

ARCE MEMBER TOUR

THE TRAIL OF THE HOLY FAMILY

NOVEMBER 4 - 17, 2026

Led by Dr. Mary Kupelian



ARCE MEMBER TOUR

THE TRAIL OF THE
HOLY FAMILY

NOVEMBER 4 – 17, 2026

Led by Dr. Mary Kupelian



ABOUT DR. MARY KUPELIAN

Dr. Kupelian research focuses on Coptic Archaeology, Armenian heritage in Egypt, and she works part-time at the Coptic Museum in Cairo. She has contributed to exhibitions such as “Armenia” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and “Exalted Spirits” at the Egyptian Museum. Dr. Kupelian serves as Secretary General of ICOM Egypt, is a member of Egypt’s Supreme Committee for Museum Displays, and actively promotes Coptic heritage through teaching, exhibitions, and tourism guidance techniques.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Arrive in Cairo

Meals Included: Dinner

Meet and greet at Cairo Airport

To ensure your journey is seamless from the start, our representative will meet you before passport control to assist with acquiring your visa stamps, moving through passport control and collecting your luggage.

Later you will be transferred to the hotel for check-in

Dinner at hotel

Overnight in Cairo



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Coptic Cairo

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

07:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

08:00AM Meet your guide and proceed to Old Cairo

Visit the **Coptic Museum**. The Coptic Museum possesses the richest collection of Coptic art in the world. It was founded in 1910 by Morcos Simaika, a wealthy Copt, and in 1931 was given official status by the Egyptian government. The monuments in the Coptic museum are a bridge between the Pharaonic and Islamic periods.

In Old Cairo, you will visit the **Hanging Church (Church of Al Moallaka)**. It is called the 'hanging' church because it rests on the two south-western bastions of the old Roman fortress of Babylon. Its nave extends over the rampart that leads to the ancient fortress. Though it is suggested that the earliest parts of the church date to as early as the 4th century, in the 9th century, the church was destroyed and then restored in the 11th century.

Then to the **St. Sergius Church (Abu Sarga)**. The church of Saint Sergius is one of the oldest surviving churches in Old Cairo. The church is dedicated to two Roman Officers, Sergius and Bacchus, who were martyred in Syria in the reign of Maximian. The earliest part of the building, dated to the 5th century, was built over the cave where, according to tradition, the Holy Family hid during their flight to Egypt. The structure was burnt down then restored in the 8th century, and again in the 11th century. Next, we will visit the recently restored Synagogue of Ben Ezra.

