OFFICIAL 2027 GROUND EDITION (UPDATED NOV 24, 2026)

Instant Digital Field Guide

The 48-Hour Cairo Arrival & Anti-Hassle Kit

Your no-nonsense ground manual from the aircraft door at Cairo International Airport (CAI) through your first two days at the Giza Plateau, the Grand Egyptian Museum, Downtown Cairo, and Khan el-Khalili.

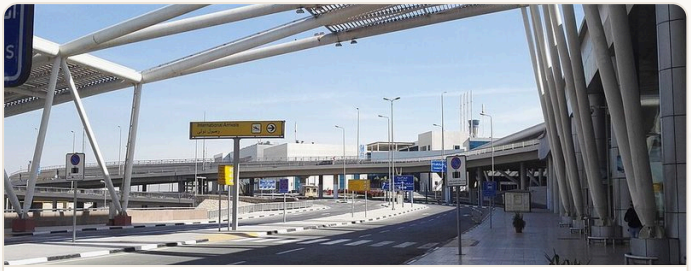
By EgyptRoute Operations Desk (egyptroute.com) | Real routes. Practical logistics. Transparent local knowledge.

SECTION 1: PRE-FLIGHT ESSENTIALS

Page 1: Before You Board (Your Carry-On Pocket Setup)

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Clearing Cairo International Airport takes 45 to 75 minutes when you know the floor layout, or two hours of pure frustration if you get caught in arrival-hall bottlenecks. Egypt's CAI visa-on-arrival uses a digital QR system ($36 USD per person through 31 December 2026; $39 USD effective 1 January 2027), Terminal 2 and Terminal 3 run on opposite floor layouts, and major Giza Plateau and GEM monument ticket gates require card or online payment.



Cairo International Airport (CAI) Terminal 3 international arrivals roadway and passenger concourse.

Carry-On Pocket Checklist

READY

- **1 Blue/Black Pen:** Kept in your shirt or jacket pocket.
- **1 Physical Card:** Visa or Mastercard (not mobile wallet).
- **Hotel Name:** Written on phone screen or paper slip.
- **USD Cash Backup:** Crisp Series 2013+ notes ($36 through Dec 31, 2026; $39 from Jan 1, 2027).
- **Offline Map Area:** Google Maps > profile > Offline maps > Select your own map > Download (saved pins alone do not work offline; no live traffic).

Free live ground support: **+20 104 283 3692**

3 Things to Put in Your Carry-On Pocket Before Takeoff

1. Pack a Blue or Black Pen in Your Pocket (Seriously)

Before passport control stamps you in, you have to hand the officer a filled-out paper arrival declaration card along with your visa QR code. If your flight crew does not hand these cards out on the plane, stacks of blank forms sit on the pillars around the airport bank windows. Here is the catch: there is not a single pen in that entire hall. Watching 200 tired travelers fight over two borrowed pens is an Olympic sport at CAI. Put one pen in your pocket before you fly and walk straight past the crowd.

2. Keep a Physical Visa or Mastercard Accessible

The CAI visa-on-arrival QR fee is $36 USD per person through 31 December 2026 ($30 visa fee + $6 service fee) and $39 USD effective 1 January 2027 ($33 visa fee + $6 service fee), payable by card at the self-service QR kiosks right before passport control or in crisp USD cash at the bank windows (advance QR codes are valid for up to seven days from issuance). Keep your physical card handy for official monument gates such as the Giza Plateau and GEM, which require card or advance online booking.

3. Don't Panic Over 200 EGP ATM Notes

Airport ATMs spit out crisp 200 EGP bills, and no shop, bank, or SIM counter inside Cairo Airport will break them into smaller notes for tips. At around 50 EGP per USD, a 200 EGP note is roughly $4 USD, so it is easy to break at city supermarkets or restaurants. If you prefer 50 EGP or 100 EGP notes immediately on arrival, ask at a currency desk before departure or break a 200 EGP bill at your hotel or a Cairo supermarket before paying drivers or porters.

