



Memphis and Saqqara - Beginnings



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The Largest Active Archeological Site in Egypt

Your Visit to Memphis and Saqqara

Memphis, situated 20 miles south of modern day Cairo, was the first capital of ancient Egypt founded in the era of the Old Kingdom (dynasties 3-6) The site is over 5000 years old so little of the actual city remains.

The city of Memphis was known for its grand temples and palaces, many of which were built by some of the most famous pharaohs in history, such as Ramesses II and III. Memphis reached pre-eminence in the 3rd Dynasty and the huge royal pyramid tombs of this period, in the necropolises of Memphis, confirm this.

Today attractions are at the open-air museum and sculptures, not architectural remains of the former city. Among the ruins left from ancient Memphis, are the statue of Ramses II. Another giant statue of Ramses II was also found in the temple is now at the entrance of the Grand Egyptian Museum. With the decline of Memphis in the 7th century Memphis's crumbling buildings were harvested for stone to lay the foundations for Cairo.

The prominence of Memphis is indicated by its extensive cemeteries of the early Dynastic period (c. 2925–c. 2575 BCE) and Old Kingdom (c. 2575–c. 2130 BCE). Most of the pyramids found near Cairo, numbering well over 100 in total, were built during this period when Memphis was the most important city in Egypt and most probably the world.

The Ancient City of Memphis and the Necropolis of Saqqara

A necropolis is quite literally a city of the dead. Considered one of the most important archaeological sites in the world, the Necropolis of Saqqara was used by ancient citizens of Memphis as a cemetery for Kings, non-kings, and also animals. The most important tombs found in the necropolis of Saqqara was the Mastaba of Ti and the tomb for King Djoser (found in the Step pyramid of Djoser)- The Step Pyramid was the first stone pyramid ever built in Egypt and perhaps the world.

The 6-tier, 4-sided structure is the earliest colossal stone building in Egypt. Beneath the pyramid was an underground structure of unprecedented size and complexity, with galleries, a bewildering array of tunnels and chambers of over 400 rooms. The center of the underground complex is a 90-foot-deep (28 m) shaft that, at its bottom, contained the burial chamber of King Djoser

Who was Djoser and How Long Did It Take To Build his Pyramid?

Djoser, the second pharaoh of the 3rd dynasty was the builder and Imhotep, the king's architect, is credited with this architectural feat. His reputation as a wise man and physician led in later times to



his deification.

Saqqara's step pyramid took about twenty years to build with about 100,000 free skilled workers. It took another 10 years to connect the Pyramid with the Valley temple below. It is considered to be an experimental structure in ancient Egypt

Egyptologists believe this design served as a gigantic stairway by which the soul of the deceased pharaoh could ascend to the heavens. Another sixteen Egyptian kings built pyramids at Saqqara, which are now in various states of preservation. It remained an important complex for non-royal burials and cult ceremonies for more than 3000 years, well into Ptolemaic and Roman times.

Pyramids Surrounded by Cemeteries

The royal pyramids are surrounded by large cemeteries where the courtiers and officials who had served the king during his lifetime were buried. The beautiful reliefs in certain of these tombs include scenes of daily life and thus give some idea of the crafts, costumes, and occupations of the royal court of Memphis. The Mastaba of Ti - one of the most detailed and preserved tomb ever to be found - has helped the modern civilization to learn more about life in the Old Kingdom. Saqqara Necropolis is also home to the largest complex of animal cemeteries and cult buildings.

Though other pyramids were attempted in the 3rd Dynasty after Djoser, it was the 4th Dynasty transitioning from the step pyramid to true pyramid shape, which gave rise to the great pyramids of Meidum, Dahshur, and Giza. Without the construction of Djoser at Saqqara, the Great Pyramid of Giza may have never existed

The Largest Active Archaeological Site in Egypt

Aside from being home to Egypt's oldest pyramid, Saqqara is the largest active archaeological site in the country. After Covid and a break of two years, work has once again begun on uncovering Saqqara's secrets. From 2021, archaeologists have made groundbreaking discoveries of a tomb carved into rock that is over 4000 years old. Additionally, archaeologists recently found a cache of 250 ancient Egyptian mummies and the largest caches of bronze statues ever found at the site

Memphis and Saqqara are crucial parts of the story of Ancient Egypt. This excursion has you entering the pyramid and recently discovered tombs. An amazing day that you will remember for life.



