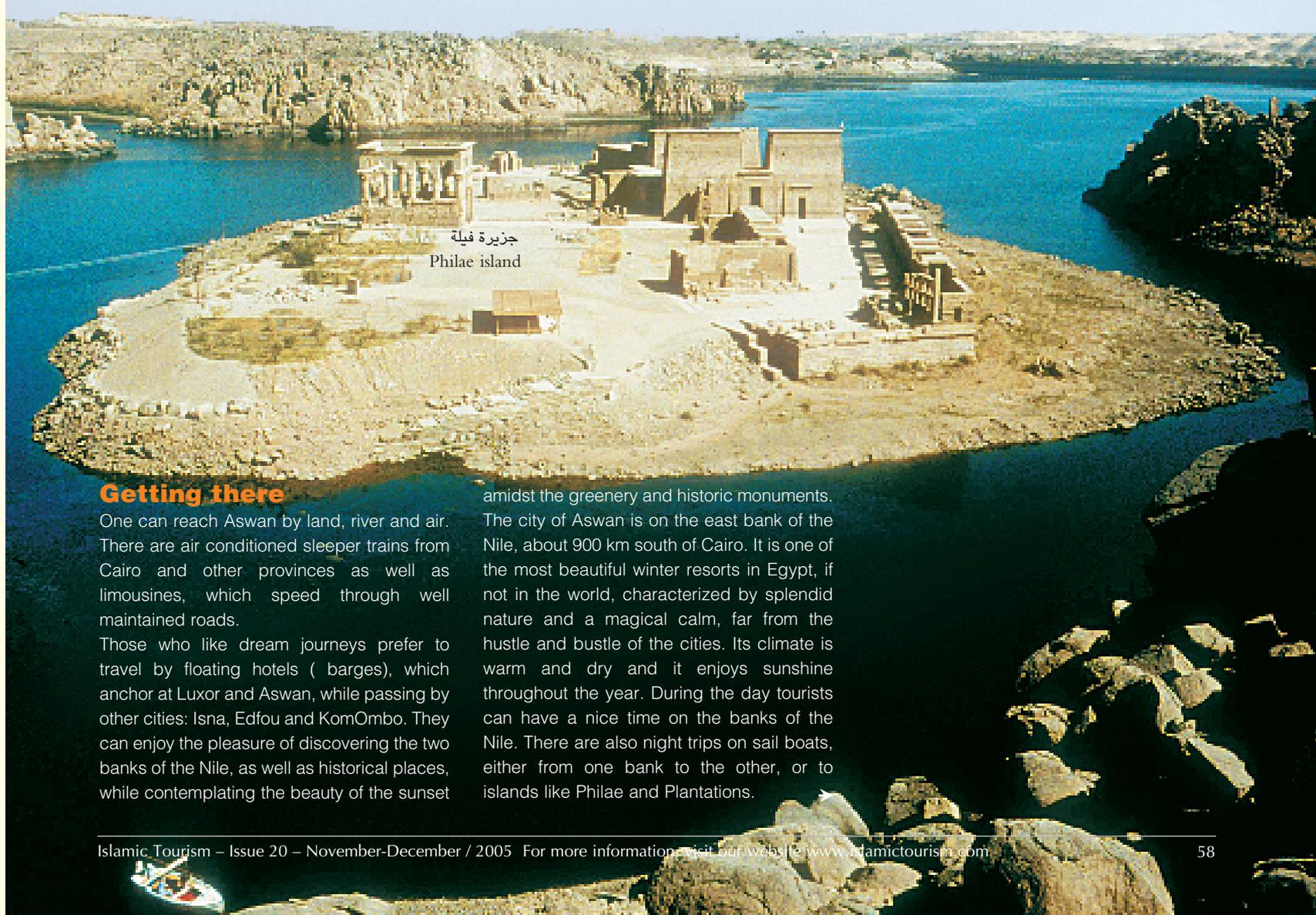


Aswan

A Journey To The Land Of The Pharaohs

Aswan - Moushira El-Fishawy

Aswan is an enchanting city in the deep south of Egypt. It is an area of permanent sunshine and greenery. This bewitching city has a perfect smile, which is reflected on the waters of the eternal Nile. It tells the Nile the glories of the pharaohs and successive generations that marked the history of this country. Its High Dam is a witness to the strong will of the Egyptians and their ability to turn the impossible into reality and create a better life for themselves and for future generations. This is the city of Aswan.



