

THE CITY  
OF ESNA **إِسْنَا**

**THE  
LIVING  
TIME  
CAPSULE**

**TRAVEL GUIDE**

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# CONTENTS



1

ESNA'S MAP

2

ABOUT ESNA

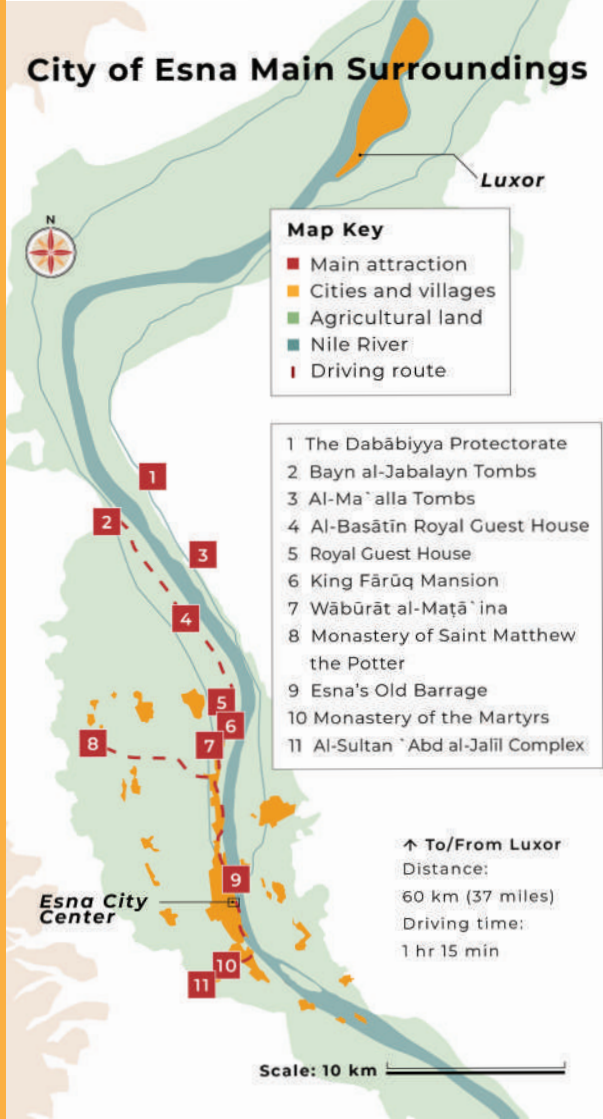
3

**KEY HERITAGE SITES**

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Step into History  
A World of Architecture  
Keeping Traditions Alive

# City of Esna Main Surroundings



Unravel a raw, strong, and magical experience unlike any other as you explore one of Egypt's best-kept secrets and travel through time in Esna.



# ESNA CITY CENTER

إسنا  
THE CITY OF ESNA

## Map Key

- Main Attraction
- Market
- Significant Building
- Religious Building
- Service
- ↑ Entrance/Extension

## Key Buildings

- 1 Nile Cruise Gate
- 2 Temple's Ticket Kiosk
- 3 Tourist Bazaar
- 4 Tourism Police
- 5 Wakālat al-Jiddāwī
- 6 Temple of Khnum
- 7 Al-'Amriyya Minaret
- 8 Al-'Amrī Mosque
- 9 Al-Dauwwī Mosque
- 10 Al-Shanāqra House
- 11 Al-Qisāriyya Market
- 12 Al-Zanātī House
- 13 Al-Zāwya al-Bayḍā' Mosque
- 14 The Oil Press
- 15 Virgin Mary Church
- 16 Weaving Workshop "Nūl"
- 17 Vegetable Market
- 18 Dānyāl Shākīr House
- 19 Police Post
- 20 'Āl Ḥuzayyin Mosque
- 21 Al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm Mosque
- 22 Al-Shanāqra House
- 23 Al-Sāwī Mosque
- 24 Local Market Street
- 25 Al-Shabrāwī Gate
- 26 Al-Sayyid al-Badawī Shrine
- 27 Hāshim Mosque
- 28 City Council
- 29 ATM
- 30 Church of Mother Dūlajī
- 31 Post Office
- 32 Al-Mijāhidiyya Gate

Scale: 125 m



# ABOUT ESNA



Esna is a living time capsule of Egypt, encompassing different eras and dynasties, with its earliest roots traced back to the Ancient Egyptian Era.





Located just 60 kilometers south of Luxor, Esna is a small city on the banks of the Nile that offers a vast cultural experience. Having preserved a simple way of life, far from the hustle and bustle.

Esna promises a unique connection to the land, the people, and the history enclosed within its walls.



# KEY HERITAGE SITES



Being one of the very few places in Egypt with monuments unraveling their beauty for 2000 years and all within walking distance, Esna has surely stood the test of time.



## STEP INTO HISTORY

Down its winding roads and through its narrow streets, you will find timeless treasures throughout the Historic City of Esna.



*Temple of Khnum*



*Entrance to Wakālat al-Jiddāwī*

Marvel at remnants of times past as you come across ancient inscriptions of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, to intricate wooden carvings of the Ottoman Era, and ultimately allow yourself to get lost amongst the beauty of our current day and age.



