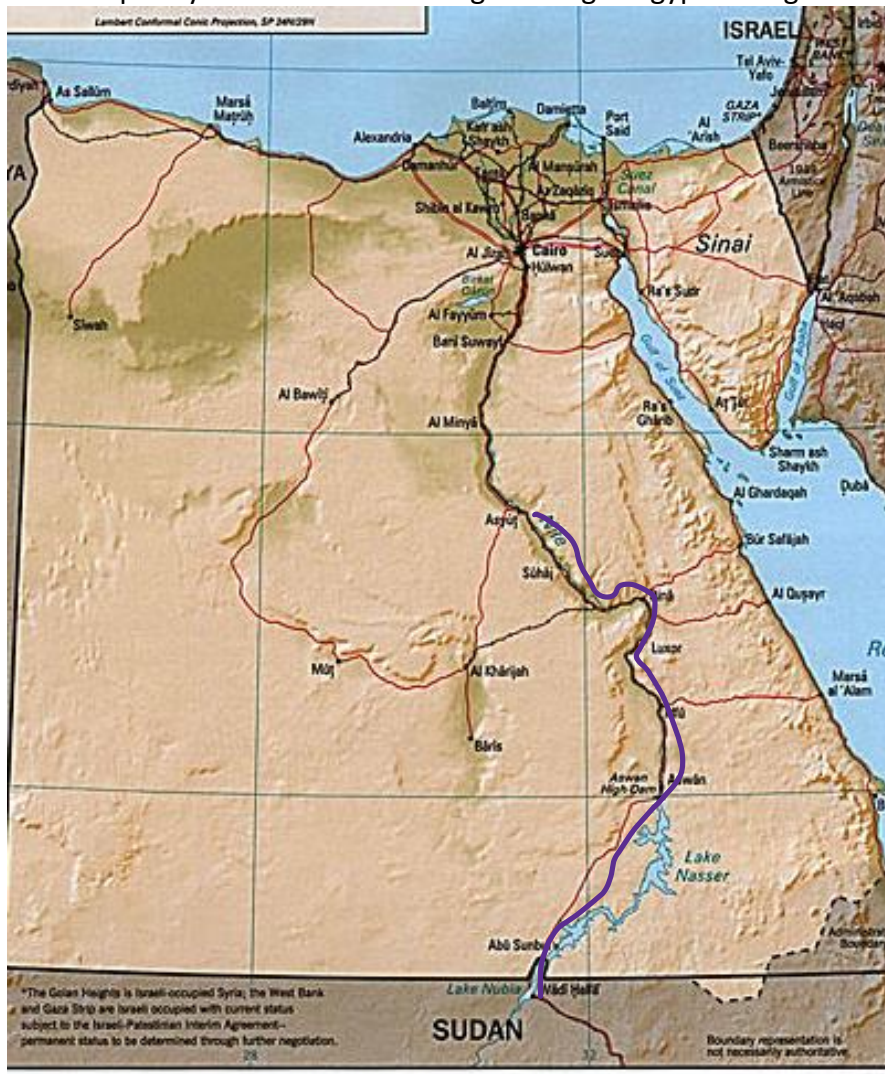


Walk to Jerusalem 2024 Week 5 Report

This week we walked 429.5 miles and had 26 participants. We have been making excellent progress and had plenty of miles to use for sightseeing in Egypt during week 5. Our route for week 5 is marked in purple on the map below.



[CIA](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The map also shows green areas that are not desert. You can see that the majority of Egyptian land is desert. As a result, 90% of Egypt's population lives along the banks of the Nile River. There has been significant immigration from other areas of the Middle East due to unrest, so that area is now highly crowded. It is one of several reasons Egypt has been unwilling to accept the refugees from Gaza. Another reason is that Egypt doesn't want to have Hamas come into Egypt and begin using the Egyptians the way they have used the Palestinians. As a result of the Egypt's increased population, many people live in very ancient buildings which continue to deteriorate, the Egyptian Government is creating new oases which contain complete cities with homes, hospitals, schools, and jobs in various industries and transporting complete communities to these new facilities. Canals from the Nile are used to supply water and power lines and other infrastructure are in place before the moves occur. These new towns are

near enough to the Nile that they can be reached easily by public transportation, so the new communities do not feel isolated. What a clever way to decrease poverty!

