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On Behalf Of zafirasdream
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2006 10:14 PM
To: bellydancema@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [bellydanceMA] Katia's AMAZING EGYPT!!!

Hi Everyone -

I wanted to write in to RAVE (like a lunatic) about Katia's two week tour of Egypt with 11 dancers and Bob (our sultan). This was the most amazing trip I've ever taken in my life, hands down. Katia's 30 trips to Egypt were clearly evident in the planning and care that went into this experience. The grace and ease of our movements across the country were remarkable. I cannot thank her enough! This was the trip of a lifetime and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Now - what was amazing? Let's start with going into the interior (the King's sarcophagus chamber) of the Cheops pyramid. It had been closed to the public for a very long time and recently reopened. We were among a handful of people who were able to go in on that day. I tell you, pyramid magic is REAL. Several of us had unusual and synchronous experiences in there. This was an experience of a lifetime, and one that I will carry with me forever.

As was the Temple of Hathor which we visited on our one week cruise down the Nile. Our tour guide was able to get us there moments after it opened in the early morning light. Before tourists! Hathor is our patron goddess and it was my favorite temple. It was stunning, beautiful, feminine, it had "mother energy" all through it. Haunting and graceful.

The list of temples and archaeological ruins that we visited was quite lengthy, and I won't go into all of them, but the Isle of Philae (the Temple of Isis) was also truly remarkable. So beautiful. So, well, sexy, if you were paying attention ...

And I don't mean to the men. On that topic, let's just say that all of the Egyptians, male, female (and even the darned crows) are beautiful. We happened to have men waiting on us hand and foot for two weeks. It was not unpleasant (grin). I think that each of us could have been married a hundred times before coming home. If you are blond, double that! It was interesting to see the different styles of veiling. The women are gorgeous, veiled or not, and some really get into the jewel-encrusted get-ups. Jaw-droppingly attractive.

The people were wonderful. Really. Honest, kind, friendly, generous and funny beyond belief. I'm not kidding. The Egyptians have a sense of humor that is very developed. I keyed into the practical joking and slapstick humor since it is such a part of my Italian heritage. I laughed many, many times with the people.

And Egypt is SAFE! At least that's how we felt at every moment on this tour (except crossing 8 lanes of traffic without crosswalks!) We had about 4 handlers much of the time. This included our phenomenal tour guide Suhaila (who looked 35 years old, but had 23 years experience). The people are HONEST too. We had a "chamber man" literally freak out because we had left the safe open in our room. He made one of our group come to find us because, well, he was THAT HONEST. I always felt safe with my possessions and money. FAR MORE SO THAN IN THE UNITED STATES. Furthermore, the efficiency of our arrival, travels within the country and departure are far beyond what we would ever experience in the United States. I was pleasantly shocked, to say the least. I expected delays. Honest to God, there were none. Again, thank you Katia.

We saw about a half dozen dance shows. Several restaurant dancers, all quite charming, many Dervish dancers, Nubian dancers and a show at a very upscale nightclub. Dina was supposed to dance, but cancelled. This is the only thing that went wrong during the entire trip, but not very wrong, because who

can complain about watching a 25 piece band play for several hours? How can one describe this? I mean, there were about 9 drums alone. It was the most amazing music I've ever heard in my life. I have to say, I've never eaten dinner between 1:00 and 2:30 am either!

We were also able to study semi-privately with Raqia Hassan and Mahmoud Reda (again, thank you Katia!). Both classes were simply stellar. Really great. And we all performed on the Nile! Yahoo! I donated my cane to the ship.

This is a small slice of what we did and what we saw. I could write pages. Mainly, I'd like to thank Katia for her hard work and hard core planning. Her expertise and intimate knowledge of Egypt were pivotal in making this trip what it was. She often overrode the decisions of our tour company in favor of more dancer-friendly options. The thing that struck me the most, while it may seem like icing on the cake, is how poised, dignified and polite Katia remained for two weeks, even at 4 am. We had some late night traveling and she was ever the lovely hostess. A mere mortal would have cracked. Katia was genuinely invested in making this trip a success for all of us. She said that one of her goals was that she wanted us to love Egypt and she made it ever so effortless to do so.

The weather was unbelievably perfect. Sunny and about 80 degrees the whole time. When I showed up, I was pale and bought a lot of silver jewelry. On my last day in Khan el Khalili (let's say this place is like "shopping as a contact sport!"), I finally broke down and bought some gold. Egypt tanned my skin, warmed my heart, opened my mind and reconditioned my spirit. The trip was pure alchemy. Silver into gold.

Katia, thank you. Through your great love of the country and the dance, this trip to Egypt has changed my life. And I firmly believe that I speak for every single person who traveled with us.

With the greatest of gratitude (and a healthy dose of jet-lag),

Gina Capossela