CRADLES OF OUR CIVILISATION

with

ENCOUNTER OVERLAND

LONDON to CAIRO
(or vice versa)
7 weeks & 2 days
6,000 miles (10,000kms)

EUROPE, TURKEY, SYRIA, JORDAN, EGYPT

ITINERARY GUIDELINE
LONDON–CAIRO

Week 1: Transit through Belgium and Germany, Austria and Vienna, Hungary and Budapest, Romania and Bucharest.

Week 2: Bulgaria and Varna on the Black Sea into Turkey, Istanbul and Gallipoli.

Weeks 3 and 4: Aegean and Mediterranean Turkey to Tarsus—beaches, fishing villages and history: Troy, Ephesus, Hieropolis, Thermessos, Aspendos, Side and Silifke.

Week 5: To Syria and Aleppo, the desert to Palmyra oasis, Damascus, and Amman in Jordan.

Week 6: The Dead Sea and Jerash,Wadi Musa and Petra, to Red Sea beaches at Aqaba.

Week 7: Ferry to Nuweiba in Egypt, across Sinai to Cairo. Pyramids and Sphinx, train to Aswan and felucca sailing boats down Nile to Kom Ombo; Luxor and Valley of the Kings and Queens, train to Cairo. Suez canal and the Sinai to St Katherines Monastery. Return Cairo.

ITINERARY GUIDELINE:
CAIRO–LONDON

Week 1: Cairo, the Pyramids and Sphinx, train to Aswan and felucca sailing boats down Nile to Kom Ombo. Luxor and Valley of the Kings and Queens, train back to Cairo,

Week 2: The Suez Canal, and across Sinai to St Katherines Monastery. Ferry to Aqaba and Jordan, Red Sea beaches, Petra, Dead Sea and Jerash to Amman.

Week 3: To Syria and Damascus, the desert to Palmyra oasis and Aleppo.

Weeks 4 and 5: Mediterranean and Aegean Turkey to Istanbul—beaches, fishing villages and history: Silifke and Side, Thermessos, Hieropolis, Ephesus and Troy.

Week 6: Gallipoli and Istanbul, then Bulgaria and Varna on the Black Sea.

Week 7: Transit through Europe to Romania and Bucharest, Hungary and Budapest, Austria and Vienna, Germany and Belgium to London.

PLEASE NOTE:

The above is intended as a guide only and to indicate a typical itinerary and its highlights. While our intention is to adhere to this, it should be understood that group interests and wishes together with the constraints of weather, road conditions and local restrictions can alter our exact route, its activities and timings.

DELAYS OR FORCED ALTERNATIVE ROUTES:

The possibility of some delay enroute is planned into this expedition and we usually arrive on time. But, by the very nature of the journey, it should be recognised that longer delays outside our control can still happen. Although these are uncommon in Asia, it is still suggested that you do not make any firm commitments within 3 days of the scheduled end date of the Cradles of Our Civilisation. If we are delayed en route, no additional payments to Encounter Overland will be asked of you.

Major forced changes to our expeditions are also unusual in Asia. When they do happen it is because of a border closure or civil insurrection making it impossible or imprudent to enter a particular country or region. In the worst of cases this could involve an overflight of the affected area. If this were to happen, Encounter Overland would meet the first US$300 per person of the fare. Should more than this be needed, a contribution from you of up to (but not exceeding) US$300 would be required. Any further amount beyond this would again be met by Encounter Overland.

HIGHLIGHTS & ROUTE
EUROPE & ASIA MINOR:

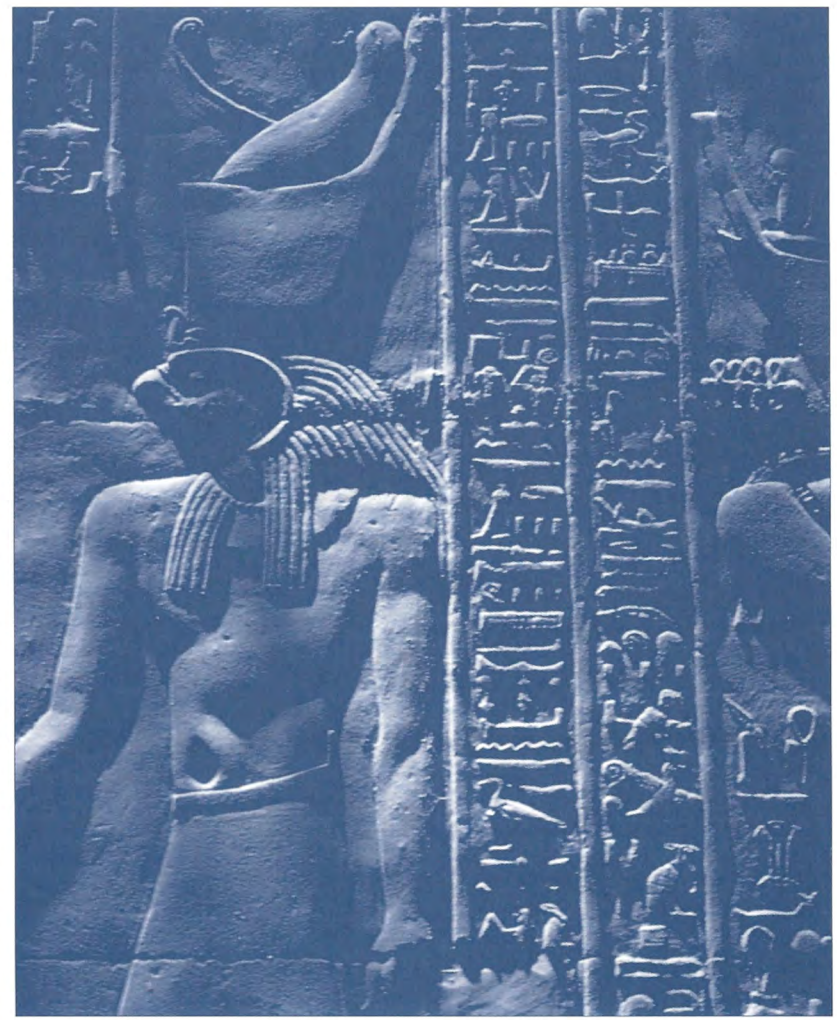
Our crossing of Europe is a straight transit toward the Black Sea and Asia. From London to Belgium and Germany's Rhine Valley, skirting the Alps through Austria, across the Bakony hills to the Danube plains of Hungary, Romania and the Transylvanian Alps to Bulgaria. Depending on daylight travelling hours and weather conditions, there are full days of travelling with overnight stops in Vienna, Budapest and Bucharest. Then, in Bulgaria, the Danube again to the historical port of Varna on the Black Sea. To Turkey and the Bosphorus, where the streets of Istanbul are packed with diversion—bargain for carpets, gold, metalwork and hand tooled leather in the Grand Bazaar. The Topkapi palace and museum, tall minarets and grand mosques, the waterfront of the Golden Horn, and tastes for every appetite. From Gallipoli we ferry across the Hellespoint to Asia Minor. Aegean shores of sun and eternity, fishing villages, wine and music. History springs from every turn in the warm hillsides: here are the ruins of Ephesus and Troy, Pammukale's mineral springs and the Roman baths of Hieropolis; the tombs and temples of Thermessos hidden high in the pine hills, and Aspendos' perfect amphitheatre. This is the Mediterranean's 'Turquoise Coast' of hidden coves and beckoning sands—lazy days just to swim, relax and explore market towns and fishing villages like Kusadasi, Fethiye, Kas and Antalya. (Optional overnight cruise from Fethiye aboard Turkish caique to bays and inlets opposite Rhodes—approx US$40).

THE LEVANT & EGYPT:

