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# Tour Notes

**Sudan – Nile Valley and Western Desert**

**Tour Duration – 15 Days**



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●●○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●● | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ●○○○○

## Tour Pace

Moderate

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Stunning desert landscapes
- ✓ Wondrous archaeological sites
- ✓ Camping under huge desert skies in marvelous isolation
- ✓ Visit old Nubian villages and meet the friendly locals
- ✓ Walk amongst the incredible pyramids of Meroe
- ✓ Cruise on the mighty Nile

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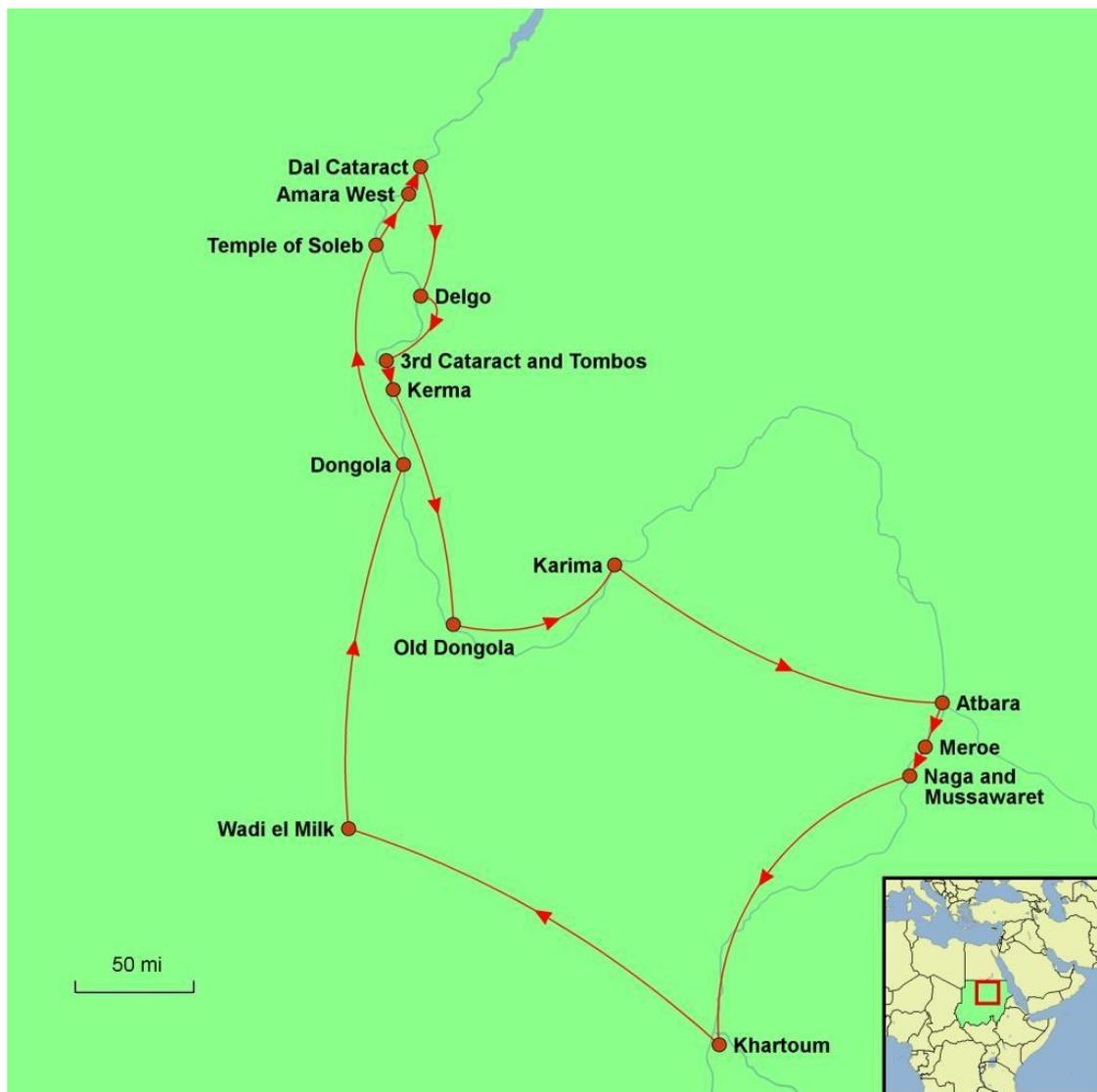


