

Day 1 (Thursday) : Arrival Cairo

Overnight

Day 2 (Friday). : Visit ***Church of Abu Serga- Old Cairo***¹

Visit ***church of Virgin Mary in Maadi*** ²

Overnight

Day 3 (Saturday) : Overday ***Wadi El Natron***³

Overnight

Day 4 (Sunday). : AM flight CAIRO / ASSIUT

Visit ***Deir El Moharraq***⁴

Visit Durunka⁵

PM flight ASSIUT / CAIRO

Overnight

Day 5 (Monday). : Visit ***Virgin Mary's tree in Mattareya***⁶

Afternoon lecture and presentation prepared by SST guides on the Holy Family's flight to Egypt and suggested itineraries for future trips)

Overnight.

Day 6 (Tuesday). : Late morning drive to Saint Catherine .

Climb Mt. Moses (optional)

Overnight in Monastery or hotel

Day 7(Wednesday): Visit ***Saint Catherine's Monastery*** ⁷

Drive to Taba and cross the border at Eilat to start

Israel portion

OR

Drive to Sharm el Sheikh

Flight SHARM / CAIRO

Overnight

Day 8 (Thursday) : Final departure.

Mediterranean Sea



1.Church of Abu Serga – Old Cairo

It was only normal that the Holy Family visits Old Cairo. The area near the Babylon Fortress was teeming with Jews. It also hosted the Jewish complex which was built in the 2nd century B.C. Virgin Mary dismounted her donkey and took her child inside a cave that had been prepared in advance to receive the strangers.

Safely hidden from the eyes of King Herod's soldiers, the family lived in a cave in Old Cairo for three months before they were forced to change their plans and leave the cave to Maadi.

Inside the cave is a rock which is said to have been stepped on, and thus blessed, by Jesus.

The well from which the Holy Family drank is well kept by the church.

The place where this church is located is the only place the Holy Family came across twice, that is, on their flight in and out of Egypt.

Empress Helena then decided to build a church above the church of the cave.



2.Church of Virgin Mary in Maadi

The Holy Family embarked for Upper Egypt here in order to escape from the pursuing soldiers of Herod. The local priest believes that the Church of the Virgin Mary in Maadi is situated on the place of an ancient synagogue used during a time when some Jews had fled to Egypt for refuge.

As at other holy sites, the church of Maadi also boasts important miracles. On Friday of March 12, 1976, a deacon found a Holy Bible floating on the water. It was of course salvaged immediately and to people's surprise, the Bible was open to the Chapter 19 of Isaiah, which reads

“Blessed be Egypt my people.”

The Bible now is on display in a reliquary of the church.



3.Wadi el Natrun

The Holy Family continued their flight, went further west and crossed the Nile. According to some accounts the Holy Family saw Wadi al-Natrun, about half way between Cairo and Alexandria, from afar and blessed it, according to others they indeed visited the place.

In the Wadi Al- Natrun is a village called Al-Homra, which is about 26 km. off the desert road between Cairo and Alexandria. Before reaching Wadi Al-Natrun, the Holy Family passed by this desert village where the infant Jesus caused a well to be opened in the ground. This sweet water well, which is called unto today “Bir Mariam” or (Mary’s well), is incredibly located among lakes saturated with the natron salt. The well had been neglected for many years but is now being restored.

In their heyday in the 5th and 6th centuries, the many monasteries of the Wadi Al-Natrun sustained thousands of monks. They were established in spiritual commemoration of the Holy Family passage through the valley. For this reason this area was called ‘Wadi Sheheet’, meaning the place where hearts are weighed. Today four large monasteries near each other – and occupied with monks and hermits, have remained. These are the monasteries of St. Macarius, St. Bishoy, Al-Syrian and Al -Baramous.



