

CHRISTMAS 2008 PART 3

SHARM EL SHEIKH

Our morning flight from Luxor to Sharm El Sheikh only took 40 minutes. We flew over very interesting desert terrain with lots of rivers of sand, some 'flowing' into sand lakes. Even around our Reef Oasis Blue Bay Resort, by the Red Sea on the Sinai Peninsular it was desert, broken only by the oasis of the gardens and greenery around the compound.



River of sand



Sharm El Sheikh



Our resort overlooking the Red Sea

It was a very large and impressive resort with several huge pools, each with a bar and towel dispenser nearby. There were several restaurants, and all food and drink was included. Only problem with that was that by then we had developed a severe case of the trots.

JORDAN – PETRA

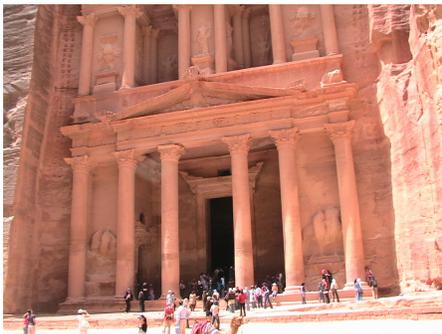
We had a huge day, up at 4.50AM bus to the airport, processed through customs and onto our Dash 7 Air Petroleum plane to Aqaba in Jordan. Aqaba is right on the border with Israel. We were quickly processed through customs at Aqaba and onto the bus for the drive north to Petra.



Aqaba, Jordan



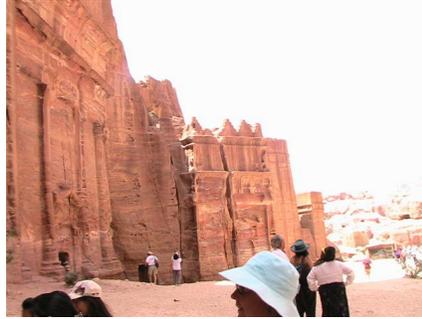
Between Aqaba and Petra



Upper section of The Treasury, Petra Lower section of The Treasury Looking up Siq River bed from Treasury



Camel in front of the Treasury



Tomb of the 17 Tombs



Landscape near Petra

SHARM EL SHEIK TO ST CATHERINES

The drive from Sharm El Sheik took us through amazing country – rugged mountains, desolate, dry, barren sandy desert. We passed several hardy Bedouin camps with their tents, shacks, camels and 4x4 vehicles. We drove past many checkpoints – armed soldiers and at least 1 APC. We had our passports checked at one point – the Sinai is quite heavily guarded. We stopped for lunch at Daqar, beside the Gulf of Aqaba. It was a very pretty spot, unspoilt and not plastic touristy like Sharm.



Bedouin Camp



Daqar on Gulf of Aqaba



Sinai Peninsular near St Catherine's



Our hotel at St Catherine's

Some of our hardier travelling companions were up at 2 Am to climb Mt Sinai in time to see the sun rise. Norm and I elected to give that a miss and so after a leisurely breakfast we set off to visit the St Catherine's Monastery, which is at the foot of Mt Sinai



St Catherine's Monastery (Mt Sinai)



Camel resting

ST CATHERINE'S TO CAIRO

After leaving St Catherine's at about midday, we had a long, hot drive through more spectacular mountain, sand dune, desert, with heavy security along the way as well as our own plain-clothes escort, armed with an AK 47.



Road to Suez Canal



Tunnel under Suez Canal

BACK IN CAIRO

The huge alabaster Mohammed Ali Mosque is high on a hill with great (misty/smoggy) views over Cairo.



Mohamed Ali Mosque



Colonnade



Water Font at Mosque



Cairo from Mosque



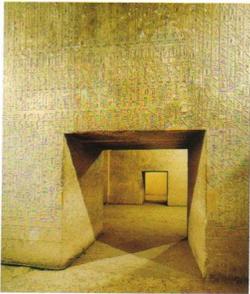
Khan El Khalili Bazaar

Another memorable experience was a visit to the amazing Khan El Khalili Bazaar – a HUGE complex of narrow alleyways leading off in all directions – very colourful, lots of clothes, jewellery, souvenirs, coffee shops, spice merchants, linen and lots more. We had fun exploring just a small section of the Bazaar. We (or at least I) were concerned that if we ventured too deeply into the maze of crisscrossing alleys we might never find our way back out. The bazaar covers an area of about 4 kilometers square.

We were taken out to the step pyramids, some distance from Giza. The Pyramid of Teti looked like a sand-covered mound of rocks, with a narrow tunnel entrance. The tunnel down into Teti was low, narrow and sloping downwards for about 30 metres, before opening into several chambers chiselled out of rock. The walls were decorated with ornate carvings, which were such a surprise to find inside such a deceptive looking pile of rocks.



Teti Pyramid



Interior



Pyramid of Djoser



Pyramids of Giza



Solar Boat



Sphinx



Happy Wanderers at Giza (Cairo in background)

AND SO HOME



WA Coastline



The Red Centre of Australia