SECTION 2: INSIDE CAI AIRPORT

Page 2: Inside Cairo Airport (Terminal 2 vs. Terminal 3 Walkthrough)

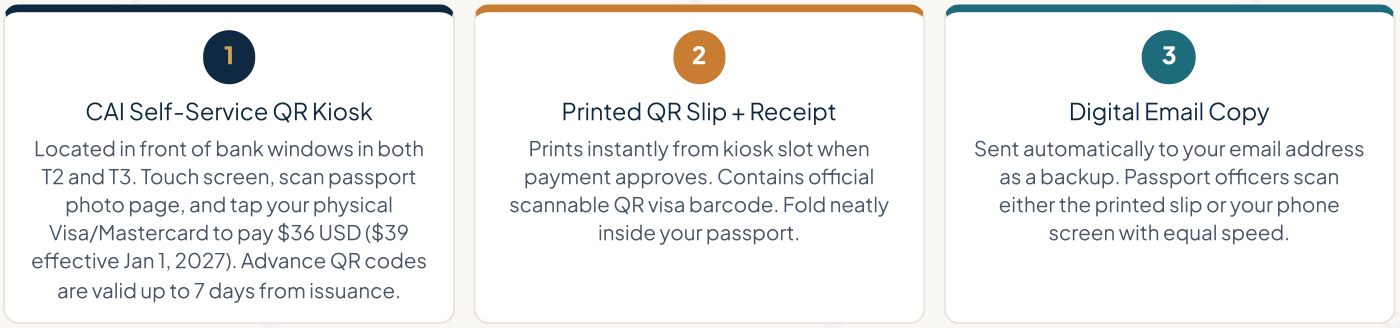
BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Terminal 2 (OneWorld, Gulf, and major European airlines) sends you down the escalator first before you reach the banks, QR visa machines, and passport control. Terminal 3 (EgyptAir and Star Alliance) puts the QR machines, banks, and passport control on the upper level first, then sends you down the escalator to baggage claim.

Terminal Comparison Walkthrough Table

Arrival Stage	Terminal 2 (Air France, British Airways, Emirates, Gulf)	Terminal 3 (EgyptAir, Lufthansa, Swiss, United, Turkish)
Stage 1: Deplaning	Deplane via the terminal boarding bridge and take the escalator down right away into the immigration hall.	Deplane via the terminal boarding bridge (or tarmac bus gate) straight into the upper immigration hall.
Stage 2: Forms & Restrooms	Grab blank arrival card from pillars around the banks (use your own pen). Restrooms on left.	Grab blank arrival card from pillars near bank windows (use your own pen). Restrooms upstairs.
Stage 3: QR Visa ($36 / $39)	Banks sit on your right; self-service QR machines sit directly in front of banks. Pay $36 USD ($39 from Jan 1, 2027) by card.	Self-service QR machines sit straight ahead as you enter; bank windows sit opposite. Pay $36 USD ($39 from Jan 1, 2027) by card.
Stage 4: Passport Control	Hand officer passport + paper declaration + QR code (slip or email). Scan, stamp, and walk through.	Hand officer passport + paper declaration + QR code. Once stamped, take escalator down to belts.
Stage 5: Bags & Customs	Collect bags. Duty-Free, 24/7 SIM kiosks & restrooms by belts. Exit left through Customs.	Collect bags on lower level (restrooms & 24/7 SIMs right by belts), clear Customs to arrival hall.

Visual Check: How the Digital QR Visa Works ($36 Through Dec 31, 2026; $39 From Jan 1, 2027)



Cash Backup Note (Crisp USD Bills Only)

You can pay the same official fee ($36 USD through Dec 31, 2026; $39 USD effective Jan 1, 2027) in crisp, uncreased cash at the bank counters behind the machines. Bank windows accept only clean Series 2013+ bills without tears, stamps, or ink markings.

Prefer Assisted Arrival & Private Pickup?

Arranged through appropriately authorised Egyptian partner operators; exact service inclusions confirmed per written quotation.

Request Availability

SECTION 3: GROUND EXIT STRATEGY

Page 3: 24/7 SIM Cards, Arrival Hall Flow & Quiet Uber Pins

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

All four Egyptian mobile networks (Vodafone, Orange, e&, and WE) run 24/7 kiosks right by the baggage belts in both terminals; Vodafone is the most popular. Once you clear customs, head to Gate 7 curbside outside Terminal 2 or follow signs to the Car Park at Terminal 3 and take the stairs or elevator down to the B6 parking space, then follow live step-by-step pickup directions in the Uber app.

1. Getting Mobile Data in 5 Minutes (Right by the Belts)

In both Terminal 2 and Terminal 3, Vodafone, Orange, e&, and WE operate 24/7 counters right beside the luggage carousels, even if your flight lands at 3:00 AM. Coverage across Cairo, Luxor, and Aswan is almost identical across all four carriers. Walk up to Vodafone first; if the line has more than four people, step over to Orange, e&, or WE. Have the agent turn on your data and verify it loads a webpage before you leave the counter.

