Sinai… Tourist and Archaeological Treasures Natural Reserves

2021
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Sinai… Tourist and Archaeological Treasures

Natural Reserves
Introduction

Sinai is the blessed land through which many prophets passed by. It was a witness to many civilizations; the Islamic, the Coptic, the Pharaonic, the Roman and the Greek. Thus, Sinai remains the pure land and the cradle of civilizations that is perpetually immortalized by history.
Chapter I
Sinai’s Archeological Treasures
Sinai
Tourist and Archaeological Treasures
Natural Reserves 2021
Sinai is part and parcel of the Nile Valley civilization. Therefore, all the eras that passed by this civilization; the Pharaonic, the Greek and the Roman left monuments at Sinai. The Pharaohs left “Hathor Temple” on “Serabit El-Khadim” Mountain in Central Sinai. The Romans left many antiquities in *Sahl El-Tinah* (*El-Tinah Plain*) and on the shores of the Mediterranean, such as “El-Khweynat and Felusyat” in Bardawil. Then, the Christian era built an architectural icon; Saint Catherine's Monastery, as well as the Islamic era that left dozens of monuments; most prominent of which are the great citadels in Pharaoh’s Island at Taba and in many other places in Sinai. Furthermore, Sinai is distinguished by two other iconic places; namely the great military road and the archeological mines, such as turquoise and copper mines that are considered the oldest in the world. The Great Military Road is the northern coastal road that was known since the Pre-dynastic era. The middle road starting from the Suez Gulf passing by Nakhl and reaching to the Aqaba Gulf was added after that, thus castles, fortresses and old cities whose remnants are still there spread on both roads. Using copper mines in Sinai started hundred years before the appearance of the first dynasty as ancient Egyptians knew copper and made some simple tools as well as jewelry. Mining in Sinai included two other elements; Malachite “copper oxide” that was used in *kohl* and in some ophthalmic medicaments, and the turquoise stone which is a
semi-precious stone used in ornaments and in making some materials for painting.

Egypt was connected to the Syrian shore since the oldest eras; the ancient Egyptians brought cedar timbers that grow on Lebanon Mountain since the first Pharaonic dynasty as they used it in building the Egyptian fleet. The road to that country was through land, starting from Sila fortress near current Qantara Sharq, heading north to North Sinai and continues adjacent to the shore until it reaches Arish, Rafah, then Gaza. That road has always been one of the most important military roads through ages. It is mentioned in the Egyptian texts as “Horus Road”. Thus, many Egyptian fortresses were built on it, especially in significant strategic areas to be centers for road guard soldiers and depots for the armies. There is an important document inscribed on a wall in Karnak Temple, dating back to King Seti I of the 19th dynasty (1315 BC) contains detailed description of “Horus Road”. The beginning of the road was identified at “Tel Habwa” in Qantara Sharq where the greatest Pharaonic site in North Sinai was discovered, namely “Tharu Fortress” where armies went out of it to secure Egypt’s eastern borders starting from the era of Thutmose III. The beginning of this road was associated with the existence of the River Nile branch (old Pelusiac branch). Thus, all important archeological areas in North Sinai lie near the shore; all of them are ports except Qatia.
First: Archeological Sites in North Sinai

Pelusium Archaeological Site (Farama)

This area considers one of the most important remaining archeological sites in North Sinai that preserves visible archeological architectural remnants on the surface of earth. It is the only area that can be developed to be an important tourist destination in the future. It is about 15 Km northern “Balouza” village on Qantara Sharq road in North Sinai; it extends to include a number of important archeological hills in addition to the main area in the ancient city. The modern Excavations revealed a number of baths, a large amphitheatre dating back to the Roman era, and a Roman castle that persisted until the Islamic era. Moreover, there is the eastern suburb of Pelusium city (Tel El-Makhzan and Tel El-Kanaes).