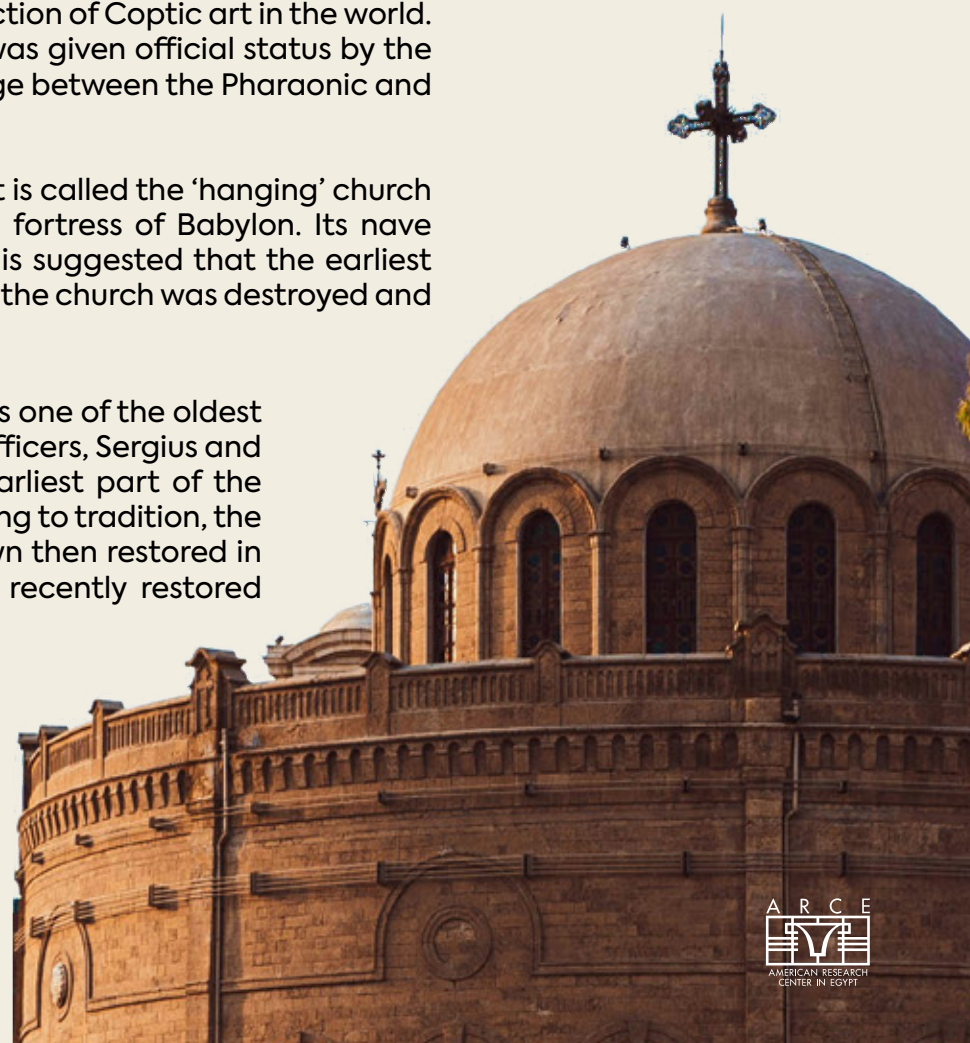
Lunch at a local restaurant

Return to the hotel

Reception at ARCE

Overnight in Cairo

The Trail of the Holy Family





FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Sakha / Samannoud / Tel Basta

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

06:30AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

07:30AM Meet your guide and head to Sakha

Sakha (also known as Bikha Issous) was an important Christian pilgrimage site from the early Middle Ages, originally known for an icon of the Holy Family. Since 1984, the main object of veneration has been a stone believed to bear Jesus' footprint.

Samannoud, one of the oldest continuously inhabited towns in Lower Egypt and former capital of the 12th nome, has deep pharaonic roots and later became an important center for the worship of Osiris during the Ptolemaic period. Christian tradition holds that the Holy Family stayed there, where Jesus blessed a well and the Virgin Mary prepared bread in a granite trough still preserved today. The town also witnessed severe Christian persecutions during the Roman period, including the martyrdom of Saint Abanub.

Free time for lunch.

Tel Basta (ancient Bubastis), near Zagazig in Sharqiah Governorate, was a major center for the worship of the goddess Bastet, especially during the 22nd Dynasty and the Late Period. Coptic tradition also links the site to the Holy Family, recounting events such as the fall of idols, the creation of a well, and their stay at Qolum's home.

Return to the hotel to enjoy the remainder of the day at your leisure

Overnight in Cairo



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Pyramids of Giza / Sphinx / Solar Boat / Grand Egyptian Museum

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

06:30AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

07:30AM Meet your guide and head to Giza Plateau

