

A Summer in Egypt:
letter to the editor of Much Ado About Mensa

By Teri Ekland

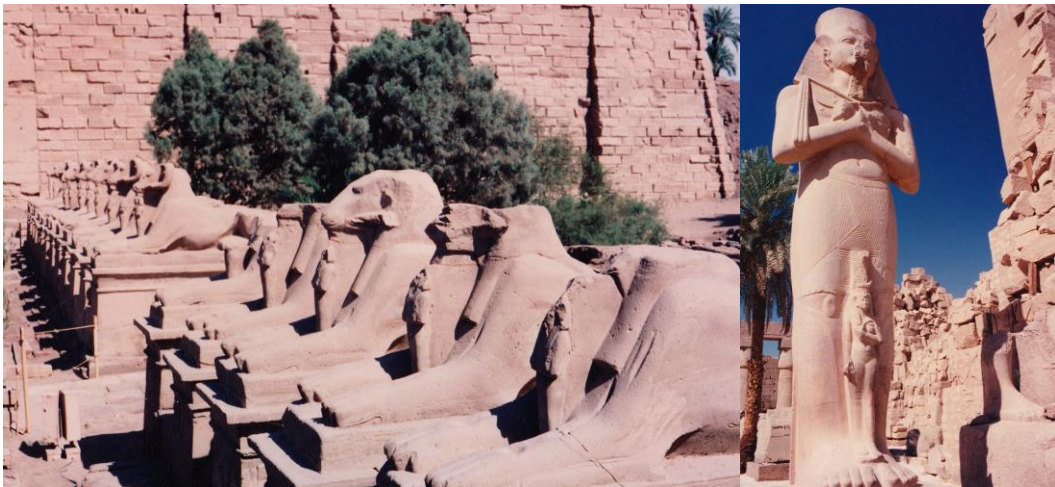


I spent the summer of 1993 in the Middle East by first flying to Cairo and meeting Lyn Stinnett, a fellow Mensa member and Arizonan. I retrieved her address in Egypt from an article she wrote in MAAM—Much Ado About Mensa, a Mensa newsletter in Arizona.

For six hours Lyn and I rode camels around the Great Pyramids of Giza. Because of the recent terrorist threats in Egypt, hardly any other tourists were present. This made the experience especially great for me, but the Egyptians, who depend on the tourist industry for their livelihood, are really suffering.



Lyn invited me to spend a few days in Beni Suef where she's working at a clinic on an air force base (an American compound inside an Egyptian compound). It was a fantastic place to rest from jet-lag. Not only did I get my own room, Lyn provided me with my own house for a few nights.



Luxor offered splendid temples and ruins but the touts--hustlers for taxis, camels, donkeys, hotels, and shops--made the experience somewhat trying. To shed ourselves of the harassment it became necessary at times to hire a taxi even though we wanted to walk to the sites.



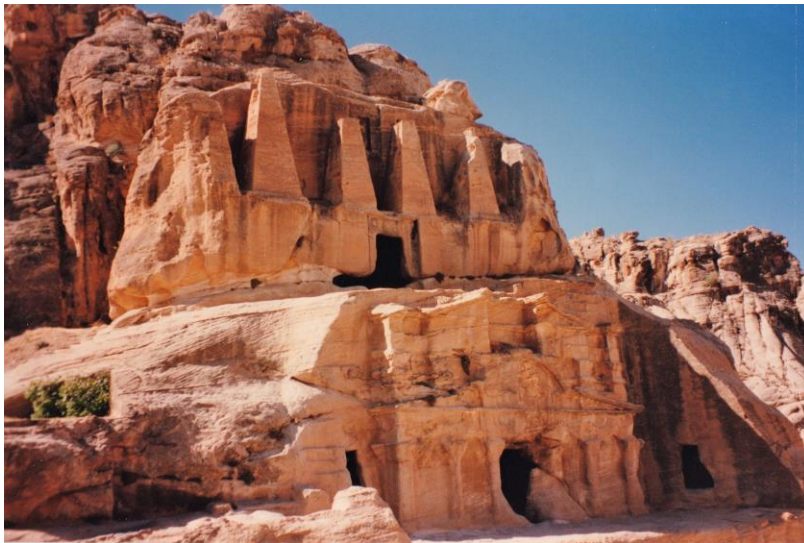
The temple of Abu Simbel near the Sudan border was well worth the four-hour taxi ride through 120-degree heat. However, I would recommend going there early in the morning instead of at noon.



For the remainder of the summer, I studied international law at Tel Aviv university in Israel (through a Temple University summer program). It was a fantastic way to experience the heartthrob of the Middle East conflict. I left wondering how the situation would ever reach any resolution; there are so many viewpoints, problems, angles, and differing peoples involved.



Because of my stay in Israel, I had to get two passports ahead of time so that I could travel to Jordan, a country that refuses to recognize Israel. I had no problem entering Jordan through the West Bank but I could only get Jordanian money by negotiating with a taxi driver to take me to a bank in Amman. From there I went to the cliff-carved palaces of Petra--a remarkable site well worth a visit.



To leave Jordan I ventured down to Egypt, via ferry, and back to Tel Aviv. Going to the West Bank from Jordan requires a permit from the Ministry of Interior which could have taken more time than I had.

My trip to the Middle East was complete when I coincidentally encountered Lyn Stinnett in the Frankfurt airport while I awaited my flight home and she awaited her flight to a Mensa gathering in Berlin. We spent about an hour rehashing our respective summers and marveling at the serendipitous encounter.