2. Handling Luggage Helpers & Arrival Hall Pitches Calmly

- **At Baggage Belts:** Local helpers offer to wheel bags. If pushing your own cart, keep a hand on the handle, smile, and say "La, shukran" (No, thank you). If you ask for luggage assistance, agree any fee upfront before bags move; any tip is optional.
- **In Main Arrival Hall:** Men with badges claim "Uber is not allowed." Smile, say "Shukran, my driver is waiting," and keep walking.

3. Blindfold Walking Directions to Quiet Uber Pickup Zones

Terminal 2 Pickup Pin: Gate 7

Exit baggage claim opposite duty free toward customs, head left after customs, walk out of Gate 7 (**بوابة 7**), and meet your driver curbside outside Gate 7. Once matched, always check "Directions to pickup" in the Uber app for live step-by-step instructions.

Terminal 3 Pickup Pin: B6 Parking Space

Exit baggage claim, follow signs to the Car Park, and take the stairs or elevator down to the parking lot to meet your driver in the **B6 parking space** (**موقف B6**). After matching, always check "Directions to pickup" inside the Uber app for live step-by-step guidance.

4. The Airport Uber Cash/USD Hustle vs. Indoor Limo Desks

Cairo Airport Uber drivers often accept a ride and immediately message in the app demanding double the fare in cash or payment in USD. Paste our Arabic reply from Page 8 into the chat; if they push back, cancel and rebook. If your phone dies or you skip Uber, use an official indoor limousine counter inside the hall rather than random guys outside. Because tourist desks charge roughly double local rates, expect to negotiate around 1,600 to 2,000 EGP for a standard sedan to Downtown or Zamalek, and 2,000 to 2,800 EGP to Giza or New Cairo.

5. Pre-Arranged Airport Transfers & Assisted Arrival (Partner Operators)

QUOTE ON REQUEST

Local ground arrangements are delivered through appropriately authorised Egyptian partner operators using modern AC sedans, family vans, or minibuses:

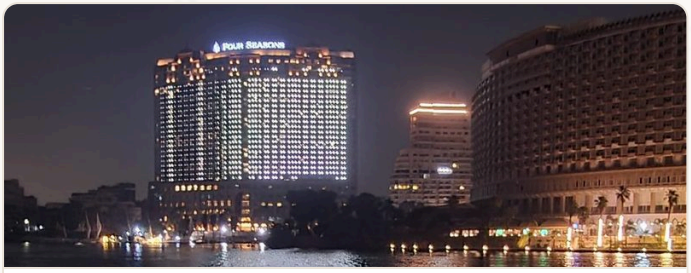
- **Private CAI Airport Transfer:** Pre-arranged pickup with flight tracking and direct hotel drop-off; pricing confirmed by written quotation.
- **Assisted Arrival + Private Transfer:** Practical arrival coordination options with exact scope and inclusions confirmed in your written quotation.
- **Request Availability:** egyptroute.com/airport-transfers.html | **WhatsApp:** +20 104 283 3692 | **Email:** hello@egyptroute.com

SECTION 4: HOURS 2 TO 12

Page 4: Hours 2 to 12 (First-Night Setup, Water & Talabat Delivery)

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Do not wander unfamiliar streets exhausted on your first night looking for bottled water, dinner, or stomach medicine. Download Talabat, link your foreign Visa or Mastercard, and have food, groceries, and pharmacy items delivered straight to your hotel lobby without needing exact cash change.



Cairo streets at night: avoid wandering tired on Night 1; order lobby delivery.

First-Night Hotel Protocol

- **Brush Teeth with Bottled Water:** Use sealed bottles for first 48h.
- **Save Cash Notes:** Keep small 20, 50, and 100 EGP notes intact.
- **Exact Hotel Pin:** Drop Google Maps pin directly in Talabat.
- **Notify Reception:** Tell front desk a Talabat driver is arriving.
- **Hydrate & Rest:** Day 1 Pyramids starts early at 8:00 AM.

1. Install Talabat & Pay Cash-Free with Your Foreign Card

Uber Eats does not operate in Egypt. Talabat is Egypt's everyday delivery app covering thousands of restaurants, supermarkets, and neighborhood pharmacies across Cairo and Giza. Link your foreign credit or debit card in the app to remove language barriers with delivery drivers and save your small EGP notes for tipping. Drop your hotel's exact Google Maps pin, write your room number in the delivery notes, and let the front desk know you have a Talabat delivery arriving at the main gate.

