

开罗： 传说之外

抛开千年文明的华丽外衣，行走在嘈杂忙乱的城市里，我忽然发现，古埃及的荣光与当代埃及人的生活几乎毫无关联。街口的清真寺，横冲直撞的突突车，大叔们聚集的水烟馆，人们友善的微笑和看似杂乱的街景之下有自成一套的秩序。这次我要在法老传说之外，寻找一个活色生香的开罗。

文 下雨天 ● 图 下雨天、视觉中国



重启开罗旅程

高耸的金字塔、永恒的神庙、神秘的法老陵墓和木乃伊、虚无缥缈的宝藏和诅咒，以及各种文学作品和电影……在过去的数百年里，埃及总是充满了独特的魅力。印象中的尼罗河畔，永远被艳阳、风沙和乌德琴的演奏包围。但当我真正深入埃及旅行了一段时间后，才发现这段旅行经历不同于以往，我似乎失去了感受一个陌生国家魅力的能力。那些千年前的伟大神迹让人觉得遥远而梦幻，却唯独缺乏真实感。

于是我决定放弃古迹打卡的计划行程，回到旅行的起点——开罗，重启这段旅程。

“欢迎回来”，酒店前台在查验完我的护照后，附赠了一个非常标准的笑容。

开罗的四季酒店尼罗河广场店就位于市中心的尼罗河畔，十多天前我第一次抵达的时候已是半夜，周围一片漆黑。第二天又匆忙赶往南方，以至于完全忽略了门前这条不算宽阔的河道，原来它就是大名鼎鼎的尼罗河。而此刻临近日落，北半球冬日的阳光通过尼罗河的反射，给大堂镀了一层迷蒙的金黄色。



“在埃及的旅行怎么样？”前台小哥一边操作着电脑，一边遵照着工作守则想聊点什么。

“嗯……怎么说呢？相比于伟大的法老和陵墓，我更喜欢和当地人打交道。”

“哦，或许你可以去老城区转转……”阳光照在小哥胸前的铭牌上，晃得我一瞬间睁不开眼。

金字塔的存在让很多人误以为开罗是一座与法老息息相关的城市，然而事实上，在建造金字塔的古王国时期，古埃及的首都是位于开罗以南不远处的孟菲斯(Memphis)。巨大的胡夫金字塔矗立在尼罗河西岸长达 3500 多年，在此期间尼罗河东岸的这片土地一直荒无人烟。直到公元 969 年，法蒂玛王朝才在尼罗河东岸建立起现代开罗的雏形，并将王朝首都迁到了这座城市。

如今，包括爱资哈尔清真寺(Mosques of Al Azhar)、胜利门、征服门和祖韦拉门(Bab Zuweila)在内的众多法蒂玛王朝时期的精美建筑，见证了开罗作为王朝首都的两百年辉煌岁月。然而随着法蒂玛王朝的覆灭，历经朝代变迁，开罗成为残酷而反复无常的苏丹们统治下的财富之源。人口的扩张和缺失的城市规划，让开罗成为一片肆意生长的巨型砖石丛林，这也造就了如今拥挤吵闹，密布小巷、清真寺、水烟馆和墓地，并且混杂着艺术和野性的《一千零一夜》式的开罗老城。

“而此刻临近日落，北半球冬日的阳光通过尼罗河的反射，给大堂镀了一层迷蒙的金黄色。”

掀开哈恩哈利利市场的帘子

重启的埃及之旅从哈恩哈利利市场(Khan el-Khalili)开始,一大清早赶在开罗早高峰前从酒店出发,只需要跟出租车司机说出全市通用的暗号——“侯赛因”(Hussein),他们就可以把你准确无误地送到老城区中心的侯赛因广场(Midan Hussein)。这个介于神圣的爱资哈尔清真寺和侯赛因清真寺之间的小广场,在马穆鲁克时期曾是开罗甚至整个埃及的心脏,而侯赛因广场边上的这两个清真寺,如今也是埃及全境地位最崇高的两座清真寺。

广场上,身穿长袍、刚完成晨礼的男人们三三两两地从清真寺里出来,分散至广场周边的各家咖啡馆和露天茶座里,从哈恩哈利利市场传来的铺子开张的动静和摊贩的吆喝,开启了开罗老城的一天。始建于14世纪的哈恩哈利利市场直到如今都是很多开罗人购物的首选,这个充满了中世纪风情的巨型购物街区,由一间间黄砖砌成、门脸不大的铺子和迷宫般的巷子组成,这里出售的商品从埃及本地的传统肥皂粉到风靡世界的小商品,应有尽有。偌大的市场里还点缀着无数的陵墓、庭院和空中连廊,其地