Pelusium city is one of the biggest Egyptian cities in the Roman era as well as one of the mightiest fortified cities in North Sinai. Moreover, Pelusium was the capital of East Delta region during the Pharaonic and Ptolemaic eras; it also witnessed chapters of Cleopatra’s story.
This ancient city was attacked in 1116 by Baldwin king of Jerusalem who fled after his defeat. Amr ibn Al-As besieged the city for a month until he managed in conquer it. Pelusium locates at the downstream of the old Pelusium River; the drought of the Pelusiac branch of the River Nile led to its deterioration. Most of the ancient city drowned except some archeological tombstones.

The ancient city was an important military, trade and economic center on the main roads between the Levant on one side and Europe and East Asia on the other. Thus, there was a port and customs zone there. “Al-Farama” was ruined at the end of the Fatimid era by the crusaders in 545 AH and was replaced by “Qatia” city in the Middle Ages which encompassed a trade center and a port. It also included “Sahl El-Tinah” fortified citadel, Roman baths, an amphitheatre and three churches for their religious importance on the route of the Holy Family. As a result of using this area as a military site during the Israeli occupation, this castle was damaged. Therefore, there is a project to revive “Al-Farama” archeological site by restoring this area and paving the access roads in order to preserve the tourist map in Sinai to increase the national income that represents one of the goals of the National Project for Development and Reconstruction of Sinai.

The restoration of the northern bath in North Sinai archeological site has been finished, it will be one of the most beautiful baths
discovered there, and it is one of the five baths that were discovered in the North Sinai antiquities area. It links between the Arab Mashreq (orient) and Europe as it represents a strategic junction for routes, and movement of the Arab and foreign tourist trade. An amount of LE one million was allocated to this project from the budget of the National Project for the restoration of monuments. More than 9 archeological expeditions were sent to excavate the area to make a comprehensive survey to the areas adjoining Al-Salam Canal and to preserve the archeological sites, especially the remnants of cemeteries dating back to the Roman and Pharaonic eras. In addition, the expeditions were tasked to identify the archeological areas and planning to build walls around them to protect them from any future aggressions, especially with the beginning of planting 400,000 feddans in the area.

Archeological Hills

- **Tel El-Shohadaa**

  It dates back to the Roman era; most probably that there is a cemetery on the hill dating back to the same era. Previously, one of the Bedouins had found a tombstone that has Greek writings.

- **Tel El-Mohammadiat**

  It is directly located on the Mediterranean coast in Rommana village, and there are some sunken architectural remnants in front of the coast. Excavations were carried out during 1996-97, where
remnants of a Roman limestone castle were found. Moreover, remnants of a building that might be a temple, having limestone pillars, were uncovered. From the western side of the castle, remnants of tombs made of calcareous rocks dating back to the Greco-Roman era were also found.

- **Tel El-Kanaes**

  It extends on the eastern side of Tel El-Makhzan where a cemetery, dating back to the Roman-Byzantine era, was discovered, in addition to a Roman bath and an amphitheater that was probably reused as a racetrack.

- **Tel El-Karama**

  It dates back to the Roman and Islamic eras.

- **Tel Qasraweit**

  This hill features the remnants of a city dating back to the Nabataean era. The existing remnants include a temple, tombs with calcareous staircases, the outer walls of the city in addition to some crockery and coins dating back to the Roman era.

- **Tel Al-Darawish**

  It is one of the archaeological sites dating back to the new kingdom of the Pharaonic era which includes four big adobe silos.
The site constituted one of the stops of the ancient military route to provide the Egyptian armies heading to Asia with supplies. Furthermore, seals holding the name of King Seti I were found.

- **Tel El-Madbaa**
  It is a flat hill located in Al-Rawda neighborhood in Bir El-Abd city. Pottery crushers dating back to the Greco-Roman era were found there.

- **Tel El-Makhzan**
  It is a part of the eastern Farama city (Pelusium); where it incorporates one of the biggest ancient churches in North Sinai.

- **Tel El-Felusiat**
  It exists near Lake Bardawil; it has some architectural monuments such as churches and military fortress.

- **Tel Sweidat**
  It is a sandy area that has archeological tombstones dating back to the Roman and Islamic eras.

- **Tel Lehfen**
  It represents a castle built from oval rock slabs dates back to the Greek, Roman and Neptunian eras.
• **Tel El-Kharouba**
  It dates back to the New kingdom of the Pharaonic era.