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## Tour Map Sudan – Nile Valley and Western Desert



### Tour Essentials

<b>Accommodation:</b>	Hotel accommodation in Khartoum. Wild camping outside of Khartoum with an option for 2 nights upgraded comfortable accommodation
<b>Included Meals:</b>	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
<b>Group Size:</b>	Maximum 12
<b>Start Point:</b>	Khartoum
<b>End Point:</b>	Khartoum
<b>Transport:</b>	4WD
<b>Country Visited:</b>	Sudan





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## Sudan – Nile Valley and Western Desert

*The history of Sudan stretches back thousands of years, to a time when they rivalled Pharaonic Egypt as a powerful civilisation. We explore some the highlights of Sudan's little-known ancient monuments on this tour, visiting collections of pyramids that few people even know exist and old temples lying in the desert sands. We spend our time camping out in Sudan's stunningly beautiful deserts and hoping to meet nomadic groups on our way. We visit isolated villages where age old traditions still rule, and spend time learning about the lives of their Nubian inhabitants. This trip takes in some of the most beautiful areas of Sudan, from its deserts to the mighty Nile, lifeblood of the country, and by camping in this amazing landscape we gain a real sense of the overwhelming power of nature.*

### Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

### Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. On this tour, your guide may be local or European but they will be based in the region. We may also you specialist guides local to their specific region. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrival in Khartoum

Arrive in Khartoum and transfer to the hotel. You may wish to view the confluence of the Nile from Mogran Family Park next to the White Nile Bridge or walk to Tuti Island across the bridge next to the Corinthia Hotel for a view of the confluence. Please note that it is forbidden to take photos from the bridges. Overnight Grand Holiday Villa Hotel or similar. No meals are included today.

## Day 2: Khartoum – Western Desert

After breakfast we take a short tour of Khartoum. We follow the Blue Nile near the Presidential Palace where in 1885 General Gordon was beheaded by the Mahdi's troops. We visit the Archaeological Museum that, besides many beautiful objects, contains two temples rescued by UNESCO and moved from the Lake Nasser area, when it was flooded by the water. We then cross the confluence between the Blue and the White Nile and we reach Omdurman, the old capital of Sudan, where we see the Mahdi's tomb from outside and the Khalifa's house Museum (closed on Mondays). Late in the morning we begin the journey northward through the Western Desert. We will stop at the "chai houses", literally tea houses, a sort of very Spartan "motorway restaurants" in the desert where local truck drivers usually stop for a quick meal and some rest. Late in the afternoon we will find a nice place to camp under the incredible African night sky. Overnight wild camping. (BLD)

## Days 3, 4 and 5: Western Desert – Wadi el Milk – Jebel Peak – Dongola

We drive westward in the desert and reach Wadi El Milk, where we find many acacia trees and Bisharin settlements around the few water wells.



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During our desert crossing we reach a mysterious fortress in the middle of the desert: Gala Abu Hamed discovered by a German archaeological expedition and dated to the Napatean time (700-400 B.C.). The ruins of the fortress are mainly huge boundary walls about 100m high, now partially covered by sand. The place was probably used as a prison for slaves coming from Central Africa. It remains a mystery how the place could have been inhabited since there is no water at all. Driving northwest deep into the Western Desert we reach a curious mountain in the middle of dune desert called by our drivers Jebel Peak. From here, passing by small beautiful oasis rich in palm trees, we reach Dongola where we stock up for the following days. Overnight wild camping in the Western Desert. (BLD)

#### **Days 6 and 7: Western Desert – Temple of Soleb – Amara West – Dal Cataract**

We drive north-west crossing curious areas of rock overlapping granite boulders. We then reach the Nile near the Temple of Soleb, the most beautiful Egyptian temple in Sudan, testimony of the New Kingdom in Nubia, with many walls rich in hieroglyphic inscriptions, bas-relief figures and many columns. The first settlement was an Egyptian colonization dated back 1500 BC. The day after we continue north visiting Jebel Doshia where on a rock just on the Nile we can see some Egyptian stelae of Thutmose III. We continue north to reach the Nile again near the vestiges of Amara West, an archaeological site currently being excavated by a team from the British Museum, where we visit the rests of an ancient Egyptian town. Dinners and overnights in wild camp. (BLD)

