

Cairo

Egypt

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Cairo is the modern heart of a region with more than 5,000 years of history, and today it is Africa's largest metropolis, home to more than 20 million people in the greater urban area. The Nile splits the city in two, and the open desert begins right at its western edge. Few cities pack this much history into one visit: thousands of years of pharaonic, Islamic, and modern history sit within a short taxi ride of each other.

A visit here suits travelers who want to see world-famous ancient sites without giving up city life — museums, markets, and Nile-side cafes are as much a part of the experience as the monuments themselves. Cairo is crowded, loud, and always moving; it rewards visitors who stay patient and flexible. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist *Naguib Mahfouz* spent his life writing about the city's streets and cafes, and many of the neighborhoods he described are still recognizable today.

When to visit

Cairo has a hot desert climate. Winter (December to February) is mild and pleasant, spring and autumn are warm, and summer (June to September) is extremely hot with little relief after dark. Rain is rare year-round.

Plan around **Ramadan** if you can. Its dates shift each year with the Islamic lunar calendar, but during the month many restaurants and shops close during the day and reopen after sunset, when the city fills with lantern-lit streets, special foods, and an evening energy unlike the rest of the year. Expect shorter daytime opening hours before iftar.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 25° Feels like 17°	8° / 5°	22 sunny days · Dry air
February	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 28° Feels like 18°	8° / 5°	20 sunny days · Dry air
March	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 33° Feels like 22°	10° / 7°	26 sunny days · Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	30° / 38° Feels like 27°	14° / 10°	26 sunny days · Dry air · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 5 days above 35°
May	Fair Fair for sightseeing	35° / 41°	18° / 14°	28 sunny days · Dry air · UV 10 (Very high) · Up to 15 days above 35°
June	Poor Poor for sightseeing	38° / 43°	21° / 17°	30 sunny days · UV 11 (Extreme) · Up to 26 days above 35°
July	Poor Poor for sightseeing	40° / 43°	22° / 20°	31 sunny days · Humid air · UV 11 (Extreme) · Up to 31 days above 35°
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	39° / 42°	23° / 21°	31 sunny days · Humid air · UV 10 (Very high) · Up to 31 days above 35°
September	Poor Poor for sightseeing	37° / 41°	21° / 18°	30 sunny days · Humid air · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 23 days above 35°
October	Good Good for sightseeing	32° / 37°	18° / 15°	29 sunny days
November	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 32°	14° / 11°	25 sunny days · Dry air
December	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27° Feels like 19°	10° / 6°	22 sunny days · Dry air

Best months: January, February, March, April, November, December

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

A Great Pyramid of Khufu is the last surviving wonder of the ancient world, and still the main reason most travelers come to Cairo. It sits on the Giza plateau alongside two smaller pyramids and B Great Sphinx of Giza, carved from a single block of limestone over 4,500 years ago.

C Grand Egyptian Museum sits close to the pyramids and holds the full Tutankhamun collection along with thousands of other pharaonic artifacts, in one of the largest archaeological museums in the world.

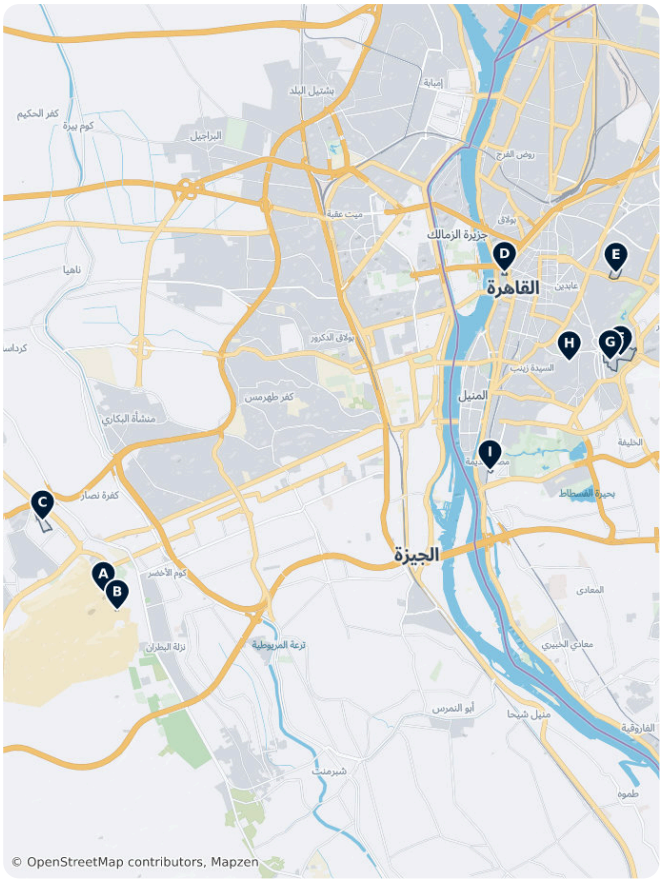
D Egyptian Museum, in Tahrir Square, is the older of Cairo's two great Egyptology museums, still packed with treasures found long before the newer museum opened.