Giza Pyramid Complex. Dominating the plateau and running in a southwest diagonal through the site are the three pyramids of the pharaohs Khufu, Khafra, and Menkaura. The northernmost and the largest belongs to Khufu. Khafra's pyramid is built precisely on a southwest diagonal to his father's pyramid on higher ground to create the illusion of being bigger. The pyramid of Menkaura is much smaller and is not aligned on the same diagonal axis as the other two pyramids. Entry to the Great Pyramid of Khufu included.

Lunch at 9 Pyramids Lounge

Head to The **Grand Egyptian Museum**, which is located at the edge of the first desert plateau between the pyramids and Cairo. It is defined by a 50m level difference, created as the Nile carves its way through the desert to the Mediterranean, a geological condition that has shaped Egypt for over 3,000 years.

The museum is envisaged as a cultural complex of activities devoted to Egyptology and will contain 24,000m² of permanent exhibition space, almost 4 football fields in size, a children's museum, conference and education facilities, a large conservation center and extensive gardens on the 50hA site. The collections of the museum include the Tutankhamen collection, that is currently housed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and the Solar Boat that is now housed beside the pyramids.

Return to the hotel to enjoy the remainder of the day at your leisure

Overnight in Cairo

The Trail of the Holy Family

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Matareya / Mostorod /Maadi

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

07:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

08:00AM Meet your guide and visit the area of Matareya

Matareya is where the tree of **Virgin Mary stands**. Then to **Mostorod** to see the Virgin Mary Church and the Holy Well

Lunch

Overlooking the Nile in Maadi is a church of Virgin Mary that was built on the spot where the Holy Family crossed the Nile to the West bank in Giza. It is on this part of the Nile that a page from the Bible appeared on the surface of the water containing the famous phrase, “blessed are the people of Egypt.”