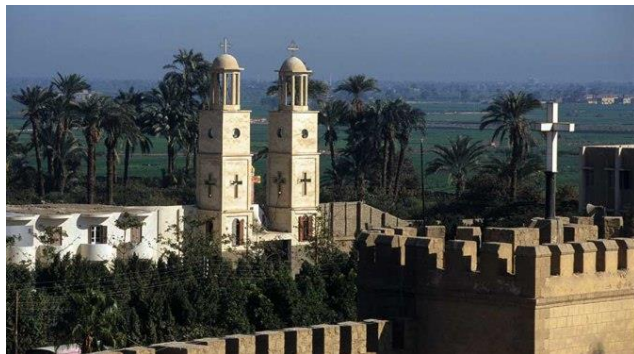
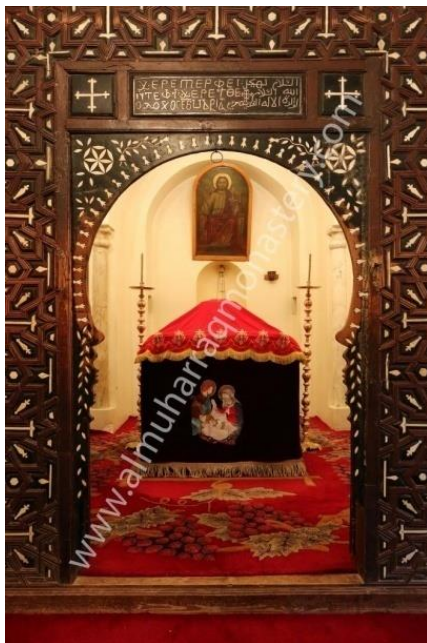
4.DAYR AL-MUHARRAQ

The monastery of the Holy Virgin of al-Muharraq lies at the foot of Qusqam Hill, 327 kilometers south of Cairo. This monastery is unquestionably the most prominent location in the Holy Family's itinerary. Dayr al-Muharraq means *the monastery scorched by fire* in Arabic referring to the desiccated desert around as well as occasional burning of ruderal vegetation. According to tradition, this is the place that the Holy Family stayed for six months and five days, and where Jesus, after his Resurrection, returned and consecrated an altar in order to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 19:19, *in that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt*. The location of the monastery is roughly the geographical center of the African Egypt.

The holiest place in the monastery is the Church of the Holy Virgin whose altar is believed to be consecrated in the first century A.D making it the first church in the world. It has a beautiful collection of the icons from the 18th and 19th century. In 1880 and 1964, the monastery subsequently erected two other churches and dedicated them to the Holy Virgin as well.

Dayr al-Muharraq is surrounded by a wall modeled after the one of Jerusalem.

For Copts, pilgrimage to this monastery is equal to that of Jerusalem.



5.DURUNKA

Approximately 50 kilometers south of Dayr al-Muharraq and 9 kilometers south of the ancient city of Lycopolis, nowadays Asyut, lies the massive monastic complex of Dayr Durunka.

In the convent there is a large cave where according to tradition, the Holy Family has stayed before taking a boat northward to return to the Holy Land. The cave, probably once a pharaonic quarry, attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims yearly, especially during the festival of the Holy Virgin in August. Many come after the recurrent apparitions of the Holy Virgin in the past decades.



6.VIRGIN MARY’S TREE IN MATTAREYA

In their flight to Egypt, the Holy Family always settled next to a spring. They found one in Heliopolis, Northern Cairo.

Virgin Mary washed her garments, sprinkling the used water on the ground, from which a balsam tree, now known as Virgin’s Tree, sprouted and continues to receive visitors to this day.

The area is surrounded by a wall on which verses praising the Virgin from the Mariam surah (chapter) in the Quran and others from the Holy Bible were engraved, paving the way to her sacred tree.

The well is still full of water. Around the well, there is something akin to a cave, was recently built to preserve this holy place.

There is the trunk of the original tree, which shaded the Holy Family, and two other trees, which people planted to memorialize the mother tree.

Near the tree, there is a “mini-museum,” which exhibits antiquities from the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt. One of those items is a stone said to have been used by the Virgin to bathe the Child Christ. .



7. St. Catherine's monastery

Located at the base of Mount Sinai, believed to be the same Mount Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments from God, St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt is one of Christianity's greatest ancient treasures. It is home to one of the oldest Christian churches still in use: the Chapel of the Burning Bush. It is also home to one of Christianity's most venerable library collections.

