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Developing
IT in Egypt

Life in Cairo

Your guide to what it's really like
to live and work in Cairo



Egypt on




A great place to live and work

Cairo – “mother of the world,” “the triumphant,” “the city of a thousand minarets,” and no end of enjoyable experiences. Cairo is quite simply one of the greatest cities in the world.

Take a trip along the Nile, head out into the desert, climb up to Saladin’s Citadel, go downtown to a club, visit the most ancient of monuments and dine in the most modern of restaurants – in Cairo you can enjoy the best of many worlds.

Cairo offers an ideal mix that is very different yet always interesting, and, above all, warm and friendly. No matter from where in the world you come, this distinctly world-friendly place is sure to welcome you. And before you know it you are bound to feel at home.





"Egypt will always be an enormous part of our lives, probably more so than anywhere else we've been"

Consultant Joe Pape gives his insight into life in Cairo

"I've been here seven and a half years now. I'm a geologist working in the oil industry. In my 30-year career with BP, I've lived in many different countries, but never one as long as Egypt. I've decided to stay here for at least another two or three years, as a consultant.

Both my wife and I have found it very enjoyable. It's an interesting place to be, if you can handle cars going round the roundabout the wrong way! There is an enormous distinction, depending on where you live. We live in the suburb of Maadi.

There are a lot of expats here, many nationalities. In Maadi, you can live in a beautiful villa like we do, but still have the interest of the souk down the road. That's very different to living in Zamalek, for example, where there's more in terms of nightlife.

We want to stay on mostly because of the people – they're very friendly, and funny. Egyptians have a similar sense of humor to us. It's quite easy to relate to them – they are sort of European facing.

Another big thing for me is to be able to get out of the city and do things at weekends. We all go windsurfing every weekend on the Gulf of Suez, Sinai. Then you get guys going out into the desert looking for ancient remains and sites. And you have the golf club set. So there is quite a variety of things you can do.

If you want to do different things, it's a great place to be.

My advice to anyone coming here is, be prepared to adapt and enjoy being with the Egyptians. Be prepared to adapt, because things are not going to work the way you are accustomed to them working. If you fight it, it'll kill you!



My favorite place is Sinai. It's spectacular. The landscape is out of this world, and of course you've got the Red Sea – the diving, the windsurfing and everything are right beside it.

Egypt has all these wonderful things. The climate is gorgeous, apart from July and August. The things to do are great. The culture is interesting. The people are very open and friendly, and they're fun.

Egypt will always be an enormous part of our lives, probably more so than anywhere else we've been. We could well end up having a long-term future between here and the UK."

Joe Pape Consultant

Living in Cairo

Culture


Fittingly for a country at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean, Egypt is a great cultural mix. Its unique heritage stretching back over 5,000 years combines with a modern, forward-looking and progressive outlook. It is a country of contrasts, yet one where all are made welcome and encouraged to make the most of everything Egypt has to offer.

Unique heritage



Climate

Winters tend to be mild, with sunny days and cool nights. Daytime temperatures in February, for example, are around 19°C (66°F) and nighttime temperatures around 8°C (46°F). From spring through summer to early autumn it is hot – very hot in July and August, when temperatures can reach over 40°C (104°F). But these high temperatures often come with cooling breezes. In short, sunshine is the key feature!



"When you come to Egypt, people certainly open their arms to you; they welcome you!"

Hill & Knowlton's Chris Larter gives his insight into life in Cairo

"Egypt is part of Africa, part of the Middle East and part of the Mediterranean – it's a combination and you really get to experience this culture. It's all around you.

One of the high points is the social feeling here. When you come to Egypt, people certainly open their arms to you; they welcome you. Within the first week or two of being in Egypt you will no doubt be invited to stay in someone's home, to meet the family, to have dinner...

My wife is Egyptian, she lives in Alexandria, which is about 220 km away. It's a Mediterranean town, completely different from Cairo.

There are lots of sports clubs here. They are very popular. Golf is really taking off here, there are some very good golf courses and the green fees are about a tenth of what you pay in Dubai.