E Khan el-Khalili is Cairo's historic covered market, packed with spice, perfume, and souvenir stalls in alleys that have traded goods since the 14th century.

F Salah El Din Citadel, a medieval hilltop fortress, gives the best panoramic view over the old city and holds the 19th-century G Mosque of Muhammad Ali inside its walls.

H Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun is one of the oldest mosques in Egypt still in its original form, known for its spiral minaret and huge open courtyard.

I Hanging Church, built above an old Roman gate, is the centerpiece of Coptic Cairo, a walled quarter of churches and a synagogue tracing Egypt's Christian history back to its earliest centuries.



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What to experience

Cairo is best experienced from the Nile itself and in its old coffeehouses, not only from its monuments.

- Sail the Nile at sunset on a traditional wooden felucca — no engine, just the wind, with the sky turning orange behind the skyline.
- Watch a Tanoura (whirling dervish) performance at Wikala al-Ghuri, a free, high-energy show of spinning dancers held in a restored 16th-century merchants' hall.
- Order tea or coffee and a shisha pipe at a downtown ahwa (coffeehouse), where backgammon games run late into the night.
- Ride the elevator up Cairo Tower at sunset for a 360-degree view over the Nile as the city lights come on.

Day trips

Some of Egypt's most important ancient sites sit within a short drive of Cairo, from pyramid fields quieter than Giza to a lush oasis and the Mediterranean coast.

- **Saqqara and Dahshur** — about 45–60 minutes by car. Home to the Step Pyramid of Djoser, Egypt's oldest stone pyramid, and the smooth-sided Bent and Red Pyramids at Dahshur, earlier experiments that came before Giza's design. Far fewer crowds than Giza.
- **Memphis** — about 45 minutes by car, usually combined with Saqqara. An open-air museum on the site of ancient Egypt's first capital, with a huge fallen statue of Ramses II.
- Ⓐ Faiyum Oasis — about 1.5–2 hours by car. A lake, palm groves, and waterfalls at Wadi El Rayan, plus the UNESCO-listed Wadi Al-Hitan (Whale Valley), where 40-million-year-old whale skeletons sit exposed in the desert.
- Ⓑ Alexandria — about 2.5–3 hours by train. Egypt's Mediterranean port city, with a breezier, more relaxed feel than Cairo, a modern Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and Greco-Roman ruins from its ancient past.



Where to explore

Giza is technically its own city, but it sits directly across the Nile from central Cairo and functions as part of the same metropolis. It's where the pyramids, the Sphinx, and the Grand Egyptian Museum are located, and most visitors treat it as an extension of a Cairo stay rather than a separate trip.

Getting there

- **By air**: Cairo International Airport (CAI) is the main gateway, about 15 km northeast of downtown. A taxi or ride-hailing car to the center takes 30–45 minutes depending on traffic and costs roughly 150–300 EGP; there is no direct train link to the airport.
- **By train**: Ramses Station is Cairo's main rail hub, with connections to Alexandria (about 2.5 hours) and overnight sleeper trains south to Luxor and Aswan. Online booking through Egyptian National Railways is limited for foreign passport holders — buying tickets at the station or through a travel agent is more reliable.
- **By bus**: Long-distance coaches to Alexandria, the Red Sea coast, and Sinai leave from terminals including Cairo Gateway (Turgoman) and Almaza.

Getting around

- **Metro**: The Cairo Metro is Africa's oldest and one of its busiest, with three lines covering much of the city. Buy a paper ticket at a station window or vending machine before each ride, or use a rechargeable contactless card for repeat trips; one car per train is reserved for women only.
- **Taxi / ride-hailing**: Street taxis rarely use their meters, so agree on a price before getting in, or use Uber or Careem, which set the fare upfront and are the practical default for most visitors.
- **On foot**: Downtown, Islamic Cairo, and Zamalek are walkable in parts, but sidewalks are inconsistent and crossing wide roads takes some nerve — Cairenes cross in gaps between moving cars rather than waiting for a signal.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Central districts like Downtown, Islamic Cairo, and Zamalek reward walking, but sidewalks are inconsistent and traffic is heavy, so short taxi or metro hops between areas are common.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Chaotic traffic and a near-total absence of bike lanes make cycling impractical for visitors.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: No. Cairo traffic is dense and largely unmarked, stressful even for confident drivers; drivers routinely ignore lane markings and traffic signals. Taxis, ride-hailing, and organized day trips cover the city and nearby sites without the hassle.
- **Parking**: Hotels generally offer valet parking. Street parking is informal, with attendants who expect a small tip for watching the car.
- **Restrictions**: No congestion charge or low-emission zone, but central streets around Tahrir Square and the Citadel see heavy security checkpoints and occasional closures.

Food & drink

Cairo's food scene runs from street-side carts to Nile-view fine dining, but the everyday classics are best found at simple, no-frills counters rather than restaurants aimed at tourists.

