

EGYPT

Follow in the Footsteps of the Holy Family, Alexander the Great & Ancient Pharaohs

Egypt • October 18–31, 2026

A collaboration between aktiv planet & the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church of Rochester

aktiv planet travel dispatch

EXPLORE BOLDLY. TRAVEL RESPECTFULLY.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to prepare travelers not just for the journey ahead, but for meaningful, respectful engagement with the cultures, landscapes, and people they encounter. Through each dispatch, we aim to inspire curiosity, deepen understanding, and build a sense of shared adventure — empowering travelers to explore boldly, connect authentically, and move through the world with intention.

Purpose of an aktiv planet travel dispatch

An aktiv planet travel dispatch aims to:

1. Prepare with Purpose

It provides practical information and cultural context so travelers feel confident, informed, and grounded. From packing tips to etiquette guides, the dispatch ensures that everyone arrives not just ready to explore, but ready to connect.

2. Deepen Cultural Understanding

Each dispatch highlights the people, history, customs, and unique spirit of the destination. It promotes respectful travel by fostering curiosity and awareness — turning a trip into a meaningful cultural exchange.

3. Build Excitement

It builds anticipation and unity among travelers. Through sneak peeks of the itinerary, local phrases, and fun facts, the dispatch fuels that "we're-really-going!" energy and invites travelers to imagine themselves there.

4. Strengthen the aktiv planet Community

The dispatch encourages communication and collaboration — travelers are reminded to check shared documents, use the questions section, and stay engaged with the aktiv planet team and each other.

5. Deliver in aktiv planet's Voice

Written in a tone that's warm, curious, respectful, and just a little playful, the dispatch reflects aktiv planet's core values: responsible adventure, cultural respect, curiosity, and connection.



History, Faith, and First Christianity



As we prepare for our upcoming journey to Egypt, our anticipation grows—not only for the stunning landscapes and monumental heritage of one of the world’s most historically rich countries, but also for the unique opportunity to explore Egypt through the lens of its formative role in early Christianity. This trip is designed as an educational and spiritually enriching journey that emphasizes the profound intersections between faith, history, and culture. The first part of our travels will focus specifically on the emergence and flourishing of Christian communities in Egypt, an era that has had lasting influence on the Orthodox tradition.

Egypt’s significance to early Christianity cannot be overstated. From the first centuries following Christ’s resurrection, this land became a fertile ground for the spread of the Gospel, the establishment of monastic traditions, and the development of theological thought that continues to shape Orthodox belief today. The earliest Christian communities in Egypt navigated a complex world: maintaining faith under Roman authority, translating Scripture into Coptic, and creating practices and institutions that balanced devotion, education, and community life. Our itinerary has been carefully curated to provide firsthand insight into these historical realities.



Desert Monasticism: The Legacy of the Desert Fathers



A highlight of this portion of our journey will be visits to monastic sites associated with the Desert Fathers. These harsh, remote deserts shaped early monastic ideals, contrasting austerity with a rich spiritual life.

Exploring these sites, we will see how early Christians used solitude and simplicity to cultivate prayer, discipline, and communion with God—practices that continue to influence Orthodox spirituality today.

Sites:

- Anba Bishoy Monastery – Famous for preserving the body of Saint Bishoy in an incorrupt state, this monastery offers a unique connection to one of Egypt’s most revered saints.
- St. Macarius Monastery – Founded in the 4th century, this monastery is one of the earliest and most influential centers of monastic life in Egypt.
- The Virgin Mary (Syrian) Monastery – Renowned for its ancient architecture and remarkable icons, it provides insight into the artistic and devotional traditions of Egyptian monasticism.
- The Monastery of Baramos – Known for its rich history and peaceful atmosphere, it exemplifies the spiritual rhythm of daily monastic life.



Historical Churches and Living Christian Communities



In addition to monastic sites, we will visit historically significant churches that preserve Egypt's early Christian heritage. From frescoes and ancient iconography to Roman- and Byzantine-influenced architecture, these sites reveal the cultural, social, and theological life of early Christian communities. Observing worship and daily life today connects us to a living tradition spanning millennia, showing that Christianity in Egypt is both historical and vibrant.

Sites:

- Church of the Virgin Mary in Maadi – A center of Coptic worship in modern Cairo, this church shows how faith is actively practiced today while connecting to centuries-old traditions.
- Church of Abu Serga in Old Cairo – Believed to be built where the Holy Family rested during their flight into Egypt, this historic church offers ancient architecture and sacred relics.
- Virgin Mary's Tree in Matareya – Said to mark a resting place of the Holy Family, this unique site has been visited by pilgrims for centuries, a living symbol of faith and continuity.
- Church of the Virgin Mary in Ain Shams – Preserving architectural beauty and sacred traditions, this church reminds visitors of Christianity's enduring presence in Cairo.



Travel Reflection Journal



When planning this trip to Egypt, I wanted to offer each participant a travel reflection journal because I believe travel—especially one rich in history and faith—is most meaningful when paired with intentional reflection. Visiting the monasteries of the Desert Fathers and ancient churches offers more than just sights; it’s an opportunity to connect with the roots of your faith and experience the continuity of Christian tradition across centuries.

This journal, which you may print, is designed to help us slow down, pause, and engage with what we are seeing and learning. By reflecting on history, architecture, and spiritual practices, we can deepen our understanding and connect these ancient traditions to our own faith journeys. It also provides space for prayer, observation, and creative expression, allowing participants to capture the moments that speak most to them. Of course, participation is entirely optional—think of the journal as a little “tool” I created to help make our journey more meaningful on a personal level. My hope is that it enriches your experience and encourages reflection and discussion among ourselves, though the trip can be fully enjoyed without it.