## TEMPLE OF KHNUM

*The Greco-Roman Era*

Stand in awe at the sight of the ancient inscriptions that adorn the walls of the Temple of Khnum as you travel to the heart of Esna.

Built over the span of 430 years - from 180 B.C. to 250 A.D. - the inscriptions carved on the temple's walls honor the three Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt during the Greco-Roman period, as well as around sixteen Roman Emperors.

### THE HISTORY OF KHNUM

Initially, the temple was built by the Ptolemies as a way to pay respect to the priests and the religious rituals of Egypt. This particular temple was built as a commemoration for the holy triad of gods who were Khnum, Neith, and their son Heka.

Khnum was one of the creator gods in ancient Egypt and was usually depicted with a ram's head and a human body. Khnum was also known as the potter god who molded mankind, cattle, birds, fish, and even other gods into existence.

The temple, currently located beneath the city level, has 24 colorful columns and ceiling - of which, 16 columns have unique designs. Its ceiling contains cosmological scenes and the only remaining original zodiac in Egypt's Greco-Roman temples.

As one walks through this wonderful piece of history that proudly stands amidst an ever-evolving urban surrounding, an eager desire to find out more about this small city's big treasures will slowly but surely start to emerge.







## WAKĀLAT AL-JIDDĀWĪ

*The Ottoman Era*

Just through those ornate wooden doors which seem to have withered with a multitude of stories from times past, one will find themselves standing in the midst of what was once a booming traders' market for all sorts of precious commodities.

### A TRADING CENTER OF THE PAST

Due to its prime geographic location, Esna was once a famous trading center. The city especially gained more attention during the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the impact caravans had on the economy at that time.

All sorts of goods were traded at these trading buildings, ranging from ostrich plumes, ivory, ebony, elephant tusks, camels, gold, mineral raw goods, exotic birds, and of course -that period's most precious commodity of all- slaves.

### TRADES OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

Wakālat al-Jiddāwī is believed to have been built by Ḥasan Bek al-Jiddāwī as a symbol of the rise in economic welfare the city was witnessing during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Particularly unique to this *wakala* is its architecture and the materials used to make up its facade. The brickwork of the building, integrated with the decorative woodwork, beautifully takes us to a world of intrigue which is undoubtedly felt as soon as one sees the accentuated sun-drenched courtyard.





## AL-`AMRIYYA MINARET

*The Fatimid Era*

Just a few steps away from the majestic Temple of Khnum, the Al-`Amriyya Minaret stands erect - acting as a sort of ode to Fatimid Egypt.

### A MINARET OF MANY FUNCTIONS

The Minaret - built in 1081 A.D. - is precedent to the Fatimid architecture typology of mosques, with its square base, cylindrical brick shaft, and domed lantern. It is one of five unique minarets built by the Fātimid vizier Badr al-Jammāli in different cities of Upper Egypt during the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Most unique to this Minaret is its marble inscription, which was the first in Egypt to use the word *mi'dhana* instead of Minaret (*manāra*) for a mosque tower. This was a result of its new function of calling for prayer added to its original function as a lighthouse for Nile travelers.

The Al-`Amriyya Minaret was witness to countless important events that took place in this region of Egypt over the last 1000 years.

An unparalleled testament to time, it still stands strong, beautifully towering over Esna's locals and reminding us all of what resilience truly means.







## AL-QĪSĀRIYYA MARKET

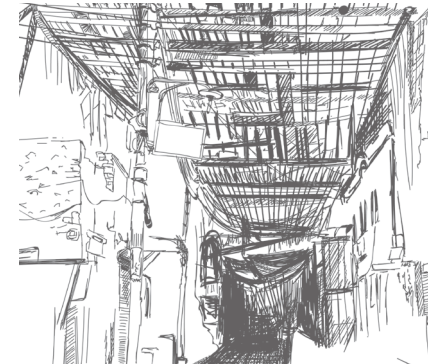
Wander through the narrow street of Esna's Al-Qīsāriyya Market, which is still in use by its locals to this day.

### THE PEOPLE'S MARKET

The word Qīsāriyya is said to have existed since Roman times. Such type of market places usually consists of a long narrow road with shops and workshops on either side. The upper levels were usually used for accommodation. Above the road itself hangs a wooden covering which was designed to help in providing shade, as well as a flow of cool breeze on those warm summer days.

The market street extends for a distance of almost 1.5 kilometers, alongside the Nile River. Most of Al-Qīsāriyya Market's historic facade, with its mud-brick walls and withering ornate woodwork, is still very much a part of the area's spirit in our current age - including its colorful wooden doors which line the street on either side.

Traditionally, such street markets were famous for locally produced goods such as textiles, spices, and traditional clothing. Today, the local shops that exist at the market still mostly encompass traditional tailors and sell textiles and shawls indigenous to Esna such as al-Habra, al-Farkha, and al-Nishra.







## THE OIL PRESS

*The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

A true testament to keeping the tradition alive, Esna's Bakkūr Oil Press - which was built in 1897 is the only remaining functioning oil press in Esna, and perhaps in all of Egypt.