What You Can Expect From This Experience

You will come away from this experience realising the impact of Egypt's first capital, Memphis, had on the development of the pyramids across Egypt. You will see magnificent statues and sculptors which were once part of Memphis.

At [Saqqara](#), you will see the first ever stone built pyramid of Djoser and go inside the recently discovered tombs to capture a glimpse of ancient Egyptian life. Saqqara is the largest archaeological site within Egypt with many recent tomb discoveries.



An Enormous Complex of Ancient Buildings

The 6-tier, 4-sided structure of the Step Pyramid is the earliest colossal stone building in Egypt. Beneath the pyramid is an underground structure of unprecedented size and complexity, with galleries, a bewildering array of tunnels and chambers of over 400 rooms. The center of the underground complex is a 90-foot-deep (28 m) shaft that, at its bottom, contained the burial chamber of King Djoser.



The Saqqara Necropolis

A necropolis is quite literally a city of the dead. Considered one of the most important archaeological sites in the world, the Necropolis of [Saqqara](#) was used by ancient citizens of Memphis as a cemetery for Kings, non-kings, and also animals. The most important tombs found in the necropolis of Saqqara was the mastaba of Ti and the tomb for King Djoser (found in the Step pyramid of Djoser).





The Most Extensive Burial Site in Egypt

The royal pyramids are surrounded by large cemeteries where the courtiers and officials who had served the king during his lifetime were buried. Another sixteen Egyptian kings built pyramids at Saqqara, which are now in various states of preservation. It remained an important complex for non-royal burials and cult ceremonies for more than 3000 years.



Recent Discoveries Are Revealing Egyptian Life

From 2021, archaeologists have made ground [breaking discoveries](#) of a tomb carved into rock that is over 4000 years old. Additionally, archaeologists recently found a cache of 250 ancient Egyptian mummies and the largest caches of bronze statues ever found at the site. This excursion has you entering the pyramid and recently discovered tombs. An amazing day that you will remember for life.



You Will Venture Into The Tombs

The beautiful reliefs in certain of these [tombs](#) include scenes of daily life and thus give some idea of the crafts, costumes, and occupations of the royal court of Memphis. This has as helped us learn more about life in the Old Kingdom. Saqqara Necropolis is also home to the largest complex of animal cemeteries and cult buildings.





We Depart Saqqara For Lunch

We enjoy taking our guests out for lunch because it's another way to experience Egyptian culture. We just want to make the following points. We only take our guests to the best restaurants. We place good hygiene and cleanliness within those establishments as the number 1 priority. The restaurants offer both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. If you choose to pass on lunch, we won't take it personally. But please be assured, your health and safety is our overriding priority.

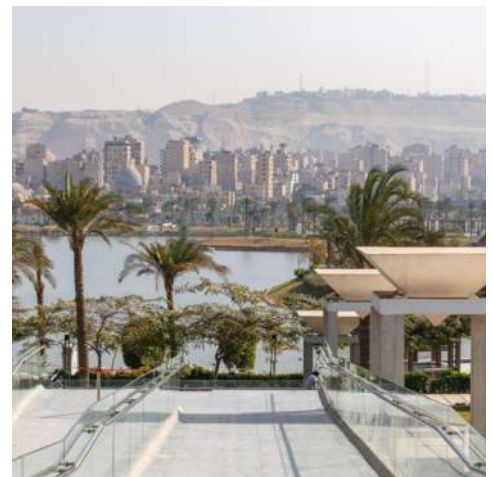


Contact Us

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This half day tour can be combined with another tour for a full day's activities. The other tours include Khan El Khanili Bazaar, Old Cairo (Coptic and Islamic History), the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, Stairways to Eternity (The Pyramids of Giza) and many others. This half day tour is combined with another tour for a full day's activities. Please enquire at One Horizon for your options.

- Pick up at 9.30 am from your hotel
- Water
- All entrance fees, service charge, current taxes, and vat.
- Tomb entry to see the latest discoveries
- Lunch
- Services of an English-speaking guide

Exclusions

- Personal expenditure
- Tips
- Alcoholic, soda or fruit juice drinks

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge FRANCE 24, whose publicly available videos on YouTube, provide travelers with information on destinations

France 24: [Tombs in Saqqara necropolis](#)