



Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Newsletter

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Measures taken by the Government to support the tourism industry



President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi during the meeting to discuss the implications of the Coronavirus

The Egyptian Government is working diligently to mitigate the effects of the Coronavirus on the tourism sector. H.E. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi issued several presidential directives aimed at supporting this vital sector whilst protecting the rights of workers throughout the crisis.

The sector's support measures include dropping real estate tax on hotel and tourist establishments for six months. Payment of all dues on tourism and hotel establishments are to be postponed for three months without fines or delay benefits.

H.E. the President has requested the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) to offer tourism facilities low-interest funds, especially for payment of salaries of employees.

H.E. the President's directives also include seizing the halt period to upgrade the infrastructure of tourism facilities in order for them to be ready to receive Egyptians and foreign tourists as soon as this situation recedes.

In the same context, the Egyptian Cabinet announced its approval of a six-months rescheduling and deferral plan on utility payments (electricity, water and gas) for tourist establishments and private airlines. The payments shall start from October 2020.

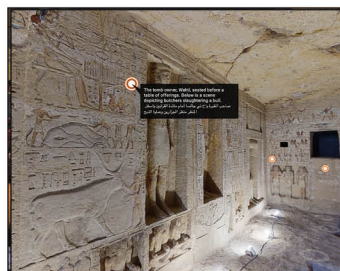
Moreover, the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) has launched a EGP 50bn financing initiative to support tourism, reducing the interest rate on it from 8% to 5%, as well as an initiative directed to the payment of salaries and operating expenses. As part of the initiative, banks can grant credit facilities with a maximum two-year repayment period, in addition to a six-months grace period starting from the grant date, during which banks can capitalise unpaid interests.

In addition to that, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has exempted all bazars and cafeterias located in archaeological sites from paying rent until tourism safely resumes.

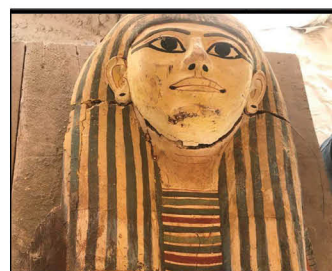
The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities met with the Minister of Petroleum and Mineral resources, and it was agreed to grant additional reductions to the price of aviation fuel, bringing the total value of the discount to 10 cents per gallon, which will be applied permanently once the tourism movement and air-traffic are back.



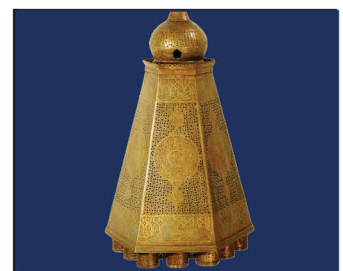
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Tourism and Antiquities Faces the "Coronavirus"

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Chairs the Crisis and Risk Management Committee ... and Meets with Investors

During the month of April, H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities chaired the second and third meetings of the Crisis and Risk Management Committee in the tourism sector to alleviate the implications of the spread of Coronavirus (COVID 19) on the sector.

The committee discussed the current situation in the tourism sector and, the actions taken towards complaints of the workers in the sector, received through the designated hotline. It also discussed various scenarios for the return of tourism, the measures to be implemented for the safe return of tourism to Egypt, in accordance to the guidelines approved by the World Health Organization and the hygiene and safety regulations required for hotels to receive visitors according to international standards.

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities also met with the Chairman of the Egyptian Tourism Federation, chairmen of the various chambers of tourism, and heads of the associations of the investors of Red Sea, Sharm El-Sheikh and Taba, and the Chairman of the Tourism and Aviation Committee in the Egyptian Parliament. They discussed sterilization, safety and hygiene measures that must be implemented in all hotels, resorts and touristic establishments to ensure the health and safety of their employees, and guests, when tourism returns after the crisis ends.

People Working in the Sector

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities is committed to protecting the rights of people working in the tourism sector, ensuring that no employee is laid off during this period. Hotels, tourism establishments and travel agencies are instructed to look after the wellbeing of their employees, and any establishment laying off workers will have their license suspended; in that respect H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities suspended the license of one of the prominent hotels in Sharm El-Sheikh, South Sinai Governorate, also the Ministry, in coordination with the Egyptian Tourism Federation, is implementing an initiative to support irregular workers in the tourism sector. H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities met with H.E. the Ministers of Planning and Manpower to discuss the situation of the labour force mostly affected by the implications of the spread of the Coronavirus on the tourism sector.

