**Egypt**

**Location**

Egypt is located in northeastern Africa and southwestern Asia. It covers 385,229 square miles. Egypt lies on the coordinates 27°N, 30°E. Libya lies on Egypt’s west border, Sudan on its south, and the Mediterranean Sea rest on the north side of Egypt. On the northeastern border lies Israel, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez is on the East. Most of the country lies in Africa, but the eastern portion of Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, is usually considered Asia.

**Geography**

Egypt consists of mostly desert, divided into two unequal sections by the Nile River. Egypt is divided into four physical regions: the Western and Eastern deserts, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Nile Valley. The deserts of Egypt are made up of sandstone and limestone plateaus. Few oases break up the desert in the west and north and by the Nile Valley and Delta.

The world’s largest river lies in Egypt. The river is also considered the highway of Egypt. The Nile Valley is no more than 14 miles wide, and is green and fertile. It cuts through the desert for 750 miles to the frontier of Cairo. The Nile splits into many branches as it meets the Mediterranean Sea. This region is called the Delta.

The eastern desert is separated from the Sinai Peninsula by the Suez Canal. Numerous wadis dissect its plateau and mountains. The Sinai desert to the east consists of a limestone plateau and rugged mountains rising over 8,000 feet. The Sinai Desert creates the only land bridge between two continents.

**Climate**

The climate of Egypt varies from place to place. Egypt is usually hot and dry in the summer with moderate winters. It is characterized by a hot season from May to September and a
cool season from November to March. Temperatures increase from north and south in parallel with the aridity. In the Delta, it is more moderate with summer temperatures averaging 90 to 100°F Fahrenheit. There is high humidity near the Mediterranean coast with an average rainfall of eight inches in the winter.

The rest of the country is hot in the summer with temperatures ranging from 100 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit. In the winter, there is an average of 65 degrees Fahrenheit and it is cold in the evening.

The highest temperatures are usually recorded in spring, during the period of the khamasin, a hot, dry wind. The period from April to June lasts for at least three to four days bringing dust, sandstorms, and reducing humidity under 10 percent.

History

Two kingdoms ruled Egypt. About 3100 B.C., the two kingdoms united under the ruler, Menes. The unification gave rise to the first stable dynasty of the king. After 2,500 years, the Persian conquered the great empire in 525 B.C. Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. took over Egypt and became the most permanent ruler. In the 7th century A.D., the Arab rulers from Damascus conquered Egypt and introduced them to Islam. In 1771, Saladin, became the ruler. By the 1500s, Egypt had become a providence of the Ottoman Turks (March). At the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire left Egypt with its own kings, but under British rule. A group of Egyptian army officers seized power in 1952, declaring Egypt a republic. Colonel Gamal Abdel led the group of army officers and by 1956; he was Egypt’s first president and ruled till 1970. Two wars with Israel followed in 1967 and 1973 after Egypt gained control of the Suez Canal from Britain in 1956. The Israelis seized Sinai, but President Anwar Sadat, leader from
1970-1981, made a deal with Israel for its return. Sadat was assassinated in 1981 and Hosni Mubarak took his place as president.

**Important Dates**


**Flag**

The Egyptian flag has red and black bands. An eagle rests in the middle, which represents Egypt’s struggle to become a republic. The white band represents a bright future for the country.

**Population**

In July 2001, a census was taken on the population of Egypt. There is an estimate of 69,536,644 people living in Egypt. Ninety percent of the population lives in the Nile Valley and the Delta. The population growth rate was 1.69 percent in 2001. The birth rate was 25 per 1,000 people and the death rate was eight per 1,000 people. The male life expectancy is 60 and the female is 64.

**Currency**

The Egyptian pound (LE) or ginih is the local currency. It consists of 100 piasters. The money is marked in English on one side and Arabic on the other, and only colors and numerals
separate the different denominations, e.g.: LE1, brown; LE5, blue; LE10, red and LE20, green.

In August 1991, the exchange rate was LE3.30 to one U.S. dollar.

