**The Calm and Crazy of Cairo**

There is so much to say about working and living in this bustling metropolis that is Cairo, that it is difficult to contain it in a single article. It is calm and calamitous, busy and beautiful, surging and soulful. It is not in any way the picture that the beloved international media seek to bombard us with. Nor is it the peaceful plateaus of the Pyramids that some of you may have equated with the essence of Egypt. It is, in my earnest opinion, somewhere in between; an ever-burgeoning, sprawling city, of mixed races, mixed cultures, all with a healthy mix of ideologies. In short, Cairo is calm, Cairo is crazy; Cairo is whatever you want to make of it.

**Initial Views**

My initial view of Cairo, upon landing here in August 2016, was that it was BIG!!! Massive, in truth. The city is a gargantuan, ever-growing construction site which makes sense when you consider that the Egypt’s population now borders 110 million! It is fast-paced (close your eyes on taxi journeys for your first month) and it has more to do than you might first imagine. I have found Egyptians a humorous and proud set of people; they know and acknowledge their failings and fortunes and are quick to crack a joke at their own expense. Although sometimes over-friendly, they are an affable nationality, often keen to show you around; they are proud of their heritage and helpful with everyday hints and tips.

**Employment**

I am employed here in an ever-growing, renowned British International School which hosts a large number of expatriates from all corners of the world. French, American, English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish teachers all congregate and work (mostly in harmony!!) under the same roof. Because of the multi-national nature of the workforce, it is an energetic, dynamic atmosphere that beholds us each and every morning. Coming from a variety of different teaching and learning backgrounds, we easily learn from each other; embracing new working practices, engaging in mutually constructive pedagogical discussion and ultimately seeking to improve the lot of the children in our care. The working year is noticeably shorter than in the UK with no shortage of celebratory days off and lengthy holiday periods when people choose to travel home or immerse themselves in the many hauntingly beautiful places that are dotted around this enchanting country.

**Social**

While to the unseasoned eye, Cairo may seem like a social desert. This idea could not be further from truth. There are a plethora of social options to keep all types active and amused. From felucca trips on the majestic Nile to sipping wine on a rooftop terrace; sampling the local shisha in a side-alley downtown to bar-hopping through a series of ‘Beladi’ bars, Cairo offers it all…and more. Quad-biking, sand-dune hiking, breakfast banquets, fry-up feasts, desert tours and little beasts; all examples of what Cairo has to offer. Museums, day-trips, games rooms, malls, shopping, shopping, shopping…there is literally something for everyone in this huge city. Have I mentioned the quintessential beauty of Dahab? Or the relaxed nature of Hurghada, the historical wonder that is Alexandria and ……has anyone ever heard of the little-known monuments, locally referred to as The Pyramids? Need I say more…

It is my second year to work and stay in Egypt and, based on my expansive experiences thus far, I intend to continue on this journey for at least a couple more years. Egypt has so much to offer regardless of your particular preferences, tastes or hobbies. Should you delve beyond the mire that exists in every developing city, you will find what it is you are looking for. Embrace it with an open mind and discard any train of negativity you may have harboured.

Egypt- eccentric and enigmatic- is waiting for you.

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