“市场里几乎每个店主都是精通数门外语的语言天才,有时候他们只是为了请你来店里喝杯茶,顺便介绍一下自己店铺的悠久历史。”



形之复杂,足以让导航“罢工”。

哈恩哈利利市场过去曾有严格的区域划分,但如今仅黄金、铜匠和香料商品所在的区域有明显的区分,有些店铺的历史传承甚至可以追溯到市场成立之初。从英语“Welcome”到不标准的中文“进来看看”,市场里几乎每个店主都是精通数门外语的语言天才,有时候他们只是为了请你来店里喝杯茶,顺便介绍一下自己店铺的悠久历史。

市场的各处也不乏 Ahwa(传统咖啡馆),虽然名为咖啡馆,但这里的主题是聊天和水烟。满是灰尘的地板、几乎固定的客人、快要散架的桌子以及多米诺骨牌和西洋双陆棋发出的咔嗒声,都诠释着 Ahwa 传统的内涵。Ahwa 不但供应红茶和土耳其咖啡,还会售卖一些简单的糕点零食,很多 Ahwa 从晨礼之后一直营业到半夜,客人大多是穿着长袍的男性,而有些老主顾们会在这里泡上一整天。背着相机的旅行者在這種环境里犹如光临地球的外星人,趿拉着拖鞋的老主顾们会满怀好奇地冲着旅行者们招招手,呼唤他们加入吞云吐雾的水烟队伍,或是分享一杯红茶。





烈日下的迷你城市

离开哈恩哈利利市场时已是下午，从侯赛因广场向东走上 20 分钟，在爱资哈尔公园以东，和萨拉丁城堡（Cairo Citadel）的宣礼塔遥相呼应的是一片巨大却错落低矮的建筑群，开罗人习惯称这里为“死人城”（City of the Dead）。死人城虽然名字上听上去有点骇人，但实际上并没有听起来那么恐怖，相反，里面充满着生活气息。得益于金字塔时代流传下来的传统，埃及人相信死者终有一天将返回尘世，于是有钱人就给死去的亲属建起和在世时居住无异的宅邸（另一种形式的金字塔）。数百年里这种宅邸连成一片，就成了死人城。另一方面，埃及人还有在周末到逝去亲人墓地野餐的传统，于是即便普通的家族墓地，也会有一个供访客过夜的房间。

久而久之，这些有瓦遮顶、有墙挡风、又无“人”居住的宅邸，为贫苦民众提供了一个庇护之所。他们选择居住于此，一来可以遮风挡雨，二来为富人守墓还可以获得一定的收入。于是这里就成了一个生者

和逝者混居的迷你城市，甚至连小卖部、公交车、水电供给、清真寺等生活设施也一应俱全。

除了私人宅邸，著名的凯特贝清真寺（Qaytbay Mosque）也位于这片区域里，凯特贝清真寺是开罗马穆鲁克穹顶设计的巅峰之作，有着极其复杂的石刻装饰图案。即使让人昏昏欲睡的炎热午后，清真寺内部的庭院里也只有屈指可数的几个当地人在午睡。几何星形的光从清真寺穹顶的射出，穹顶上面设有装饰非常精美的天窗，午后的光线射入室内，让这些原本只有单一线条的画面都变得金碧辉煌。在庭院里找块冰凉舒服的大理石坐下，几分钟后燥热逐渐退去，耳边除了偶尔飞过的鸽子，再无别的声响，我决定在这里好好睡个午觉。

随着日头渐西，沉寂的迷你城市也开始逐步恢复生机，人们从家里走出，妇人们为晚餐开始忙碌，孩子们抱着皮球开始玩耍，一派热闹场景。



“日落时分，清真寺的宣礼塔被
光线勾勒得分外清晰。”



