

The Glory Of The Pharaohs Lives On In Luxor

By Ian Stalker

Egyptian tourism authorities want visitors to view some of the splendor and Luxor-y that the storied Pharaohs enjoyed.



While Cairo's Sphinx and Pyramids are the dominant signs of Egypt, the more southerly city of Luxor offers a stunning wealth of reminders of the Pharaonic age, with new legacies of that golden era continually being unearthed by archeologists.

The city, once known as Thebes and renamed Luxor – which

translates as The Palaces – includes among its attractions Karnak and Luxor Temples, as well as the Valleys of the Kings and Queens, home to the tombs of Pharaonic nobility, including King Tutankhamen.

“Thirty per cent of the antiquities around the world are in Luxor,” declares Luxor-based guide

Luxor Statue



Mahmoud Awad. “We consider Luxor the biggest open-air museum in the world. The whole city is an archeological site. The golden age of Egypt is here.”

The Karnak Temples – built over some 2,000 years -- underscores Luxor’s glory, reportedly being the largest ancient religious site in the world. It has been described as a “fabulous collection of ancient buildings and structures, columns, courtyards, statues, pylons and obelisk, even a sacred lake.”

Afficionados of British superspy James Bond may recall Karnak Temples being one of the settings in the Roger Moore movie *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

Luxor Temple is near Karnak Temples and has pylons, statues, columns and colonnades, one of them 100 meters long. Also found are courtyards and an obelisk, with its twin obelisk now displayed in Paris.

Luxor – free of pollution and which has little traffic -- is divided by the Nile River and those who cross to the West Bank can enter tombs in both the Valley of the Queens and Valley of the Kings, with the latter home to Tutankhamen’s tomb. Visitors can see his sarcophagus,

a gilded coffin and his mummy.

The west side of the Nile is also home to the towering Colossi of Memnon, which date back 3,400 years.

Luxor’s economy is heavily dependent on tourism, with the city serving as the northern terminus for Nile River cruises that link it with Aswan, and home to many hotels, restaurants and stores that sell the likes of alabaster vases, papyrus paintings and other distinctly Egyptian crafts.

Modern hotels await guests, and another lodging option is the storied Winter Palace Hotel, once the retreat of an Egyptian monarch and which hosted the likes of Agatha Christie, who reportedly penned the novel *Death on the Nile* there. The Winter Palace is now a Sofitel.

Caleche rides along palm tree-lined boulevard are available, giving passengers a relaxed look at the Nile, desert landscapes and, Awad reminds visitors, constant insights of the greatness of ancient Egypt.

“You can stay here for a month or a year or two years and you will still not be able to see everything,” Awad declares.