• **Tel Zeizaa (Umair Tomb)**
  It dates back to the Greco-Roman era.

• **Tel El-Kawthar**
  It was used as one of the Israeli military bunkers during 1967/73.

• **Tel El-Set**
  It represents a high hill on the Mediterranean Sea, incorporating some archeological monuments dating back to the Greco-Roman era.

• **Tel Leheimar**
  It probably dates back to the Greco-Roman era.

• **Tel Abu Shanar**
  It dates back to the Greco-Roman era.

• **Tel Rafah**
  It is divided into two sections by the Egyptian-Palestinian borderline; where there are no excavations made.

• **Tel Assalij**
  It is one of the hills located on the Mediterranean coast in the area between Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah. It dates back to the Greco-Roman era.
• Tel Khweynat
  
  It is located north Mazar village. The excavations revealed buildings dating back to the Islamic era. It also has a cemetery dating back to the Greco-Roman era.

• Tel Mazar
  
  It is in Mazar village on Qantara/Arish Road, and backs to the Greco-Roman era.

• Tel Qals
  
  It is in Lake Bardawil and dates back to the Greco-Roman era.

• Tel Habwa
  
  It exists in north-east Qantara Sharq city, where some castles dates back to the period of the Hyksos occupation to Egypt were found. Another limestone castle, dating back to King Seti I era, was also discovered, in addition to seals dating back to King Thutmose III and King Ramses II eras.

• Tel Qatia
  
  It is in Qatia Village, North Sinai. It has remnants of archeological buildings dating back to the Ptolemaic, Roman and Islamic eras.
• **Tel Abu Seifi**

  It exists in southern Qantara Sharq city, and was the site of the Roman fortress “Sila”. This area was called “the Red Hill” due to the red bricks that distinguish the remnants of its buildings.

**Archeological Citadels**

• **Arish Citadel**

  It is the only monument in Arish city; it witnessed remarkable historical events such as Arish Treaty concluded in 1800 between the Turks and the French Campaign. It dates back to the era of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.

• **Nakhl Citadel**

  A square-shaped five-towered citadel dates back to the era of Sultan Qansuh Al-Ghouri. It is located on the path of the ancient Egyptian pilgrims, and it had a garden dating back to 1906 AD.
• **El-Tina Citadel**

It exists on the administrative borders of Port Said, on the kilo 32 of Balouza/Port Fouad Road. It is one of the major ports in the Mamluk era. It has a great citadel dating back to the reign of Sultan Qansuh Al-Ghouri, 1508 AD. It includes many military and homing pigeon towers as well as a large mosque.

• **Om-Mufarrej Citadel**

It extends within the administrative borders of Port Said. It dates back to Sultan Barsbay, 1424 AD of the Mamluk era. It is a fortified military tower.

• **Al-Zulma Cave**

The archaeological mission for documenting rock inscriptions in Sinai discovered an ancient cave featuring a unique and diverse collection of carvings at Wadi Al-Zulma, North Sinai. The cave exists in the beginning of one of Wadi Al-Zulma’s tributaries within a difficult-to-reach limestone mountainous area, about 90 km southeast of the city of Qantara Sharq, and 60 km east of the Suez Canal. The cave is the first of its kind to be found in the area and is larger than Al-Zaranji cave recently documented. This cave features an utterly unique assortment of carvings unlike others at the South Sinai valleys.
Ein El-Qudairat Area

It is in a fertile valley irrigated by “Al-Qudairat Spring” water. The monuments discovered there reflect the pivotal importance of this area during the early Pharaonic eras. Furthermore, remnants of defensive fortifications, used during the New Pharaonic Kingdom, were discovered, including the central fortress which is a rectangular-shaped structure with strong interior walls, towers, trenches and a 4-m thick exterior wall surrounded by 8 towers. Moreover, the last fortress whose remnants are still apparent was discovered where columns of black granite, fragments of glass, mosaic and coins from Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic eras were found.

Second: Archeological Sites in South Sinai

Mining is the key of the archeological sites’ map of South Sinai. Sinai is the most ancient region where Ancient Egyptians used copper and turquoise ores long time before the Pre-dynastic era. The most important old mining sites were Al-Maghara and Serabit El-Khadim.