In addition to that, the Ministry activated a hotline (19654) to receive complaints and inquiries of workers in the tourism sectors, in cooperation with one of the companies affiliated to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

Sanitization and disinfection of hotels, museums and archaeological sites



Disinfection of hotels



...and of archaeological sites

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities continues exerting efforts in implementing precautionary measures to prevent and protect from the repercussions of the Coronavirus, and to complete sterilization work in various museums and archaeological sites, in addition to hotel, resorts and tourist establishments. In this regard, all hotels and resorts in Egypt have undergone a mandatory sanitization and disinfection process under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in coordination with the Egyptian Hotel Association, in accordance with the guidelines approved by the World Health Organization and by using materials approved by the Ministry of Health and Population. In addition to that, the second and third phases of sterilization of archaeological sites and museums in Egypt have also ended, and special teams were formed to carry out cleansing and disinfection works every 48 hours. To follow up on and ensure the implementation of the correct sanitization and disinfection procedures in hotels in Cairo, H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities personally inspected a number of hotels there.

Tourism and Antiquities Faces the "Coronavirus"

As for Museums and archaeological sites across Egypt, they have been closed from 23 March 2020, until further notice; all restaurants, swimming pools, nightclubs and spas in all hotels also remain closed. This is part of the government's efforts to protect the health of citizens and ward off any repercussions of the Coronavirus. The Ministry is working on preparing safety guidelines for hotels, museums, and archaeological sites to receive visitors.

Inspection of Restaurants and Tourism Facilities

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities inspected a number of tourism facilities and restaurants to ensure eateries and food outlets are adhering to proper hygiene standards after the Cabinet's decision to allow eateries and restaurants to run delivery and takeout services.

As part of the precautionary measures, restaurants are required to operate with no more than 50% of their workforce present in the restaurant and give them medical examination with daily temperature checks throughout the month of Ramadan. In addition to that, restaurants are required to provide workers with health and safety training, ensure they wear protective equipment such as masks and gloves, follow preventive measures, and undergo regular sterilization and disinfection procedures. The Ministry stressed that those who do not adhere to the conditions set out will face severe penalties, and in that regard two restaurants have been shut down for not abiding by the set regulations.

The World Tourism Organization tweets a "Thank you" note to Egypt

On its Twitter account, the United Nations World Tourism Organization commended Egypt's efforts to protect and mitigate the effects of the novel Coronavirus and its commitment to applying international health and safety measures. UNWTO tweeted "Thank you to Egypt for amplifying our commitment to staying home today so we can travel tomorrow. A valued UNWTO member, Egypt is ready to welcome tourists again and ensure the benefits the sector brings everyone".

Experience Egypt from Home, an online initiative by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities



A virtual tour of the tomb of King Ramses VI

In light of the call of the government of Egypt and all governments of the world for their citizens to stay home, amid the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities launched, in April, an online campaign on its websites and social media platforms under the title "Experience Egypt from Home". The Ministry posts everyday at 8 pm virtual tours and guided tours, inside some of Egypt's museums and archaeological sites, sharing these wonders with people staying at home. The Ministry also shed light on a number of Islamic monuments through virtual and guided tours during the month of Ramadan. Those tours were produced in cooperation with scientific institutions and a number of media agencies; namely Media Hub, MO4, NAV 3D and Virtual Mid East, in addition to the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Agriculture.



A guided tour of Al-Tahrir Museum

International Media Praises "Experience Egypt from Home"

Newspapers, international and Arab news agencies, including Reuters, the French News Agency, the Chinese Agency, the Guardian, Life Sciences, Paris Match, CNN and other media outlets praised the initiative launched by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities under the title "Experience Egypt from Home". An initiative that provides virtual tours to some museums and archaeological sites for people around the world during their stay at home as a precautionary measure to combat the spread of the Coronavirus.