The one thing I love is that, yes, I'm living in a developing country that is progressing quite fast, I'm living in the Middle East, also in Africa – but I'm also less than a five-hour flight from London, or a two-hour flight to Milan and Rome. I'm very close to Europe, which is another great advantage.

I tell people that to see Cairo you've got to be like a cockroach! You'll only appreciate it if you go exploring.

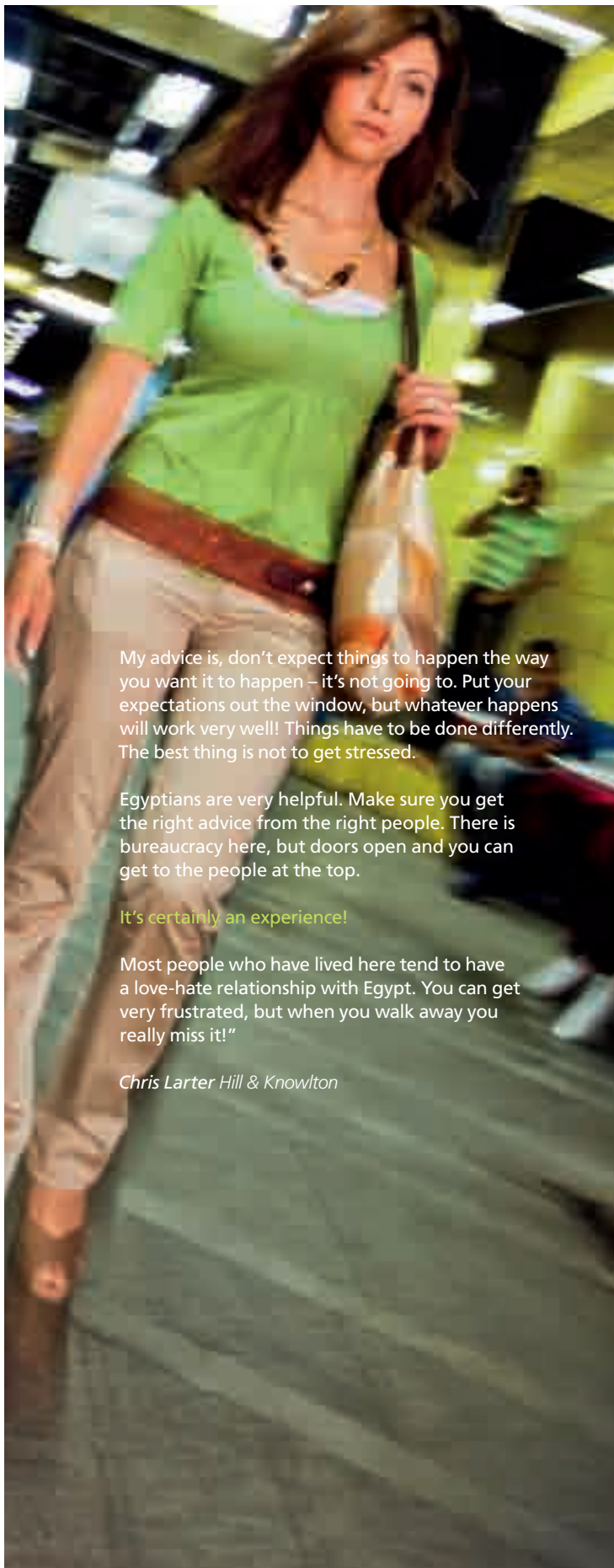
There are some amazing places waiting for you.

So you have to go exploring or have someone to take you around and show you the places. There are some very exciting areas.

When people visit me I might well take them on a tour at night. We'd go out to eat in a restaurant at 9 or 10 o'clock, at midnight or so I'd take them to a belly dancing show downtown, then at about 3am I'd take them for a drive around Cairo, when there's less traffic. It's lovely to drive up to the City of the Dead, for example, behind the citadel.

I've lived here for in total about 17 or 18 years and for me Egypt is very safe. Even though in Cairo I'm in a city of 20 million people, I can walk around at any time of night in any area and I'd feel absolutely safe. Maybe it's because the city never sleeps – there are always people walking around, it is always active.