Al-Maghara

“Al-Maghara” is called after a specific part of Qonia Valley where the Ancient Egyptians extracted turquoise. Remnants of ancient workers’ caves are still there. About 45 hieroglyphic inscriptions were discovered in those mines that mainly date back to the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and a little engravings date back to the New Kingdom.
Serabit El-Khadim Valley

It is located south west the Sinai Peninsula besides Abu-Zenima city, 80-Km far from Ras Sidr. Excavations there resulted in a significant number of ancient mining camps in addition to Hathor Temple. It stretches on a hard-to-climb plateau. It has a large number of monuments, mines and many statues holding the names of a number of Pharaonic kings. Hathor Temple exists on a sandstone plateau, 1200-m above sea level. The Temple was greatly destroyed, especially during the Israeli occupation to Sinai in addition to transferring some of its architectural elements, paintings and statues to Israel.

Sinaitic Alphabet

Those inscriptions were discovered in 1905; scientific research proved that the Sinaitic or the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions date back to the beginning of the 15th century
BC. It also concluded that there is a relation between this alphabet and the Semitic alphabets. It is a Canaanite language affected by some hieroglyphic. It is supposed to be used by Semitic captives or slaves who worked in mining. This alphabet has a great scientific and historical importance as it affected the Phoenician alphabet that was the ancestor of the Greek alphabet; consequently, most of the Latin letters, the origin of all modern European languages, were derived from it.

**Al-Tur Monuments**

Al-Tur city has many archeological areas, including the following:

- **Al-Tur Ancient Commercial Port:**
  
  It dates back to the Mamluk era.

- **Wadi Gharandal (Gharandal Valley)**
  
  It is located on Suez/Tur main road. Monuments discovered therein date back to the Roman era.

- **The Ancient Tur Monastery**
  
  It is one of the largest monasteries in South Sinai that dates back to 182 AD.
- **Saint Catherine Monastery**
  
  It is located in South Sinai at the foot of Catherine Mountain and near Mount Moses. It dates back to the 4th century AD. The Monastery is considered one of the oldest monasteries in the world. It attracts a great number of tourists from all over the world. The Monastery comprises many magnificent contents:

1. **The Church of Transfiguration**
   
   It is the center of concern in the whole Monastery. It was built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian.

2. **The Burning Bush**
   
   It is a rare evergreen plant that only grows in Saint Catherine Monastery. It has a special status for Christians and Jews. It is named after the place where Prophet Moses saw fire, as cited in the Munificent Quran. A wall was built around the tree to protect it.
3. The Monastery’s Museum

It is also known as the “Sacred Storage”. It includes a variety of religious, artistic and symbolic manuscripts. In the first room in the Museum, there is a painting that dates back to the 12th century AD.

4. The Monastery’s Mosque

It is “Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah” Mosque that was built with a separate minaret in the 11th century during the Fatimid era.

5. The Monastery’s Library

The library includes a variety of the greatest and the oldest valuable manuscripts in the world. The books reach more than 2000, written in Greek, Persian, Amharic, Arabic, Turkish and Russian languages.
6. The Monastery’s Gardens

A group of beautiful gardens shaded with towering trees and flowers is located outside the Monastery’s walls to the North West that produce a variety of vegetables and fruits.

7. Mount Moses

Mount Moses or Mount Sinai is 2285-m above the sea level. It is known that it is the place where Prophet Musa (Moses) received the Ten Commandments from Allah, the Almighty. Thus the Mountain is holy in the three religions; Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The Mountain comprises 2 main routes established in the 6th century; the routes were taken by pilgrims as steps of redemption.

8. Mount Moses Church

It is a small church built on the mountain’s peak in 1930. Moreover, there is a small mosque that has a significant status for Muslims.
9. Mount Catherine

It is the highest mountain in Sinai, about 2642-m high. It constitutes of black volcanic rocks. There is a meteorological station on its peak. The Mountain is rugged, yet gorgeous and includes various archaeological sites.

