



Pyramids on Giza Plateau

travel tales

# EGYPT:

## LAND OF ARCHEOLOGICAL WONDERS

Article by **John N. Serio**, Photos provided by **The Serio's**

My wife Faye and I just returned from a fabulous two-week trip to Egypt, which we had always thought of as the land of the pyramids. But Egypt offers much more — warm and friendly people; museums packed with priceless artifacts; huge temples; gorgeously decorated tombs; and history in hieroglyphics.

The tour was organized by Archaeological Paths (which we highly recommend) and featured five-star accommodations and an in-depth visit to important sites. The first few days were based in Cairo, where we visited the Step Pyramid of King Djoser in nearby Saqqara, the oldest pyramid in the world, constructed 4700 years ago by the legendary architect Imhotep. Then we explored a decorated noble's tomb and King Teti's pyramid, which contained the oldest religious texts ever found. The next day, we went to Dahshur to see the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid built for Pharaoh Snefru (I climbed up the 300 ft., 4 by 4 ft. shaft to the sarcophagus room while my claustrophobic wife stayed behind). Then it was on to Memphis, with its outdoor museum featuring a 35 ft. statue of Ramesses II. After, we had a private tour of the tombs of the pyramid builders with famed Egyptologist Dr. Zahi Hawass, his major discovery. Early the next morning, Dr. Hawass addressed us between the paws of the Great Sphinx. After marveling at the three Giant Pyramids on the Giza Plateau, we attended a reception at the home of Mrs. Anwar Sadat, wife of Egypt's former president. Ever graceful, she talked about her efforts on behalf of women in Egypt, her charities for children's hospitals, and her dream of world peace. Our final day in Cairo featured a visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum, where, among numerous other artifacts, we saw the lavishly decorated coffins, jewelry, personal effects, and golden mask of King Tutankhamun.

Next, we flew to Luxor and boarded a cruise ship for an eight-day voyage up the Nile to Aswan. While in Luxor we visited the

Temple of Karnak, the largest temple in the world, and met with Dr. Mostafa Waziri, Egypt's Head of Antiquities, who revealed his latest discoveries and led us through a newly discovered temple that is still closed to the public. The next day, we entered the Valley of the Kings, where 62 tombs of Pharaohs have been discovered, including King Tut's (1922). Unlike the interior of the pyramids, these tombs have large entryways that contain colorful bas-reliefs. Scenes from the life of the Pharaoh and religious rituals, such as the Book of the Dead, adorn the walls.

We visited more fascinating sites along the Nile: the temples of falcon-headed Horus at Edfu; of the crocodile god, Sobek, at Kom Ombo; of Isis on the Island of Philae; and the impressively grand temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. We stopped at a Nubian village; saw the cracked, unfinished obelisk (it would have measured 137 ft. and weighed 1200 tons!); and marveled at Abu Simbel, carved out of a mountainside during the reign of Ramesses II.

A major highlight of our visit occurred during our return to Luxor when we met Dr. Hawass in front of the Luxor Temple at night after it was closed to the public. The scale is beyond one's imagination: a two-mile road of sphinxes leads to the grand entryway. Originally, on each side stood an obelisk (the missing one is in the Place de la Concorde in Paris). The size of the statues within and the mere girth of the columns are breathtaking. I had no idea that Egypt, more than 1000 years before the Greeks, constructed such magnificent temples. Truly, this educational adventure was a "trip of a lifetime."



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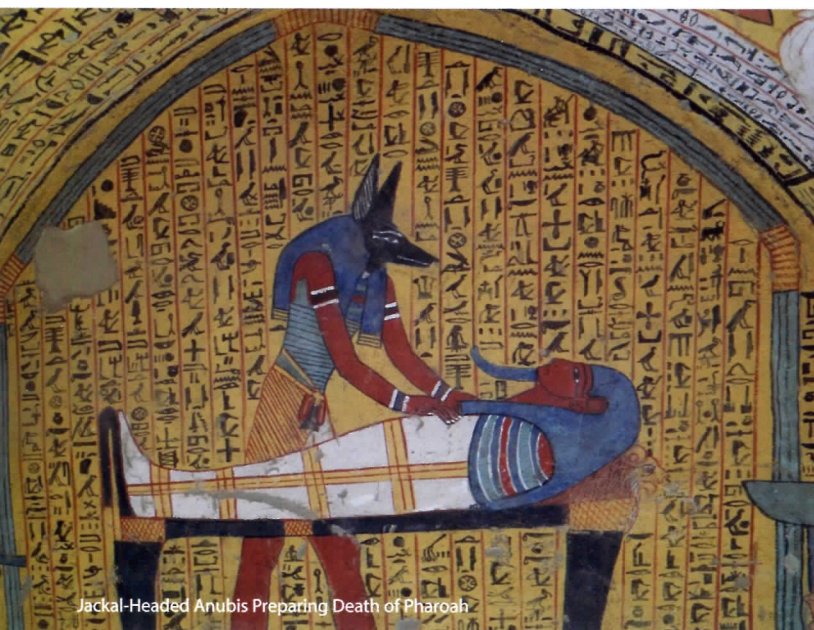




Abu Simbel



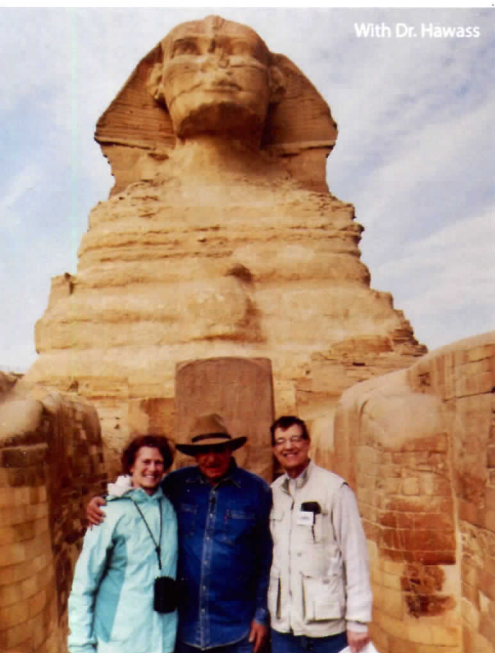
King Tut's Throne



Jackal-Headed Anubis Preparing Death of Pharaoh



Private Tour by Dr. Waziri



With Dr. Hawass



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With Mrs. Sadat