The working culture is becoming very westernized. It is more nine to five in terms of hours, with email communications, mobiles, the internet. But it is still also very much about face-to-face meetings. You meet and do business in offices and, in the evenings, over dinner. It's pleasurable!



My advice is, don't expect things to happen the way you want it to happen – it's not going to. Put your expectations out the window, but whatever happens will work very well! Things have to be done differently. The best thing is not to get stressed.

Egyptians are very helpful. Make sure you get the right advice from the right people. There is bureaucracy here, but doors open and you can get to the people at the top.

It's certainly an experience!

Most people who have lived here tend to have a love-hate relationship with Egypt. You can get very frustrated, but when you walk away you really miss it!"

Chris Larter Hill & Knowlton

Living in Cairo

Home life

When deciding where to live you can choose from a variety of areas, including Maadi, October 6 and Zamalek. Each area has its own distinct character and attractions. Maadi has many green spaces, beautiful old houses and quiet streets. With international schools close by and plentiful gyms, cinemas and restaurants, it is home to many expats, especially families. October 6 has luxurious gated communities and is close to the Smart Village business park. Zamalek is a vibrant area on the Nile island in downtown Cairo – the location of many embassies, hotels, sports clubs, fine restaurants, the opera house, and the homes of rich Cairenes.

Nile University



Schools and universities

Cairo has 15 international schools: 11 English schools, two German schools and two French schools. There are also four international universities: the American University in Cairo, the German University in Cairo, the British University in Egypt and L'Université Française d'Egypte. All the schools and universities are internationally accredited. The schools offer a full range of qualifications, from A levels to International Baccalaureate. The universities offer bachelor degrees, master's, and PhDs.

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"The climate, the quality of the food,
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these things make life exciting here"

Jerome Nestlé



Cairo by night

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Nile Towers



Conrad Hotel



Gezira Sporting Club



October 6 Bridge



Nile River

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Egyptian Television Broadcast Quarters

Ramses Hilton Hotel

Cairo Tower



ro Tower

Ahly Stadium

El-Tahrir Bridge

Semiramis InterContinental Hotel



Cairo Opera House

Opera Metro
Station

Four Seasons Hotel

Sofitel Hotel
(Buddha Bar)