2. Real Bottled Water & Supermarket Prices

Never drink tap water in Egypt, and use bottled water even when brushing your teeth for your first 48 hours. Bottled water is sold at street kiosks (koshk), grocery stores, and supermarkets like Seoudi, Gourmet, and Metro Market (note that pharmacies in Egypt do not sell bottled water).

- **Small Bottle (600 ml):** 7 to 10 EGP
- **Large Bottle (1.5 Liters):** 12 to 15 EGP
- **Insider Tip:** Prices vary slightly between street kiosks and upscale supermarkets, while stands right outside tourist monuments charge higher markups. If you want to save your small cash bills on Night 1, order a 6-pack of 1.5L bottles on Talabat Mart and pay with your foreign card. Whenever you want to break a 200 EGP cash note into smaller bills for tips, pay cash in person at a physical supermarket or neighborhood street kiosk.

3. Egyptian Pharmacy (صيدلية) Rules

Unlike in the US, UK, or Europe, Egyptian pharmacies do not require a doctor's prescription for everyday traveler medications, including local stomach remedies (like Antinal or Streptoquin), oral rehydration packets, painkillers, or motion sickness tablets. You can order straight from major chains like El Ezaby or Seif inside the Talabat app and pay with your foreign card.

SECTION 5: HOURS 12 TO 36

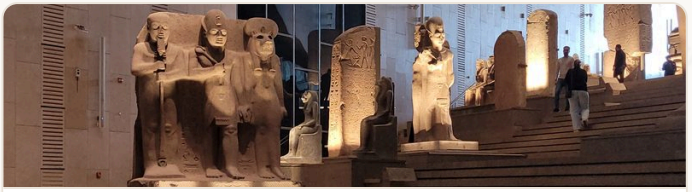
Page 5: Hours 12 to 36 (Day 1 Giza Plateau & GEM Playbook)

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Seeing the Giza Pyramids and the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) properly is a full-day commitment (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM), never a rushed half-day trip. Enter the Giza Plateau exclusively through the New Visitor Center on Fayoum Road, avoid the old Sphinx Gate, and book your GEM tickets online in advance.



The Giza Plateau: enter exclusively via New Visitor Center on Fayoum Road.



GEM Grand Staircase: book mandatory online timed entry at tickets.gem.eg.

1. Why This Takes a Full Day (And Where to Recharge)

- **The Giza Plateau (2.5 to 4 Hours):** Massive desert complex across the Great Pyramid, Panorama viewpoint, and Sphinx. Check out our dedicated Giza Plateau Navigator Guide on egyptroute.com for exact shuttle stops and photo angles.
- **The Grand Egyptian Museum (4+ Hours):** GEM is enormous. Even a focused highlights route takes 4 hours, and history lovers easily spend 5 to 6 hours inside. When your feet need a break, head to the GEM food court, which has great specialty coffee and solid meals. See our Complete GEM Insider Guide on egyptroute.com for gallery-by-gallery routing.

2. Official Ticket Portals Only (Card & Online Entry)

Avoid third-party reseller sites that mark up tickets. Both Giza Plateau and GEM require card payment on site (where walk-ups are sold) or official online booking:

- **Giza Pyramids (egymonuments.com):** Buy online ahead of time, or walk up to the human-staffed ticket windows (most popular and easy) or self-service kiosks at the Visitor Center and tap your card.
- **Grand Egyptian Museum (tickets.gem.eg):** Unlike the Pyramids, GEM restricts walk-up entry and requires advance online timed-entry tickets, so always book your GEM time slot online before you go.

3. New Visitor Center & Verified Electric Shuttle Route

- **Fayoum Gate & Real Shuttle Route:** Modern, organized, and scam-free. The real Orascom electric shuttle route is: (a) *Main Outbound Line:* New Visitor Center → Panoramic Viewpoint → Pyramid of Menkaure → Pyramid of Khafre Hub (central stop between Menkaure and Khufu). (b) *Dedicated Khufu Shuttle:* Runs continuously back and forth strictly between Khafre Hub and the Great Pyramid (Khufu). (c) *Sphinx & Return Line:* Runs from Khafre Hub down to the Valley Temple and Great Sphinx; re-boarding at the Sphinx returns you all the way to the New Visitor Center.
- **100% Avoid the Old Sphinx Gate:** Entering here drops you into persistent touts, unlicensed camel handlers, and fake badge hustlers. Even if your hotel overlooks Sphinx, take a 10-minute taxi around to the Fayoum Road entrance.