#### **Day 8: Amara – Dal Cataract – Western Desert**

Continuing north we can see the rocks on the Nile that create the rapids of the Dal Cataract. In this area there are some nice Nubian villages and the people are not used to seeing foreigners. Dinner and overnight wild camping. (BLD)

#### **Days 9 and 10: Delgo – 3<sup>rd</sup> Cataract – Sebu – Tombos – Kerma – Nubian Villages**

After breakfast we continue northward crossing the Nile by small ferry. These ferries are a hive of colourful activities. Continue south passing the village of Delgo reaching the granite boulders of the Third Cataract which used to be the third huge obstacle that the ancient Egyptians had to face when trying to sail on the Nile River and nearby we visit the remains of an Ottoman fort. We then reach the village of Tombos where there are the remains of ancient granite quarries and where we see a statue of the King Taharqa, simply left there in the desert 3000 years ago. We stop in Kerma to visit the majestic "Defuffa" and the rest of this ancient civilisation together with the little museum founded by Charles Bonnet. Continuing south along the Nile we arrive in the central part of the Nubian region. The population speaks a different language from the Arabs, and also the Islamic religion is not as "strict" as in other regions. The women don't cover their faces and readily speak to foreigners. We visit the beautiful Nubian villages with their painted entrance doors with typical patterns and flowers. Enthusiastic hospitality abounds, people will often invite foreigners to visit their houses and share a meal or a cup of spiced tea. Dinners and overnights wild camping. (BLD)

#### **Day 11: Old Dongola - Nubian Desert – Karima – El Kurru**

Driving south we reach the archaeological site of Old Dongola, where the ruins of a Christian Coptic temple with marble columns as well as several churches are situated on the banks of the Nile. We then reach the small town of Karima located at the foot of Jebel Barkal. A landmark in the Nubian Desert, Jebel Barkal can be seen for miles around whilst in the open desert. At the foot of this wonderful and isolated red sandstone mountain, there is a big temple, dedicated to Amon. Amon's ancient "Pure Mountain" was the religious Nubian heart for more than 1000 years. In addition to the ruins of the big temple there are still several sculptured granite rams that were supposed to border a long avenue that probably led to the pier on the Nile. In the mountain wall there is a big room decorated with bas-relief. The Jebel Barkal archaeological sites are World Heritage listed. We then visit the site of El Kurru, where there is one of the necropolises of the ancient capital Napata. Here we can visit two tombs which are excavated in the rock under the pyramids partially collapsed. They are totally decorated with amazing images of the Pharaoh, of the gods and multicolour hieroglyphic inscriptions.





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Not far from here there is an interesting site of petrified wood, an ancient forest with hundreds of huge trunks. Overnight wild camping (option to upgrade accommodation tonight). (BLD)

### **Days 12 and 13: Karima – Nuri – Atrun Crater – Bayuda Desert - Meroe**

Today we cross the Nile and we reach the Pyramids of Nuri. We take a cruise along the river and explore the small islands and sandy beaches along the Nile. Arriving on the other shore of the Nile we reach the site of Nuri where several pyramids stand out, among which is the pyramid of the great Taharqa. We then enter the Bayuda Desert, an area bounded by the loop formed by the Nile between the 4th and the 6th Cataract and characterised by sharp black basalt mountains, most of them volcanic and typically cone-shaped. They alternate with level pebble stretches and large valleys crossed by dry wadis, where a little vegetation can be seen. It is very likely we shall meet isolated groups of Bisharin nomads, who live in familiar groups in small huts made of intertwined branches close to the rare water wells, with their caravans and herds of camels and cattle. Just in the centre of the Bayuda Desert we reach Atrun Crater, where nomads gather salt from the edge of a green coloured pool. They will then sell it to markets of the towns outside the desert. We then reach the town of Atbara, located on the confluence between the Nile and the Atbara River. Here we cross the Nile for the last time. We start driving south where there are many small camel thorn acacia trees as far as we can see. And then in the distance we glance at more than 40 pyramids, located on top of a hill, some of them perfectly preserved that belong to the Royal Necropolis of Meroe. We visit the ruins of the Royal City. The excavations confirm that the town of Meroe used to cover a large area and the royal city was located in a central position, surrounded by suburbs and a boundary wall. Most of the area where the city is located, formed by many small hills covered by red clay fragments, has still to be excavated by the archaeologists. Dinners and overnights in wild camp near the pyramids (option to upgrade accommodation tonight). (BLD)