For a good concentration of options, head to Zamalek or Downtown for the wider restaurant and café scene, or to the alleys around Khan el-Khalili for historic coffeehouses serving tea and shisha. Alcohol is only served in some restaurants, bars, and hotels rather than everywhere, so don't expect it with every meal.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Ful Medames · فول مدمس
Mashed and slow-cooked fava beans, usually seasoned with lemon, garlic, and olive oil, eaten with bread.

Ta'ameya · طعمية
Egyptian-style falafel made from fava beans instead of chickpeas, fried and served in bread.

LUNCH

Koshari · كشري
A filling mix of rice, lentils, macaroni, and chickpeas topped with crispy onions and spiced tomato sauce — Egypt's best-known comfort food.

DINNER

Molokhia · ملوخية
A garlicky green soup made from jute leaves, usually served over rice with chicken or rabbit.

Kofta and Kebab · كفتة وكباب
Grilled minced or skewered meat, a street-grill and restaurant staple across the country.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Konafa · كنافة
A sweet pastry of thin, shredded dough layered with cream, nuts, or cheese, soaked in syrup.

Basbousa · بسبوسة
A dense semolina cake soaked in sugar syrup, often topped with almonds or coconut.

DRINKS

Karkade · كركديه
A tart hibiscus-flower infusion served hot or cold, one of Egypt's most common non-alcoholic drinks.

Egyptian Tea · شاي
Strong black tea, often sweetened heavily, offered as a standard gesture of hospitality.

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Safety & health

Cairo is generally safe for tourists; violent crime against visitors is rare. The more common issues are petty scams: unsolicited "guides" near the pyramids and Khan el-Khalili who push tours or shops, perfume or papyrus sellers offering a "free gift" that comes with pressure to buy, and camel or horse handlers at Giza who demand a large tip mid-ride before letting you off. Agree on any price out loud, with a witness if possible, before you start.

Traffic is the biggest everyday hazard — pedestrians do not have the right of way, and crossing busy streets means watching gaps in traffic rather than waiting for a signal. Small tips (baksheesh) are commonly expected for minor services, like bathroom attendants or unsolicited "help," even when not asked for.

Women traveling alone may face street harassment, including staring and comments. Dressing modestly and traveling with others in the evening reduces most of it, and the women-only metro car is a reliable option when public transit feels uncomfortable.

History

Cairo as a city dates to 969 CE, when Fatimid conquerors founded al-Qahira ("the victorious") as a new capital north of the older garrison town of Fustat. The area's history goes back far further, though: the pyramids at Giza and the pharaonic capital of Memphis nearby predate the city itself by more than 3,500 years, which is why Cairo is often described as a young city built beside an ancient one.

Successive dynasties left their mark on the skyline. The Fatimids founded Al-Azhar Mosque in 970 CE, one of the world's oldest continuously operating universities, and later Mamluk sultans added grand mosque-madrasas like Sultan Hassan Mosque. Centuries later, the Ottoman-appointed ruler *Muhammad Ali Pasha* rebuilt Egypt's military and economy and crowned his rule with the mosque that still bears his name atop Salah El Din Citadel.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Egypt at a glance:

CURRENCY
EGP LE

ELECTRICITY

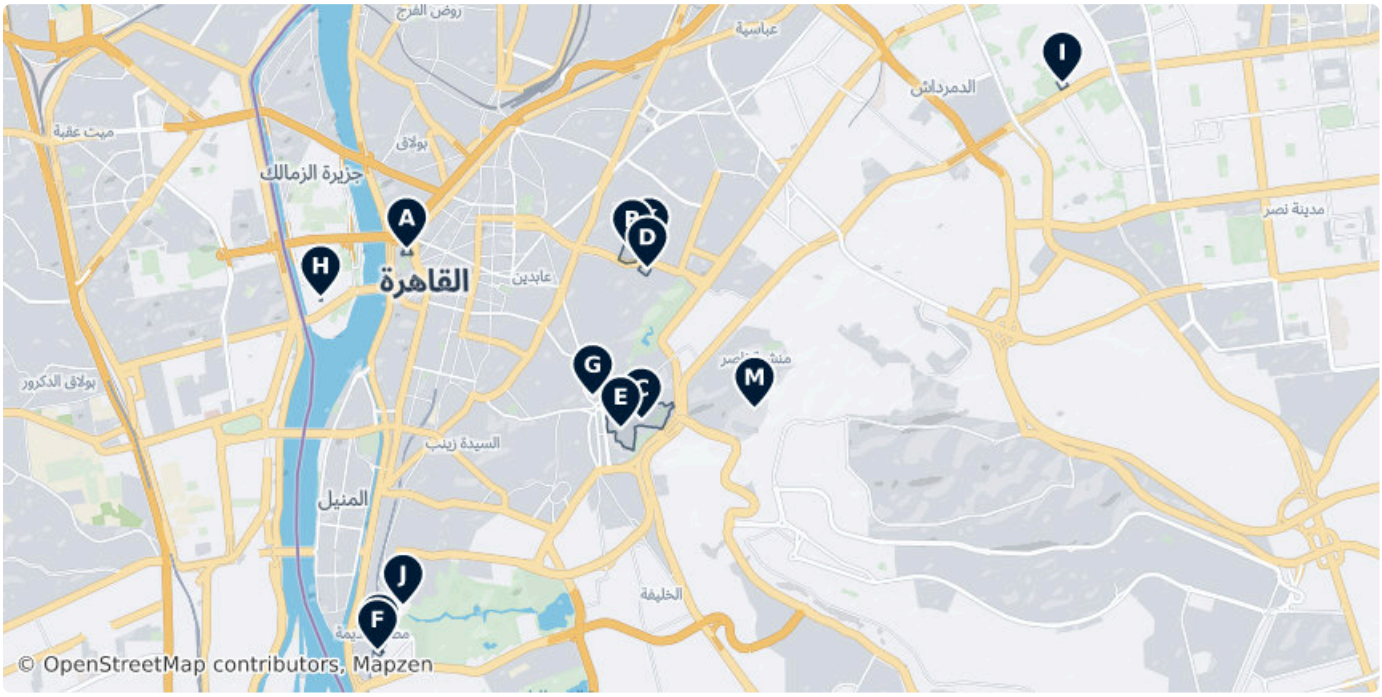
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LANGUAGES
Arabic