4. Two Critical Giza Street Rules

- **Ignore the "Gate Is Closed Today" Story:** Men outside plateau tell tourists "The main entrance is closed today for a VIP visit or prayer" to steer you toward camel stables or commission shops. Never believe anyone outside a gate claiming a monument is closed.
- **The Post-Tour Visitor Center Uber Bottleneck:** Always ride shuttle bus back to New Visitor Center to call an Uber (never get into unmarked cars with men waiting outside gates claiming to be Uber drivers). Catching an Uber at Visitor Center during afternoon exit hours takes a long time, which is why having a standby private car makes the day effortless.

5. Private Giza Plateau & GEM Transport & Guiding Options

CUSTOM DAY

Private AC vehicle (sedan, family van, or minibus) with optional local guiding arranged through appropriately authorised Egyptian partner operators. Official monument tickets are excluded unless requested; scope confirmed by written quotation.
Request at egyptroute.com/private-cairo-giza.html | **WhatsApp:** +20 104 283 3692 | **Email:** hello@egyptroute.com

SECTION 6: HOURS 36 TO 48

Page 6: Hours 36 to 48 (Day 2 Cairo Ubers & Verified City Pins)

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Inside Cairo, always select Uber Comfort (it costs pennies more than UberX and gets you newer cars, working AC, and better drivers). Drivers prefer cash, so either carry exact small EGP bills or pay by credit/debit card and allow an extra 10 to 15 minutes during rush hour.



Handmade brass lanterns and historic stone merchant stalls in Khan el-Khalili bazaar.

1. Three Insider Rules for Using Uber in Cairo

- **Always Tap "Uber Comfort":** Skip standard UberX. Uber Comfort costs only a tiny bit more and upgrades you to cleaner, newer vehicles with reliable AC and higher-rated drivers. 100% worth it.
- **Card vs. Cash Payment:** Linking a foreign card avoids any debate over change. Because many drivers prefer cash, some cancel card trips, so allow an extra 10 to 15 minutes during peak traffic. If you pay cash, keep exact 20, 50, and 100 EGP bills ready.
- **Use Exact Perimeter Pins:** Never drop a pin inside Tahrir roundabout or inside the narrow alleys of Khan el-Khalili.

2. Verified Day-2 Pickup & Drop-Off Pins

Downtown / The Egyptian Museum (Tahrir) Perimeter Pin

Dropping a pin in the middle of Tahrir Square traps your driver in circling traffic. Walk to the museum's perimeter pickup spot:

https://maps.app.goo.gl/nQ9Amc1W21bjfH5L7

Khan el-Khalili Bazaar & El-Moez Street Tested Pins

Drivers meet guests near Al-Hussein Mosque, but searching that name pulls up dozens of mosques across Cairo. Use these two tested pins on the main Al-Azhar Street edge:

- **Best Pickup Pin (Most Used by Drivers):**
  https://maps.app.goo.gl/b9XtaboxBxNV4S5K8
- **Best Drop-Off Pin (Main Khan el-Khalili Entrance):**
  https://maps.app.goo.gl/hQd8J53rTMfXHaTy5

3. Khan el-Khalili Street Rule

Shopkeepers along El-Moez Street and Khan el-Khalili love inviting tourists to see "free" papyrus or perfume demos, or claiming a mosque is closed for prayer so you follow them down a side lane. Keep walking with a friendly smile and "La, shukran" and you will breeze right through.

SECTION 7: STREET CULTURE, TIPPING & SHOPPING

Page 7: Practical Tipping (بقشيش) & Fair Dealing

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT (BLUF)

Carrying small EGP notes (10, 20, 50, 100 EGP) makes everyday travel smooth. Driver and guide ranges below are **per vehicle or per group per full day** (not per person) and are normally given at the end of service; porter and housekeeping tips are given when the service occurs.

EgyptRoute Practical Tipping Guide: Suggested Amounts (November 2026)

Service / Role	Suggested Amount	Unit & Context
Private driver, full day (approx. 8–9 hrs)	EGP 300–600	Per vehicle/group. EGP 600–800 for a very long day or notably helpful service.
Private licensed guide, full day	EGP 500–800	Per group. EGP 800–1,000 for an extended day or exceptional specialist service.
Half-day guide / driver	**Adjust down**	Scale down by duration; do not automatically use a full-day amount.
Hotel porter	EGP 50–100	Per bag/carrying service (use helpers you requested; agree terms if needed).
Housekeeping	EGP 50–100	Per room per night.
Restaurant	Around 10%	When no service charge is included. If shown, extra is optional for great service.
Toilet attendant	EGP 10–20	Per visit where the attendant provides the service.
Site helper / attendant	EGP 20–50	When you requested and received genuinely useful assistance.
Nile cruise crew	**Check policy**	Check the operator's pooled gratuity policy; public 2026 sources vary.