جزيرة فيلة
Philae island

Getting there

One can reach Aswan by land, river and air. There are air conditioned sleeper trains from Cairo and other provinces as well as limousines, which speed through well maintained roads.

Those who like dream journeys prefer to travel by floating hotels (barges), which anchor at Luxor and Aswan, while passing by other cities: Isna, Edfou and KomOmbo. They can enjoy the pleasure of discovering the two banks of the Nile, as well as historical places, while contemplating the beauty of the sunset

amidst the greenery and historic monuments. The city of Aswan is on the east bank of the Nile, about 900 km south of Cairo. It is one of the most beautiful winter resorts in Egypt, if not in the world, characterized by splendid nature and a magical calm, far from the hustle and bustle of the cities. Its climate is warm and dry and it enjoys sunshine throughout the year. During the day tourists can have a nice time on the banks of the Nile. There are also night trips on sail boats, either from one bank to the other, or to islands like Philae and Plantations.



Kalabsha Temple

معبد كلابشة

Aswan's historic treasures

The city of Aswan shelters many important sites. One finds the strongest fortresses of Egypt on its southern borders. In front of the old Cataract Hotel, is Philae Island with the remains of stone temples from different historic times, such as the Temple of Khnum, constructed during the era of the former empire and rebuilt at the end of the Pharaonic era. The island also has a nilometre dating back to Roman times, that marked the level of the river using two languages: Greek and Arabic. The island's museum has important collections of artefacts dating from the times of the Greeks and Romans.

Plantations Island is situated in the middle of the Nile, near Khnum island. It is one of the most beautiful islands with plants and trees from the hot regions of the world. Visitors can admire the vegetation – and shelter in its shade.

One also finds an incomplete obelisk measuring 41 meters and weighing more than 1,150 tons. It shows how the old Egyptians made the obelisks sculptures. Nearby is the Fatimide cemetery, containing hundreds of brick tombs, dating from the 9th century.

The Philae temple is dedicated to the Goddess Isis. It was flooded by the Nile and has been relocated on Agilika Island some 500 meters from its original site on Philae Island. Its buildings include Hathor Temple where, every evening, visitors can enjoy shows in different languages.

The Temple of Aswan

We paid a quick visit to the Nubian Museum in Aswan. Its restoration is the crowning glory of an international effort, led by UNESCO. The museum has 3,000 historic pieces from different eras: prehistoric, Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic and Islamic. One also finds the small Museum of Aswan with a collection

of pieces discovered in Aswan and Nuba, such as the mummy of the Holy Veal representing the God Khatoum.

Moving towards the west bank of the Nile, there are a number of monuments and places of interest to visitors, such as the cemeteries of the nobles, that are sculpted on the rocks of the western mountain in front of the north zone of the city of Aswan, dating back to the 23 century B. C. The engravings on the walls of these cemeteries reveal the role that these nobles played in protecting the country. They also tell us about their journeys through Africa.

One cannot go to Plantations Island without visiting the temple of the Agha Khan, whose mausoleum is a beautiful work of Fatimide architecture. He was the leader of the Ismailite community and spent every winter in Aswan. For many years after this death, his wife Begum Agha Khan placed a rose on the tomb every day. ➔



Villa of the Beghum Kahn and river Nile

فيلا بيغوم خان على نهر النيل



General view

منظر عام



Cataract Hotel

فندق كاتاراكت



Nile and Oberol Hotel

النيل وفندق أوبرول

Near the mausoleum is the monastery of Al-Anba Samaan, that dates back to the 6th century. It is one of the most important and most beautiful Coptic monasteries with engravings of Christ and the saints.

Monuments of Kom Ombo and Edfous

About 45 km to the north of Aswan, one finds the temple of Kom Ombo, built on an overhanging, elevated hill overlooking the Nile. One can go there by boat while contemplating the beautiful landscapes. The walls of this temple include engravings representing old surgical and dental instruments, saws and bones. Nearby, one finds three mummified crocodiles in the Hathor kiosk. Every Tuesday there is a camel market near Kom Ombo where animals from the north of Sudan are sold.