TAP WATER
Not safe to drink

Cairo Essentials

Cairo's historical landscape spans pharaonic treasures at the Egyptian Museum and medieval fortifications at the Salah El Din Citadel. The city's religious architecture includes the 10th-century Al-Azhar Mosque, the Mamluk-style Sultan Hassan Mosque, and the Hanging Church in Old Cairo. Cultural highlights range from the sprawling 14th-century Khan el-Khalili bazaar to the world's largest collection of Coptic artifacts. Modern sites, such as the pyramid-shaped Unknown Soldier Memorial and the Museum of Egyptian Modern Arts, complement ancient landmarks like the Mosque of Amr ibn al-As, Egypt's first mosque.





A Egyptian Museum

This history museum showcases a tremendous collection of pharaonic antiquities including mummies and other items found in tombs.

Cairo, Egypt (30.04783, 31.23357)

Mo–Sa	09:00–21:00
Su	09:00–16:00

egyptianmuseumcairo.eg/emc/ar/, +20 25782448



B Khan el-Khalili

Khan el-Khalili is a busy bazaar that will dazzle you with its traditional atmosphere, this is simply the place to go if you want to...

Gohar Al Kaed, El-gamaleya, Qism El-gamaleya, Cairo, Egypt (30.04767, 31.26119)



C Salah El Din Citadel

Salah El Din Citadel was completed in 1183 and throughout its history, this fortification not only protected the city but it also served as...

El Qalaa, Cairo, Egypt (30.02981, 31.26230)

Mo–Su 09:00–16:00

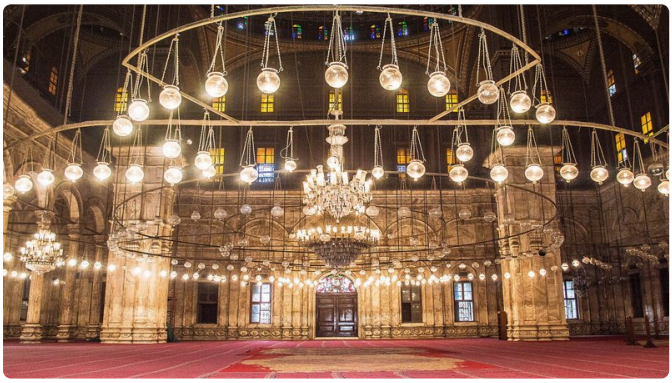


D El Azhar Mosque

Established in 972, Al-Azhar represents the oldest mosque and the oldest operating university in Cairo with more than thousand years of...

4 Haret El Elaish, Cairo, Egypt (30.04578, 31.26301)

Mo–Su 08:00–16:00



E Mosque of Muhammad Ali

Also known as the Alabaster Mosque, this mosque with two minarets is one of the most popular landmarks in the city.

Al Mathaf Al Harby Al Qawmy Street, El-Darb El-Ahmar, Cairo, 11636, Egypt (30.02887, 31.25975)



F Saint Virgin Mary's Church

Visiting this famous monument of Coptic Christians is a must. Also known as the Hanging Church, the building is embellished with hundred of...

