

## Egypt, Jordan and the Suez Canal

Hi Folks,

We effectively spent 2 days in Luxor, one day at Sharm el Sheik [Sinai Peninsular] and one day in Cairo with a day in Aqaba, Jordan in between. Where to start?



We had a 3.5 hr bus ride through the Eastern Desert to reach Luxor. The desert was hilly and rocky and very arid. When you drop down into the Nile Valley everything changes. The landscape is flat, the land on each bank is intensely cultivated with sugar, bananas, wheat, date palms, garlic

and vegetables.

Large irrigation channels run parallel to the highway and there is continuous settlement along the channels. Life is pretty primitive. Houses are made out of rough brick and steel support rods etc are left in place on the roof in case they want to build future extensions. Stables made out of mud brick and straw. Small pumps are used to bring the water up from the channels and onto the fields. Most labour is done by hand or donkey. Most transport is donkey and cart. Everyone has a satellite dish. It is an incredibly busy scene and totally mesmerising.



Our tour group was staying the night in Luxor, and we had a very luxurious hotel all decked out in marble and Egyptian themed art, heated toilet seats and with a specky view across the Nile [as well as the water works & sewerage works]. There were literally dozens of cruise ships tied up along the banks waiting for the tourists to return.

We did tours of the Karnak & Luxor Temples and did the evening sound and light show. Next day we visited the Valley of the Kings [underground tombs and wonderful hieroglyphics] the Temple of Queen Haitchepsut and the Colossa of Memnon, all fabulous architect dating back 3000 BC.



The weather was clear and sunny, mid 20s [heat wave the week before] and without all of the tourists it was really easy to move around and there was no queuing. The only sticking point was all of the hawkers who were



desperately trying to sell you anything from postcards to horse and buggy rides. They were so pushy and insistent that you just didn't bother looking.

Cairo is a city of over 20 million all living in ugly brick buildings with rubble on the roofs. We saw the most polluted channel that we have ever seen, complete with the bodies of dead horses and donkeys. Our guide told us that the road lines were for decoration and traffic lights are just a suggestion. We arrived on a Friday [Muslim equivalent to a Sunday] so traffic was light although there was a peaceful rally being planned for Freedom Square in the afternoon and we visited the museum there in the morning.

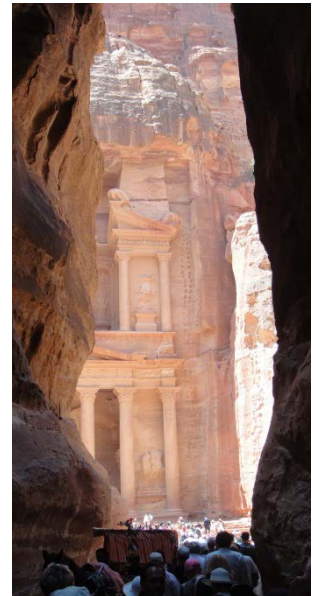


It was a bit rushed as they wanted us out of there, still we did get to see Tutenkamens memorabilia! Then off to the pyramids & sphinx all sitting there on the edge of suburbia with the Sahara Desert stretching off across the horizon. They are magnificent and huge. Sharm el Sheik is a modern resort [not that we saw any] based port famous for its crystal clear waters and coral reefs. We spent the morning snorkelling in a desert national park [water mid 20s, good range of corals but not a lot of colour] and then the afternoon by the pool. They had a special cocktail party that night just for the Australians on

board [about 60].

Aqaba is the only coastal town for Jordan and it is a very nice modern town. Jordan is a much smaller country with a population of only several million and it is much more prosperous than Egypt.

We headed off inland across the desert to the ancient city of Petra an amazing experience where you walk down through a narrow gorge of beautiful red coloured rocks for several miles and then it opens up into an ancient burial site where tombs were cut out of the canyon walls. You can spend days there exploring, they even have Roman ruins there.



We sailed through the Suez Canal and popped out into the southern Mediterranean Sea after a very busy week. Needless to say there were no terrorist attacks and we have lost our escorts and barb wire. Sailing the canal was really interesting, for most of it, it is one way. Ships anchor at the northern



and southern ends and in the middle at the Bitter Lakes and then it is a one way convoy. We headed north as number 1 ship in a convoy of 23 ships, but the most you could see behind at any one time was three. It was only several hundred metres wide, with the Nile Delta on the west side and desert on the east.

Once in the Mediterranean the temperature dropped and the wind picked up and it was all systems ago for our trip to Israel. But that is another story.