I hope everyone leaves not just with memories, but with insights, questions, and inspirations that continue to shape your faith long after we return home.



Travel Reflection Journal



Section 1: Desert Monasticism

The Desert Fathers

A few reflection prompts...

Anba Bishoy Monastery

- What thoughts arise knowing this monastery is associated with a saint whose body remains intact?
- How does the idea of holiness preserved over time shape your experience of this place?
- How does this site invite reflection on devotion, discipline, or faithfulness over a lifetime?

St. Macarius Monastery

- How does being in a monastery founded in the 4th century affect your sense of history and continuity?
- How does simplicity function as strength rather than absence in this space?
- What practices or values from early monastic life feel relevant to your own daily life?

The Virgin Mary (Syrian) Monastery

- What emotions arise as you move through a monastery shaped by centuries of prayer?
- How do architecture and icons here communicate faith without words?
- How does this place reflect the idea of refuge—spiritual, physical, or communal?

The Monastery of Baramos

- How does the quiet and openness of this monastery affect your awareness or sense of stillness?
- What does peace feel like in this setting, and how does it differ from peace in your daily life?
- What does this monastery suggest about perseverance and unseen faithfulness?

Closing Reflection

- What shared quality do you sense across these monastic spaces, despite their differences?

Travel Reflection Journal



Section 2: Historical Churches Early Christian Communities

A few reflection prompts...

Church of the Virgin Mary in Maadi

- How does the presence of this church within a modern city shape your understanding of living tradition?
- What contrasts do you notice between the world outside and the atmosphere inside?
- How does this space balance continuity and change?

Church of Abu Serga

- What thoughts arise knowing this site is linked to an early moment in the Christian story?
- How does the sense of shelter or protection shape your experience of this church?
- What does endurance mean in the context of faith here?

Virgin Mary's Tree, Matareya

- How does encountering a living site of devotion differ from visiting a church building?
- What does rest or refuge mean to you at this stage of your life?
- How does nature function here as a witness to faith and memory?

Church of the Virgin Mary in Ain Shams

- How does the historical setting influence your experience of this church today?
- What does belonging mean within a tradition that spans centuries?
- How do architecture and memory work together here?

Closing Reflections

- How has being physically present in these spaces shaped your understanding of early Christian community?
- How do these experiences challenge or affirm your understanding of tradition and belonging?

Flights

INDEPENDENT BOOKING

You are, of course, welcome to book your own flights (Cairo airport code: CAI).

- If you arrive in Cairo on 19 October 2026, we will take care of your visa and airport transfer as included in your package.
- If you plan to arrive earlier than 19 October, we would be happy to extend these services but you would need to arrange your hotel through aktiv planet. Please let us know in advance so we can make the necessary arrangements smoothly.

Please note that flights cannot be booked for an earlier return than 31 October 2026. If you wish to stay in Cairo after the trip, you may book on your own (you are responsible for all transfers) or we can assist in booking an additional night at our hotel and ensure your transfer to the airport on your preferred departure day.

GROUP AIRFARE

aktiv planet can assist in booking group airfare from Rochester to Cairo and back with a departure on 18 October 2026 and return on 31 October 2026.



Important Notes:

- Returning from Cairo to the US usually means either a very early morning or very late-night flight, so a full night's rest may not be guaranteed.
- Booking as a group requires that we move very quickly to secure seats and pricing.

To Book Your Flight Through aktiv planet:

1. Let Demos know if you want us to book your flights.
2. Provide your full name and date of birth exactly as they appear on your passport. Any error is your responsibility.
3. Be prepared to make a wire transfer within 48 hours of receiving your ticket price. The airline requires this urgency to hold pricing and keep the group together.

We will book economy only but you may be able to upgrade directly on the airline website after booking.

Please keep in mind: this process follows typical airline rules once we submit all passenger information. While not ideal, these steps are necessary to ensure the group books together at the best rate.

Interested in Continuing the Adventure?

AN AFRICAN SAFARI IN TANZZANIA

After meeting with Armelle Fée, owner of aktiv planet, at the church in October, several members expressed interest in joining her on a journey to Tanzania. After our Egyptian adventure, Armelle travel to Tanzania and will personally lead safaris through her aktiv planet tanzania office. She is offering us a chance to explore wildlife, landscapes, and culture with her and her team's expert guidance.

This Tanzania extension is not included in the Egypt package, but it's a wonderful opportunity to discover another fascinating facet of the African continent.

If this sounds exciting to you, feel free to reach out to Armelle directly at info@aktivplanet.com to learn more or reserve your spot.



A FEW THINGS TO KNOW

What: A 7-day/6-night safari featuring multiple game drives, off-the-beaten-path discoveries, and cultural encounters with three local tribes, including the renowned and courageous Masai tribe.

When: We'll depart for Tanzania on 31 October 2026 and return to the US on 7 November 2026.

Logistics: Small group private safari, with a maximum of 6 travelers per vehicle for a more personalized and immersive experience.

Lodgings: Stay in mid-range lodges and tented camps offering all the comfort you'd expect.

Meals & Transfers: All meals are included, along with all transfers in private vehicles guided by a professional driver/guide.

Price: \$2,095 per person (based on 6 travelers; double occupancy)

- Book by 31 January 2026 and receive **\$100 OFF**
- Single supplement: **\$800**

This is exceptional pricing extended exclusively to our group, offering a truly unique safari experience with both adventure and comfort.



Contact Us



travel. connect. (re)discover.

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MORE INFO ABOUT TANZANIA

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egypt

Let the journey
transform you.

