

Information Sheet

Afendina

Dahabayias



Theban Mapping Project - Dahabyia Tour



Library



Living Room



Dining Room and Bar



Cabin/Large Bed



Cabin/In Suite Bath



Upper Deck

The Afendina

The interiors were designed by one of Egypt's leading interior designers, expert wood-carvers, using old world techniques were recruited to design the elegantly carved details and an outstanding chef and staff hired to assure your sail will be remembered for a lifetime.

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This is an article printed in an Egyptian newspaper upon the launching of the Afendina.

In this new millennium there is a growing concern about the future and wellbeing of our planet. Responsible people are showing more and more concern for the threats that are looming high: global warming, pollution, and depletion of our energy resources. Many successful men and women from different countries are supporting this effort by sponsoring 'green' projects, from the building of commercial jet planes to natural and organic farming. Yet, how often we forget that the most important of nature's gifts are the water that we drink and the air that we breathe. My friend Mohammad Nazmy, President of Quest Travel in Cairo, is a man with vision, and this vision is to remind us of how important "clean air" is to all human beings and life on earth. He decided to 'give back' with the '**Afandina**' Project: the building of a traditional Nile ship powered by the desert winds as in times gone by and to carry visitors along this ancient river. With his jovial nature and altruistic passion for the world, Mohammad Nazmy is truly the 'Al Gore of the Nile'.

"I have invested most of the profits I earned in the last ten years into this project," says Nazmy." As a tour operator I witnessed the growing pollution of our cities and countryside caused by increased tourism, and especially the shipping traffic on the Upper Nile. I am not saying that we do not need to run Nile cruises with motorized ships, but surely three hundred ships with multi-thousand horsepower motors is not viable to our ecology. Sooner or later, we will have to look into alternatives for the sake of our children and our land. '**Afandina**' is a step in the right direction and I hope that it may inspire others to follow suit and look for solutions to this problem of air and water pollution."



The ancient dwellers of the Nile Valley were acutely aware of how precious the air and water is. The Nile was sacred, and its waters were personified by the god Hapi. And so, too, was the air, which was personified by the god Shu who held up the sky-goddess with his hands. 'Egypt is the gift of the Nile', wrote Herodotus, the father of history. For without the Nile, the longest river in the world, the land of Egypt would be dry as a bone, a lifeless arid desert hardly fit for habitation. Yet with the blessing of this river, Egypt is an elongated 1000 kilometers valley so lush and so fertile that it can truly be called a paradise on earth. But Herodotus should also have added that Egypt –indeed the whole planet-- was also the gift of the air, that wonderful unseen life-giving element that we take for granted.

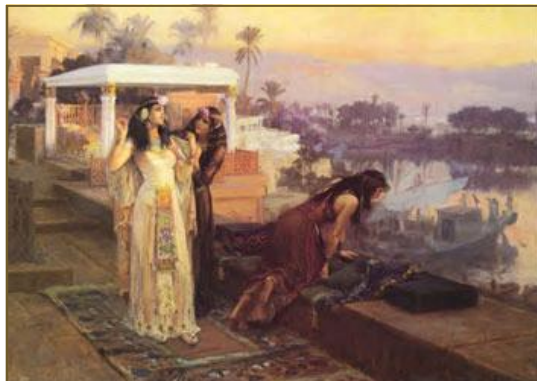
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“For years I wanted to do something about this threat to our environment, and yet I was also aware as a tour operator that the Nile cruises are the major attraction of our tourist industry. Egypt depends on the revenue from tourism, and we cannot eliminate this very popular commercial resource. Yet surely there is an answer. One day in Aswan as I pondered on the solution to this problem, I saw a *felucca* with its tall sail fully stretched by the wind, sailing silently on the Nile. Although I had seen feluccas such as this one thousands of times, this time I had an inspiration. I would build my own ship, a ship powered only by the force of the wind. I would build a *Dhahabeya*, a traditional Nile sailing ship, and call it ‘**Afandina**’ (which translates to ‘our king’ or ‘protector’), a reminder of quieter days.”

Presently, there are a few *Dhahabeyas* on the Nile. ‘**Afandina**’ is a *Dhahabeya* with a difference: it is the first of its kind to have a full steel hull for maximum security and durability. It combines the best from the past and the present. ‘**Afandina**’ will have a trained crew of nine. The captain, Reis Mohammad Magdy, is an experienced sailor from Aswan. He explained that ‘**Afandina**’ is unique with its special thick steel hull to navigate sand banks and the strong current and eddies. Reis Magdy has years of experience, from sailing *feluccas* in youth to larger *dhahabeyas* in his adult years. He knows the Nile and the prevailing winds like his own family.

The ‘**Afandina**’ took more than two years to build. At the peak of construction, Nazmy employed over 50 workers. They are proud to have participated in this project and they adore Nazmy. “He treats us like family”, says Reis Magdy. “He not only pays our wages, but takes care of us and our families if we become ill or injure ourselves. He is our very own ‘**Afandina**!’”