On its official Twitter account, UNESCO tweeted "In times of crises, we need culture more than ever! As COVID-19 enforces barriers, virtual traveling breaks them down. Explore the amazing wonders of Egypt from Home".



The Guardian newspaper



... And UNESCO's Tweet

A Message of Solidarity to the Italian People

With the Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) as a backdrop, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, sent a message of solidarity from the Egyptian people and government to the Italian people on the Italian RAI TV channel, wishing them health and that that we all defeat the Coronavirus as soon as possible. In response to his message, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities received a phone call from the Italian ambassador to Egypt, thanking him, for the kind gesture that reflects the deep and strong relations between the two countries in various fields, especially tourism and antiquities. The Ambassador also conveyed the gratitude of the Italian government and people to the Egyptian government and people.

...And a Message of unity to the People of the World from H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities posted a video message to the Egyptian people and the people of the world, asking them to stay home and take care of their health and the health and safety of their loved ones. He said "We are deploying great efforts to sanitize and disinfect all touristic attractions: hotels, resorts, restaurants, museums and archaeological sites, to be ready to welcome you soon.

And while we are working hard to take care of the heritage of humanity, please take care of yourselves and your loved ones". The UNESCO posted the Minister's video on its social media platforms.

Ambassadors of Italy, England, Mexico and Austria express appreciation for Egypt's efforts to assist their citizens back home

The Ambassadors of Italy, England and Mexico expressed their countries' appreciation for the support and efforts of the Egyptian government, to facilitate the departure of their citizens back home, and the ambassador of Austria sent an official letter to H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities in this regard.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities greets Egyptians stranded abroad due to the Coronavirus pandemic in Marsa Allam

The office of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in the Red Sea Governorate greeted Egyptians stranded abroad due to the Coronavirus pandemic upon their return to Marsa Allam from a number of the countries, including the United States and Canada. The office received them at the airport of Marsa Allam, where they were all medically examined and then were transported to hotels for a quarantine period of 14 days.

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Celebrates World Heritage Day

On World Heritage Day, H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Announces a New Archaeological Discovery



The Minister's visit to "Wahati" tomb

On 18 April, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities celebrated World Heritage Day in a different way this year, in light of the precautionary measures taken by the Egyptian government and the world at large to limit the spread of the new Coronavirus. The Ministry chose Saqqara Archaeology site, one of the World Heritage sites in Egypt, to be a symbol for celebrating this day.

The Ministry's official website on the internet and all its social media platforms posted a tour of H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities in the tomb of "Wahti". Discovered in 2018, the tomb of "Wahti" is considered one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the last decade. The Ministry also posted a video announcing a new archaeological discovery in Saqqara online.

The discovery is located at the Sacred Animal Necropolis in Saqqara. A shaft 11 meters deep has been found, at the bottom of which five sealed stone coffins/sarcophagi, four niches in a room containing wooden coffins and Late Period human burials were uncovered.

A massive anthropoid wooden coffin bearing hieroglyphs written in yellow pigment was discovered in one of these niches. Other objects were discovered around this coffin, including: 365 faience ushabti figurines, a small wooden obelisk about 40 centimetres tall, all four of its sides bearing painted scenes depicting the goddesses Isis and Nephthys, and the god Horus; wooden statues of the god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris; three pottery canopic jars in which the viscera removed during mummification were kept; in addition to many other artefacts.

Lighting the Pyramids of Giza with the Slogans of ICOMOS and UNESCO

On World Heritage Day, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities lit the Pyramids of Giza with the slogans of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and UNESCO: "Shared Culture", "Shared Heritage", and "Shared Responsibility", in the presence of H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities and H.E. the Minister of State for Information. The Ministry launched this event from the Pyramids of Giza, one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites.

It is worth mentioning that 18 April marks the International day for Monuments and sites, also known as World Heritage Day. This international observance is met with different types of activities around the world.



Lighting the Giza Pyramids on World Heritage Day

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities launches an Art Competition for Children

On the World Heritage Day, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities launched an art competition for children aged 6 to 12 years, where children are to choose one of the seven World Heritage Sites found in Egypt, draw a picture of it and write a short essay to describe it. The competition aims at raising archaeological and cultural awareness among children.