Egypt has been populated since c. 700,000 B.C.E. but the evolution of the Pharaohs began c.3200 B.C.E. and they had rulers but were not initially one cohesive state. They used sun-dried mud bricks for administrative buildings and tombs. The first true dynasties date back to the Old Kingdom beginning about 2700 B.C.E and the upper and lower Nile Valley were united under one leader. The first pyramids were built, called step pyramids, using stone and the Dynasties lasted until 332 B.C.E. when Persians conquered Egypt. From then on, there were various non-Egyptian rulers, including Alexander the Great, Arabs, along with periods of Egyptian rulers until 1822 when Britain became Egypt's protector; that protectorate lasted until the 1950's.

We were near the Egyptian-Sudan border, walking northward along the Nile when we ended last week and continued along the Nile as we continued walking toward Egypt where our first stop was at Abu Simbel. As we approached the area, we made a detour into the desert to see the temples of Abu Simbel. They were built in the thirteenth century BC. One temple was for the Pharaoh Ramesses II and another for his wife Neferatari. Forgotten until 1813, the temples were accidentally rediscovered by J.L. Buckhardt, a Swiss researcher. He found the front of the main temple and when the temples were excavated, they became the sensation in Europe. Victorians who visited Egypt made the long trip up the Nile to see the temples.

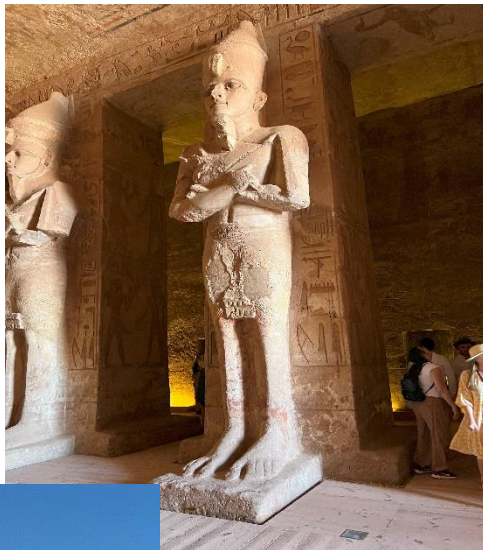
The four pictures below show some of the main highlights of the temples which some have suggested should be considered the eighth wonder of the ancient world. The beauty of the carvings and statutes at the site is amazing. The Pharaohs had large groups of artisans who lived around the temples as they were being constructed to make statutes, do engravings, and create all of the objects that would accompany the Pharaoh's body into the afterlife. The size of the objects and detail of carvings are extraordinary. The two stone statues below are of Ramesses II and his wife Neferatari.



All 4 photos below: kscharer © 2023



When we finished our visit to the temples we were returned to the Nile where we took a felucca ride on the Nile. The boat is a sailboat with a gaff-rigged sail. They come in different sizes and the ones we took



seated about 20 people. The Nile does not have waves and the boats are very stable so none of us had problems with motion sickness!

[Charlesdrakew at English Wikipedia](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



We then resumed our walk downstream; our next stop was at the Aswan High Dam. The Aswan High Dam, is the world's largest embankment dam built across the Nile in Aswan, Egypt, between 1960 and 1970. Its significance largely eclipsed the previous Aswan Low Dam initially completed in 1902 downstream. The newer dam contains 18 more times material than was used in building the Great Pyramid. It provides all of the electricity and irrigation for all of Egypt. One of the key goals for the dam was to better control the annual flooding of the now heavily populated

banks of the Nile and to provide better water storage for irrigation in times of drought. Lake Nasser is a man-made reservoir which fulfills this second goal. The High Dam has had a significant effect on the economy and culture of Egypt.

Flooding from the Nile, before the High Dam was built, during late summer had continued to pass largely unimpeded down the valley from its East African drainage basin. These floods brought high water with natural nutrients and minerals that annually enriched the fertile soil along its floodplain and delta; this predictability had made the Nile valley ideal for farming since ancient times. However, this natural flooding varied, since high-water years could destroy the whole crop, while low-water years could create widespread drought and associated famine. Both these events had continued to occur periodically. Naturally, Egypt sought a solution to both flooding and times of inadequate water and the Aswan Dam was the solution.

