



Introduction

Egypt, the cradle of civilisation, is host the last remaining wonder of the ancient world, and is considered to be the place from which modern civilisation arose. So, to understand why the world admires this civilisation, we have to return back to the beginning of the story and read carefully.

Prehistory of Egypt:

The first dynasty of Pharaohs dates back to around 3100 BC. However, there are many evidences talking about a sort of human life in different parts of Egypt especially in the Western Desert that dates back to more than 40,000 years. An amazing example of that period is the swimmers cave in Wadi Sura "Valley of Pictures" in Western Desert with fantastic paintings estimated to be produced around 7000 BC.



As from 5000 BC, archaeologists can easily recognise a real human cultural production, namely the Baradian culture which is considered to be the first known pre-dynastic civilisation. The Badarian people lived in Upper Egypt, on the eastern bank of the Nile, from approximately 5000 BC to 4400 BC.

Though they were a semi-nomadic people, they formed small settlements and began to cultivate grain and domesticate animals. They buried their dead in small cemeteries on the outskirts of these settlements, and also conducted ceremonial burials for some of their domesticated animals. Although the graves themselves were simple, the deceased was buried with fine ceramics, jewelry, cloth and fur, and they usually included a finely crafted figurine of a female fertility idol. They did not mummify their dead, instead burying them in a foetal position, facing west (towards the setting sun).

The Pharaohs Dynasties (30 Dynasties):

It refers to that period when Egypt for the first time became a unified kingdom till the time of being concurred by other nations which led to significant changes to the structure of the society and the culture.



The Early Dynastic Period (3100 BC till 2686 BC):

It defines the period that followed the unification of two kingdoms of Egypt (Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt by the king Menes or "Narmer"). The Capital of the kingdom has been transmitted to Memphis (Its ruins are located near the town of Mit Rahina, 20 km south of Cairo)



The Old Kingdom (2686–2181 BC):

The Old Kingdom is most commonly regarded as the period from the Third Dynasty through to the Sixth Dynasty. Some Egyptologists also include the Memphite Seventh and Eighth Dynasties in the Old Kingdom as a continuation of the administration centralised at Memphis. The undisputed most important monument of the Old Kingdom is the great Pyramid of Cheops among a huge set of monuments including the Step Pyramid of Djoser, The other two pyramids of Khefren and Menkaure and the fabulous statue of the sphinx and many others.





The Middle Kingdom (about 2000 BC till 1700 BC):

After a period of schism, led to a split of the Egyptian Kingdom into two conflicting parts, the Pharaoh Mentuhotep II from the 11th Dynasty in Upper Egypt succeeded to defeat the Lower Egypt separatists and to reunite the whole Egypt under his throne. The most important monuments of this period include the ruins of Mentuhotep II's Mortuary Complex at Deir-el-Bahri in Luxor and some ruins of Amenemhet I, Senusert II and Amenemhet III pyramids at Lisht and near Fayum.

The New Kingdom (Also referred to as the Egyptian Empire):

The new Kingdom is the period in ancient Egyptian history between the 16th century BC and the 11th century BC, covering the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Dynasties of Egypt. It was Egypt's most prosperous time and marked the peak of its power. The later part of this period, under the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties (1292–1069 BC) is also known as the Ramesside period, after the eleven pharaohs that took the name of Ramesses.



The new kingdom pharaohs list contains the megastars of Ancient Egypt such as Tutankhamen, Akhenaten, Hatshepsut (the only female pharaoh in Egypt), Nefertiti (held position as co-regent with Akhenaten), Ramses the Second, and Thutmose III.

Huge erections have been established in that era including temples, palaces, fortresses, cities, obelisks, etc. Although the fact that the capital of Egypt has been located in three cities over that period (Thebes, Memphis and Pi-Ramesses), however, the architecture of that kingdom covered many other places in Egypt.



Most important monuments of this era include the treasure of Tutankhamen tomb (Now in Cairo Museum), the Hatshepsut Temple in El Deir El Bahari in Luxor, Ramses II Temple and Nefertari's Temple (both in Abu Simbel south to Aswan) along with many others.



