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ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria is the second largest city in Egypt, located on the Mediterranean coast and has an atmosphere that is more European than Middle Eastern. It is a university town and a favourite with holidaying Egyptians.



In ancient times, Alexandria was one of the most famous cities in the world. Founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC, Alexandria became the capital of Egypt for nearly 1,000 years. It was known for Pharos, the legendary lighthouse that was one of the Seven Wonders of the World, it was the setting for the stormy relationship between Cleopatra and Mark Antony, and was also the centre of learning, with the largest library in the ancient world.

Alexandria is a city to explore at random. The corniche is a good place to start before heading into the back streets, the shopping and market areas and the local living areas.



Like many of the ancient sites in Alexandria, the original library burnt down. The new library is itself a sight to behold. A beautiful building covered in the letters of all the world's alphabets housing around 8 million books, 3 museums, 5 research institutes, several exhibition galleries, a planetarium and a conference centre.

Another of the fascinating places to visit is the ancient roman catacombs. Entered by descending a spiral staircase, the labyrinth of tunnels under the ground makes for a fun exploration. There are dozens of chambers containing sculpted pillars, statues, and other Romano-Egyptian religious symbols, burial niches and sarcophagi, as well as a large Roman-style banquet room, where memorial meals were held by relatives of the deceased.

The place to truly see some of ancient Alexandria is under the water. Much of the important parts of the city fell into the sea due to earthquake subsidence. It is possible to dive in Alexandria, and come face to face with a sphinx, largely forgotten by the people on the land.