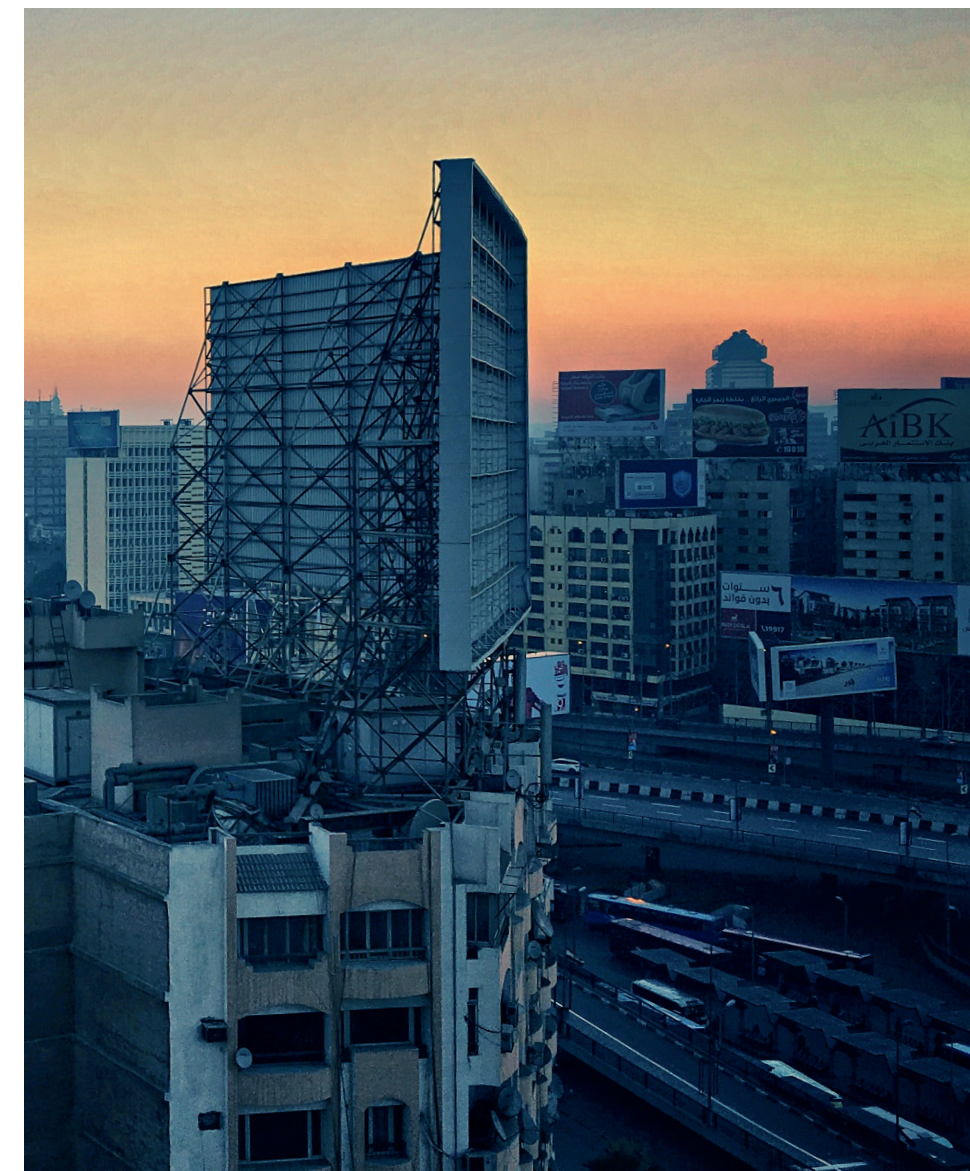
法老传说之外的开罗

离开死人城的时候已经临近黄昏，距此不远的爱资哈尔公园是开罗城里第一座，也是唯一一座大型公园，从这里可以看到大半个开罗老城。日落时分，清真寺的宣礼塔被光线勾勒得分外清晰。从爱资哈尔清真寺到萨拉丁城堡，号称“千塔之城”的开罗老城内，500多座时间跨度长达十几个世纪，设计维度横跨法蒂玛王朝、阿尤布王朝、马穆鲁克王朝以及奥斯曼帝国时期的清真寺不但保留至今，至今还依然被当地人所使用，一日五次的宣礼传统从公元970年之后就再未停歇。

等我带着疲惫的身躯回到酒店时，天早已黑透了。在酒店后面的小巷子里，我本想随便找家看着还行的餐厅，将就着把晚餐对付了。结果几乎每家餐厅都爆满，很多餐厅把临时桌椅都摆到了大街上，同时每家餐厅都摆出了大大的电视，放着足球比赛即将开始的预告。

埃及人对足球可谓狂热，仅开罗就有7家参加埃及超级联赛的足球俱乐部，占埃及超级联赛参赛队伍的三分之一，其中两家更是埃及国内顶尖的足球俱乐部。今晚就有一场堪比“皇马对阵巴萨”的重量级埃及国家德比大战，于是在比赛开始前一两个小时，市区的各大餐厅和 Ahwa 就被狂热的球迷挤满了。餐厅老板客气地告知，今晚只有小吃和水烟可以提供，然后悠然自得地看电视转播去了。