After Pharaohs

Ptolemaic Kingdom:

Alexandria was the capital of the empire, where the old world has witnessed a huge cultural mixture between the Ancient Egyptian civilisation and the Greek civilisation.

The most important monuments of that era are the sunken city of Cleopatra in Alexandria and the Temple of Hathor in Denderah Temple Complex and many others.



Roman Rule (30 BC till 390 AD):

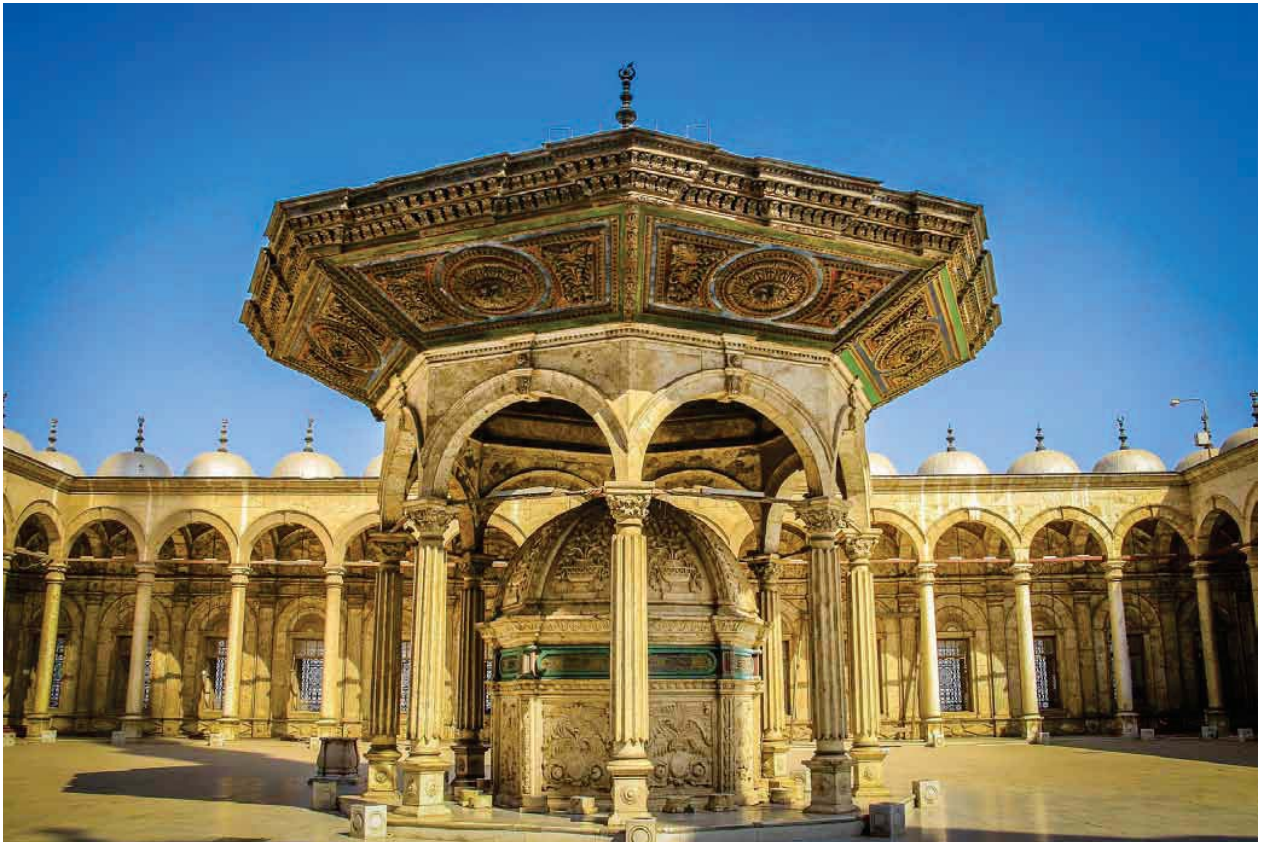
After defeating Mark Antony and deposing Cleopatra, Octavian or later known as Emperor Augustus annexed the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt to the Roman Empire. This period was full of revolts against the Romans. It witnessed also the beginning of Christianity which enriched the Egyptian culture and arts by a huge patrimony of artifacts.