Overnight in Cairo





MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Wadi El Natrun

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

06:30AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

07:30AM Meet your guide and head to Wadi Natrun

The trail of the Holy Family from **Sakha to Wadi Natrun** is recorded in the Vision of **Theophilus**. Located between Cairo and Alexandria, Wadi Natrun lies in a desert depression 25 meters below sea level. Its name comes from the large deposits of natron (sodium bicarbonate), used in ancient mummification and later in Roman glassmaking. After the Arab conquest, it became the official residence of the Coptic patriarch.

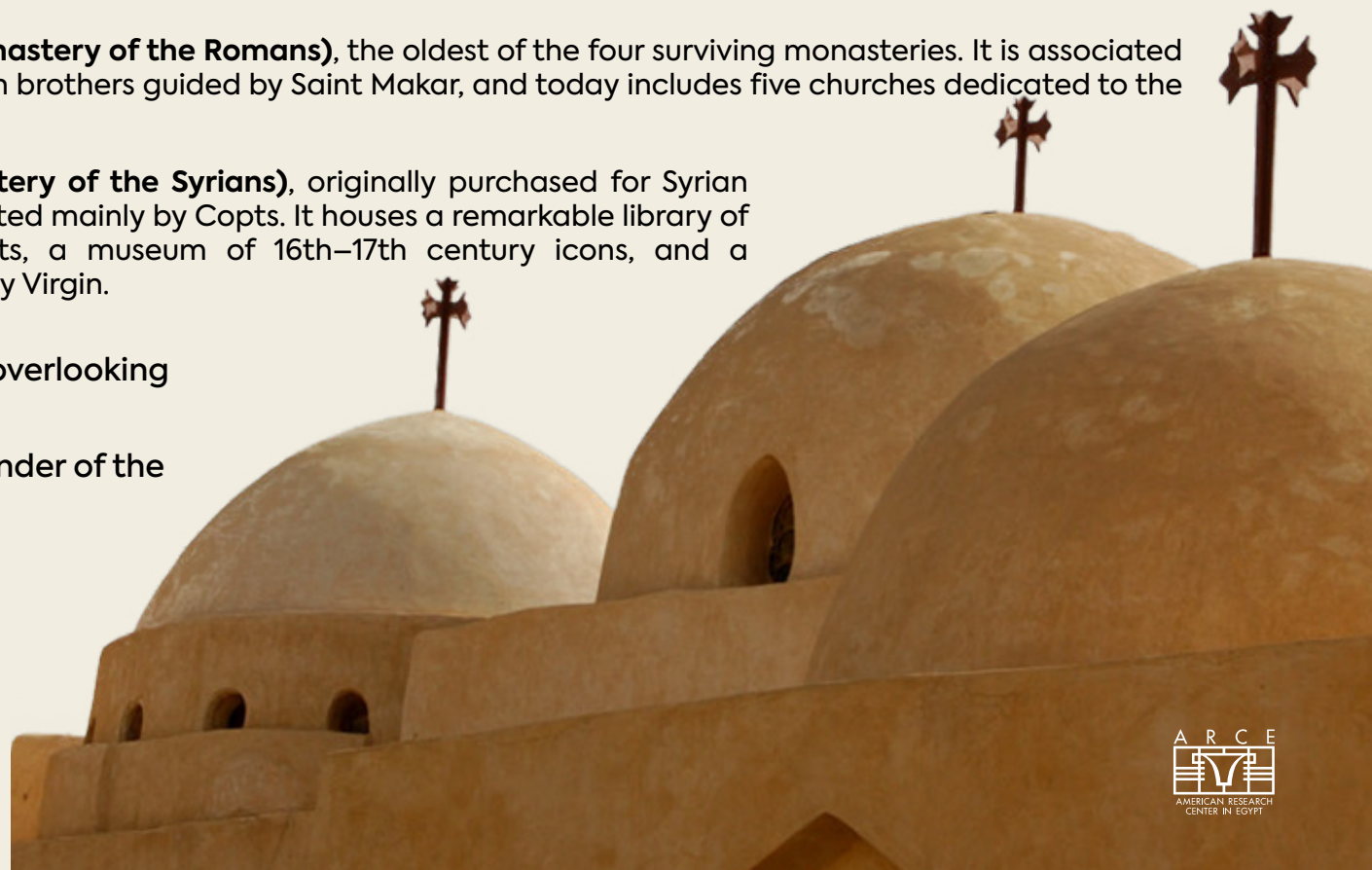
Your visit begins at **Deir Al-Baramus (Monastery of the Romans)**, the oldest of the four surviving monasteries. It is associated with Saints Maximus and Domitius, Roman brothers guided by Saint Makar, and today includes five churches dedicated to the Holy Virgin and several saints.