East beyond Tarsus we cross into Syria and the Levant—the 'fertile crescent' and the Holy Land. Aleppo's souk is the largest and perhaps the oldest in Asia, and Hama's great waterwheels speak of ancient skills far in advance of their time. Out in the Syrian desert the time softened ruins of Queen Zenobia's city, Palmyra, echo the footfall of camel caravans that carried wealth and knowledge from Samarkand, India and farthest China. Style driven boulevards and plazas in Damascus cannot hide the intriguing undertow in cobbled backstreets and pavement coffee houses, in whispered secrets over hookah pipes and along the cornucopian alleys of the covered bazaar. We enter Jordan—to Amman, the great Roman forum at Jerash and the biblical shores of the Dead Sea. The dry ravines and narrow chasm walls of Wadi Musa reveal the red sandstone temples and treasure-houses of Petra where for centuries the Nabataean Arabs maintained an independent city-state, collecting and controlling the flow of wealth throughout the known world. The sands and beaches of Aqaba are washed by the warm, crystal-clear waters of the Red Sea. Leaving our truck behind in Jordan we cross by boat to Nuweiba—and our chartered transport to Cairo, the Treasures of Tutankhamen, the Pyramids and inscrutable Sphynx. A train journey along the banks of the Nile takes us far inland to Upper Egypt and Aswan (Optional same day return flight from Aswan to Sun Temple and statues of Ramses and Nefertari at Abu Simbel near Sudan border—approx US$115). We board traditional Nile feluccas to sail slowly downstream toward Kom Ombo and the majestic Valley of the Kings and Queens. By train to Cairo. Across the Suez Canal to drive the Bedouin deserts of the Sinai to the Monastery of St Katherines. Return to Cairo, and flight routes home from this land of the Pharoahs where Asia and Africa merge.

GROUP SIZE & STAFF:

24 max including EO staff. Plus local guides in Istanbul, Ephesus, Petra, St Katherine's monastery, Pyramids and Sphinx, Valley of Kings and Queens.



PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

An easier project with no demands other than the extended camping/nomadic lifestyle.

INCLUDED IN EXPEDITION COST:

All transport, food, camping equipment and supplies, hotels and guest houses in Egypt, local guides, camping fees, entrance fees and activities as detailed from published starting date of expedition until arrival in Cairo (after upper Egypt and Sinai) or London. There are no kitties or similar en route payment funds.

EXPEDITION COST DOES NOT COVER:

Flights from/to Cairo/London, transfers to/from airport and airport taxes, vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, laundry, snacks, drinks, occasional lunches in major centres (minimal cost), personal clothing/equipment and items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees to museums/sights (minimal cost). Accommodation/meals in London/Cairo before/after the expedition.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED:

Standard EO truck equipment including 2 person tents, campbeds, kitchen/dining tent, tables and stools, light, cooking equipment and utensils, mosquito nets, first aid kit.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING:

A warm sleeping bag, a medium sized bag or backpack and a daypack. Personal clothing, strong footwear, water bottle, personal medicines and toiletries etc. No specialised clothing or equipment is necessary and you probably already have most of what is needed. A complete suggested clothing list is included in our pre-departure information. Soft bags or frameless backpacks are the most suitable kinds of luggage to bring. Airlines flying in and out of Cairo have a 44lbs/20kg baggage limit.

TRANSPORT:

EO expedition truck between London and Aqaba, Red Sea Ferry Aqaba—Nuweiba (4 hrs), chartered bus and driver in Egypt with overnight train Cairo—Aswan and Luxor—Cairo (1 night each), felucca sailing boats on Nile from Aswan—Kom Ombo (1 day).

ACCOMMODATION:

Budget hotels and guest houses in Egypt (approx 9 nights), Nile felucca (1 night). Otherwise camping throughout. Equipped campsites in most of Europe and parts of coastal Turkey; then basic campground facilities in main centres only, usually extending to simple washing/showering and toilet arrangements. Otherwise open "bush" camping with no facilities other than standard EO truck equipment. (Your involvement is needed in camp setup, domestic and day to day routines etc).

MEALS, COOKING & FOOD:

Camp cooked breakfasts and evening meals, picnic lunches. Expedition members are involved in daily fresh food shopping and cooking. (Fresh vegetables, fruit, meat where available, eggs, bread, cereals, cheese, preserves, supplemented by canned and dried goods in areas where no fresh supplies available). Restaurant/hotel meals in Egypt, and meals prepared by felucca crews on Nile. In larger cities where a day is spent in individual sightseeing or activities away from the truck, lunch will sometimes be at your own expense. The cost of these occasional lunches is minimal.