[عاصم سيد](#), [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

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The photo, above left, shows the hydroelectric plant of the dam with the high dam directly behind it.

The photo, above right, shows Lake Nasser which was created as a great reservoir. Many antiquities and a town were in the area which was to be flooded when the dam was completed, and the Government moved these to other places. We will visit one of those places after a brief stop in the city of Aswan.

Not surprisingly, there were a variety of political issues with the building of the dam which was built between 1960 and 1970. The USA was originally going to contribute funding and support but conflicts between Israel and Egypt occurred, Then the USA withdrew most of its support. The USSR stepped in to help Egypt instead. I knew one of the engineers who was a bridge specialist who worked on the design and construction of the bridge, so I was excited to visit and see it in operation!

The city of Aswan is the Nile we see in story books. The white sails of feluccas dot the glistening river, ferrying tourists to botanic islands and charming Nubian villages with a backdrop of golden sandy mountains. Strolling through the colorful markets we experienced a blend of Nubian and Egyptian culture. Aswan is a busy market and tourist center located just north of the Aswan Dam on the east bank of the Nile at the first cataract. The modern city has expanded and includes the formerly separate community on the island of Elephantine.

While we were in Aswan, we went to church at Saint Teresa Catholic Church. This is a Roman Catholic Church, but the Mass was in Arabic, but we used a printed version of the daily mass to follow along. Of course, we couldn't understand the homily, but we did receive communion. Both pictures below, kscharer © 2023



period. As the temple was piece by piece was numbered and an exact diagram of how the pieces fit back together was maintained. The new island on which the temple was reconstructed is called the Island of Agilika, also in the Nile but not in the middle of Lake Nasser.

Four pictures below, kscharer © 2023

We left Aswan to head for Luxor but stopped first at the Philae Temple. The temple was moved in the 1960's from the basin that began Lake Nasser prior to flooding the lake basin. The temple was on an island in the middle of the Nile. Hieroglyphics on the temple describe the island are translated as "island in the time of Re" who was of the Gods worship in ancient Egypt. This temple was a place to worship the Goddess Isis and her relationships with Osiris and Horus during the Ptolemaic deconstructed for the move, every



The four pictures show the two ends of the temple and one of the connecting sides. The fourth picture is an example of the intricate designs and hieroglyphics on the inside walls of the temple. Practically every vertical surface is covered with intricate designs, including the round columns that once supported a roof. It is an impressive sight—you can



see how tall it is by the size of the people near the front of the building!

We continued walking downstream toward Luxor. Between Aswan and Luxor, we visited three ancient temples, Kom Ombo and Temple of Horus at Edfu. The Temple of Kom Ombo is an unusual double temple in the town of Kom Ombo in Aswan Governorate. It was constructed during the Ptolemaic dynasty, 180–47 BC. Some additions to it were later made during the Roman period.



[GNU Free Documentation License](#) (left, and below right). The building is unique because its 'double' design meant that there were courts, halls, sanctuaries,



and rooms duplicated for two sets of gods. The southern half of the temple was dedicated to the crocodile



god Sobek, god of fertility and creator of the world while the northern part of the temple was dedicated to the falcon god "Horus the Elder".

It was built during the Ptolemaic Kingdom in the second century, but little remains of the temple. Most of the destruction of the temple was due to the Nile flooding and earthquakes but after it began falling apart, builders carried away the stones for other buildings. Additionally, the temple was used as a safe haven by the Coptic Christians, and they defaced some of the carvings inside.

[Shannon Hobbs](#), [CC BY-SA 2.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons, left. Nearby is the Crocodile Museum which has mummies of crocodiles; about 300 croc

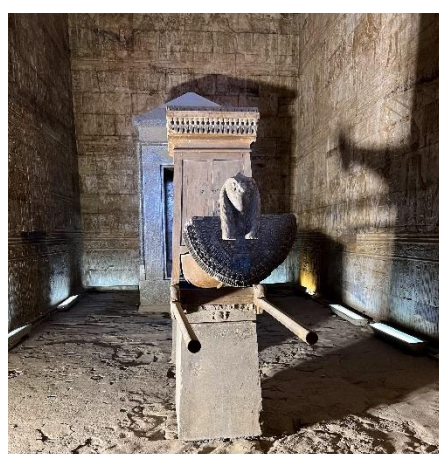
mummies were found near the site. I



wondered why anyone would mummify a crocodile, but the crocodile god Sobek was the god of fertility so maybe that was the reason.

pictures left, kscharer © 2023 The upper Niles no longer has any crocodiles since the Aswan Dam was completed.

