



# HARVARD Alumni Association

## SPRING BREAK IN CAIRO, EGYPT FOR STUDENTS & ALUMNI

MARCH 15-23, 2019

### SCHEDULE BY DAY

*B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner*

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 15

DEPART FOR CAIRO, EGYPT

#### SATURDAY, MARCH 16

ARRIVE CAIRO

Upon arrival transfer to the Steigenberger Hotel which is strategically located in the heart of the downtown Cairo, offering elegant and comfortable accommodations and views of the Nile River.

Dinner tonight is on your own.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel*

#### SUNDAY, MARCH 17

GIZA / PYRAMIDS / SPHINX / SAQQARA

After breakfast, depart for a tour of the Pyramids of Giza—those of Cheops, Kephren and Mycerinus, all of the IVth Dynasty (2575-2465 B.C.)—which represent the highest achievement in Egyptian pyramid construction. Giza lies on the west bank of the Nile (the land of the setting sun and the dead), on the border between the cultivated land and the desert. The significance and meaning of the construction of the pyramids is uniquely sacred and religious. Next visit the great

Sphinx of Giza, a couchant lion with a human head. The Sphinx is believed to represent Khephren and was later identified with the god Hamarkhis.

Saqqara (or Sakkara), is the world's oldest standing step pyramid located approximately 30 km south of modern-day Cairo, Saqqara covers an area of around 7 km by 1.5 km. Saqqara served as its necropolis. Although it was eclipsed as the burial ground of royalty by Giza and later by the Valley of the Kings in Thebes, it remained an important complex for minor burials and cult ceremonies for more than 3,000 years, well into Ptolemaic and Roman times. The step pyramid at Saqqara was designed by Imhotep for King Djoser (c.2667-2648 BC). It is the oldest complete hewn-stone building complex known in history. It is also the location of the newly opened Imhotep Museum. It is also where the tomb of King Menes, the first pharaoh of Egypt lies

Enjoy a festive welcome dinner this evening.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel (B, L, D)*

#### MONDAY, MARCH 18

EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

This morning visit the \*Egyptian Museum with a private guide. The French Egyptologist, Auguste Mariette, was the founder of the Egyptian Antiquities service in 1857, and the collection grew immensely as a result of the continual excavations which took place

throughout Egypt. The Egyptian Museum has the richest collection of Pharaonic antiquities in the world. The scope and interest of the collections is inexhaustible!

Dinner this evening is at the hotel. After dinner enjoy a traditional Sufi Whirling dance performance.

*\*Please note, the visit to the New Egyptian Museum is contingent upon their opening. If it is not available, the group will visit the Old Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square.*

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel (B, D)*

## **TUESDAY, MARCH 19**

### **CAIRO**

Enjoy independent exploration of Cairo on this morning at leisure. Afternoon activities are pending and will be announced prior to departure.

Join the group for dinner this evening.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel (B, D)*

## **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20**

### **ISLAMIC CAIRO**

This morning visit the Al-Azhar Mosque which is located in the center of an area teeming with the most beautiful Islamic monuments from the 10th century. The Mosque is called "Al-Azhar" after Fatama al-Zahraa, daughter of the Prophet Mohamed. The Mosque has remained a focal point of the famous university which has grown up around it. Al-Azhar University is the oldest university in the world, where the first lecture was delivered in 975 AD.

The Sultan Hassan Mosque is considered stylistically the most compact and unified of all Cairo monuments. The building was constructed for Sultan Hassan bin Mohammad bin Qala'oun in 1256 AD as a mosque and religious school for all sects.

The Royal Mosque Al Rifai in Cairo stands opposite the grand Mosque of Sultan Hasan as an exhibit of the Khedival family's ability to

measure up to the achievements of the Memluks. Not only did it mark a new era in the history of Egyptian architecture since it was the first major structure designed with the neo-Memluk style, but also, it was a bold statement in rejecting the foreign architectural forms especially those imported from Europe and Turkey.

In 1869, Mimar Huseyin Fehmi Pasa (educated in France in 1840 as part of Mehmet Ali's fifth and largest educational mission) was commissioned by Her Highness Husiyar Hanimefendi, mother of the Khedive Ismail, to replace the zeviye of Rifai and its revered mausolea with a dynastic Mosque that would house, in addition to the Sufi relics, the tombs of the royal family. However, he died during the first phase of construction, which came to a complete halt shortly after the abdication of Khedive Ismail in 1880. Construction resumed in 1905 upon the orders of II. Abbas Hilmi, who entrusted Max Herz Bey, the Austro-Hungarian architect in charge of the Committee for the Conservation of Arab Monuments in Cairo, to complete the Mosque. Herz was aided by the Italian architect Carlo Virgilio Silvagni. Finally, it was completed in 1912, more than forty years after its initial commission.

Lunch will be served at Al Azhar Park, resulted from a seven-year project by the Aga Khan Development Network that transformed a dumping ground into North Africa's largest urban green space. The \$30 million project was designed as an agent for economic development and has become a case study for creative solutions to a spectrum of challenges facing historic areas.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel (B, L)*

## **THURSDAY, MARCH 21**

### **OLD CAIRO / ISLAMIC MUSEUM / CITY OF THE DEAD**

Depart this morning to Old Cairo (Egyptian Arabic: Masr el Adima) which is a part of Cairo that contains the remnants of cities which were capitals before Cairo, such as Fustat. It encompasses Coptic Cairo and its many old churches and ruins of Roman fortifications,

the Hanging Church and other Coptic churches, the Ben Ezra Synagogue, and the Mosque of Amr ibn al-'As. Fort Babylon is a Roman fortress where many of the Egyptian Christians' oldest churches were built.

The museum of Islamic art is truly a wonderful reservoir of Islamic antiquities. It has a vast supplement of about 10,200 artifacts. The museum displays art from the different Islamic eras that Egypt passed through including the Fatimid, Turkish and Persian periods.

Continue to the City of the Dead (Qarafa, Arafa), a four-mile-long cemetery in eastern Cairo, Egypt. To the people of Cairo and other Egyptians, it is simply el'arafa which means "the cemetery". It is a bustling grid of tombs and mausoleums where people live and work amongst their dead ancestors. Many residents live here to be near their loved ones, or because they were forced from overcrowded areas in Cairo.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel (B, L, D)*

## **FRIDAY, MARCH 22**

### **ISLAMIC CAIRO**

This morning visit the famous city Gate of Bab Zuwela, one of the most important landmarks in Egypt, where you will witness the result of a five-year conversation project. This project was supervised by the American Research Center in Egypt. Continue to the Bab el Futuh (The Gate of Conquests), a fortified gate made of solid blocks of stone embedded in the wall. Next stop is the Bab el-Nasr (The Victory Gate) built at the same time as Bab el Futuh but it is more imposing because of its austere and sober decoration.

After lunch at Naguib Mahfouz restaurant explore the Khan El Khalili Bazaar which is the oldest market in Cairo.

Tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner at a special restaurant.

Overnight: *Steigenberger Hotel (B, L, D)*

**SATURDAY, MARCH 23**  
DEPART FOR U.S.