Grand Hyatt Hotel



Nile River

Living in Cairo

Quality of living

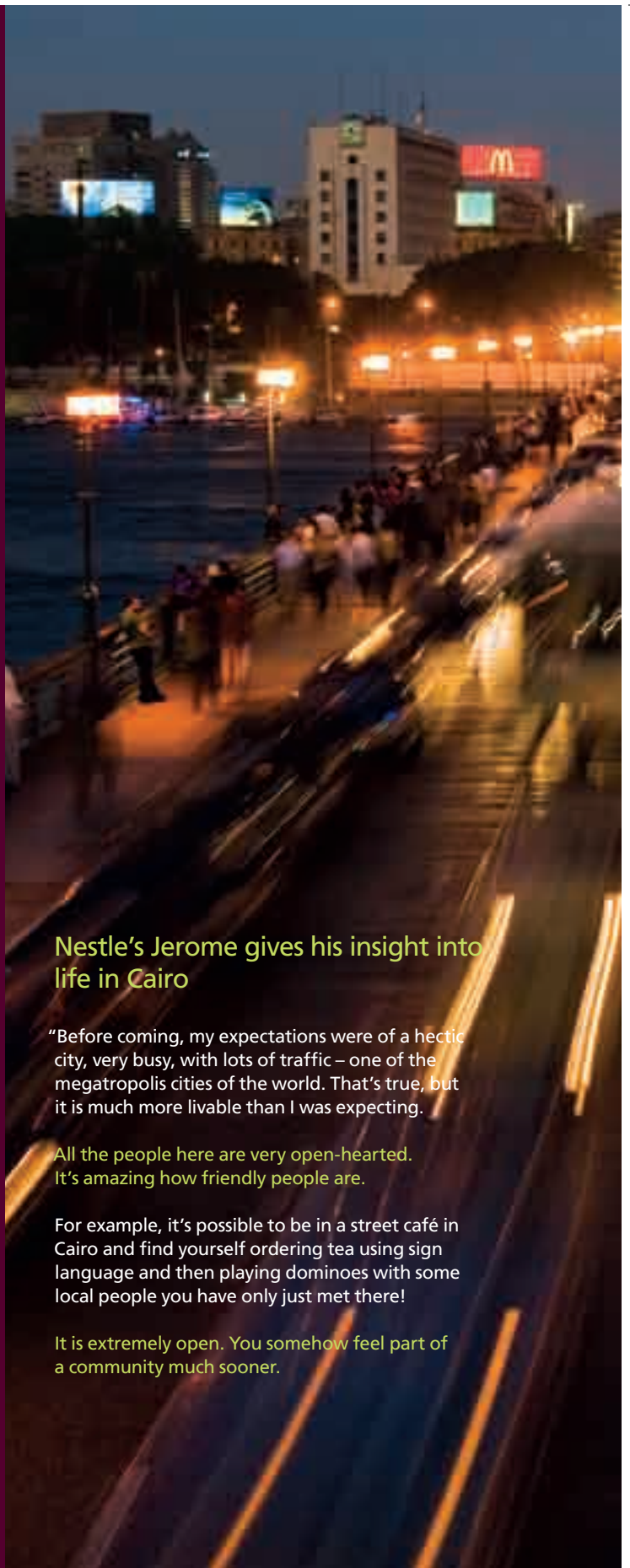
The Mercer Quality of Living Survey 2006 and 2008 ranked Cairo higher than any other city in Africa or India. The Survey takes into account a range of criteria, from the political and social environment to health and sanitation, education, public services and transportation, recreation, housing and the natural environment.

State-of-the-art underground



Cost of living

Cairo's cost of living is well below that of Eastern European cities. According to the latest Cost of Living Survey from Mercer, Cairo ranks the 87th city in 2010 index.



Nestle's Jerome gives his insight into life in Cairo

"Before coming, my expectations were of a hectic city, very busy, with lots of traffic – one of the megatropolis cities of the world. That's true, but it is much more livable than I was expecting.

All the people here are very open-hearted. It's amazing how friendly people are.

For example, it's possible to be in a street café in Cairo and find yourself ordering tea using sign language and then playing dominoes with some local people you have only just met there!

It is extremely open. You somehow feel part of a community much sooner.



"Part of the charm of Egypt is the diversity"

Part of the charm of Egypt is the diversity of locations and sites that you can see. You can go in the desert, you can go to the pyramids, you have the Red Sea, you have the Mediterranean. In addition to the climate, this diversity is part of the package that you immediately appreciate when you live and work in Egypt.

Cairo has all the advantages of a huge city – many cultural sites and activities, different places to go out. There are many possibilities. I still haven't finished my checklist of things I want to visit!

You see the key role that Cairo plays in the Arabic world.

It is a melting pot, which makes it very interesting.

When I told my friends I was going to Egypt, they said I was crazy – it's highly polluted, dangerous, the climate is impossible! But on the contrary, what you find is that it is a great climate, you have a huge diversity, and you can live as a European very easily here.

You can find everything here that you have in Europe, and more! It's a very attractive place.

In Cairo, it's busy and bustling and then you drive into the desert for a couple of hours and you step out into a completely different world. What is most overwhelming is the quietness. You get out of the car and you don't hear anything other than what catches your ear – maybe the sound of a bird's wings. It's amazing, when you realize just how quiet it is compared with the city. It certainly shows again the contrast available here, which makes it attractive.

The climate, the quality of the food, the diversity of the entertainment – it's a melting pot for the Arabic world – all these things make life exciting here.

You can really choose the way you want to live in Cairo."

