

# A CAIRO GETAWAY

Avid traveller *John Stocki* takes a break from his sales executive role at Kempinski Hotel Ajman to explore buzzing Cairo



After living in the UAE for around seven months, it was finally time to take a little vacation; a small getaway from the hectic and fast-paced life of Dubai.

My mini vacation took me to Cairo for the Eid holiday following Ramadan. The city has an amazing culture which is full of life, energy, and most of all people. Cairo is known for being the largest city in the Arab world, and for good reason. As for that relaxing vacation I was looking for, I definitely didn't find it in Cairo.

Of course I did all the touristy bits such as visiting the Giza and Sakkara Pyramids, Egyptian Museum, Khan el Khalili and even the Cairo Zoo. These places were great to visit and there were so many photo opportunities. It is also very interesting to see and experience the incredible depth of Egypt's history.

With the pyramids and museum under my belt, it was time to see the parts of Cairo that don't make text books or the history channel. Khan el Khalili is a bazaar of sorts where you can buy just about any touristy item known to man. Great place to pick up some of those key chains, refrigerator magnets and little trinkets that you buy for all your friends back at home that secretly resent that you went to the Pyramids and all they got was a key chain.

But nevertheless, the atmosphere in this place was just electric. It was one of the loudest, entertaining and most alive places that I've ever visited. I sat down in a small café called El Fishawy, located in the centre of the bazaar, and I had a sensory overload with everything that was happening there. Whether it was the waiter screaming from one side of the café to the other,

or someone trying to sell you something, anything, everything.. I've never been propositioned so many times in my life to buy something within a 30 minute period. I could have bought countless leather wallets, cartons of cigarettes, soccer balls, necklaces or key chains. Too bad for them I wasn't really in the market for any of that.

A whole different adventure in Cairo is the food. In between visiting all the touristy spots, I tried to visit as many different street vendors as I could to taste all the types of food on offer. Items ranged from grilled corn on the cob, freshly-baked traditional Egyptian bread and a vast range of different nuts and fresh juices.

After tasting a whole slew of these types of food, trying to find full meal at a quality restaurant was quite difficult unless you went to a hotel. Local cafeterias are available, but are definitely not at the pinnacle of quality cuisine. They might not have the best food, but they will do anything to get you to have a meal at their restaurant. I even had a restaurant manager follow me down the street for about five blocks trying to convince me to have dinner at his restaurant!

All in all, the trip to Cairo was enlightening, intriguing and most of all exhausting. With the combination of sightseeing, walking around all day in 45 degree Celsius heat and non-stop bargaining for everything I purchased, I was ready for my flight out of Cairo.

As for a return visit, I can't see myself visiting Cairo again for a vacation, but there are many other beautiful locations within Egypt such as Alexandria, Soma Bay, Luxor or Aswan which I would like to visit. We'll see where I end up next.