

Commentary... Travel back in time to ancient Egypt

By Susan Waymire
Columnist

Egypt — land of pharaohs, gods, magic and mysticism. While touring this wondrous land of antiquity, the countless facts, figures, and stories our Egyptologist imparted were overwhelming. He must know not only the names, dates and people of the different pharaonic dynasties, but also be well versed in the building of the old-world monuments, their meanings and also how to read the ancient paintings on the tomb walls.

In other words, it's an overwhelming week of facts mixed with storytelling. We were fortunate to have one of the best Egyptologists throughout our journey for the week to make for an enlightening adventure.

Egypt houses nearly three-quarters of the world's archeological finds. Many countries now have their own archeology sites within this country creating a unified world effort toward the maintenance of these historic finds. With over 600 pyramids, the Great Pyramid of Cheops is the one that we know in modern day. This pyramid is the only remaining of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World still standing.

As was explained to us, the condition of each pyramid still standing is a result of the economic conditions within the country during that time. Wealthier times meant sturdier-built, longer-standing buildings. The Egyptians were master engineers and architects. Imagine constructing these tombs at 2500 BC with no power tools, cranes, or forklift — it was all reliant on manpower, and lots of it! Each block was hand-chiseled to perfection. Then the workers had to be advised by the architect and engineers as to where to perfectly place each stone. From there, with heavier 20-ton blocks on the bottom and the lighter-weighted blocks toward the

top, these construction masterpieces were created. Other wonders of the world were lost to earthquakes, floods, and time. Egyptians, being master builders, crafted their tombs to last forever. It truly is awesome to stand in a place in time that appears much like it did in those early days.

I was one of the fortunate ones who was able to climb through the looters' hole on the side of the Great Pyramid and make the ascent to the top internally. It truly is not suggested for tall people, claustrophobics, or those with bad backs. The climb to the top is within a three-foot-high tunnel that climbs up a ramp to the uppermost chamber... while lit, is still relatively dark and on a 108-degree day, very hot! One has to lean over the entire way for roughly 150 yards. It is not so bad ascending but the descending is much more difficult. From the inside you can peer down to see where the pharaoh was entombed and once at the top, you can find an empty room.

Yes, after all of that, it's empty. We were advised of this but it still is a disappointment to have no drawings, stories or artifacts. After a quick pic, down we went — been there, done that!

Egypt is preparing for 2020 and a major tourism boom after years of economic downturn. Several new high-end ships are being built and coming out in January 2020 to fuel the numbers of people that are being anticipated for this economic uptick. Nile River cruising will be hot! The new Grand Egyptian Museum is on track at the moment to open in April, 2020. With so many artifacts buried in the current Egyptian Museum basement, it was time to make room for King Tutankhamun and his treasures to have a new home.

Many of those artifacts are being restored by Egyptian experts to their original condition — his mask,

sarcophagi, sandals, chariot, throne, and other treasures will now be shown in their true glory. Situated near Giza and the Great Pyramids, it will be a truly incredible technological improvement over its predecessor. The original Egyptian Museum will still display many antiquities, so visitors will have plenty to view between the two museums.

Perhaps the best "moment in time" I had while in Egypt was a visit to Ramses VI's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. I was the first one down to the bottom of this tomb, laden in beautiful images telling the stories of ancient Egyptian theology, the story of the heavens and the earth.

Standing there alone for 10 minutes, I was able to take a step back and truly appreciate those scenes from yesterday...no other tourists taking costly selfies (you pay for photos inside these tombs) or pushing me out of the way. It was one of those travel moments where I had to put the camera down to truly appreciate where I was and what I was viewing. In essence, I was viewing the story of the origin of the earth, heavens, as well as the creation of light, sun and life itself — both spiritual and breathtaking from an Ancient Egyptian perspective. I've had many moments on my adventures, but this is one that will stand in my memories forever.



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Susan Waymire enjoyed a real adventure in travel to the relics of Egypt.

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