The most important monuments of this era include the Holy Family footprints in Egypt along with many other monasteries and churches.



Islamic Era: from 639 AD:

The Arab leader Amr Ibn El As moved with his army towards Egypt. In two years' time, Egypt became an Islamic province. Having that the majority of Egyptians turned into Islam, one of the biggest shift has happened to the history of Egypt. The language has turned into the Arabic and hence the hieroglyphs have been replaced by the Arabic Calligraphy. As they stopped worshipping the dead, they gave up



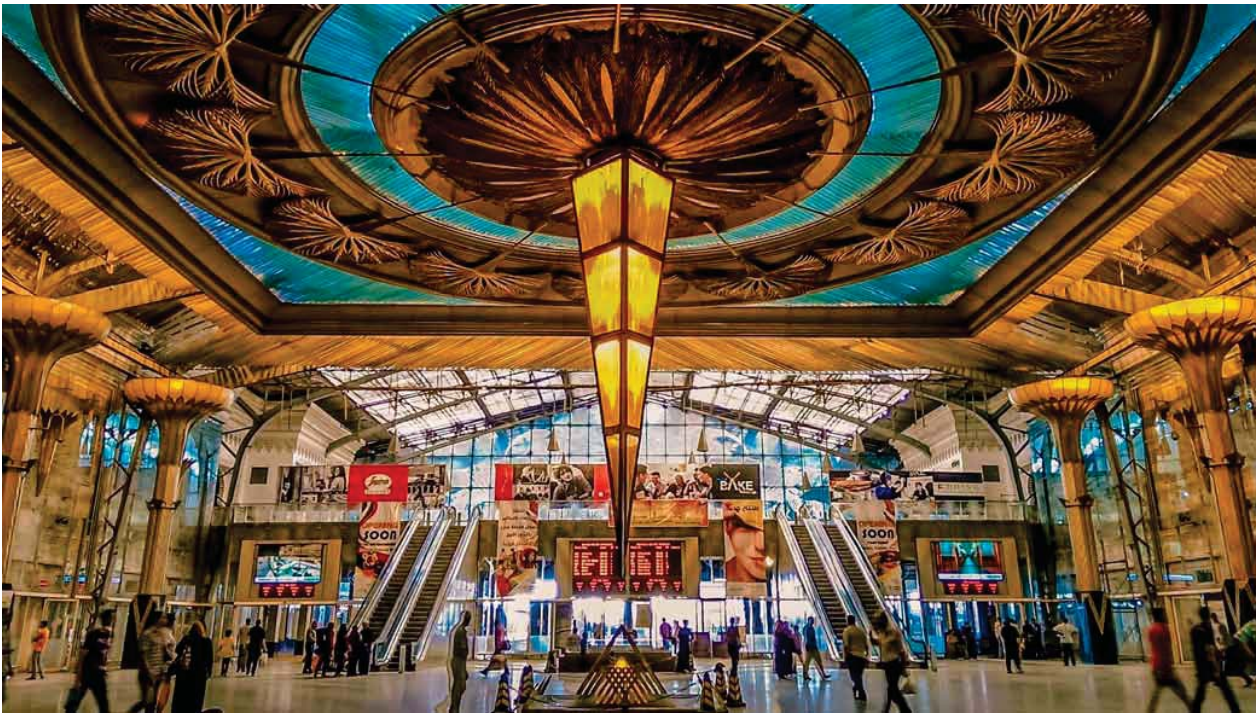
mummification. Another tremendous transition was the architecture which turned from building temples, pyramids and statues into building mosques, palaces, Islamic style houses, gardens, fortresses, hospitals, etc. Egyptians used their accumulative experience of sculpturing to set a magnificent patrimony of decorations out of geometric shapes and botanical unites rather than the human and animal figures used earlier.