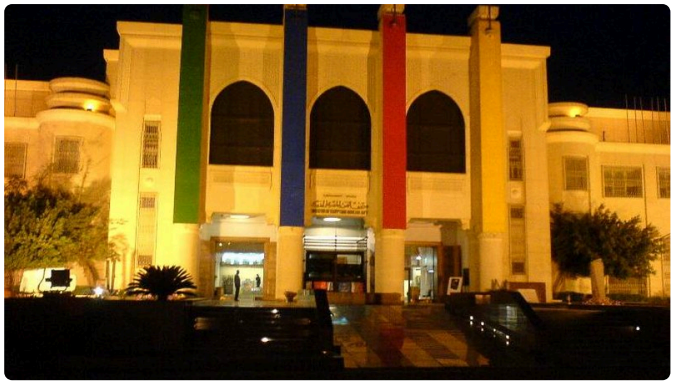
30 Mary Gerges Street, Cairo, Egypt (30.00529, 31.22999)



G Sultan Hassan Mosque

An eye-candy for the lovers of Islamic architecture as it features many unusual elements - large wooden dome or twin minarets.

(Unnamed Road), Cairo, Egypt (30.03227, 31.25631)



H Museum of Egyptian Modern Arts

This museum is proud to display Egyptian art dating back to the early 20th century.

(Unnamed Road), El Zamalek, Egypt (30.04274, 31.22303)

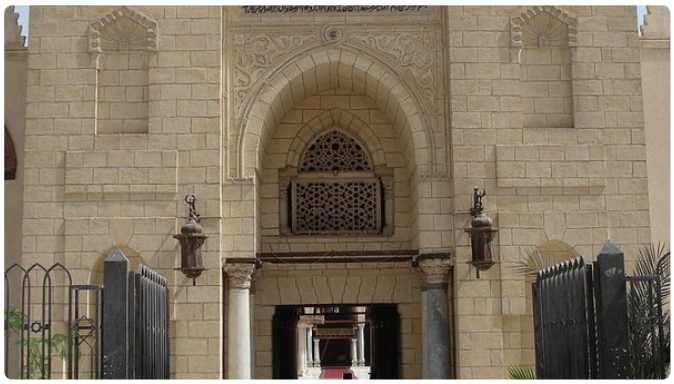
+20 2 7366665



I Unknown Soldier Memorial

The Unknown Soldier Memorial in Cairo is a pyramid-shaped monument in Nasr City.

(Unnamed Road), Cairo, Egypt (30.06537, 31.31380)



J Mosque of Amr ibn al-As

Even though, originally, this mosque was the first one built in Egypt, due to the building being continuously rebuild and restored, there...

Cairo, Egypt (30.01009, 31.23312)



K Hussein Mosque

The al-Hussein Mosque or al-Husayn Mosque, also known as the Mosque of al-Imam al-Husayn and the Mosque of Sayyidna al-Husayn, is a mosque...

4 El Mashhad El Husseiny, Cairo, Egypt (30.04784, 31.26322)



L Coptic Museum

The Coptic Museum is a museum in Coptic Cairo, Egypt with the largest collection of Coptic Christian artifacts in the world.

Mari Gerges, Misr El Kadima, Cairo, Egypt (30.00590, 31.23020)

coptic-cairo.com/museum/museum.html



M Church of Saint Simeon the Tanner

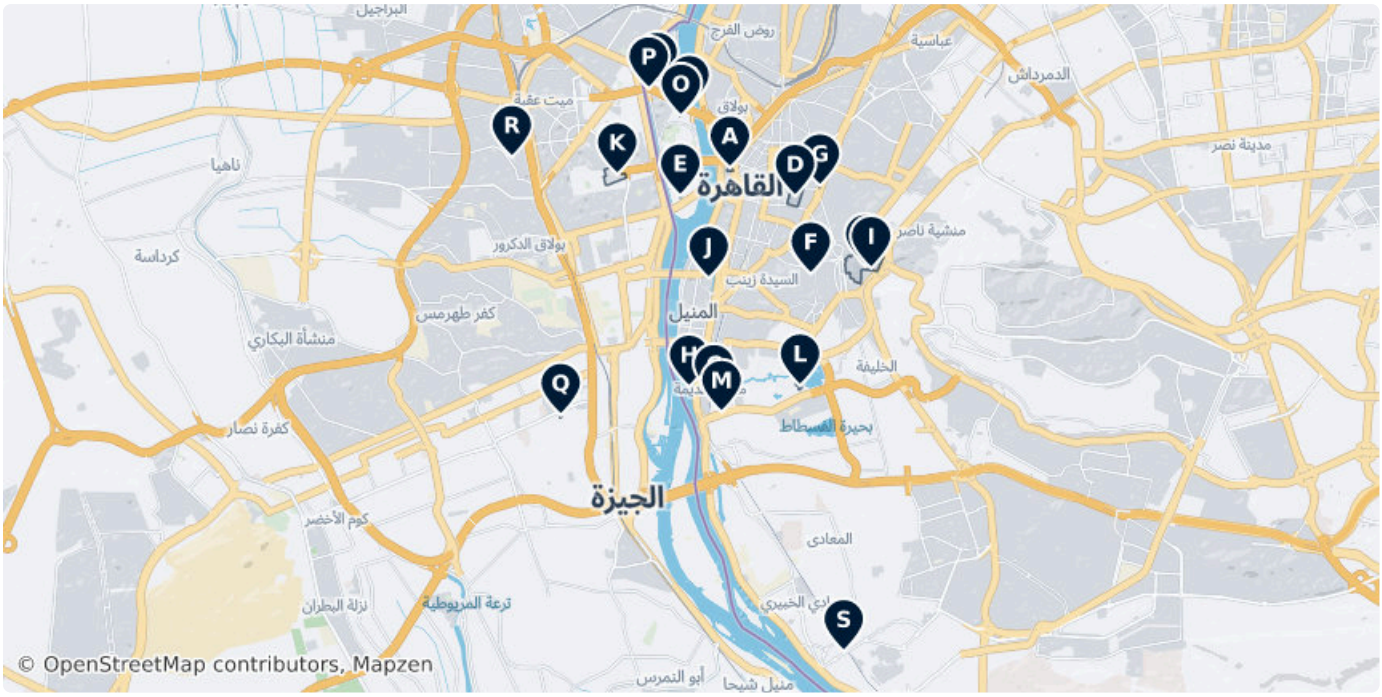
An astonishing complex carved into the cliffs of Muqattam hills. Also worth visiting for great views of the city.