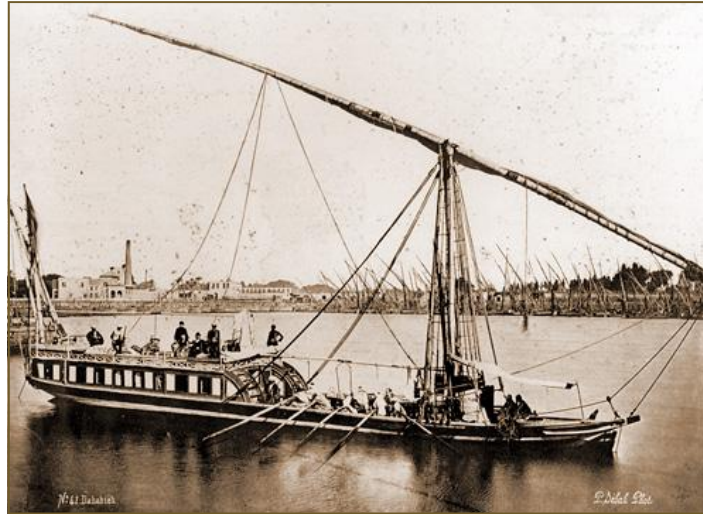
Boats have existed in Egypt since the Early Dynastic Period (c. 2850 BC). As early as the Pyramid Age (c. 2500 BC), the construction of boats had reached a level of perfection so high that it astounds the modern visitors to Egypt. The supreme example is the wonderful ‘sun boat’ of Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid of Giza. When it was discovered in 1954 in a pit south of the Great Pyramid, it was completely dismantled and had to be rebuilt like a giant jigsaw puzzle. No one knew how to proceed. Finally a master boat builder was found, Reis Ahmad Youssef, who intuitively put it together, as if he knew exactly how it was built 4500 years ago!



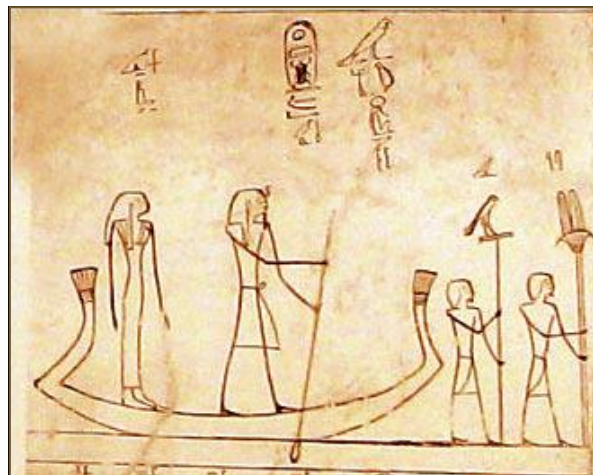
When the celebrated queen Cleopatra VII took the mighty Caesar on their honeymoon up the *Nile* it is said that their ship was 300 cubits long (about 125 meters) and was decorated with the finest furniture, and sails draped with the finest silk. It is on this trip that the young queen (she was 21, Caesar was 52) became pregnant with the future Caesarion.

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Dhahabeyas were used until the 1930s when they finally were replaced with larger motorized Nile cruisers, or the floating hotels that we see today. Yet the *dhahabeyas* remain deeply nostalgic for all who can remember the time when they graced the Nile with their tall sails and elegant lines.



“When I launch ‘**Afandina**’, says Nazmy, “I decided to invite a special group of VIP guests from all over the world: authors, philosophers, scientists and, of course, Egyptologists. I want them to experience my love for Egypt and to share the splendor of the Nile as it must have been in ancient times. I wanted them to sense the tranquility, the majestic beauty of this sacred river and the many marvelous temples along its banks. I wanted to revive one of ancient Egypt’s most splendid and loved yearly festivals, the ‘**Sailing of the Goddess Hathor of Dendera**’. There are ancient inscriptions and drawings that tell us, in the month of September, this journey took place along the Nile when an effigy of Hathor, goddess of beauty and love, was put on a ship at Dendera that sailed 160 kilometers upstream to Edfu, there to be united in a sacred marriage to the god Horus. The fourteen day journey began at the new Moon and ended at the full Moon. It related to the rising of the star Sirius, the star of the Nile. It must have been magical, like a fairy tale on water, with a flotilla of ceremonial boats sailing along the Nile. I want to use ‘**Afandina**’ as the flag-ship to re-enact this ancient festival and journey each year. This will not be simply a typical tourist Nile cruise, but a unique cultural experience and an unforgettable journey along the Nile.”



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The real pleasure will be sailing leisurely with only the power of the wind, and the sound of water lapping on the hull of **'Afandina,'** as it travels along the Nile...and the thrill of approaching the ancient temples with the tall sails fluttering in the breeze like in the ancient days. **'Afandina'** will be equipped with all the modern conveniences expected by seasoned 5-star travelers, says Nazmy. It will carry a maximum of sixteen guests plus the crew. Nazmy has employed a gourmet chef for the kitchen, and wants all the details to be perfect. The rooms will be ergonomically designed for maximum comfort and will not have numbers but names of the last royal family of modern Egypt. "I am not a royalist", jokes Mohammad Nazmy, "but I am proud of our past, the pharaohs, the Khedives and even the last kings of Egypt, Fuad and Farouk. They are part of our 5000 years of culture, and I want to honor this." **'Afandina'** will have the best modern technology but the ancient ways and traditions will also be respected, such as using lanterns in the evenings for dinners on the open deck, and obtaining fresh organically grown food, cooked and baked in the traditional manner. **'Afandina'** will have a library with books on ancient and modern Egypt, and Nazmy is planning to have a mini- planetarium with astronomical software and a telescope for stargazing at night in the crystal clear skies of Upper Egypt.

"I have traveled in many countries of the world, says Nazmy, and seen many of their wonders but nothing can compare - to Egypt. The last of the seven ancient wonders, the Great Pyramid, is still here and the Nile still retains its mystery and magic. **'Afandina'** will be their 'home away from home' and yet, at the same time, it will be an exotic, sensual and intellectual experience they will always remember. ***I want my guests to not only see Egypt with their eyes but also to see the splendor of Egypt with their hearts***".