We also visited the Temple of Edfu, two pictures below, which is on the west bank of the Nile. The temple is the largest and best-preserved temple in Egypt. It is dedicated to Horus (the



Falcon God). The two pictures below, kscharer © 2023.

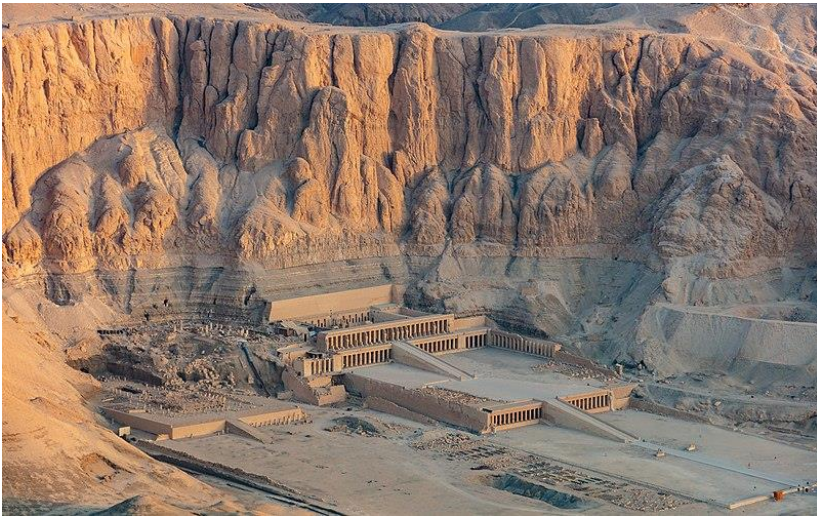
The photos show the entrance to the temple and a temple altar, right.

It was built in the Ptolemaic Kingdom between 237 and 57 BC. Some of the texts talk about the construction of the

temple, and about the mythical interpretation for this temple and the others on the Island of Creation. It is very helpful to have someone who knows hieroglyphics when visiting these temples.

We continued our trek north, heading for Luxor. Before reaching Luxor, however, we will stop for a visit to the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut and the famous Valley of the Kings. Below is the temple of the queen.

Diego Delso, *delso.photo*, License **CC-BY-SA**, *below*



This is a mortuary temple dedicated to the Queen and to the god, Amun. This queen was the Great Royal Wife of Pharaoh Thutmose II and the fifth Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt, ruling first as regent for her stepson, Thutmose III, then as queen regnant from c. 1479 BC until c. 1458 BC. Hatshepsut was the daughter of Thutmose I. After several years as regent, Hatshepsut assumed the position of pharaoh and adopted the full royal titulary, making her a co-ruler alongside Thutmose III. She adopted traditionally male roles, wore male garb. Rules during a period of great prosperity and general peace. She

was a prolific builder in ancient Egypt. Some of her contributions were the Temple of Karnak complex, the Red Chapel, and her own mortuary temple. Afterwards attempts were made to remove her from the history of Egypt. Statues of her were destroyed, monuments were defaced and many of her accomplishments were attributed to others. Unlike the defacement of other rulers' statues, this drive to erase Queen Hatshepsut seems to have been for religious reasons, rather than personal dislike.

From this site we walked to the nearby Colossus of Memnon. These are two massive statues that are the only surviving remnants of the mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III and they depict the Pharaoh. The Temple was built in 1200 BC but was destroyed by an earthquake soon after that, leaving only the two statues standing. Another earthquake around 27 BC damaged the base of the statue on the left side, as seen in the picture below. The picture below gives us an idea of the height of the statues since there are people approaching but still have a distance to walk before reaching the Colossus.