(Unnamed Road), Cairo, Egypt (30.03096, 31.27613)

samaanchurch.com, +2 223 414 080

Cairo's Museums & Galleries

Cairo’s cultural landscape spans millennia, from the pharaonic treasures of the Egyptian Museum and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization to the medieval fortifications of the Salah El Din Citadel. The city also hosts specialized collections at the Coptic Museum and the Museum of Islamic Art. Beyond ancient history, royal residences like Abdin Palace and Mohamed Ali Palace showcase 19th-century opulence, while contemporary hubs like Darb 1718 and the Museum of Modern Arts highlight Egypt’s evolving 20th and 21st-century artistic scene.





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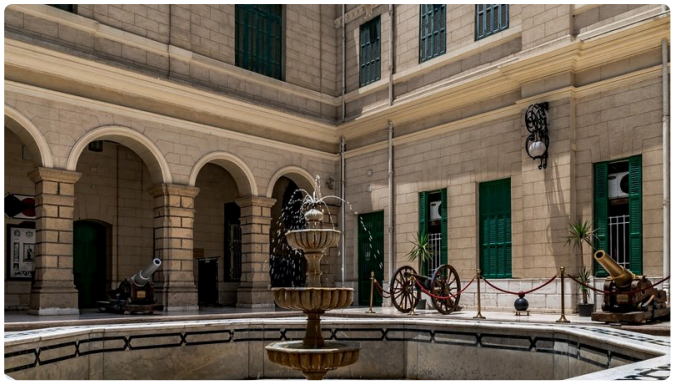


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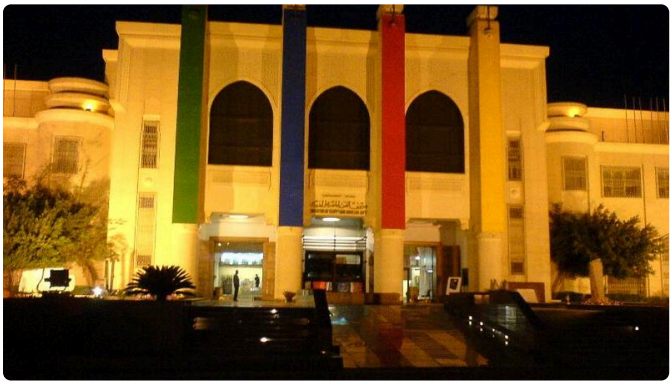


D Abdin Palace

Probably the only presidential residence that works as a museum at the same time. Its collection are related to the state affairs.

Mosque, Rahbet Abdein, Abdeen, Cairo, Egypt (30.04265, 31.24742)

+20 2 391 0042

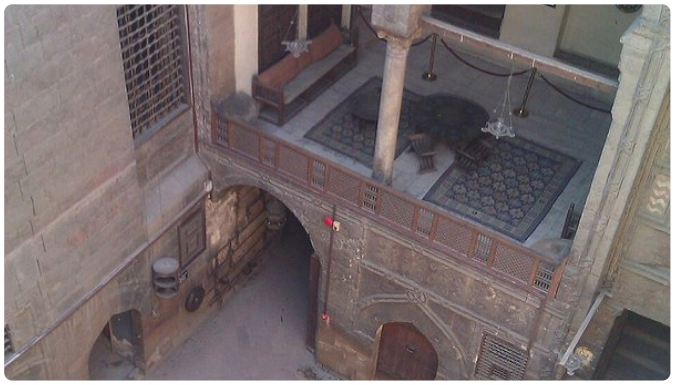


E Museum of Egyptian Modern Arts

This museum is proud to display Egyptian art dating back to the early 20th century.

(Unnamed Road), El Zamalek, Egypt (30.04274, 31.22303)

+20 2 7366665



F Gayer-Anderson Museum

The Gayer-Anderson Museum is an art museum located in Cairo, Egypt. It is situated adjacent to the Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun in the Sayyida...