Archaeological Discoveries

Archaeological cave uncovered in North Sinai

During April, an ancient cave decorated with distinctive engravings depicting scenes of animals has been discovered at Wadi Al-Zulma in North Sinai.

The newly discovered cave is the first of its kind to be discovered in the area, the scenes carved inside the cave are completely different from those found in South Sinai, having a special artistic style that resembles raised relief in execution. Studies are underway to determine their date. Most of the discovered scenes are carved along the cave's inner walls and depict animals, including camels, Deer, mules, mountain goats and donkeys.



Part of the engravings discovered

17th dynasty mummy in coffin discovered in Luxor



Wooden coffin from the seventeenth Dynasty

A 17th dynasty anthropoid coffin containing a mummy, along with a mud-brick offering chapel and a pile of mixed materials from funerary equipment, have been unearthed by a Spanish-Egyptian archaeological mission in Dra Abu el Naga necropolis on Luxor's West Bank.

The coffin was carved in wood cut from a single sycamore tree trunk, then coated with a whitewash and painted in red. Inside the coffin the mummy of a 15 or 16 year old girl was found resting on her right side. The mummy is in a bad conservation condition and is wearing two earrings in one of her ears, both with a spiral shape and coated with a thin metal leaf, maybe copper. Four necklaces tied together with a faience clip were found around her chest.

Foundation deposits and storerooms of Ramses II Temple in Abydos uncovered

The mission of the New York University-ISA at the Temple of Ramses II in Abydos, discovered the temple's foundation deposits during excavation work carried out in the temple's southwest corner.

The deposits were buried in 1279 BC at the time of the construction ceremony. They include food offerings, plaques inscribed with Ramses II's throne name painted in blue or green, small copper construction tool models, pottery vessels decorated with hieratic inscriptions, and oval shaped quartzite grindstones.

Meetings

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities participates in the UNWTO Meeting and the African Tourism Ministers' Meeting via Video Conference

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities participated in the first ministerial meeting of the tourism ministers of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) via video conference, where they discussed measures taken by countries and governments to alleviate the economic impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the tourism sector. H.E. the Minister also participated, through video conference, to the meeting of the African Tourism Ministers' Bureau affiliated to the African Union. During the meeting, they discussed the implications of the Coronavirus on the tourism sector in the African continent, and they agreed on formulating a small crisis management committee to study the implications of the crisis on the sector, recovery scenarios, and submit a complete report to the Bureau.



The Minister during the video conference with the UNWTO

Meetings

H.E. the Minister discusses the Opening Ceremony of the Grand Egyptian Museum and its Promotional Campaign

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities met with the General Supervisor of the project of the Grand Egyptian Museum and the surrounding area, to follow up on the preparations of the opening ceremony of the Grand Egyptian Museum and the process of choosing the international company that will be responsible for organising the ceremony in 2021.

H.E. the Minister also met with the company in charge of the promotional campaign of the inauguration of the museum. During the meeting, several ideas for the campaign were reviewed and discussed.

H.E. the Minister Discusses the Establishment of a new Fund to Support Workers with the Chairmen of the Egyptian Tourism Federation and the Hotel Association

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities met the Chairman of the Egyptian Tourism Federation and the Chairman of the Egyptian Hotel Association, to discuss establishing a new fund to support workers in the tourism sector in case a crisis occurs that negatively affects the sector.

Tourism Crises that have occurred over the years revealed the absence of an accurate database for the workers in the sector which made it very difficult to protect the rights of many of them and provide the necessary support to those who deserve it.

H.E. the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Inspects the Administrative Capital Museum, the Grand Egyptian Museum, and the Saqqara Archaeological Site



Restoration laboratory of the Grand Egyptian Museum



The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities while visiting Saqqara archeological site

During the month of April, the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities visited a number of museums and archaeological sites to follow up on the progress of the work. The Minister inspected the Administrative Capital Museum, visiting the museum's grand hall, the halls attached to it and the tomb of Tutu. So far, the museum received 550 artefacts to be displayed. During the upcoming period, heavy objects and display cases will be transported to the museum. The Minister also inspected the Grand Egyptian Museum to follow up on the progress of work there in light of the preventive measures taken by the government to combat the spread of the Coronavirus. The Minister visited the archaeological restoration centre and the wood restoration laboratory. The work in the museum did not stop, according to the directives of H.E. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, to continue work in major projects. H.E. the Minister also visited the Saqqara archaeological site to inspect the sterilization and disinfection process, H.E. the Minister also inspected archaeological excavations in the area to ensure the implementation of precautionary measures taken by workers at the site and to provide them with maximum protection.