### **Day 14, 27<sup>th</sup> February: Meroe – Mussawarat - Naga**

The Royal necropolis of Meroe is located at about 3 km from the Nile on some hills covered by yellow sand dunes. Several pyramids stand out with their sharp shapes against the clear sky. Each one has its own funerary chapel with the walls fully decorated with bas-reliefs that show the King's life and offers to the gods. In the afternoon we reach Mussawarat El Sufra. This settlement is located in a beautiful valley crowned by hills. Here the ruins of a very big temple are visible; it once played an exceptionally important role. Its main characteristic, the "Great Enclosure" is made by many constructions and boundary walls which surround a temple built in the 1st century A.D. The large number of elephants represented on these walls makes you think that this animal used to have an important role in this area. Beyond the big Wadi there is another temple - restored by a German archaeological mission - dedicated to the god Apedemak. We then move to the beautiful site of Naga for our last camp. Overnight wild camping. (BLD)

### **Day 15, 28<sup>th</sup> February: Naga - Khartoum**

We begin the day exploring the ancient site of Naga, which is located 30 km to the east of the Nile and it is one of the two centres that developed during the Meroitic period. In Naga, in a typical Saharan environment with rocks and sand, we find a temple dedicated to Apedemak (1st century A.D.): a wonderful building with bas-relief decorations depicting the god with a lion's head, the Pharaoh, noblemen and several ritual images. A few metres away there is a small and odd construction with arches and columns, named "kiosk", in which we can notice Egyptian, Roman and Greek styles, all at the same time. Not far away we reach another temple dedicated to Amon with many statues of rams and beautiful gates decorated with bas-reliefs. Lunch - picnic on the way. In the afternoon we reach Omdurman and visit the Souk and we will also be able to witness the ceremony of the Whirling Dervishes. Check in at the hotel in Khartoum where rooms are available for day use until 23.00. Late in the evening transfer to the airport. Day use at Grand Holiday Villa Hotel or similar. (BL)



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# Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

## Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers  
All accommodation (hotel in Khartoum and camping elsewhere on the expedition)  
Land transportation with the services of a professional driver  
Services of an English-speaking guide / tour leader  
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary  
Visa support documentation (invitation letter)

## Excluded:

**Compulsory Archaeological fees, permits, passport registration – currently EUR 280 payable locally in EUR cash (or the equivalent in USD)**  
International flights  
Travel Insurance  
Visa  
Drinks  
Items of a personal nature  
Tips (discretionary)  
Video Camera fees

# Important Information

## Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

Before booking your tour please familiarise yourself with the country specific information provided by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing there are no warnings in place for the Nile Valley and Western desert tour. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or if you would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

## Accommodation and Meals

### Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.





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It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

### **Accommodation Rating**

This is a wild camping expedition using domed tents. You will also be allocated a floor mattress. You will stay in a comfortable hotel in Khartoum. There is an opportunity to upgrade from camping to a comfortable rest house for 1 night and also a permanent tented camp for 1 night with hot water facilities and private bathrooms, however you have decided not to take the upgrade. If you change your mind before to the departure, and subject to availability, please do contact us. When camping, you will be expected to pitch and take down your own tent.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

### **Food & Drink**

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### **Dietary Requirements**

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### **Budgeting for your Tour**

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### **Food**

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £5  
Dinner £10

### **Drink**

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. Alcohol is not available in Sudan.

Bottle of water - £0.50  
Cans of soft drink - £0.75  
Bottle of non-alcoholic beer - £3

### **Tipping – Guide and Drivers**

Tipping is common practice in Africa. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. If you are travelling on a group tour, allow around EUR5-6 per day – if you give this to the guide at the end he or she will distribute it among the drivers and other members of the team.