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Next, we walked a short distance to the famous Valley of the Kings, where the great Pharaohs were entombed. Of course, many of the graves were robbed in antiquity, but archeologists have discovered enough information from what was left behind to identify the various tombs. And, of course, the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb (known to us as King Tut) showed us how opulent the burials were. King Tut was known as the boy King because he ascended his throne at age 9 and ruled until he was 19. He was not a popular ruler, and I will show you how we know that a little later. We will see the artifacts from his tomb in the museum in Cairo but there is a 60-minute YouTube National Geographic video on the subject. You can watch just the first bit if you wish to see the video of the gold casket and also the wooden ones and other artifacts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VANTQdAm5eA>

There are 63 tombs in the Valley of the Kings, some of which we viewed. The area had been home to royal burials beginning in 2100 BC, but it wasn't until the age of the New Kingdom beginning in 1550 BC when the Pharaohs began constructing elaborate tombs. Along with the bodies of the mummified Pharaohs, objects believed to be needed in the afterlife were included in the tombs. Because King Tut's tomb was most intact the artifacts found in his tomb show us how he lived. The following pictures show us how much care was taken with King Tut's tomb and also with the tombs of Rameses VI and Rameses IX. kscharer © 2023. Next 5 photos



King Tut's tomb



Ramses VI's tomb and detail of from entrance down to the tomb. (left and right images)



King Ramses IX's tomb left

There are other royal tombs also in the Valley of the Kings, but I thought these three tombs presented the area's conservation the best.

Leaving the Valley of the Kings we headed to Luxor, down a row of Sphinxes to Luxor Temple. See picture below. Luxor Temple was the center of one of the most important religious festivals in Ancient Egypt. During the festival, several statues of important gods-



Amun-Re, his wife, Mut, and their son Khonsu were carried from Karnak to Luxor. Luxor Temple differed from other temples in the area Luxor, some scholars argued, in that the focus was on the living king rather than past ones.

Path from Luxor Temple to the Valley of the Kings through the row of Sphinxes. Entrance to the temple left.

kscharer © 2023 5 pictures below



Earlier I noted that King Tut and his wife were not popular rulers. After the death of an unpopular King or other unpopular leader, it was common practice to defile any statues of them by removing noses, and mouths, sometimes their ears and eyes also. The damage to these statues was not due to time but them!

to the lack of respect the populace had for



Another interesting thing that we observed in the area was that modern buildings had been built on ancient ruins. In the picture bottom left, there is a mosque built upon an ancient wall.

We left Luxor Temple and headed to Karnak Temple. Karnak Temple is the largest temple ever built by man. It took 13 centuries to build. Amun-Re, who was the god of the Sun, his wife Mut, mother goddess and god of everything and their son Khonsu, god of the moon. We heard a little about the temple when we explored Queen Hatshepsut's mortuary.



The pictures here show how enormous Kanark Temple is.

The large obelisk is to honor King Tut. The massive statue is of Ramses II.

After examining Karnal Temple we headed into the city of Luxor. We were able to find Holy Family Catholic Church which says the Mass in Italian with multilingual readings. We figured at least those of us who had attended Mass when it was in Latin would have a better chance of following the mass in Italian than in Arabic. Unfortunately, we were all busy praying and forgot to take any photos!

Then we headed north again toward Cairo. There is a reason most Egyptian tours take a plane between

Luxor and Cairo! It is because there is very little to see or do between the two cities. But we enjoyed walking along the Nile, passing small villages until we reached Abydos where found the Temple of Seti, pictured left.

Roland Unger, CC BY-SA 3.0,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22673561>

The temple of Seti I is sometimes called the Great Temple of Abydos. It was built by Pharaoh Seti I. But later the inscription dedicating it to Seti was covered over with plaster and a new title of "He who protects Egypt and overthrows the foreign countries" was inscribed during the reign of Rameses II. Gradually, the plaster has eroded, so that parts of both inscriptions can be seen. The



temple is also notable for the Abydos graffiti, ancient Phoenician and Aramaic graffiti found on the temple walls.

A long gallery with the List of Kings is part of the Temple. Seti has a list of the principal dynasties' Pharaohs inscribed upon the walls. Some important names were not included but it is unknown why. Since it is an almost complete list of the Pharaohs prior to the time of Seti, it has been compared for Egyptian archeology to the Rosetta Stone for Egyptian writing.



At the rear of the temple there is the Osireion, which some believe was the empty tomb of Seti and has his name inscribed in multiple places but there are disagreements among archeologists about the age of the building and the purpose of the Osireion.

Olaf Tausch, CC BY 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

After viewing the Temple, we continued our trek north to a town called Asyut where we ended for the week!

Thanks for Participating!
Your Tour Director,
Kathy Scharer