The tour ends at **Deir Al-Surian (Monastery of the Syrians)**, originally purchased for Syrian monks in the 8th century and later inhabited mainly by Copts. It houses a remarkable library of over 3,000 books and rare manuscripts, a museum of 16th–17th century icons, and a 10th-century church dedicated to the Holy Virgin.

Free time for lunch in the Eco-Lodge overlooking Ein El Hamra

Return to the hotel to enjoy the remainder of the day at your leisure

Overnight in Cairo



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Bahnasa / Gebel El Teir

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch/ Dinner

06:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

07:30AM Meet your guide and drive to Minya

Visit **Bahnasa** enroute. Coptic and Koranic sources differ on both the route that the Holy Family took as well as the length of time that they spent in Egypt — particularly with regards to the time they spent in Middle Egypt. Bahnasa was the first stop of the Holy Family in Middle Egypt, close to the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, capital of the 19th nome of Upper Egypt dating to the Dynastic Period. Local tradition claims that the family took refuge at the site. At the site you will visit the Church of the Virgin Mary where there is a well that, according to tradition, Jesus played near it and planted a piece of wood that grew into a fruitful tree. Archaeologists have excavated in recent years the remains of an ancient church nearby.

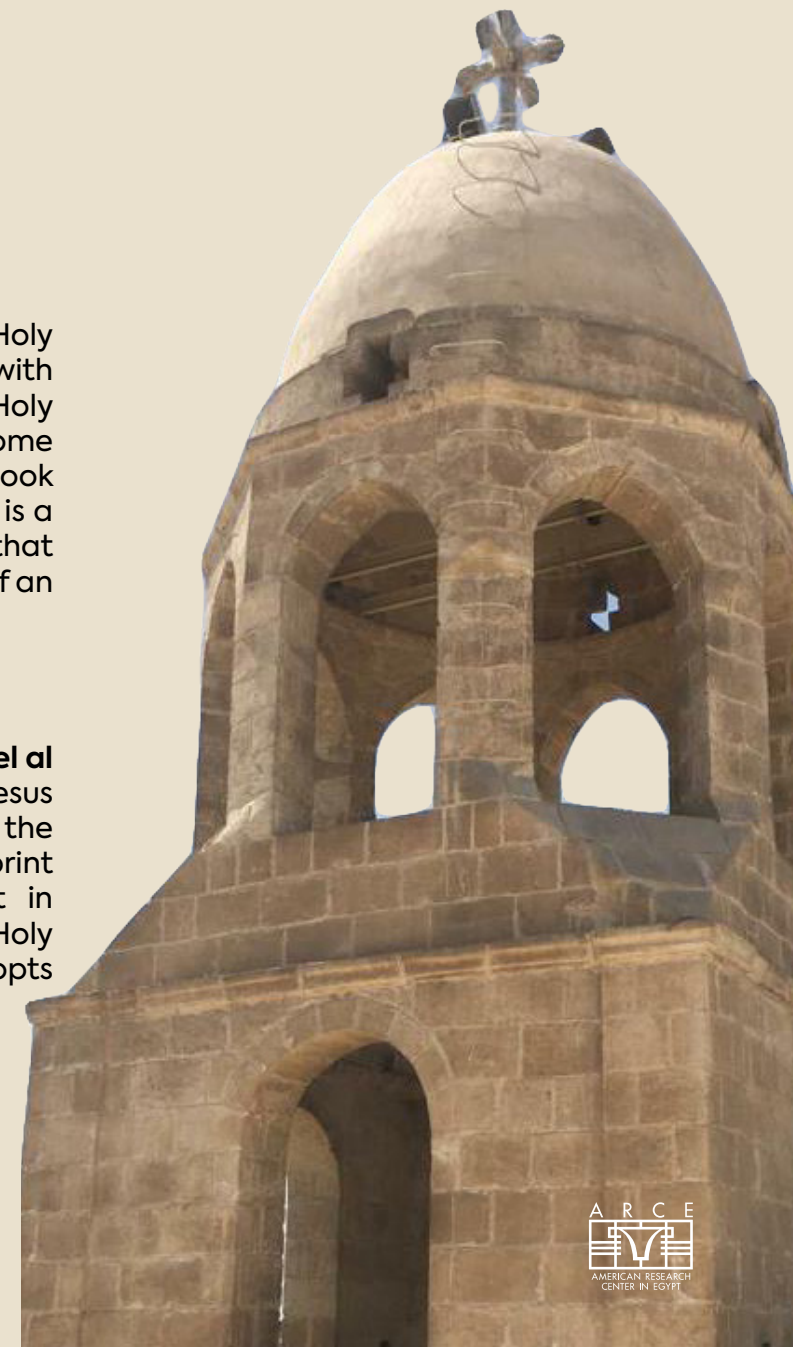
Free time for lunch

After leaving Bahnasa, the Holy Family crossed the Nile at Samalut and went to **Gebel al Teir**. This is the site where Mary, according to tradition, feared for the safety of Jesus because a large rock threatened to fall on their boat from the mountain overlooking the river. Jesus is said to have extended his hand and prevented its falling. His imprint remained on the rock and the Church of the Lady of the Palm was built in commemoration of the visit. This church is one of the most important stops of the Holy Family in Egypt and it hosts an annual pilgrimage to the site that is shared by both Copts and Muslims. Later you will be transferred to the Hotel for check-in

Dinner at hotel

Overnight in Minya

The Trail of the Holy Family



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Tuna El Gebel / Tel El Amarna

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch box / Dinner

06:30AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

07:30AM Meet your guide and start your day with **Tuna El Gebal**

The monuments of the site are scattered for about 3km along the desert, 7km west of Ashmounein. A boundary stela of Akhenaten is the earliest monument at the site. One of the most famous are the Greco-Roman animal mummy catacombs of votive ibis and baboon offerings to the god Thoth. The site also contains many free-standing Greco-Roman tombs, which give us rare evidence in this period for above-ground mortuary architecture. It used to be common around the Mediterranean. One of the most unique buildings is the tomb of Petosiris, dating to the Ptolemaic period. The tomb is in the form of a temple, with an entrance portico and cult chapel behind.

Free time for lunch

Tell el-Amarna or Akhetaten (The Horizon of the Aten) was the short-lived capital of Egypt during the reign of King Akhenaten and the center of a new state religion that he introduced at the time (c. 1350 BC). At the site, you will visit the northern tombs including those of Ahmose & Huya and the central city including the Great and Small Aten Temples.