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### Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** Not available for foreign cards

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Cards cannot be used in Sudan

**Local Currency:** Sudanese Pound

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** US Dollar (these must be unblemished)

**Where to Exchange:** Your guide will advise you

### Joining your Tour

#### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

#### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country.

#### Visa Information

Everyone except Egyptians requires a visa for entry to Sudan. At the time of writing British and most other European nationals no longer require an authority from the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs before the visa can be issued, which has previously been the case. A simple Letter of Invitation to support your application will be sufficient.

For all nationalities and in general where no Sudanese diplomatic representation exists in the home country, a visa on arrival can usually be issued but prior authorisation is required from the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs which we can assist with. \*Prices vary depending on nationality so please check with us about the costs for a visa on arrival.

**All travellers must bring one (or best, two) passport sized photograph/s to Sudan.**

**It is essential that your passport does not contain any Israeli stamps or other evidence of travel to Israel; otherwise your application will be rejected.**

#### Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.



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For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

### **Bags Inspection on arrival and departure**

The custom officer may need to check your bags and in this case you will be sent to a large room where you need to open the bag and let them make sure you are not carrying anything. Once cleared you can go.

It is strictly forbidden to take out of the country fossils, stones and any possible archaeological item. An accurate screening of your luggage will be done at the airport before departure. Fines may apply in case they find something suspicious.

### **Vaccinations & Protection**

As with travel to most parts of Africa, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations.

For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication will also be required and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended. In addition if you are arriving from another African country you may also require a yellow fever certificate.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

## *Preparing for your tour*

### **Climate**

Sudan is a seasonal destination. The north is the area of most interest for travellers. It is typically hot and dry throughout the year, but between April and October temperatures are ferociously hot, typically reaching over 40 °C. Sandstorms are also common during this time. Khartoum is a little cooler but more humid, receiving rain in July and August. From November to March are the best months to travel, although northern winter nights can be cold in the desert so you should be prepared for this.

### **Clothing**

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy although rain is rare. Wind and blown sand can be a problem so a head scarf can be useful.

Both male and female clients should dress with respect. Shorts should not be worn. We also recommend that women keep their arms covered. Our advice is to dress sensitively in accordance with Muslim traditions, and avoid wearing revealing clothing, particularly in rural areas. In summary, unless advised by your local guide, you should follow the above advice. If it is appropriate to dress in a slightly more revealing manner, then your guide will advise you accordingly.





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### **Equipment**

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. For those tours involving camping, a torch (flashlight) is essential. You may also wish to bring a hand towel and inflatable pillow. Toilet paper is not readily available in Sudan so if you are camping you should bring some. You will need to bring a sleeping bag and a sleeping sheet.

### **Photographs while on tour**

Camera lenses larger than 400mm and binoculars may not be allowed in to the country- you risk having them confiscated at the airport and they will be returned to you before you depart.

It is not allowed to take photographs of military items, airports, bridges, official buildings and in the markets. In Khartoum also there are often problems with Islamic fundamentalists to take photos of the town. We suggest, in case of any doubt, to ask the tour leader. You will take amazing photos in Sudan following the rules.

### **Footwear**

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended when walking around archaeological sites and in the desert. When travelling lighter sandals are a good option.

### **Luggage on tour**

Your luggage should not exceed 15kg. One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

### **Environmental Responsibility**

We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment and protect its resources and the people of Sudan. It is quite difficult to do so in Africa, however in our tours, we are trying our best to minimize the production of non-disposable rubbish, we try to be as "green" as possible and to preserve the friendliness of the Sudanese people. On this tour single-use plastic bottles of water will not be handed out. Water will be provided from a large container. We kindly ask you to bring your own water bottles/flask with you on this trip. If you have any concerns please contact us.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

Electrical supply is 230V/50 Hz and plugs usually have two round pins.

### **Language**

The official language is Arabic; in the Nubian region it is also used a local dialect different from Arabic. Very few people speak English.

### **Time Zone**

After 17 years Sudan has decided to adopt once again the Daylight-Saving Time. This means that the official time from 1 Nov is GMT +2. Also note that daily program will start in between 7 and 8am since sunset is currently between 17.00 and 17.30.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020.