Take care, our love to you all,

Bruce & Jill

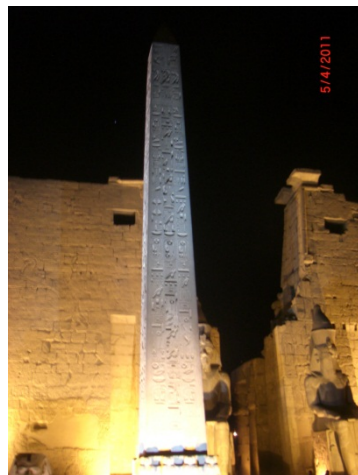




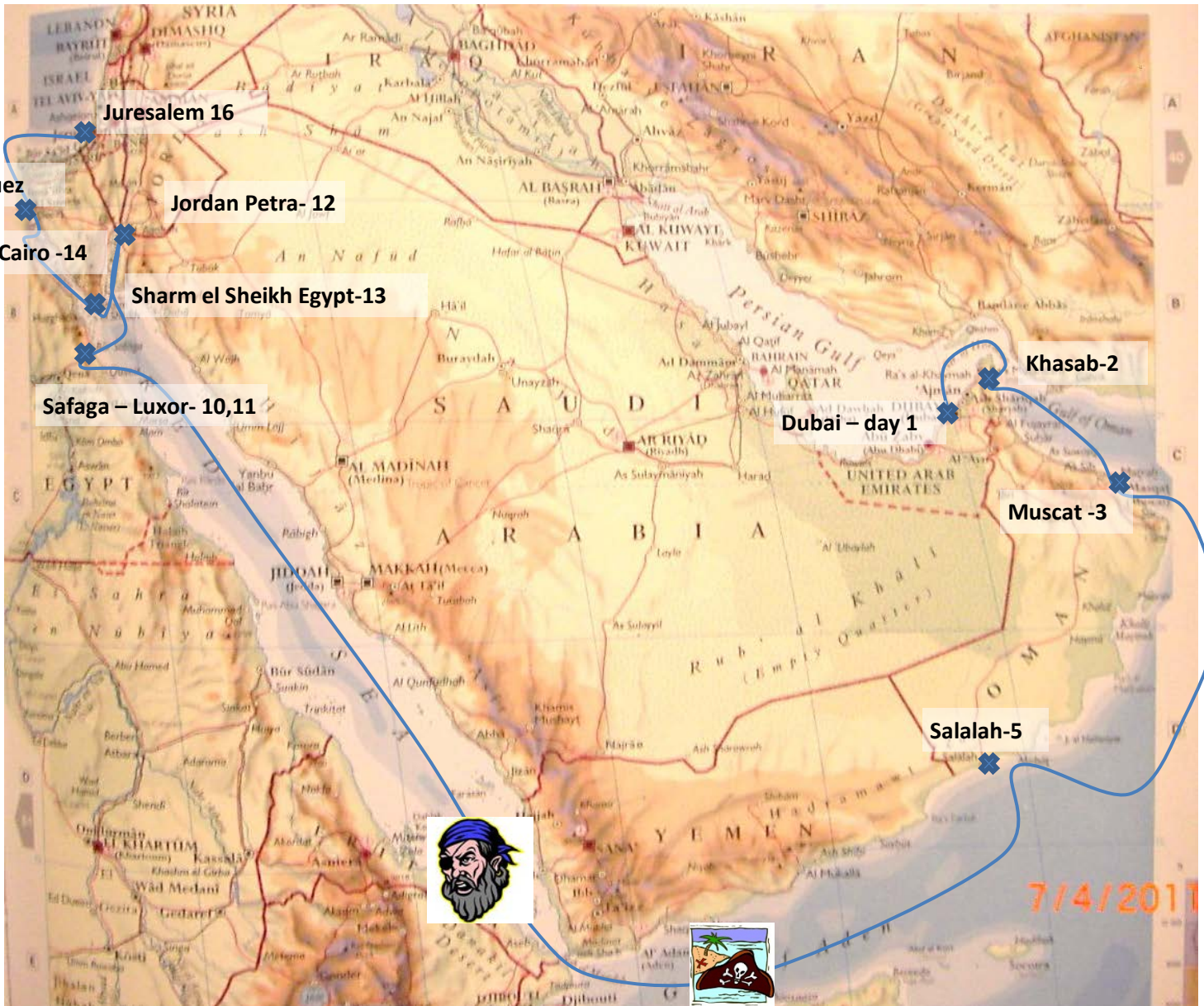
Luxor  
at  
night



Karnak Temple







Juresalem 16

Suez

Jordan Petra- 12

Cairo -14

Sharm el Sheikh Egypt-13

Safaga - Luxor- 10,11

Dubai - day 1

Khasab-2

Muscat -3

Salalah-5



Somalia and Pirates.