PASSPORTS & VISAS:

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than 6 months after the end of the expedition, and which contains not less than 8 blank pages. Your passport should also be free of any evidence of having visited Israel. Visa requirements and costs vary according to your nationality, and even then are subject to sudden change. Some visas need to be obtained before departure, others en route. EO or your agent can advise you of all the up to date visa requirements applicable to you, and their costs. We can also help you in obtaining any visas you may require before departure. Visas en route are applied for as a group with the assistance of your leader/driver.

INSURANCE & MEDICAL:

Everyone must have individual personal travel insurance. Various policies are available, but they must include a minimum of £20,000 or US$30,000 for medical, hospital and additional expenses including emergency repatriation.

Several vaccinations are strongly recommended though not required by law for travel through Asia. Their up to date details are given in our pre-departure information. Malaria pills are supplied on the expedition.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY:

To cover personal day to day expenditure en route—drinks, snacks, laundry, occasional lunches in major centres, optional activities, some individual museum entry fees and some souvenirs. You should budget an additional £25/US$40 per day that you spend in Cairo after or before the expedition to cover hotel, meals and incidentals. Good buys can include leatherwork and ceramics, ornate copper and brasswork, gems and jewellery, gold and silver, and inlaid woodwork. Many small 'treasures' need not cost much at all. Credit cards are accepted in most cities. Apart from this, and your en route visas, EO has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money in Asia.

ARRIVING AND LEAVING:

From London:

There will be a pre-departure meeting in our London offices at 6.00 pm two days before expedition departure date.

From Cairo:

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 8.00 am on Day 1. On departures from Cairo we recommend that you try

to arrive a couple of days before expedition departure date to allow yourself time to acclimatise. (If you are arriving early: Cairo is a frenetic and fascinating city—Goldsmiths bazaar and the souks, horse racing at Gezira, football matches complete with armed riot police, river taxis on the Nile, the camel market, opera and ballet; theatre, cinemas, cafes and an unusual nightlife). Even though serious delays en route are unlikely, we would prefer that you not have any firm commitments for up to 3 days after scheduled expedition completion date.

COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS:

"Cradles of Our Civilisation" is also a part of "The Backroads of Asia" expedition (London—Kathmandu or vice versa) which travels onward from Egypt into the mountains and nomadic lands of central and eastern Turkey; the deserts, cities and oases of Iran to Pakistan and tribal lands of the Khyber, the plains and palaces of India to the Himalayas and Nepal. On departures from London you may therefore be travelling with some group members who are continuing on to Kathmandu. And on departures from Cairo you may be joining part of a group that has already been on the road for 9 weeks from Nepal.

INTERESTING READING:

Anatolian Tales (Yashar Kemal), Among the Believers (V.S. Naipaul), Gods, Graves and Scholars (C.W. Ceram). A full list of recommended reading in history, guidebooks and fiction is given in our pre-departure information.

SPECIFIC DETAILS:

On Mailing Lists for receiving letters from home, the best ways to organise and carry your spending money, clothing lists etc are all contained in our Pre-departure information.

AGENT'S STAMP

CLIMATE:

Europe to Bulgaria and Black Sea. Warm summers, cold winters. Erratic rain.

MARITIME

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	3	5	11	16	20	23	25	24	21	14	8	4
Daily Average	Low	–2	–1	2	6	9	13	15	14	11	7	3	0
FAHRENHEIT	High	38	41	51	76	69	74	77	76	69	58	47	39
Daily Average	Low	29	30	35	42	49	55	58	57	52	44	38	32
Relative Humidity		77%	70%	57%	51%	50%	52%	53%	54%	60%	68%	77%	81%
Rainfall in mm		58	44	38	44	55	73	70	76	57	52	55	54

Istanbul and coastal Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Hot summers, cool winters.

MEDITERRANEAN

		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
CELSIUS	High	13	14	17	21	26	31	33	33	29	24	19	14
Daily Average	Low	4	4	6	9	13	17	21	21	17	13	9	6
FAHRENHEIT	High	55	57	63	70	79	87	92	92	85	76	67	58
Daily Average	Low	39	40	43	49	56	63	69	69	62	59	45	42
Relative Humidity		62%	51%	52%	48%	45%	40%	31%	37%	42%	49%	58%	64%
Rainfall in mm		112	84	76	43	33	15	5	5	20	53	84	122

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Return flights .....

Visas .....

Vaccinations .....

Insurance .....

Personal spending money .....

TOTAL_____