The Islamic era in Egypt was generally the golden age for arts and architecture. Examples of such revival can be seen in several mosques, fortresses and city walls, mainly in Cairo such as Amr Ibn El As mosque, The Nile meter, Al Moez Street, Sultan Hassan Madrassa (School), Al-Keretlia House and a huge collection of other genuine artifacts



Modern Era:

Egypt in the modern time has accomplished a number of mega projects each of which can be in itself interesting attraction such as the High Dam in Aswan, Bibliotheca Alexandria, Suez Canal, Cairo Tower, and Cairo Opera House and many others. Now Egypt is getting into a new era of huge construction projects including the New Administrative Capital, The Corridor of Suez Canal, the New Alamein city, the New Damietta city, the new underground lines, the Grand Egyptian Museum and more.



Some samples of cultural program components in Egypt:

- **Component (1): A day in Cairo with Pharaohs:**

Morning:

- * Pyramids of Cheops, Chephren, Mykerinus (Only remaining from Ancient World Wonders)
- * Photo stop by the Sphinx.
- * Solar Boat Museum (The boat of Cheops, buried near his pyramid so as to help him sailing in the other world).
- * Cairo Museum (Biggest collection of pharaohs treasures, contains 160,000 items)

Evening:

- * Sound & Light show by the Sphinx (A laser show narrating the history of civilization in Egypt)

- **Extension for a second day in Cairo with Pharaohs:**

Morning:

- Djoser Pyramid in Saqqara (Step pyramid built in the third dynasty, first trial of building a real pyramid)



- Open Air Museum of Memphis (The first capital of Ancient Egypt 3100 BC)
- Dahshur Pyramids (Built by Sneferu the father of Cheops and the first trial of building a smooth sided pyramid)
- Pharaonic Village (A simulation of the daily life of Ancient Egyptians)

Evening:

- * A Dinner in a Pharaonic decorated fixed or floating restaurant.

- **Component (2) A Day in Old Cairo:**

Morning:

- * Religion Complex (Amr Ibn El As Mosque, Hanging Church, and Ben Ezra Synagogue)
- * Salah Eddin Citadel (medieval Islamic fortification in Cairo).
- * Mohamed Ali Mosque (Located in Salah Eddin Citadel, a fabulous masterpiece from the Ottoman period).
- * Saints Sergius and Bacchus Church (A point of the Holy Family trip to Egypt)
- * Babylon Fortress (An ancient fortress city built around 525 BC).
- * Sultan Hassan Madrassa (Mumruk era- considered to be the peak of the Islamic architecture in Egypt)
- * Al Refaei Mosque (called the royal mosque as it contains the tombs of Khedive Ismail and many others of the Royal family of Egypt).
- * Shopping in Khan El Khalili old bazaar (Oldest market in Egypt dates back more than six centuries)

Evening:

- * Dinner in an authentic Egyptian restaurant
- * A folklore show (Different sites in Old Cairo offer music or folklore shows periodically).

- **Extension for a second day in Old Cairo:**

Morning:

- * Al Azhar Mosque (the world's oldest life university)
- * Al Husein Mosque (Where grandson of prophet Mohamed is believed to be buried).
- * Ahmed Ebn Tolon Mosque (a magnificent Islamic monument)
- * El Moez Street (The most important site from the time of Fatimid)
- * El Sehemy House (old Ottoman era house museum- recently became a center of Arabic arts, folklore shows, seminars, puppet shows)
- * Bab Zuweila Gate (One of the giant ancient Cairo's gates)

Evening:

- * Oriental Music Life Bands
- * Dinner at Al Azhar Park (A restaurant- entertainment complex on the Arabic style near old Cairo)

- **Component (3) An over-day to Alexandria:**

Morning:

- * Qaitbay Fort (a 15th -century fortress on the sea coast)
- * Bibliotheca Alexandria (The largest world public library with more than 8 million books and transcripts)
- * Catacombs of Kom El Shoqafa (considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Middle Ages)
- * Alexandria National Museum (includes 1800 masterpieces of different eras of Egypt)