2 Haret Albair, Cairo, Egypt (30.02838, 31.25073)



G Museum of Islamic Art

The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, Egypt is considered one of the greatest museums in the world, with its exceptional collection of rare...

4 Dar El Koteb, Cairo, Egypt (30.04457, 31.25266)



H Om Kalthom Museum

Located on Rawda Island, this museum is dedicated to the legendary Egyptian singer Om Kalthom. It houses her personal belongings, stage costumes, and awards, alongside a documentary film theater.

(Unnamed Road), El Manil El Gharby, Egypt (30.00762, 31.22488)

I The Carriage Museum

The Royal Carriages Museum is located at the Citadel in Cairo, Egypt, in front of Suleiman Pasha Mosque.

القاهرة (30.02941, 31.26356)



J Mohamed Ali Palace

Built by Prince Mohammed Ali Tewfik between 1901 and 1929, this palace complex features a mix of Ottoman, Moorish, Persian, and European architectural styles set within an extensive botanical garden.

(Unnamed Road), El Manil El Gharby, Egypt (30.02756, 31.22910)

Mo 09:00–16:00

K Agricultural Museum

Established in 1930, this museum documents the history of Egyptian agriculture from the Pharaonic era to the present day. It includes displays of ancient farming tools, taxidermy, and botanical specimens.

(30.04663, 31.20964)



L National Museum of Egyptian Civilization

The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization is a large museum in the ancient city of Fustat, now part of Cairo, Egypt.

Al Fostat Street, Fostat, Cairo, 11632, Egypt (30.00785, 31.24845)

Mo–Su 09:00–17:00

nmec.gov.eg

M Darb 1718

Darb 1718 is an Egyptian contemporary art and culture center located in the Fustat area of Old Cairo.

Kasr El Sham (30.00298, 31.23181)

darb1718.com

N Akhenaten Centre Of The Arts

A contemporary art center located in the Zamalek district, hosting rotating exhibitions of modern Egyptian art, workshops, and cultural events.

(30.05899, 31.22498)

O Italian Institute of Culture

Located in Zamalek, this cultural hub promotes Italian heritage through art exhibitions, language courses, and cinematic screenings within a historic building.

القاهرة (30.05741, 31.22317)

P El-Sawy Cultural Wheel

A private cultural center situated under the 15th of May Bridge in Zamalek. It features multiple theaters and galleries hosting concerts, puppet shows, and visual art exhibitions.

15th May Bridge, Zamalek, Cairo, 11211, Egypt (30.06241, 31.21633)

Q Qasr Al-Thaqafa

A local cultural center facilitating community arts, traditional Egyptian crafts, and neighborhood-focused educational programs.

Al Yaban Street, Giza, 12551, Egypt (30.00243, 31.19764)

R Art al-lewa

An independent art space in the Ard El Lewa neighborhood focusing on community-based projects, artist residencies, and contemporary exhibitions.

Mohamed Ali Al Eisiry Street, El Mohandesin, Nazlet Bahgat, 13211, Egypt (30.04982, 31.18726)

S Cairo Photography Club

A dedicated space for photography enthusiasts offering workshops, gallery exhibitions, and resources for both professional and amateur photographers.

7 46 (29.95900, 31.25774)

cairophotography.club

T Khan al-Maghraby

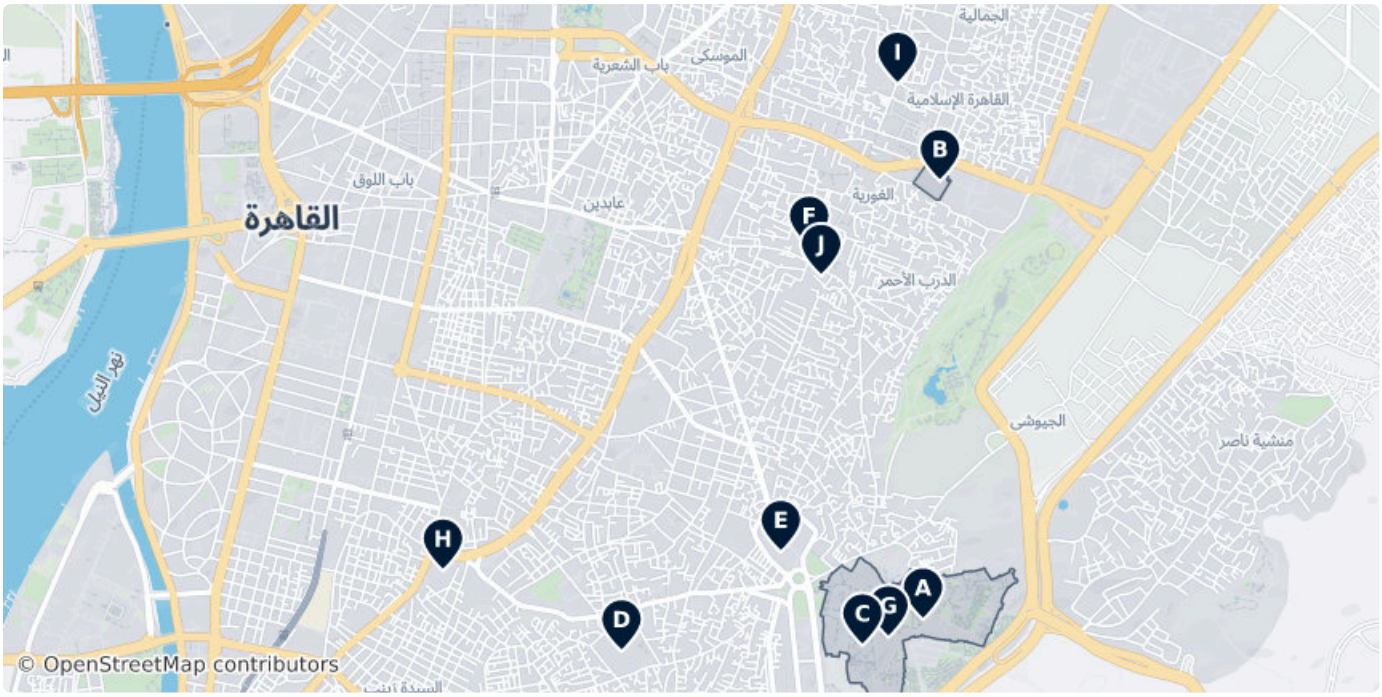
This gallery featuring a young Egyptian artist is an interesting stop breaching the link of traditional art and archaeological museums.