Dinner at hotel

Overnight in Minya



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Asyut / Sohag

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch box / Dinner

07:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel and checkout

07:30AM Meet your guide and drive to **Asyut**

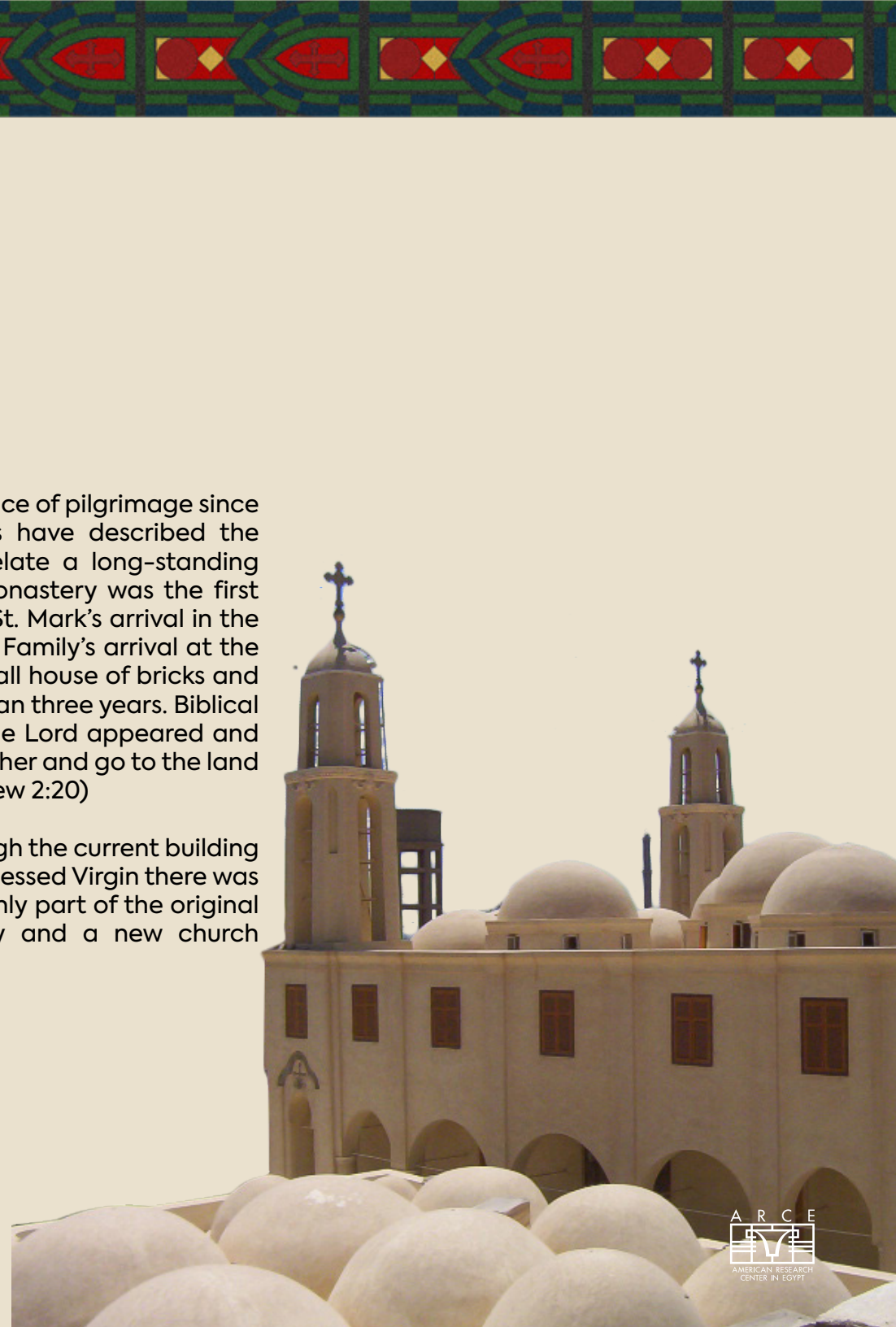
Visit **Deir Al Muharraq** enroute. Deir Al Muharraq has been a place of pilgrimage since early in the Christian era. Medieval and modern historians have described the monastery as a place of healing. The monks at the site relate a long-standing tradition that the Church of the Blessed Virgin within the monastery was the first church to be built in Egypt and that it was constructed after St. Mark's arrival in the middle of the first century of the common era. Upon the Holy Family's arrival at the site, they are said to have hid in a cave and Joseph built a small house of bricks and covered it with palm leaves. They lived there for a little more than three years. Biblical historians state that it was at Muharraq where an angel of the Lord appeared and said to Joseph in a dream: "Arise and take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead," (Matthew 2:20)

There has been monastic life here since the 4th century, although the current building dates from the 12th to 13th centuries. Above the church of the Blessed Virgin there was another church dedicated to Saint Peter and Saint Paul, but only part of the original woodwork remains. It was demolished in the 19th century and a new church dedicated to Saint George remains.

Later, you will be transferred to the Hotel for check-in

Dinner at hotel

Overnight in Sohag





FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

White Monastery / Red Monastery

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

06:30AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel and check out

07:30AM Meet your guide at the hotel and head to the **White Monastery**

The **White Monastery (Deir al-Abyad)**, or Monastery of St. Shenoute, dates to the mid 5th century and is so called because it is built of white limestone- much of which was taken from nearby Pharaonic temples. This church predates the Red Monastery church by about 30 years, and is much larger. The Red Monastery church essentially copied the architectural type of the White Monastery, but on a smaller scale. Shenoute was and is a very famous monastic leader, with a huge mouldid every summer.

Red Monastery (Deir al-Ahmar). Built in the 5th century, the Red Monastery church, at the place of the ascetic and monastic leader Bishai/Pshai's now lost hermitage, belonged to a monastic community. It preserves an astonishingly rare example of extremely vibrant paintings in a monument from late antique Egypt, and is the best preserved example of monumental painted architecture in the Roman tradition, anywhere. From 2002-2019, ARCE undertook its longest conservation project at the Red Monastery. Beginning in 2002, an Italian team began to reveal the magnificent painted surfaces of the church's triconch sanctuary that were covered by layers of black soot. From 2015-2019, work then moved to the nave of the church where conservation of the nave walls commenced along with architectural conservation and site presentation.