- * Montazah Palace Gardens (a Royal family palace)
- * The Church of Saint Mark (oldest church in Africa)

Evening:

- * Stanley Bridge (a fantastic contemporary masterpiece with a breathtaking view on the Mediterranean Sea)
- * Cornish tour (Perfect for pedestrians' activities)
- * A concert in Alexandria Opera House

- **Extension for another day in Alexandria:**

Morning:

- * Royal Jewelry Museum (contain an inestimable collection of jewelry of the Muhammad Ali Dynasty, 19th-century paintings, statues, and decorative arts)
- * Bombay's Pillar (a Roman triumphal column- the largest of its type constructed outside the imperial capitals of Rome)
- * Roman Amphitheatre (is the only one of its type in Egypt)
- * Mosque of Abu Al Abbas Al Morsi (The biggest and most decorated mosque in Alexandria)
- * AD- The most Eastern surviving Christian monastery in Egypt)
- * Aquarium Museum (exhibits many species from the Mediterranean and Red Seas around Egypt)

Evening:

- * Shopping in the Old Bazaar or in a shopping mall

- **Component (4) An over-day to Fayum:**

Morning:

- * Kom Oshim Ruins (Karanis city from the Greco-Roman era)
- * Qarun Lake (The oldest lake in Egypt)
- * Wadi Hitan (Valley of Whales) protected area
- * Waterfalls of Wadi El Rian protected area
- * Madinet Madi (Dates back to 12th dynasty)

Evening: Back to Cairo.

- **Component (5) Luxor / Aswan Nile Cruise:**

Day 1: Luxor (East Bank):

- * Karnak Temple (The largest temple of Ancient Egypt).
- * Luxor Temple
- * Shopping in the Old Bazaar.
- * Horse Carriage tour in the old city.

Day 2: Luxor (West Bank):

- * Valley of the Kings (contains some 60 tombs).
- * Valley of the Queens, where the wives of the Pharaohs were buried, contains some 70 tombs.
- * Colossi of Memnon
- * The mortuary temples of the Temple of Hatshepsut
- * Sail overnight to Kom Ombo.



Day 3: Kom Ombo – Edfu

- * Temple of Horus, dedicated to the falcon-headed god, and considered the best preserved of all Egypt's temples.
- * The temple of the two gods Sobek and Horus.
- * Sail overnight to Aswan.

Day 4: Aswan

- * Aswan's High Dam.
- * Superb views across Lake Nasser
- * Visit of a Nubian Village.
- * Evening: Sound & Light in Philae Temple situated on the small island of Agilkia, located in the middle of the Nile.

Day 5: Aswan:

- * Nubian Museum (a collection of 3000 masterpieces from different era including the pre-historic period)
 - * Visit of the unfinished obelisk.
 - * Elephantine Island.
 - * Philae Temple.
 - * Kalabsha Temple.
 - * Shopping at the old bazaar
- **Extension to Abu Simbel Temple:**
 - * Morning flight to Abu Simbel
 - * Visit of Abu Simbel Temple & Nefertay Temple.

General Tips:

- Since it might be heavy experience for guests to keep absorbing pure cultural content during the whole trip, it is recommended to lighten the itinerary by some recreation escapes such as an overnight to Hurghada beach resort from Luxor or such as an overnight to Sidi Abdel Rahman beach resort from Alexandria. While in Cairo lots of entertainment programs could be offered by the local DMCs.
- Especially in case of having children in a group outdoor sightseeing needs to be minimized to fit into their capacity.
- More options are available for those who are fond of excavations. Such itineraries can be arranged with the DMC in order to get the required permissions.
- The above-mentioned itineraries are just samples of what Egypt could offer as a cultural destination. The time allocated to each city is the minimum. However, it is highly recommended to extend the visit in each city to have the chance to communicate with the locals and to enjoy the monuments with less rush.
- Egyptian dress-code in most of the tourist sites and public areas in Egypt is similar to the Indian one. In religious sites particularly, it is better to have the hair covered as well as the body including the stomach.