where there is a statue of Ramses II that is one of the iconic pieces at the museum and our brand tells his story in a non-traditional way. ●

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# A PERFECT DAY TRIP FROM CAIRO

## EXPLORING THE WONDERS OF FAYOUM

WRITTEN BY: SABAH AWAN



**A**fter exploring the busy streets of downtown Cairo filled with merchants calling or marvelling at the spectacular Pyramids of Giza, every visit to the Egyptian capital should include a day trip to Fayoum. A short two-hour drive away from ancient history, bazaars and museums lies a quiet, serene oasis filled with lakes, waterfalls and sand dunes. A breath of fresh air located around 100km southwest of Cairo lies Fayoum, considered to be one of Egypt's oldest and largest natural oases where you can enjoy memorable activities such as sandboarding down the dunes and horse riding around lakes as well as creating your own masterpieces in one of the many pottery workshops available.

Fayoum has a rich history as a major agricultural centre during the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000-1700 BCE) where it was developed through large-scale irrigation projects overlooked by Pharaohs Senusret I and Senusret II transforming it from a semi-desert basin to a lush agricultural oasis. This was largely completed through the development of The Bahr Youssef Canal which has supported the growth of crops such as wheat, barley, rice and sugar cane for over 3000 years. These

projects supported large-scale agriculture ensuring the growing population was able to be fed as well as stabilizing the kingdom. Artifacts and statues from this significant period of Fayoum's development in irrigation and agriculture can be found in the Grand Egyptian Museum's Middle Kingdom galleries including statues of Senusret I made of limestone as well as the sarcophagus of Senusret I.

Although Fayoum's history stretches back to Pharaonic times, there were numerous periods that followed including the Greek (Ptolemaic) era which resulted in several Greek settlers inhabiting the region, around this time the famous Fayoum Mummy Portraits were created. These portraits were discovered in burial sites around Fayoum and are now displayed at the Grand Egyptian Museum. The Greek era was followed by the Roman rule which was then followed by the Islamic conquest leading to the development of mosques, markets and villages. Today, in the modern era, Fayoum is a mix of natural beauty, historic sites as well as arts and culture which makes it the perfect place to visit for those looking for a quick getaway from Cairo.

### The Heartbeat of Egypt's Oldest Oasis

Built around ancient water canals, Fayoum City Centre which is the capital of the Fayoum Governorate boasts numerous waterwheels dating back to ancient Egyptian times that are powered by the flow of water within the canals located throughout the city, with The Bahr Youssef Canal being the largest connecting the Nile River to the Fayoum Oasis. Following a short stroll, another popular attraction to visit is The Hanging Mosque, also known as El-Masjid El-Moa'allaq which was built above street level during the Ottoman period and is the perfect place to visit to enjoy some peace away from the busy streets below, especially during prayer times where the atmosphere becomes calm and reflective. With its beautiful architecture, intricate wood ceiling and carved doors, it is the perfect spot for photography enthusiasts to take the picture-perfect shot during sunset. Qaitbay Mosque built in the 15th century is also a popular tourist attraction for visitors and it remains an active place of worship nestled between shops and local homes. For the history buffs, The Obelisk of Senusret I also known as the Abgig Obelisk built nearly 4,000 years ago is located within a small park in Fayoum City and it is also free to visit. It is a must see for those interested in Egypt's Pharaonic past.

### Desert Waterfalls and Tranquil Lakes

Wadi Al Rayan is a protected area covering 1759 square kilometres of open desert, a popular tourist destination which involves driving through a barren desert to reach a hub of waterfalls, vendors and activities such as camel riding. Wadi al Rayan is home to one of Egypt's natural waterfalls, although man-made the waterfalls formed naturally overtime creating a peaceful landscape overlooking the beautiful Lake El Rayan, a stunning lake spanning 113km with waters that glisten under the sun. For the thrill seekers, you can enjoy an adrenaline-fuelled safari adventure driving up and down the sand dunes in a 4x4 vehicle followed by a chance to sandboard, ending the



Camels in Wadi Al Rayan at sunset

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expedition with a trip to the Magic Lake with its gleaming waters that change colour depending on the sunlight reacting with the minerals found in the water. The avid bird enthusiasts can also spot species such as the Pharaoh eagle-owl which is a species of owl native to the Middle East and North Africa, a nocturnal owl which uses its hearing and night vision to detect prey in total darkness. For travellers that prefer to relax, you can enjoy a camel or horse ride or a picnic located near the waterfalls as well as a browse around the various market stalls selling goods that make perfect souvenirs to commemorate your trip.

### Step Back in Time Amongst Ancient Giants

Wadi Al Hitan is a UNESCO World Heritage site located around 35km from Wadi Al Rayan, containing fossilised remains of early whales that lived around 40-42 million years ago. Considered to be one of the world's most important fossil sites demonstrating the evolution of whales from land animals to ocean dwellers, it is an excellent place to visit for those interested in palaeontology or environmental science. Here you can explore the outdoor museum of ancient whale fossils as well as the Fossil and Climate Change Museum, a museum designed to raise awareness of the effects of climate change on the planet. The museum includes interactive exhibits, viewing platforms and educational platforms and guided tours are also available. You can also enjoy other activities such as hiking, camping overnight and stargazing.