Jerome Nestlé

Living in Cairo

Sights

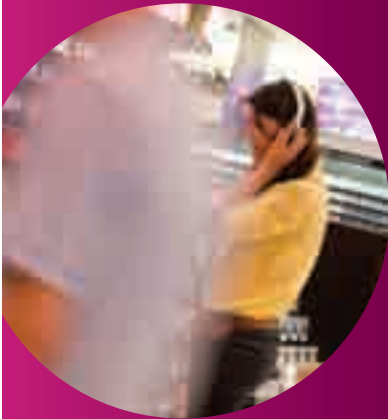
Naturally the Pyramids and Sphinx of Giza, the only remaining of the seven ancient wonders of the world, are a must-see. But in this great and varied cultural center there are many other wonders, including over 100 museums, mosques, and historical buildings.

Nile City Towers



Shopping

There are modern shopping malls and fashion centers. And there are vibrant markets too, such as the world-famous Khan El-Khalili Bazaar.



Nightlife

Operas, theatres, cinemas showing the latest releases, dozens of high-class restaurants and many bars and clubs – the nightlife is varied and vibrant.

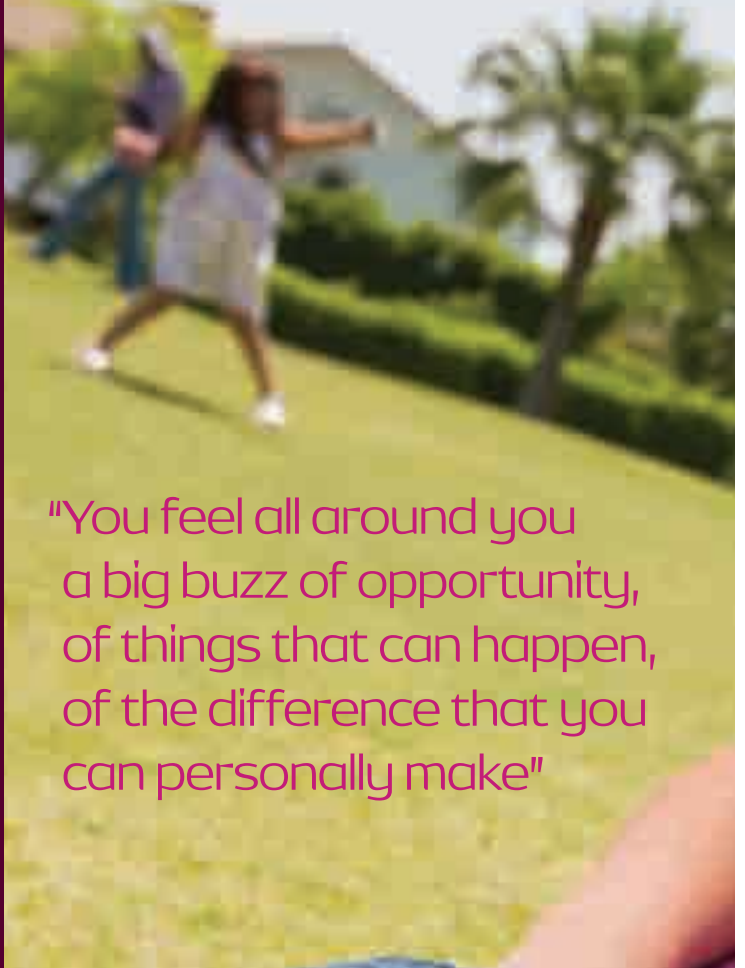
Vodafone's Denise D'Elia gives her insight into life in Cairo

"I have been here since September 2008. This is my second assignment in Cairo – I lived here from April 2002 to April 2005. Before 2002, I was based in Rome and from 2005 to 2008 I was in the UK.

What I really like about Cairo – besides the usual stuff that people say: the sun, the food, the nice people – is the opportunity. Whichever industry you are in, you feel all around you a big buzz of opportunity, of things that can happen, of the difference that you can personally make.

Sometimes in Europe you are more part of a little process, while in Cairo you have this feeling that you can really give a big contribution. You can really drive things differently.

You have to be flexible here. You need to be attracted and interested in what is different, to be open to the new. You should allow the local culture to come out. People here have their own way of doing things, their own way of looking into often very creative solutions. This is maybe why you have the opportunity to achieve a lot, especially in leveraging local resources, which are very, very high caliber.



