

EGYPT – LUXOR

First Impressions

My wife and I travelled to Luxor on a cruise and stay package, one week cruising on the Nile visiting all the sights and one week r&r in the le Meridien Hotel. On arrival we were appalled by the poverty and filthy state of the area as we approached the



Eastway Dock. The entrance to the dock itself was no more than a slum and I speak as a guy who was brought up in a quite undesirable area myself. After boarding our River Cruiser and settling in our cabin I decided to grab a taxi and call at the local Pharmacy for some supplies. The taxi driver ripped me off and I was plagued by the world and his brother for “baksheesh” (money for

nothing) as soon as I stepped out of the taxi. I didn't hang around and made a quick return to the boat. As we set off on our cruise I couldn't help but feel that a week in this City wasn't going to be something that we would look forward to with relish!

It's not all doom

After a wonderful week on the Nile Cruise (RA II) we docked in Luxor and were painlessly transferred to our 5 star hotel, the Le Meridien. A really nice hotel situated

right on the Nile facing the Valley of the Kings with the entrance on the Main Street, a tatty dual carriageway. Immediately you leave to confines of the hotel you are at the mercy of every taxi, Callesh (horse drawn carriage) driver or Felucca (boat) owner who just will not take no for an answer, and



will follow you for an eternity and badger you beyond belief. This is probably the biggest downer in Egypt and the main reason why I personally have no desire to

return. Having said that, the taxi's and Callesh are incredibly cheap to use. It is important you agree a price before you board and stick with it, there are no metres,



but allow for a tip if the service is good.

One Callesh driver (Omar – carriage No.99) took us on a two hour trip, broken in the middle by a visit to the excellent museum, round Luxor including through the old market bazaar which was truly amazing. If only they wouldn't hassle more people I'm sure would use them.

Of course the Luxor and Karnak temples are

awesome and the Valley of the Kings is truly one of the most wondrous sites in the world but there are still some treasures less well known in the City. Take for instance the Winter Palace Luxor's most prestigious hotel with an enviable location along the Nile corniche next to the Luxor Temple. A favourite watering hole of President Nasser amongst many other rich and famous guests, where you can enjoy excellent food or afternoon tea at very reasonable prices.

The Old Market is also worth a visit in spite of the non stop hassle. This is where you can find your bargains at very low prices and barter non stop.

Restaurants and MacDonal's

Yes there's no escaping the Big Mac, whether it's Luxor or the Pyramids at Cairo you can always get a Big Fix, sorry



Mac. We chose not to and instead explored the local restaurants.

There are plenty to choose from although they all seem to have the same menu, but the way it is cooked and served varies a great deal. With exotic names like Maxims (great name, awful food) or the good old English Pub (about the same standard as the good old English pub) or the more up market Snobs (really good food actually), tucked away down a street opposite the hotel you can eat very cheaply and in

all fairness quite well. Not many serve alcohol and the ones that do only serve the local wines and beers which are quite disappointing.

This may sound like a good old moan and I appreciate that many tourists visit year after year but for me this was my last visit to Luxor, I would have liked to hire a car and see a little more of the area but this is not encouraged due to the number of terrorist incidents reported, and unreported. I didn't actually see a car hire place to be honest although I wasn't looking.



It also needs mentioning that due to the serious number of fatalities over the years in the various incidents there is a huge armed police presence to protect the tourists, the lifeblood of the local economy. They are everywhere and although this has lowered the crime rate it doesn't add to the holiday experience we all seek.

All in all Luxor is a popular resort but, after a week cruising the Nile I would recommend you take your second week on the Red Sea Coast where you can swim in the crystal clear sea and relax, after all that's what we all need to do when we take a holiday don't we???