The History of the Ramadan Lantern and the Masaharati

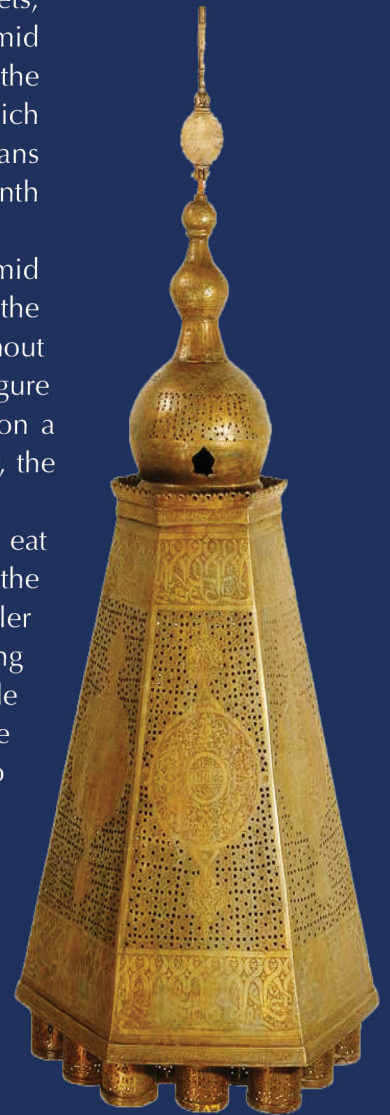
For centuries in Egypt, Ramadan has been a time to celebrate customs that are essential to the holy month. Many of those unique customs, which are still practiced in most Arab and Islamic countries, date to the beginning of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt, and are viewed as a necessary to give the days and nights of Ramadan a very special flavor.

The first and most characteristic of those customs is the Ramadan lantern, an ornate, colorful lantern that people buy or make themselves. The lantern is used to decorate homes or streets, signaling the beginning of the holy month. The tradition goes back to the Fatimid era. The origin of the lantern, however, remains contested. One story notes the earliest use of the lantern to the twenty-fifth of Ramadan of the year in which the Caliph Al-Muizz Le Din Allah Al-Fatimi entered Egypt, when Egyptians celebrated his arrival by carrying lanterns that were lit until the end of the month of Ramadan.

Another version for the origin of the lantern suggests that Caliphs in the Fatimid era obliged the owners of houses and shops to light lanterns throughout the month of Ramadan so that the country could enjoy luminous nights throughout the holy month. Another prominent Ramadan tradition is the Masaharati, a figure whose role is to walk the streets every night while chanting and banging on a small drum. The purpose of the Masaharati is to wake people up for Suhoor, the last meal before fasting begins.

It is said that during the Fatimid regime, the process of waking people to eat before dawn was carried out by a special call to prayer. Some narratives say the first person who performed the role of the Masaharati was Otba Ibn Ishak, ruler of Egypt in 228 AH, who used to call on people to Suhoor himself, knocking on doors with a stick. In another narration, the ruling Caliph obliged people to sleep after evening prayers then sent his men knocking on doors to wake people up for Suhoor. As for the Ramadan cannon, Cairo was the first city to set this tradition.

The story goes that at the sunset of the first day of Ramadan in 869 AH, the Mamluk Sultan Khashkadam wanted to try a new cannon. The launch of this cannon coincided with the time of the Maghrib prayer call, so people thought that the Sultan deliberately launched the cannon to alert the fasting people that the time for breaking the fast had come. When the Sultan saw their happiness, he decided to proceed with the launch of the cannon every day in the month of Ramadan, marking the breaking of the fast.



Gehan Nabil (Director of the Education Center of the Grand Egyptian Museum)



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