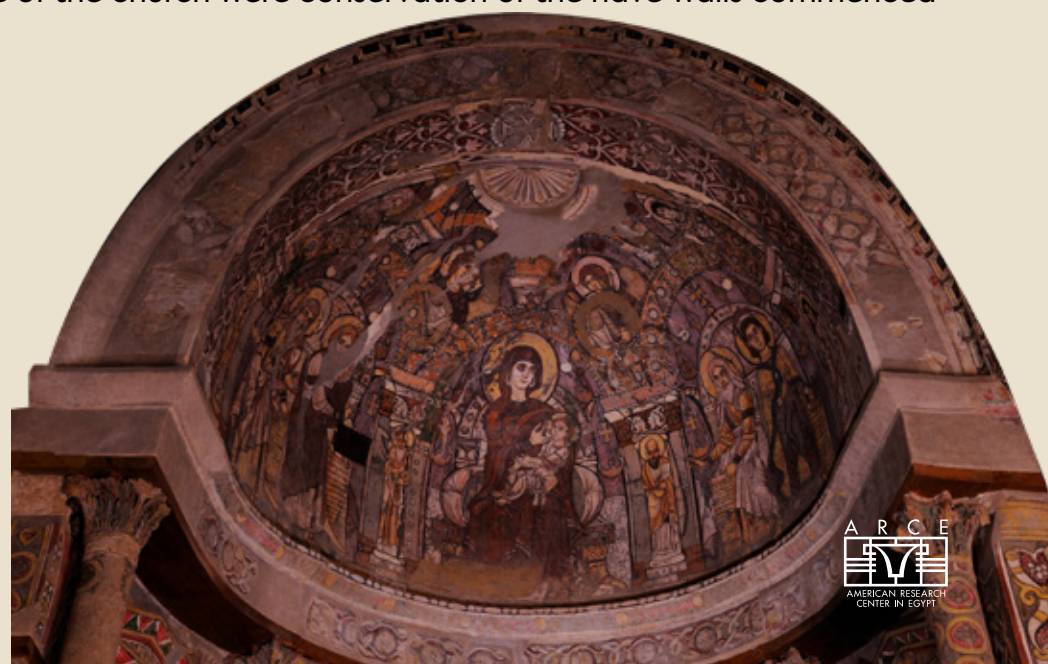
Lunch will be served at the Red Monastery

Check in at your hotel

Dinner at hotel

Overnight in Sohag

The Trail of the Holy Family



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Temple of Seti I / Dendera

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

07:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel and check out

08:00AM Meet your guide at the lobby and head to **Abydos**

Ancient **Abedju (Greek Abydos)** was the most important burial ground in Egypt dating back to the beginning of the dynastic period. Its cemetery contains graves going back to the Predynastic Nagada I times, including Umm el-Qa'ab, or the royal cemetery where the kings of the first and second dynasties were buried. These tombs began to be seen as extremely significant burials and in later times, lead to the growth of the town's importance as a cult site.

Abydos is notable for the **Temple of Seti I**, which contains an inscription from the nineteenth dynasty known as the Abydos King List. It is a chronological list showing cartouches of most dynastic pharaohs of Egypt from Menes until Ramesses I, Seti's father. The Great Temple and most of the ancient town are buried under the modern buildings to the north of the Seti temple.

Free time for lunch

Then to **Dendera**. The city of Dendera is located on the west bank of the Nile, about 60 km (miles) to the north of Luxor, in the 6th Nome of Upper Egypt. The Dendera Temple Complex is situated around 2.5 km (miles) to the southeast of this city.

The early history of Dendara includes tombs of the Early Dynastic period along with early cultic structures dating to the Old Kingdom. There are also remnants of a temple that was built during the New Kingdom. The main temple at the site is that of Hathor, and dates to the Late Ptolemaic and Roman period. The temple is one of the grandest and most elaborately decorated of its period. Later you will be transferred to your hotel for check-in.

Overnight in Luxor

The Trail of the Holy Family



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

Valley of the Kings / Luxor Temple

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

07:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel

08:00AM Meet your guide at the lobby and head to the **West Bank**

Visit the **Valley of the kings**, Lying protected by the high Gurna Hills surrounding it. Here you will visit the tombs of Egypt's splendid Pharaohs. Deep-cut into the rocky mountain sides are the magnificent tombs of spell binding construction and decoration.

