

Budget Traveler in Egypt

The thought of Egypt conjures up thoughts of pyramids, deserts, ancient cities, the Sphinx, the Nile River, King Tut, and so many other exotic objects of history. Indeed Egypt is a place of mystery and history; and with these thoughts comes the location for a vacation of a lifetime! When traveling to Egypt, one can go five star or extreme budget. This article will be focusing on the budget traveler in Egypt. From cheap flights, budget friendly accommodations, cheap dining, and even some free things to do thrown in.

Getting to Egypt can be the most expensive of this adventure. The most budget friendly airfares are directly from Europe. EasyJet is the cheap travel source and flies direct from the UK to cities like Luxor, Hurghada, and Sharm El Sheik with fares as low as \$140USD each way! Another cheap travel alternative is Air Berlin out of Germany with flights from Munich, Berlin, and Dusseldorf direct to Egypt. If traveling from the USA, one can get direct service from New York City to Cairo but it will come at a price. Usually at least \$700USD. The most budget friendly airfares can be found on the internet. Check websites such as Travelocity, Kayak, and Mobissimo. As with booking any airfare, the best and cheapest fares will be found when booked far in advance.

Budget friendly hotels in Egypt are usually found in the cities of Luxor and Aswan. Although some budget travelers will want to stay in Cairo and many cheap hotels can be found downtown. Downtown Cairo is a good choice as it's close to attractions such as the Egyptian Museum, Islamic Cairo, the Khan el-Khalili Bazaar, and old Cairo. It's also a central point of tour hoping to important places like Giza, Memphis, Dashur, and Saqqara. One can find cheap hotels in downtown Cairo anywhere from \$5-50USD depending on lodging and budget requirements. Most hotels have air conditioning, televisions, private bath, and telephones.

Probably the best budget friendly hotel would be Hotel Longchamps. At \$36USD a night it really cannot beat for the clean, quite, and upscale lodging offered. Another great choice is Hotel Victoria as it boasts a great quality internet café. Other hotels to look into are the Carlton, Windsor Hotel, and Hussein Hotel. As with booking any travel these days, the internet offers the cheapest options around when it comes to booking lodging. Take time and shop around to find the best deals.

Getting around Egypt is just like any other foreign country. Most budget minded travelers opt not at renting a vehicle as driving in a foreign place, not knowing the laws, and not have knowledge of roads and highways can spoil that vacation of a lifetime really quick. So with that in mind, budget for taxicabs. Taking taxicabs is certainly not the cheapest way to get around but it is definitely the safest and most efficient for any traveler. To get the best taxicab rate the smart traveler will need to negotiate. Do not take the first bid the driver gives. Another tip is to keep in the currency exchange rates, for example a trip that costs 10 Egyptian pounds (L.E.) is about \$1.50USD. Consider negotiating a cheaper fare. Chances are the driver will

take your offer. It is not recommended to hire a taxi for the whole day or even a few hours. Taxicabs are plentiful in the urban areas, and it is usually best to take one taxi to the destination and then find another back. If you decide to take a taxicab to outlying areas such as Dashur expect to pay about 150-200 L.E. When paying for the taxi, exit first, pay the cab driver, and then walk away. This is expected and is custom. If the driver expects you are a wealthy tourist expect an argument but just avoid this and walk away.

Food in Egypt can be classified into two categories, expensive and very budget friendly. For the most budget oriented, the best option is to go to a supermarket and buy a sandwich and other cold items. Most of the hotels have mini fridges to store these items. It is also recommended to purchase items such as bottled water, cigarettes, and soft drinks at a supermarket as the hotels charge a lot more for these items. For example, buying a Coca Cola at a supermarket will set you back 1.5 L.E. but at a hotel one can expect to pay at least 10 L.E. Avoid eating restaurants inside the hotels. These are the most expensive options and will set you back a lot of cash. Outside of the hotels is a vibrant street vendor scene offering traditional Egyptian and Middle Eastern/Mediterranean food. If one really wants to experience the culture it is highly recommended to try the street vendors! You will also save quite a bit of money too. As with any country, the traditional Western fast food eateries exist such as McDonalds and Subway. A typical hamburger will run about \$3.00 to \$4.00USD.

When planning your trip, budget for telephone and internet communications. It is not recommended to use the telephone at your hotel, as the charges are very high. Best bet is to purchase an international calling card either in your home country or in Egypt. This will save quite a bit of money on phone charges. Internet cafes are plentiful in Egypt and are the cheapest and most budget friendly way to check email and even call internationally for free via Skype or other internet based phone services.

Tipping or Baksheesh in Egyptian is custom however do not tip for a service that is not worth it. For instance, if taking a taxi the fare will not include a tip so be prepared to tip accordingly. Egyptians by nature are very gracious and asking for simple directions on the street does not warrant a tip. It is recommended to carry around small amounts of Egyptian notes at all times for tipping purposes.

Traveling on a budget in Egypt is very easy and can make a vacation the best time ever had! Enjoy what this amazing country has to offer. Thank you reading....see you in Egypt!

Scott Beebe is a freelance travel writer and lives in Los Angeles with his wife Gwen and three dogs.