30分钟后，我跟着一群素未谋面的陌生人，为了一支我从未听说过的足球队，在咖啡馆里放声嘶吼。我想，这才是我想要的旅行。



Cairo: Beyond the Legend

Walking through the hustle and bustle of the city, leaving behind the gorgeous appearance of a millennia-old civilization, I suddenly discovered that the glory of ancient Egypt had little relevance to the life of modern Egyptians. The mosques at the end of the street, the reckless tuk-tuks driven recklessly, the shisha bars where local middle-aged men gather, the friendly smile, and everything that seems to be in chaos but runs in its own way made me look for a colorful and lively Cairo beyond the legends of pharaohs.

WORDS XIA YUTIAN ● PHOTOGRAPHS XIA YUTIAN, VCG



Restarting a Tour to Cairo

With towering pyramids, eternal temples, mysterious pharaohs' tombs and mummies, ethereal treasures and curses and a variety of literary works and movies, Egypt has always been filled with distinctive fascination over the centuries. The Nile in my impression is always flanked with the bright sunshine, the wind and the sand, as well as the strains of Oud. However, when I went deep into Egypt for some time, I found that this experience was different from those of the past, and I seemed to lose the ability to feel the charm of a strange country. The great miracles of thousands of years ago seemed distant and dreamy, but lacked a sense of reality.

So I decided to give up my planned trip to historical sites and returned to Cairo, to restart the journey.

"Welcome back." The hotel receptionist offered a very standard smile after checking my passport.

Four Seasons Hotel Nile Plaza in Cairo is right next to the Nile in the heart of the city. It was midnight when I first arrived more than 10 days ago. The next day I hurried south again, so I completely ignored the not-so-wide river in front of the door, which

turned out to be the famous Nile. As the sun was setting, the northern hemisphere's winter sun reflected off the Nile and coated the lobby with a hazy golden color.

"How was your trip in Egypt?" The clerk at the reception was working on the computer, trying to chat while still following the rules of practice to.

"Hmm... How can I put it? I prefer the local people to great pharaohs and tombs."

"Oh, maybe you can go to the old town and walk around." The sun shone on the nameplate on his chest, making me unable to open my eyes for a moment.

The very existence of pyramids makes many people mistakenly believe that Cairo has been a city associated with the pharaohs, but actually, when the pyramids were built in the Old Kingdom period, the capital of ancient Egypt was Memphis, not far from the south of Cairo. The great Pyramid of Khufu has been standing on the west bank of the Nile for more than 3,500 years, during which time the land on the east bank remained uninhabited. It was not until 969 that the Fatimid Dynasty established a city, on which modern Cairo took



shape on the east bank of the Nile, and moved its capital here.

Many fine buildings of the Fatimid Dynasty, including Mosques of Al Azhar, the Gate of Victory, the Gate of Conquest and Bab Zuweila, bore witness to Cairo's two hundred years of glory as the capital. With the collapse of the Fatimid Dynasty and the changes of dynasties, however, Cairo became a source of wealth under the cruel and capricious sultans. Population expansion and the lack of city planning have turned Cairo into a sprawling brick jungle, resulting in the crowded, noisy Old City with densely built alleys, mosques, shisha bars and tombs, and a mix of art and wildness as in Arabian Nights .



"As the sun was setting, the northern hemisphere's winter sun reflected off the Nile and coated the lobby with a hazy golden color."

Lifting the Curtain of Khan el-Khalili Market

To restart the tour to Egypt from the Khan el-Khalili Market, I left the hotel early in the morning before Cairo's morning rush hour. All I needed to do was to speak out the city's code word "Hussein" to the taxi driver, and they could drop me off at Midan Hussein, right in the center of the old town. The small square between the holy Al-Azhar Mosque and Hussein Mosque was the heart of Cairo and even Egypt in the period of Mamelukes, and the two mosques next to Hussein Square are now the two most prestigious mosques in Egypt.

In the square, robed men emerged from the mosque after their morning rituals in twos or threes, and scattered into the cafes and open-air tea houses around the square, where the opening of shops and the shouts of vendors from Khan el-Khalili Market began the day in Cairo's Old City. Khan el-Khalili Market, founded in the 14th century, is the first choice for many local people shopping in Cairo until now. The huge medieval shopping district, made up of small yellow brick shops and a maze of alleys, sells everything from traditional Egyptian soap powder to small commodities that are popular around the world. The vast market is



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dotted with countless mausoleums, courtyards and aerial corridors, and the terrain is complex enough to make Google Maps strike.