Note: These are practical suggestions, not fixed charges. Adjust for the service, duration, group size and any gratuity already included. Larger parties share the suggested group amount; if one person is both driver and guide, do not automatically tip twice (adjust for the combined service). Keep small EGP notes rather than foreign coins.

Bargaining & Optional Shopping Stops

Prices vary by seller and product. Compare similar items, ask for the full price before agreeing, and feel comfortable walking away politely if it does not suit your budget. Some shops use fixed prices.

Shopping Stops: Some tourist-shopping arrangements in Egypt involve referral commissions paid to drivers, guides or other intermediaries when travellers make a purchase. Based on EgyptRoute's field experience, commissions in some arrangements can reach approximately 20–40% of the purchase value. The actual percentage varies by shop, product and agreement; this is not a universal rate. If you prefer to keep your day focused on the places you chose, agree your route before departure. EgyptRoute plans routes without optional shopping stops unless you request them.

Page 8: Screenshot-Ready Lock-Screen Field Cheat Sheet

- **QR Visa:** $36 USD through Dec 31, 2026 ($39 USD effective Jan 1, 2027); 7-day max advance QR validity. Bring your own pen.
- **Terminal 2 Uber Pin:** Exit baggage claim opposite duty free toward customs, head left after customs, exit Gate 7 curbside; follow Uber app pickup steps.
- **Terminal 3 Uber Pin:** Exit baggage claim, follow Car Park signs, stairs or elevator down to parking lot, meet at **B6 parking space**; follow Uber app pickup steps.
- **Official Monument Sites:** egymonuments.com (Giza & Ministry sites) | tickets.gem.eg (GEM; timed entry online).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
٠	١	٢	٣	٤	٥	٦	٧	٨	٩

Example Plate 4827 on Your Uber App: ٤ ٨ ٢ ٧ (Read left-to-right)

Important: Even though Arabic words read right-to-left, Egyptian license plate numbers read left-to-right just like in English. If your Uber app says plate 4827, look for ٧ ٢ ٨ ٤ in that exact left-to-right order.

3. Copy-Paste Uber Chat & Curbside Arabic Scripts

T2 Gate 7 Pickup: أنا واقف عند بوابة 7 بره صالة الوصول مبنى 2. مستني حضرتك.
("I am standing at Gate 7 outside Terminal 2 Arrivals. Waiting for you.")

T3 B6 Parking Pickup: أنا في موقف B6 في جراج مبنى 3.
("Ana fe maw'ef B6 fe garage mabna talata." "I am at the B6 parking space in Terminal 3 Car Park.")

Stop USD / Extra Cash Demands: أنا بدفع بالجنيه المصري حسب سعر الأبلكيشن بس. لو مش مناسب اعمل كانسل.
("I pay in EGP per the app price only. If not suitable, please cancel.")

Walk Past Arrival Touts: شكراً، السواق بتاعي بره عند البوابة.
("Shukran, el-sawa' beta'y barra." "Thanks, my driver is outside. Keep walking.")

4. QUICK TIPPING GUIDE (NOV 2026): Full-day driver: EGP 300–600/vehicle (EGP 600–800 extended/standout); Full-day guide: EGP 500–800/group (EGP 800–1,000 extended/specialist); Porter/Housekeeping: EGP 50–100; Restaurant: ~10% if no service charge; Toilet: EGP 10–20; Site helper: EGP 20–50. Practical suggestions, not fixed charges; adjust for service, duration, group size and any included gratuity.

5. Request Local Ground Arrangements via Partner Operators (Quote on Request)

QUOTE ON REQUEST

- **CAI Airport Transfers & Assisted Arrival:** egyptroute.com/airport-transfers.html
- **Private Giza & GEM Transport:** egyptroute.com/private-cairo-giza.html | **Custom Routes:** custom-egypt-route.html
- **General Enquiries:** egyptroute.com/trips.html | **WhatsApp:** +20 104 283 3692 | **Email:** hello@egyptroute.com