

The Ride of Your Life

By MARY-ANN MCGURRAN



A month after arriving in Egypt I had not yet felt the desert heat, I had not seen the Pyramids and I had never been on a horse, so I did all three at once and went riding by the Pyramids. Two month later the heat still leaves me dizzy, the Pyramids still amaze and excite but the aches and the bruises are mercifully subsiding.

I suppose most novices to both riding and Egypt feel the same when they first arrive here. It's all rather bewildering but enthralling at the same time. One moment you are captivated by the horses and stable boys, and then with a turn of your head, by the Pyramids. On your first few visits not seeing and knowing enough is the problem with every new sight prompting a question about the horses or the way of life you see before you.

Some of the animals are wonderous in their beauty and strength while others are in need of further nurturing. Then again even a bag of bones can reduce a beginner such as myself to feeling like a disempowered twit who doesn't have a clue.

Thankfully, I've found a very understanding mare and I can say I've never exploited a skeleton.

It's not only the animal that let you know that you are in the horse world but also the language used; standing martingale, changing legs, leg on etc..... leave you wanting an equestrian dictionary. However, the people at the stables are as understanding as my mare and ever willing to explain the basics or give little tips.

The unique aspects of riding at the Pyramids is learning not only about horses but about one kind of Egyptian life. It's enlightening for a Londoner to see donkeys, camels, strange looking dogs and bare-foot boys jumping on and off horses or to drink very sweet mint tea while watching the village women walk with piles of supplies on thier heads. Here in the village you see both the good and the bad; people who care about animals and those who are unaware of the feeling when a horse bonds with humans.



Fortunately, I was taken to a reputable stables of one of the horse breeders in the pyramids who manages his stables with a good mix of efficiency, power and cosideration for the animals. This contrasts greatly with some of the tyrants who coax tourists into riding their sorry looking animals and unwittingly give Egypt and its stables masters a bad image. If they ventured further along the road they would find a way of life and riding very different from anything they thought they would ever experience. I'm just glad I got the chance.



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