Archeological Citadels

- Nuweiba Citadel

It is known as Nuweiba castle which is a small one built in 1893 as a police station of Haggana (Camel-riders) for maintaining security in this region. The citadel has a wall, a big gate in addition to a water well. It is located 2-mile away from Wadi Al-Ein Temple to the north; this area is currently called Nuweiba Tarabin.
• **Salah El-Din Citadel**

This Citadel was built on Pharaoh’s Island to be a hard-wall to protect roads among Egypt, the Levant and the Arab Peninsula, and an advanced maritime base to secure the Aqaba Gulf and the Red Sea from the Crusades. The Citadel’s strategic location; 250-m away from the beach, near to potable water sources, relatively high above sea level that allows viewing roads on the Sinai Peninsula and the Aqaba Gulf, had a great effect to thwart invading it. The crusaders occupied the island from 1116 AD until it was restored by Salah El-Din Al-Ayubi in 1170 AD who established the current Citadel. In the Mamluk era, the Citadel was used to secure the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) route. The island was deserted in 1300 AD and replaced by Al-Aqaba Citadel in Taba to carry on its mission.

• **Al-Gundi Citadel**

It is one of the most famous signs of cultural tourism in South Sinai. It was built by Salah El-Din El-Ayubi in 1187 to protect and secure the *Hajj* route to Mecca and to face the Crusades.
It is 70-Km away from Ras Sidr city, and 100-km far from South East Suez. It was built on a hill 645-m above sea level, it is steep, thus it is difficult to be climbed or invaded. It is surrounded with a 5-6 m wide trench. It is only 5 Km far from potable water sources.

**Third: Sinai Museums**

1-**Sinai Heritage Museum at Arish**

   It was established in 1991. It includes archaeological antiquities dating back to more than 100 years that express all Bedouin life features. The museum antiquities were collected by Sinai people as donations. It includes a number of sections; most important of which is the architectural section that includes a model for the Bedouin house, and for Arish house in various stages. It also includes models of hand woven and colored *kilim*\(^1\), ground hand loom that is used in carpet and *kilim* industry. Moreover, it includes models for some houses dating back to 1948 where the house was a ground floor built with adobe bricks. The museum also includes a section for costumes and jewelry.

   The traditional medicine is among the most important sections in the museum. It includes models of medicinal herbs used by the

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\(^1\) A flat tapestry-woven traditional carpet or rug
Sinai citizen in curing. There is also a section for the traditional agriculture tools that were used in the past.

In the showroom, films representing different kinds of Sinai heritage such as customs and traditions, weekly markets, ways of splinting fractures and some handicrafts industries such as hand kilim, Ajwa (pressed dates) industry, and knitting on the Bedouin dresses, are displayed. Moreover, the museum library includes a collection of heritage books concerned with desert and Bedouin life in addition to other books on travelling and on past and recent Sinai in both Arabic and English languages.

2- Arish National Museum

The idea of Arish Museum started by reviving the project of Horus Military Road that the Egyptian armies had taken in the ancient and modern Pharaonic ages to defend Egypt and protect the discovered archeology along this road. The museum was established in a distinguished area at the entrance of Arish on an area of 17,000 m². It consists of two floors and a basement; the ground and first floors were specified for display. It includes 8 halls that embody Sinai history from the first mankind era to the ancient, middle and modern
ages. The cost of the museum establishment reached about LE 45 million and it was inaugurated on March 16, 2008.

The museum has been equipped by the most modern exhibition technologies, and electronic security against fire and robbery. It was established in 5 years. The archaeological artifacts were brought from 8 museums all over Egypt which are the “Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Taba, Port Said, Beni Suef, Archaeological Seizures in Salah El-Din’s Citadel, the Coptic and the Islamic”.

The museum includes archaeological artifacts that reflect the role of Sinai, and the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. Furthermore, it includes a special section for the restored antiquities from Israel, such as a rare mural, tools that were used in mines, arrowheads, tombstones, and a collection of pottery including 500 pieces.

The museum was equipped with a specialized archaeological library, an auditorium, and a garden. Moreover, an open-air theatre was established and equipped for different shows.