Edfou city, is situated about 105 km from Aswan. The journey is pleasant and the city has some of the finest preserved temples in

Egypt visited by thousands of tourists and lovers of ancient history. It has been built during the reign of the Ptolemies and dedicated to the God Horus. This temple, with a nilometer and places for offerings, combines Greek and Pharaonic architecture and competes with those of Luxor. In its dimensions it is second to that of Karnak.

Nuba

For a long time Nuba was the kingdom of the former Kush: the land spreading all along the Nile between Aswan in the north and Khartoum to the south. In the cemeteries one finds big pictures and prominent engravings depicting the Nubians as mercenaries or traders. The Nubians, talented architects, have always preserved their traditions and customs. They are characterized by the dark color of their skin and have their own language. Most of them emigrated to Aswan and Kom Ombo or to Sudan, after the waters of the High Dam flooded their territory. Nuba

has multiple historic sites, a temple, a number of fortresses and cemeteries such as Dendour, Lissi, Amada or Wadi Al-Sebowa.

Kalabsha Temple

Situated on the east bank of the Nile, this temple dates back to the Greco-Roman era. It was constructed by the emperor Octavius Augustus in the year 30 B.C., in recognition of the Nubian God of Fertility, Mandoles. At the same time the Kertassi kiosk was transferred together with two columns crowned by the bust of Hathor. The temple on the west bank of the Nile was situated about 55 km from Aswan but has been rebuilt and relocated next to the High Dam in 1970. It is one of the biggest temples made from Nubian stone and sand. Its walls are covered with texts and engravings, presenting a very beautiful picture of the inside, which overlooks the magnificent landscape of Nasser Lake. Nearby, there ➤



Kalabsha Temple on Nasser lake

معبد كلابشة على بحيرة ناصر



The temples were relocated after they were threatened with submersion by the construction of the High Dam. This massive feat of engineering between 1964 1968 was made possible with the help of 45 countries and one of UNESCO's biggest campaigns.

are other monuments of Ramses II sculpted to the feet of the mounts representing his military strength. There is also the house of the Wali with engravings glorifying the victories of the Nubians, Ethiopians, Asians and Libyans. One also finds exquisitely coloured engravings inside the temple of Ramses presenting offerings to the Gods.

The Temple of Abu Simbel

About 280 km to the south of Aswan is a beautiful esplanade sheltering one of the marvelous historic monuments of the world, built by the most famous Pharaoh, Ramses II. He also constructed another temple for himself and another for his beautiful wife Nefertiti more than 3000 years ago. The temples were relocated after they were threatened with submersion by the construction of the High Dam. This massive feat of engineering between 1964 - 1968 was made possible with the help of 45 countries and one of UNESCO's

biggest campaigns.

The plan of the temples of Abu Simbel are unique. The big temple is characterized by its main facade decorated with four gigantic statues of Ramses II sitting on his throne with the double crown of Higher and Lower Egypt. This temple has been reserved for the worship of the God Hour, the Sun God. The rays of the sun shine on the statue of Ramses II every year on his birthday on 22 February as well as on October 22, the date of his enthronement. A few meters from this big temple, one finds the small temple of Simbel built for his beautiful wife Nefertiti. It is called the temple of Hathor, Goddess of love and beauty. The facade of this temple is decorated with six statues: four of Ramses II and two of his wife Nefertiti, as well as engravings representing Ramses II and Nefertiti presenting offerings to the Gods.

The High Dam

Egypt dreamt of building the High Dam in

Aswan to protect it from floods that continually ravaged the agricultural region. Throughout the year, the dam harnesses these waters for irrigation, drinking and energy production. The second largest artificial lake in world, Nasser Lake, is part of the dam. It resembles a nature reserve home to migrating birds and rare marine animals and an ideal place for tourists' relaxation. The lake is about 500 km long with about 350 km in Sudan. Its contours follow the beds of the streams that it flooded: Allaki, Kalabcha, Adandan and Touchki.

Since 1993, the High Dam and the lake have been a focal point for tourists. The Europeans are especially fond of boat trips from Aswan to Abu Simbel. The British relive the adventures of their travellers and historians who explored Egypt in days goneby and thousands of Arab tourists make their way to Egypt to bask in the ancient heritage and enjoy some of Islam's famous sites. ■