### A Lakeside Haven for Art and Poetry

Located on Lake Qarun is a small village which is well known for its pottery, first introduced by Evelyne Porret, a Swiss potter who established a pottery school where locals are still learning the art of pottery to this day. The tranquil village exhibits stunning views of the lake and surrounding desert hills, home to several eco-lodges built in traditional mud-brick style and guesthouses which are perfect for a weekend getaway. Here you can enjoy meals from cookery schools to fine dining restaurants which promote sustainable rural tourism by using local produce in their meals. For those that enjoy the finer things in life, there is also a luxurious boutique hotel and spa located in the heart of the village which is a stone throw away from the restaurants and workshops where you can create your own item out of pottery or even purchase pottery items made by locals.

Whether you are a keen photographer, a crafts enthusiast or you just want a quiet getaway, Fayoum has it all. From lakes to sand dunes there is something for everyone to enjoy, perfect for solo travellers, couples and families alike. So next time you are in Cairo, do plan a day trip to Fayoum as part of your itinerary – it is truly unmissable! ●



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# MERCEDES AMG GLE 53

EXCLUSIVE TEST DRIVE  
BY HE MAGAZINE

TEST DRIVE BY: ZIYAD SELIM  
DOP: AMIR DAKRORY  
ASSISTANT DOP: FAHD EL MOGHANY  
VENUE: KATAMEYA DUNES GOLF CLUB

**W**hen HE Magazine conducts a test drive, our mission is simple: deliver an honest, immersive experience that reflects what our readers value; performance, refinement, and the emotional connection between driver and machine. This time, we went behind the wheel of one of the most anticipated performance SUVs to land in Egypt: the Mercedes-AMG GLE 53.

This marks the first time the Mercedes-AMG GLE 53 is officially offered by Mercedes-Benz Egypt and locally assembled on an Egyptian production line, a significant milestone for the brand and the market alike.



## A Heart Built for Performance

Under the hood sits a 3.0-liter inline-six turbocharged engine, paired with a 48-volt mild-hybrid system. Together, they deliver 435 hp and 560 Nm of torque, sent to all four wheels through 9-speed AMG SPEEDSHIFT TCT transmission and the advanced 4MATIC+ system, an intelligent AWD setup that constantly shifts power between the front and rear axles for sharper cornering, stronger launches, and noticeably higher stability at speed.

The result?

0–100 km/h in 5 seconds, delivered with the unmistakable AMG surge — immediate throttle response, tight power delivery, and a level of control that feels far more athletic than a mid-size SUV should.

## Exterior: Where Luxury Meets Sport

From the first glance, the Panamericana AMG grille sets the tone; aggressive, confident, unmistakably AMG. The new MULTIBEAM LED headlights enhance visibility with its intelligent light system that adjusts based on road and traffic conditions.

The wheels, however, steal the show:

22-inch AMG rims, with 285/40 front and 325/35 rear tires. Behind them, massive 6-piston red AMG calipers clamp onto ventilated discs, both a performance necessity and a visual statement.

At the rear, full LED taillights, a sporty diffuser, and the quad-exhaust system complete a design that perfectly balances elegance with athleticism.



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## Luxury You Feel Immediately

Step inside and the GLE 53 instantly reminds you why Mercedes remains a benchmark in cabin refinement.

The interior offers generous rear-seat space, 4-zone climate control, ISOFIX mounts, and a welcoming sense of comfort that families will appreciate, but from the driver's seat the experience becomes much more focused.

The new AMG multi-spoke steering wheel, wrapped in Alcantara and carbon fiber, is one of the car's highlights. Two customizable AMG rotary dials allow instant control of driving modes, suspension settings, traction, exhaust valves and more.



Digital integration is equally impressive:

- 12.3-inch digital cluster
- 12.3-inch MBUX infotainment system
- Head-Up Display with multiple views
- Touchscreen + touchpad + steering-wheel controls

The cabin materials elevate the experience even further: Leather with Alcantara seats, heated and cooled massage seats, carbon-fiber dashboard, panoramic sunroof, ambient lighting, and the excellent Burmester 13-speaker surround system.

With the Night Package, the interior takes on an even sportier, darker aesthetic.

Practicality remains strong, with a 630-liter trunk expandable to over 2,000 liters with rear seats folded. The air suspension, adjustable from both the console and trunk, adds convenience and comfort.

## On the Road: Two Personalities in One

Driving the GLE 53 is a tale of dual character. In Comfort mode, the SUV delivers the calm, insulated experience expected from Mercedes—smooth acceleration, quiet cabin, soft suspension, and refined cruising.

Switch to Sport+, and everything changes: Throttle response sharpens, the exhaust note deepens with addictive crackles, gear shifts become quicker, and the suspension firms up. The car suddenly feels smaller, more alive—almost like a sports car.

Mercedes' improved mild-hybrid system reduces turbo lag noticeably, giving the car punchier acceleration from a standstill and improved responsiveness across the rev range.

Stability is exceptional thanks to the wide tires, 4MATIC+, and air suspension, allowing confident handling even at higher speeds or through tight corners. Braking performance is impressive as expected from the large AMG braking system.

## Final Thoughts

Mercedes has succeeded in blending two worlds: the comfort and luxury that define the brand, and the strong, engaging performance expected from AMG.

For the Egyptian market, the GLE 53 is offered in a single, fully equipped trim at 8,100,000 EGP, making it one of the most compelling premium performance SUVs available today.

We truly enjoyed this exclusive test drive, and we look forward to bringing you more first-hand experiences in upcoming issues of HE Magazine. ●

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