El-mansour Mohammed 18, Abo El Fada, Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt (30.06325, 31.21821)

+20 2 7353349

Cairo's Islamic Heritage

Cairo’s historic core preserves a dense concentration of Islamic architecture spanning over a millennium. This collection features the 9th-century spiraled minaret of Ibn Tulun and the Fatimid-era Al-Azhar, one of the world's oldest universities. The skyline is dominated by the Salah El Din Citadel, housing the Ottoman-style Muhammad Ali Mosque. Notable Mamluk contributions include the massive Sultan Hassan complex and the Al-Nasir Muhammad Mosque, characterized by its unique ceramic-tiled minarets and grand courtyards.





A Salah El Din Citadel

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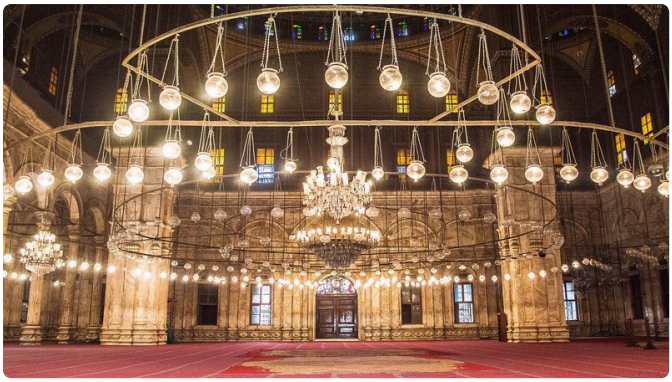


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D Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Ţūlūn

The Mosque of Ibn Tulun is located in Cairo, Egypt. It is one of the oldest mosques in Egypt as well as the whole of Africa surviving in its...

Al Dahdora, Tolon, El-sayeda Zainab, Cairo, Egypt (30.02866, 31.24961)



E Sultan Hassan Mosque

An eye-candy for the lovers of Islamic architecture as it features many unusual elements - large wooden dome or twin minarets.

(Unnamed Road), Cairo, Egypt (30.03227, 31.25631)



F Mosque of Sultan al-Muayyad

Named after Sultan al-Muayyad, this mosque is yet another Cairo's example of the Mamluk architecture that was completed in 1421.

7 El Ishraqeia, Cairo, Egypt (30.04335, 31.25751)



G Al-Nasir Muhammad Mosque

Al-Nasir Muhammad Mosque, dating back to the 14th century, is a gem of the so-called Mamluk Architecture.

El Matthaf El Harby El Qawmy Street, Cairo, Egypt (30.02916, 31.26084)

H El-Sayeda Zeinab Mosque

One of Cairo's most significant shrines, dedicated to the granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad. The current structure dates to the 19th century, though the site has been a major center of Sufi devotion and pilgrimage since the 10th century.

(30.03160, 31.24210)

I Madrasa of Sultan al-Zahir Baybars

Built in 1262 by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars, this complex served as a school for the four Sunni schools of law. Only parts of the original structure remain, including the monumental entrance featuring striped ablaq masonry.

78 El Moeez Ldeen Ellah, Cairo, Egypt (30.04932, 31.26123)

J Al-Tala'ee Mosque

Commissioned in 1160 by the Fatimid vizier Tala'i ibn Ruzzik, this is the last major Fatimid mosque built in Cairo. It is notable for its elevated base, which originally housed shops beneath the prayer hall to provide endowment income.

2 Atfet El Quolaly, Cairo, Egypt (30.04233, 31.25801)

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