

## Explore “Egypt Beyond the Monuments” at 34th ATA Congress in May

*Tuesday, 10 March 2009*

Delegates to the 34th Annual Africa Travel Association (ATA) Congress in Cairo May 17-21, 2009 will have an exciting opportunity to explore “Egypt Beyond the Monuments” on pre or post conference trips.

Egypt is most well known for its world famous archaeological sites such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Valley of Kings, the Valley of Queens, the Valley of Nobles, Edfu’s sandstone temple to name just a few. The Egyptian tourism product now offers visitors a much more diverse and contemporary range of experiences - Beyond the Monuments.

### **Egypt Beyond the Monuments: Golf**

In just 10 years, Egypt has gone from its original three standard-bearers to almost 20 world- class golf courses – with many more under construction or planned. The courses are spread right across the country. One can tee off in the historic heart of Cairo, and Cleopatra’s home city, Alexandria; play on courses which are part of huge, self-contained leisure complexes in Cairo’s suburbs; swing away on a pristine stretch of the Mediterranean coast; send a drive soaring towards the Luxor mountains where the pharaohs of ancient Egypt were buried; and sink putts on Red Sea Riviera courses from the Sinai Peninsula to the northern and western Red Sea coasts.

It is golf of the very highest caliber. Famous names including Gary Player, Fred Couples and Karl Litten have already put their stamp on Egypt’s courses. New projects will bear the hallmarks of such luminaries as Nick Faldo, Greg Norman, Robert Trent Jones Jr, Jack Nicklaus and five-time Open Championship winner Peter Thompson.

### **Egypt Beyond the Monuments: The Holy Land**

Egypt has played an important role in the history of Christianity’s Holy Family as well as in the roots of Judaism and Islam. Moses had deep ties to the country especially in the Sinai, and there are many Biblical sites that are of great significance to all of the three major monotheistic religions. Egypt’s population has been predominantly Muslim since the 12th to 13th centuries, though 10% of the population is Coptic Christian. Although the ancient religion of the pharaohs, worshipping the God Ra or the conflict between Amon and Aton, will always be part of Egyptian mythology.

Egypt’s historical ties with the Holy family are not widely known. When Christ was an infant, the Holy Family fled to Egypt in fear of persecution by King Herod. Their four year sojourn took

them from Al-Farma in the north east of Sinai to Al-Muharraq Monastery in the southern Nile Valley. Egyptian authorities have undertaken a major project to re-pave the “Route of the Holy Family” and give prominence to the religious landmarks along this route.

Visitors will also find it interesting to see many of the famous Mosques, Coptic Churches and Jewish Synagogues.

**Mosques:** The most famous, El-Azhar (970 A.D.), stands in the centre of Cairo, the city of a thousand minarets. Worth looking at while strolling around Cairo’s Muslim quarter, in the area of the medieval Khan el-Khalili market: the El Gouri complex, the el-Ashraf Barsbay Mosque, the Sayyidna el-Hussein Mosque, the al-Saleh Talai Mosque, the el-Aqmar Mosque, the Ibn Toulon Mosque, the Sultan Hassan Mosque; and the famous Mohamed Ali Mosque.

**Coptic Churches: Monasteries and places of worship:** Old Cairo’s churches (St George’s church and convent, St Sergius’ and St Barbara’s churches, the "hanging" church), the Coptic Museum; In the Eastern desert, St Anthony’s, St Bishoi’s, St Katherine’s monasteries in Sinai, the Aswan Cathedral, Maadi and Gabal El-Teir churches etc., as well as many springs, wells, "sacred" trees such as Al Abed "the worshipper", at Nazlet Ebeid-Minia.

**Synagogues:** In Cairo, The Ben Ezra Synagogue in the Coptic quarter and the Sha’ar Hashhamayim Synagogue; In Alexandria, the Eliyahu Hanavi Synagogue.

### **Egypt Beyond the Monuments: Desert Tourism**

Desert tourism offers adventure and a glimpse into the nomadic Bedouin culture. It can be explored by trekking, hiking, 4x4 land rovers as well as by camel. To the west of the Nile, the Western Desert contains numerous lush oases. Scattered in a wide arc like islands in an ocean of sand, the oases are accessible from Cairo and Luxor. In both cases, a week is needed for exploring these desert wonders and, in particular, visiting the Dakhla Oasis where the inhabitants have preserved their traditional settlement. The White Desert with its astonishing limestone formations and the Black Desert with its black, pyramidal hills are another two stopover sites en route.

The desert on the Sinai Peninsula adds a spiritual dimension to the rich array of landscapes in this region. At the summit of Mount Moses (Mount Sinai) or in the Colored Canyon close to Nuweiba, in the Ras Muhammed natural park, one can truly experience the total serenity of the desert. A safari to south Sinai is not complete without a visit to the biggest of the region’s oases, Wadi Feiran.

### **Egypt Beyond the Monuments: Wellness**

Socrates himself was singing the praises of Egypt's healing therapies and spas some thousands of years ago. While Aswan was renowned for its rheumatic remedies, ancient tourists swarmed to Safaga to cure certain skin diseases such as psoriasis. Whether visitors want to bathe in sand or salt-rich seas, soak in hot springs or wrap oneself in curative clay, Egypt has centuries of experience in catering to its therapy keen tourists.

Aswan: Good for traditional Nubian therapies and environmental therapies including sand bathing and massages.

New Valley: With an abundance of bubbling hot springs, the hot water wells of the New Valley are naturally heated between 35-45 degrees all year round. One can also opt for sand bathing or sample various traditional medicinal herbs.

Red Sea: The whole Red Sea coast including Marsa Alam and Safaga offers a practically perfect climate for healing in rich mineral waters, with up to 35% more salt than the average sea.

Oyoun Mossa and Hammam Pharaon: As well as having some of the most sulphuric waters in the world, both Oyoun Mossa and Hammam Pharaon boast a warm, dry climate that's perfect for recuperating. Their success rate for curing all kinds of aches and pains is astonishingly high.

All the deluxe hotel resorts also have wellness and spa centers.

### **ATA Congress: "Connecting Destination Africa"**

The four-day Africa Travel Association Congress, "Connecting Destination Africa," will take place at the Cairo International Conference Center. The congress will engage participants in discussions on a range of topics, such as intra-Africa cooperation, airline access, tourism infrastructure development, tourism industry investment, branding and marketing, and responsible tourism.

A special roundtable for ministers will take place, as well as the first African marketplace for buyers and sellers.

The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA) are subsidizing hotel accommodations at the five-star Fairmont Heliopolis Hotel, for all delegates and providing transportation, logistical support, and a full day of tours in Cairo itself. The "host day" tour will include a visit to the The Pyramids in Giza, as well as a visit to the National Museum.

Egypt Air, the official Congress Carrier, is offering discount rates for all delegates.

**Direct Link:** <http://www.asiatraveltips.com/news09/103-EgyptTourism.shtml>