Entry to the tombs of Kings **Tutankhamun & Ramses VI.**

Lunch

Visit **Luxor Temple**, which was once joined to the Temples of Karnak by a two-kilometer long Avenue of Sphinxes, a portion of which marks the entrance to the temple. Dominated by statues of the great warrior pharaoh Ramses II, Luxor Temple has survived Nile floods, foreign invasion and thousands of years exposed to the elements.

Dinner

Overnight in Luxor

The Trail of the Holy Family



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Karnak Temple / Luxor Museum / Cairo

Meals Included: Breakfast / Lunch

07:00AM Buffet breakfast at the hotel and check out

08:00AM Meet your guide at the lobby and head to **Karnak Temple**

Walk along the Avenue of Sphinxes to enter the complex as your guide explains how the massive facade was constructed. On entering the Temples of Karnak, you will see each legacy left by the various pharaohs as the complex grew even larger. The deeper you go into the complex, the further back in time you will travel, with the oldest ruins dating back over 3,000 years.

Visit **Luxor Museum**

Lunch

Evening return flight to Cairo

Upon arriving in Cairo airport, you will meet our representative for your private transfer to **Hotel** for check-in.

Overnight in Cairo





TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Final Departure

Meals Included: Breakfast

Buffet breakfast at the hotel or breakfast box. (Depends on your flight time)
Check out after breakfast.

Meet our representative at the lobby for your private transfer to Cairo Airport
Our representative will help you with all the departure procedures and formalities.



PAYMENT INFORMATION

City	Hotel	Dates	Nights	Category
Cairo	Marriott Omar Khayyam	November 4 - 10	6	Nile view rooms
Minya	Grand Aton	November 10 -12	2	Nile view rooms
Sohag	Al Fanar hotel	November 12 - 14	2	Nile view rooms
Luxor	Steigenberger	November 14-16	2	Nile view rooms
Cairo	Hilton Heliopolis	November 16 - 17	1	Garden view rooms

Rates:

	20 participants
Per person in double	US\$8435
Per person in single	US\$10435

PAYMENT INFORMATION

In case you booked an early flight on **November 3**, arriving in Cairo before the check in time, you are requested to book an extra night at the Marriott Omar Khayyam so you can check in upon arrival (**check in time at hotel 02:00PM**).

Extra night at Marriott Omar Khayyam from November 3 to November 4

Nile view room	US\$ 195.- US\$ 375.-	Per person per night in double Per person per night in single
-----------------------	--	--

Rate includes:

- All accommodation based on double occupancy per itinerary with daily breakfast
- All meals as shown in itinerary (B, L, D)
- Vehicle for group arrival and departure transfers on the first and last days of the program
- Land transportation per program by private coach
- All sightseeing and excursions, including entrance fees per program
- Private English-speaking guide throughout program
- Water provided on the bus during all visits transfers and all included meals
- Baggage handling at all hotels and airports, where available
- Tipping for Guide, Tour Manager, hotels, restaurants and drivers

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Rate excludes:

- International airfare to Egypt
 - Individual arrival and departure airport transfers
 - Pre- or post-tour services
 - Egypt entry visa fees
 - Medical and trip interruption insurance; evacuation costs
 - Food or beverages not included in group meals
 - Items of a personal nature such as laundry, alcohol, telephone expenses, excess package fees, photo/video expenses inside sightseeing or museums (where allowed)
 - Other items not expressly listed as included
 - Travel insurance for medical and political reasons
-

Important Notes:

- Prices are based on a minimum group size of twenty paying passengers and are subject to increase if the number of passengers paying is less than twenty

PAYMENT SCHEDULE & CANCELLATION POLICY

Payment Schedule

- \$2000 Deposit Due on Confirmation
- Final Payment Due on September 1, 2026

Cancellation Policy

- **0%** Cancellation fees From 16 weeks to 12 weeks before departure
 (Less \$100.00 per person handling fee)
- **35%** Cancellation fees From 12 weeks to 8 weeks before departure
- **55%** Cancellation fees From 8 weeks to 6 weeks before departure
- **75%** Cancellation fees From 6 weeks to 3 weeks before departure
- **100%** Cancellation fees Any cancelation from 21 days before departure

A full refund will apply in case of “Force Majeure”

Force Majeure is identified as acts of God, war and revolution, acts of terrorism preventing travel to Egypt, natural disasters happening within Egypt and not outside the country.

For inquiries and to reserve your place, please email Mary Sadek at msadek@arce.org.
For ARCE membership inquireies, please email membership@arce.org.

To participate, individuals must be members of ARCE in good standing.



THANK YOU

Email: msadek@arce.org
for more information