It is still run manually by local craftsman and Bakkur family descendant, Nāšir Bakkūr.

### HISTORY OF THE CRAFT

During the Abbasids era (9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Esna was one of the most important centers for the oil pressing industry, especially for the production of lettuce oil.

For the past 120 years, this particular oil press has been producing oils made of lettuce and sesame grains. Lettuce oil is rarely found nowadays and, in the past, it is said to have been used as a source of medicine for some illnesses.

The oil press is also an example of how Esna's agriculture and the crafts related to it are closely connected. Rarely one would find such a prime representation of a city's essence, which is moving in the way that it manages to reflect a culture and its people.

This impressive contraption is a wonderful representation of Esna's primitive spirit and how the city's locals manage to keep tradition and history intact.





## MONASTERY OF THE MARTYRS

*The Coptic Era*

The Coptic Era is of great historical significance in the City of Esna, evident in that the city is also known as the 'City of Martyrs'.

### A MARTYRS' MEMORIAL

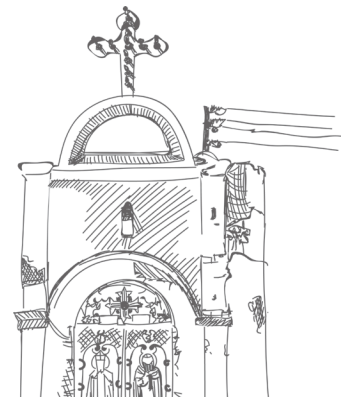
This is a result of a series of violent Roman persecutions of Esna's Copts between 303 and 311 A.D., taking place at the same time as the era of persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire.

Located about 5 kilometers south-west of Esna, the Monastery of the Martyrs stands tall as one of the most unique historical monuments in Esna.

It was built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Saint Helena, the Roman Empress, as a memorial to Esna's Coptic martyrs and one of the city's most difficult eras.

Saint Ammonius, who was ordained as Bishop of Esna, is also closely linked to the monastery - having had a sanctuary specifically dedicated to him following his persecution and martyrdom.

Walking through the sunlit courtyard and across the ancient water well within the monastery, the spiritual journey of a thousand-year-old history will be sure to leave anyone in awe.





## A WORLD OF ARCHITECTURE

Marvel at remnants of times past as you stroll down its winding roads, and through its narrow streets, you will find timeless treasures throughout the City of Esna.



From carved calligraphy and geometric patterns on wooden frames to the grandness of Neo-Classical European architecture mixed with vernacular expressions, Esna's buildings are full of intricate details. Having so many different eras of architecture represented in one place is rarely found in other cities of Upper Egypt, and these architecturally significant buildings mostly belong to Esna's prominent families that still inhabit the city until today.

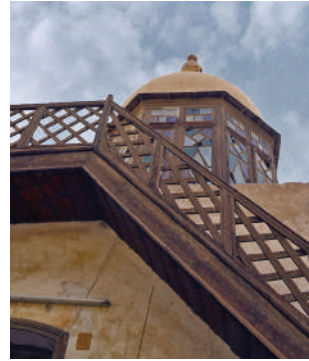


## ELABORATE WOODWORK



As evident in Wakālat al-Jiddāwī - as well as other noteworthy locations such as Bayt al-Shanāqra, and Bayt al-Shabrāwī - traditional architectural styles dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries shine through the use of intricate brickwork inter-laid with decorative wooden panel and lining. These architecturally significant buildings beautifully preserve the traditional patterns and calligraphy engraved within its woodwork.

## WHERE EAST MEETS WEST



In addition to these more traditional buildings, one will also find architecture reflective of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which combines both local and European architectural styles. This unique combination can be seen in various buildings around the city.

EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN



Remember to also keep an eye out for various mansions and freestanding buildings whose architecture is associated with Europe's highly ornamented facade.

Every step one takes throughout the City of Esna is truly akin to walking miles and miles through history, making every experience worth a thousand lifetimes.



## KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE

In the fast-paced world we currently live in, where mass production has taken over and people rarely rely on their own two hands anymore, the clock still strikes slightly slower in the small City of Esna.



*Hand Woven Shawls*



*The Oil Press*

Keeping the artistry of local handicrafts alive, this is a city where locals take pride in the crafting skills that have been passed on and refined throughout generations.



## UNMATCHED LOCAL HANDICRAFTS



From pottery to textile and clothing, the products one would find on display at Esna's local markets are nothing short of impressive. The history, culture, and heritage that have been so intricately woven through the products, end up being the very essence of the final result.



Thanks to this slower-paced part of the world, in which careful attention to detail is given to each local craft, one will surely find unique products that are not only handy in their utility but are also rich in their culture and history.







# THE CITY |

Approached by land or river, Esna is a living time capsule of Egypt, encompassing different historical eras. The city is one of Egypt's oldest, with its earliest roots traced back to the Ancient Egyptian era. Located 60 kilometers south of Luxor, Esna is a place best discovered on foot. Take a walk through the ages and let your imagination go as you stroll through Esna's charmingly winding streets.

Preserved in time, experience Esna in the form of its people, buildings, and structures that stand tall to this day.



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