

Egypt

One of my first trips outside the U.S (other than Canada) was to Egypt. I did not speak Arabic, knew nothing of the customs, but I traveled by myself to meet John there (he was visiting his relatives in Jerusalem).

I have had the good fortune to benefit from the kindness of strangers often; on this trip it was travelers on the plane telling me what to do when I got into the terminal. I had never even thought about needing a visa! Good thing you could get it in the airport.

I met wonderful people and had a great time. And I learned to think through panic. John had to leave Cairo by bus about 4 hours before I had to go to the airport, which meant I had 4 hours to be by myself, alone, in a foreign country. By myself. Alone. I was terrified, but there was nothing to be done. I knew John was going to arrange for a cab to pick me up, and would talk to the concierge about getting my suitcase and making sure I headed off to the airport. I had to trust that all would go well. And it did.

On my second or third trip I was given alms as I sat to rest in the shade of Bab el Nasr. I must have looked pretty awful, after trying to walk around the walls of Old Cairo.