The museum incorporates many halls showing a collection of antiquities that reveal Sinai’s belonging to Egypt since prehistoric
eras; the First hall is on Sinai, its location and the most important archaeological places. In the second hall, an imaginary model for Horus road was made which incorporates the most important discovered antiquities. This is in addition to the most important Egyptian kings who crossed this road in their military campaigns to secure Egypt’s borders; King Thutmose III was the most famous of them. The hall also includes statues and paintings of King Ramses II in addition to antiquities that represent the entry of Hyksos to Egypt and how they were expelled out of Egypt by King Ahmose I. The Pharaonic section includes statues for goddess Hathor, “the Lady of Turquoise” who was worshiped in Sinai especially by the mining workers. There is also a statue for King Nkhtnbu who represents the end of the Pharaonic era. In the Greco-Roman hall, there are the most important antiquities that were found in Pelusium, Qantara Sharq and the mosaic paintings dating back to the Coptic era. It also includes a great collection of icons that express Egypt in that time, the icon of the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt and a collection of fabrics, ivory and wood. The Islamic hall shows the entry of the Arabs to Egypt, the Islamic arts such as woodcarving and stone carving. There is also a part of the Holy Kabba kiswa\(^2\) and a collection of potsherds that have metallic luster. The museum also includes a big hall for Sinai people pottery and the commercial

\(^2\) It is the cloth that covers the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia
exchange of pottery between Egypt and its neighbors in different eras. In the last hall, there are various currencies, their history and kinds since the Greco-Roman era to the end of the Islamic era. A big hall was allocated for Sinai heritage with its different kinds of clothes, accessories and daily life tools. The museum overlooks a big garden with different levels and some antiquities as an open-air exhibition. The museum includes a visual configuration hall which are plasma display screens, and graphic paintings that give a general idea about North Sinai and Arish.

**3- Museum of Taba**

It is in Taba city, south Sinai with the aim of keeping the Sinai heritage. It contains a big collection of artifacts, paintings, and inscriptions that reflect the life of South Sinai people from the Pharaohs era to the modern era. This collection reaches more than 750 rare archaeological pieces. This makes the museum one of the most important tourist destinations in recognizing the daily life and the handicraft activities that distinguished Sinai throughout the different historical periods. A part in the museum has been allocated for Taba issue events and the procedures that were taken to restore it as well as the documents, maps and pictures related thereto, until the celebration of raising the Egyptian flag on this precious land.
4-Sharm El-Sheikh Museum

The idea of establishing the museum goes back to 1999. Working on the project began in 2003, then stopped in 2011, to be resumed again in 2018. It is located on an area of 191 thousand m².

The museum was established to be a cultural and civilizational inspiration centre, a crossroads of human civilizations, and a considerable contribution to the promising tourism in the city. This comes in line with the Ministry's plan to integrate leisure and cultural tourism. The visitor and tourist can enjoy the picturesque beaches, interesting marine and land activities in the city, and learn, at the same time, about the ancient Egyptian civilization.

The construction costs amounted to EGP 812 million. The museum display deals with the advent and evolution of the Egyptian civilization. Moreover, it sheds light on the Egyptian man and his behaviour towards the environment surrounding him, and the way he coexists with its creatures that he sanctified. The museum displays 5,200 selected artefacts, carefully selected from the museum stores in El Manial Palace, Kom Ushim, Saqqara, Suez
Museums, Ismailia Museums, Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria and the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir, as well as the stores of Luxor and Ashmounine in Minya and others. These artefacts are to be displayed inside the museum’s various halls; the Great Hall, the Hathoric Corridor, the cemetery area, or in the external display area.

The Great Hall expresses man and wildlife in ancient Egypt, by displaying a number of paintings representing the Egyptian family in different historical stages. It also includes a group of Sphinx statues that represent the body of an animal mixed with that of human being, and a statue of a man next to his young daughter. Moreover, it incorporates a number of sacred animals in ancient Egypt, such as cats and scarabs of different shapes and sizes. These statues were discovered in 2019 in the Saqqara antiquities area.

