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Since Bassel and I have been living in Egypt for a long time (15 and 20 years respectively), we thought it would be useful to write a post about things you should and shouldn’t do in Egypt. This post is very beneficial for expats and those who want to visit the country.

The aim of this post is to help you understand what is socially acceptable from the locals’ point of view in order to make your life easier in this wonderful country.

So here we go. In Egypt, **don’t**:

* Wear shorts and sleeveless t-shirts. For men it’s ok, but try to avoid sleeveless t-shirts and wear the normal ones. This will not be the case if you are visiting Sharm-El-Sheikh, Dahab, Marsa Allam and Hurghada. In these coastal cities, wearing this type of clothing is acceptable.
* Kiss your partner in the street. (Even a kiss on the cheek might be unacceptable in some areas in Egypt.)
* Kiss or hug persons of the opposite sex. Shaking hands is ok in general, but strict Muslims don’t shake hands with people of the opposite sex in order to avoid any physical contact.
* Cross busy streets alone. Wait for someone to come and cross with you, or ask someone to help you. Egyptians usually will offer to help you in such situations. This doesn’t apply for all streets, of course, but in Cairo and Alex especially there is a lot of traffic and sometimes no traffic signs. Cars won’t stop to let you cross and you have to find a way between them.
* Put your feet on a table. This behavior is not acceptable and might offend the people around you.
* Talk to people who are approaching you in the street or in tourist areas to offer services like city tours, special visits to tombs, sites or shops…etc. It’s always preferable to go through registered tour operators and agents.
* Pet street dogs and cats (unless you have all your vaccines and you’re not afraid to be bitten or scratched).
* Get angry or frustrated when someone is late. People in Egypt are very laid back, so in some cases people will be late, and you will have to get used to it during your stay.
* Expose yourself to the sun (in summer especially). This is dangerous unless you are wearing proper clothes.
* Drink tap water.
* Drink alcohol in the street (it’s not socially acceptable, and in some areas it’s forbidden by law).
* Smoke in the street (for women).
* Eat, drink or smoke in public places during daytime [during Ramadan](http://www.when-is.com/ramadan-2013.asp).
* Take a taxi if you are alone late at night. Try to use the yellow cab instead.

**In Egypt, do:**

* Leave tips in cafés, restaurants, hair dressers, clothes shops almost everywhere! Sometimes people won’t take them, but usually they will, as they don’t have good salaries.
* Bargain (it sounds paradoxical after what I’ve just said!) in souvenir shops, markets, taxis. Within reasonable limits, bargaining in Egypt’s souvenir markets is a nice way to start a conversation, and is expected.
* Dress modestly and not too extravagant.
* Ask locals the fare for a taxi ride before taking the taxi, then agree on that fare with the taxi driver. In Cairo they have the metered taxis (“white taxi”), so you shouldn’t have to discuss the fare, but always make sure the meter is working. If not, leave the taxi and take another. You can leave a one-pound tip at the end of your ride.
* Ask directions from at least three different people (to be sure you have the right information). Sometimes people try to help even if they don’t know the place.
* Take taxis rather than public transportation, especially for women.
* Take off your shoes and cover your head (for women) when you enter a mosque.
* Ask permission before taking a photo (even of people). In some places it is forbidden to take photos.
* Spend time talking to the people. Egyptians are interesting, kind and have a great sense of humor. You will learn from them as they will learn from you—it is always a rich exchange. Don’t miss out on that!
* Enjoy the country as much as you can. Egypt is not just any country—Egypt is “Om el Donia” (the Mother of the World)!

**Questions:**

1. What recommendations would you change and why?

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1. What statements would you add to the list? Why?

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1. Why do you think that Bassel and the writer are residing in Egypt? Do you think they like Egypt or not? Why?

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1. Is it important to research cultural traditions before visiting a country? Why/why not?

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1. Have you visited any countries and experienced cultural shock? If not, where would you like to visit and what obstacles do you expect to face?

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