"You feel all around you a big buzz of opportunity, of things that can happen, of the difference that you can personally make"

The first time I was here I was the Customer Operations Director for Vodafone Egypt. It was a huge opportunity to rebuild the center, put the correct foundation in place, give people an opportunity to grow, to create the best customer experience in the whole Vodafone group. I left with a very good success story and a lot of regrets because much more could've been done! But I took a great opportunity in the UK to serve Vodafone global customers. It was another beautiful experience.

Now I am back in Cairo with another big opportunity – to head up Vodafone International Services. This is a new company created by Vodafone Egypt dedicated to offshoring, to providing IT and customer services for Vodafone and also for external customers. Since I've been here, I've been very busy creating the new company – the legal structure, building the team, hiring the people, putting together the strategy, winning the customers. It's going very well. I'm a woman that likes challenges!

I have two children. The schools here are good. English is widely spoken. Especially at a higher level of society, everybody as a minimum speaks English and French. If you're interested you can learn Arabic, but you don't have to. You can find some fantastic housing. There are clubs and plenty of restaurants – even too much!

The best thing about being in Egypt? The Egyptians – they are fantastic people, very nice, very warm, very welcoming, very willing to help. And the country itself – there is a lot that it can give. So if you are a desert safari lover, you can go to the desert for the next ten years of your life and you will never visit the same place twice! If you are into diving, there is plenty of beautiful diving in the Red Sea. If you are into history, there are all the pharaonic sites – Luxor and Aswan will keep you busy for the next 20 years! If you are more into Islamic art or religion, there is old Cairo.

And then of course there is the sun, the food is fantastic, the club life, the expat community, the opportunities to meet, to play golf...

My advice to people coming to Cairo is to accept that it is a different culture. I've learnt a lot. My first time here was a big learning experience. In a way I tried to give up my Italian way of doing things – I said if we can reach the same result that I would have reached with a different path, why not try it!

My advice is to be open to the new and appreciate it. **While you're here, make the most of it – take and enjoy the opportunity to see things with a different eye!"**

Denise D'Elia Vodafone International Services



Ten things you should do in Cairo...

1

Tour the pyramids on horseback
Touring the pyramids on an Arabian horse – there is no better way to explore the last remaining wonder of the ancient world.

2

Sail the Nile on a felucca
Leave the hustle and bustle of the city behind as you drift down the Nile on a traditional Egyptian sailing boat – eating, drinking and relaxing as you go.

3

Take a spin on the El Sawy Culturewheel
From Sufi jazz to alternative comedy – there is always something new and different going on at this hub of underground arts in the heart of Cairo.

4

Wander through Khan El Khalili Souk, then watch the dervishes whirl
Amazing sights, sounds and smells surround you in this, the oldest souk in the world. When you've finished browsing and bargaining, you can watch Sufi dervishes whirl to music in the nearby mausoleum of Al-Ghuri.

5

Step back in time at Abou El Sid
A traditional Egyptian dining experience is the order of the day at Abou El Sid. It's a great place for the family and ideal for lunch or dinner.

6

Watch the sun set from Sequoia

By day Sequoia is a great Nile-side restaurant known for its delicious mezes. And then the sun goes down, and before long the dancing begins – and doesn't stop till the early hours.

7

Enjoy dinner and drinks at La Bodega

An established favorite with expats and Cairenes alike, La Bodega is furnished in a 1930s style and known for its international cuisine and cocktails.

8

Experience the chic restaurant and club Tamarai

Modern, spacious and chic, Tamarai is one of Cairo's hottest nightspots. From early evening cocktails to dining and dancing the night away – Tamarai is the place to go.

9

Explore the Cairo museum

Home to the largest collection of pharaonic objects in the world, the Cairo museum is a treasure trove of ancient wonders and a testament to Egypt's great heritage of inventions and culture.

Stroll through Old Cairo

Old Cairo, the original Coptic quarter, is a wonderful place to wander, where you'll find an interesting mix of people and places, such as the 7th century Hanging Church. While you're there, make sure you visit the recently reopened Coptic Museum.

10