Currency regulations are strict and must be adhered to. All foreign money must be declared on arrival into the country. Credit cards and travelers' checks are honored in most hotels, restaurants and tourist shops.

**Education**

The state pays for the education of children. There are free state schools as well as private schools and religious schools. The government feels that they have the right to teach the students subjects that will benefit the country. After elementary school, the students take an exam before going on to intermediate school. After a child has reached the age of 12, they are either sent to new vocational and industrial training centers or they can go onto high school. Some students will go to one of the four state universities or many colleges.

**Language**

Arabic is the official language of the Egyptians. Only well educated people easily understand standard Arabic. English and French is also widely understood by well-educated people. Colloquial Egyptian Arabic is the language of daily conversation. There are also a few minorities that speak other languages.

Arabic is read from right to left and has its own alphabet. Even though Arabic was brought to Egypt out of the country, some say that its alphabet was developed from the signs of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

**Religion**

Islam is the official religion of Egypt. Ninety-four percent is Muslim (Sunni). Islam came to Egypt with the Arabs in 640 A.D. They believe that Muhammad was the chosen
prophet. They pray five times a day and their holy book is called the Koran. At least once in their lives, the Muslims have to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

The largest minority religion is Coptic Christians. The Coptic Christians and other minority religions amount to six percent of the population.

Agriculture

Agriculture in Egypt was and still is the principle business. Nearly two-thirds of the Egyptian population is peasants whose lives are lived along the Nile. These people work the land and produce a lot of the agriculture of Egypt.

Egypt’s area of cultivable land is small, but very fertile. There is no part of Egypt where agriculture is possible with the help of irrigation. Most of this land is located for the most part along the Nile and in the Delta. Almost every piece of land grows at least two crops a year.

Cotton is Egypt’s most important crop, which is mainly grown in the Delta. It is considered to be the finest cotton in the world. Some other crops that are grown in Egypt are cereals, fruits, vegetables, and animal fodder. Dates are Egypt’s most common fruit. Maize production has expanded and is now a major crop.

Trade

Before industrialization, agriculture provided most of Egypt’s exports, but by 1998, it was only six percent of the exports. Oil makes up about half of Egypt’s exports, but cotton is considered the most important export crop. It exports poultry, fruits, vegetables, sugar, and rice.

Egypt now imports about a quarter of the cereals it needs and a much higher proportion of the meat and dairy products. It also needs to buy two-thirds of its food supply from other countries and borrows money from abroad.

Food
Mutton, buffalo, and pigeon are the main ingredients for many dishes. Yet meat is a luxury, which poor people only eat twice a year during festival. Fresh bread is usually at every meal. It is made fresh daily and different types of bread are used in different parts of Egypt. Vegetables are widely available. During a normal evening meal, hot vegetable stew is made and dipped in with homemade bread.

The national dish of Egypt is fool. A popular and inexpensive way that fool is prepared is called Fool Medamis. It is the crushed fava bean mixed with cotton oil and served as a paste with salt.

**Landmarks**

In the country of Egypt, there are many places to visit and see. Cairo, the capital city of Egypt, has places that you must see. The Egyptian Museum in Tahir Square contains more than 1,000 relics and has the largest collection of local and international Pharoanic and Byzantine art and sculpture. The Cairo Tower at 187 meters or 613 feet tall, is the city’s modern landmark.

In Giza, the Great Pyramid of Khufu and the other pyramids is a site. The pyramids contain royal tombs that are open for exploration by tourist. The Sphinx is also located in Giza. It has the head of the pharaoh, Chephren, or of a god and a body of a lion.

Some other sites to see in Egypt are: The Step Pyramid of Djoser, the Avenue of Sphinxes near the ancient city of Thebes, the Valley of the Kings, where the pharaohs of Thebes were buried and the Temple of Abu Simel, which is the largest of Egypt’s temples. There are many more other sites to visit in Egypt. If you want to see them all, a long, well-planned vacation might be in order.

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