Khan el-Khalili Market used to be strictly zoned, but today only the areas for goldsmiths, coppersmiths and spices are clearly separated, with some shops dating back to the market's earliest days. From "welcome" in English to the nonstandard "come in and have a look" in Chinese, almost every shop owner in the market is a linguistic genius fluent in several foreign languages, and sometimes they just want to invite you in for a cup of tea and talk about the long history of their shop.

Throughout the market, there are also Ahwas (traditional cafes). Despite their name as cafes, the themes here are chatting and shisha. Dusty floors, regular customers, crumbling tables and the clatter of dominoes and backgammon all define the tradition in an Ahwa. Serving black tea and Turkish coffee, as well as simple pastries and snacks, many Ahwas stay open until midnight after the morning ritual, with most regulars being robed men, some of whom stay all day. Camera-toting travelers in this kind of environment are like aliens on the earth, waved to by curious patrons shuffling in slippers and calling them to join the shisha line or share a cup of black tea.



A Mini-city in the Burning Sun

It was in the afternoon when I left Khan el-Khalili Market. A 20-minute walk east from Midan Hussein, opposite to the minarets of Cairo Citadel is a vast sprawling cluster of low-lying buildings that Cairo people call the City of the Dead, to the east of Al-Azhar Park. The name of the City of the Dead may sound scary, but it's not as scary as its name. Instead, it's full of vitality. Thanks to the tradition passed down from the Age of the Pyramids, Egyptians believed that the dead would return to the earthly world one day, so wealthy people built houses for their dead relatives as if they had lived there (another form of pyramid). For hundreds of years, these houses were connected together and became the City of the Dead. Egyptians, on the other hand, also have a tradition of picnicking at the graves of their dead relatives on weekends, so even ordinary family tombs have a room for overnight visitors.

Over time, these residences with roofs and walls provided a refuge for the poor. They chose to live here to protect themselves from rain and wind and got some income from

guarding the graves for the rich. The result is a mini-city of the living and the dead, fully equipped with grocery stores, buses, water and electricity, mosques and other amenities.

In addition to the private residence, the area is also home to the famous Qaytbay Mosque, the greatest masterpiece in Cairo Mamelukes' dome design, with its intricate decorative patterns of stone carving. In the hypnotic heat of the afternoon, only a handful of locals napped in the mosque's inner courtyard. Light in the shape of a geometric star emanates from the dome of the mosque, which was decorated with exquisite skylights, and the afternoon light entered the interior, transforming these originally single lines into gorgeous splendor. I sat down on a cool and comfortable piece of marble in the courtyard. After a few minutes the heat subsided and there was no sound but the occasional fluttering of doves. I decided to take a long nap.

As the sun is setting, the sleepy mini-city began to come to life. People came out of their homes. women got busy for dinner and children played with balls. What a lovely scene.



Cairo Beyond the Legends of Pharaohs

It was late afternoon as I left the City of the Dead. Not far from here, Al-Azhar, Cairo's first and only major park, provides a good view of more than half of Old Cairo. At sunset, the minaret of the mosque is clearly defined by the light. From the Al-Azhar Mosque to Cairo Citadel, there are more than 500 mosques, with designs spanning centuries from Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamelukes Dynasties to Ottoman Empire, are not only well preserved today, but also used by local people. Thus the area of Old Cairo is known as "the City of a Thousand Minarets". The tradition of praying five times a day has continued since 970 AD.

By the time I returned to the hotel exhaustedly, it was already dark. In the alleyway behind the hotel, I tried to find a restaurant that looked good. However, almost every restaurant was full, with many putting makeshift tables and chairs out on the street. Meanwhile, every restaurant had a big TV announcing the football match was about to begin.

Egyptians are crazy about football. Cairo alone is home to seven clubs in the Egyptian Premier League, accounting for one third of all competing teams. Two of them are even top football clubs in Egypt. There was a heavy weight Egyptian Derby just as Madrid vs Barcelona tonight, so an hour or two before the game started, all the restaurants and Ahwas in the city were packed with fans. The restaurant owner kindly informed me that only snacks and shisha would be served tonight, and then leisurely went to watch the match on TV broadcast.

Thirty minutes later, I roared for a football team I had never heard of with a group of strangers in a cafe. I thought this was the trip I had wanted.



“At sunset, the minaret of the mosque is clearly defined by the light.”