The Hathorian Corridor was so-called due to the presence of a large number of pieces belonging to the god Hathor, along with some statues of kings Thutmose I, Hatshepsut and Nakhtenabo, Ramses II, and Ramses III. Furthermore, there is a simulation of a complete archaeological tomb in all its details with funerary furniture.
One of the most important exhibited artifacts is a rare Alexandrian mosaic monument dating back to the fourth century BC. Additionally, there are the statue of the god "Eros" during hunting deer, at the entrance of the museum, and another unique incomplete-fired-clay statue of god "Bes", exhibited inside the Great Hall. Moreover, there are also the newly discovered pieces of some archaeological sites in their first display, thus enriching the exhibition in the museum.

The museum exceptionally displays 10 artifacts from the treasures of King Tutankhamun, before displaying them in the Grand Egyptian Museum. The statue of Ka, the consort of King Tutankhamun, covered with black resin and wearing a mongoose on head, was chosen to be the masterpiece of the exhibition. This represents an attraction to the city visitors to see some of the young king’s treasures for the first time. A special visit path in the museum has been set up for people with special needs.
Chapter II
Natural Reserves
Sinai… Tourist and Archaeological Treasures
Natural Reserves 2021
First: North Sinai Reserves

1- Zaraniq and Sabkhat Al-Bardawil Reserve

It was called by this name because it is like a zigzag water line surrounding a vegetation island. The Prime Minister’s Resolution No. 1429 of 1985 was issued to declare it as a natural reserve from Kilo 24 to Kilo 42 Arish/Qantara Sharq road. Its area is about 250 Km² and it has many salt pans.

Zaraniq Reserve Biodiversity:

Flora

It has diversity in the natural flora; many sea grass and Halophytes spread in it. The scope of the reserve transfers into natural gardens after the rain fall. Its natural flora is represented in 175 species of seasonal plants and grass, 135 of annual plants, 140 kinds of resist drought trees, in addition to palm trees and marine plants such as sea grass.
Fauna

Zaraniq reserve plays a key role in bird migration where hundreds of thousands gather to have rest or to get food before completing their trip through desert to Africa. More than 270 species of birds were recorded; most of them are migratory water birds. Many kinds of reptiles live therein; salient of which are the lizards and the endangered reptiles such as the Egyptian land tortoise. There are also mammals such as the jerboa and marine animals such as crustaceans, fish and others.

Tourist and Scientific Importance

The reserve represents a destination to tourists and researchers interested in scientific, historical and environmental tourism. It provides many services for visitors, including the following:

- Visitor Service Center with a capacity of 120 visitors.
- Environmental Studies Center that includes an equipped restroom for researchers and a scientific library.
- Booths for bird monitoring.
- Camping places to enjoy the natural beauty far from pollution.
- Entertainment areas to practice leisure activities such as swimming.
2- Ahrash Coastal Area

It was declared a natural reserve by Cabinet Resolution No. 1429 of 1985. This area is one of the resources that the state seeks to protect as an expected area to have positive effects on protecting the soil, dense vegetation, water resources, mammals, reptiles and wild birds.

Ahrash reserve is located in the northeastern corner of Egypt on its border line with Palestine. It is characterized by areas of sand dunes with a 60-m height above sea level and are densely covered by acacia trees, some tamarisk and eucalyptus trees, shrubs, and other pastoral and forage herbs and plants. Thus, the sanctuary is a resource for grazing and timber and shelter for animals and wild birds. There are also some wild animals such as: fennec, sand cat, long-eared hedgehog, gerbils, and hares. Besides, different kinds of birds such as quail, wild pigeon, owl, blackbird, partridge and many other types. There are also many kinds of reptiles.

3- Sabkhat Sheikh Zuweid “Zahrat Al-Mabahag” Reserve

It is considered one of the wetland reserves located in the city of Sheikh Zuweid in North Sinai at a distance of 2 km from the Mediterranean coast. It is surrounded by sand dunes and palm trees from north and west, and surrounded from the south by palm trees
and some citrus trees that depend on rain and underground water. Sabkhat Sheikh Zuweid is one of the important areas for winter birds where many of them reproduce such as Plover. Moreover, many kinds of birds pass over this reserve in spring such as quail.

Second: South Sinai Reserves

There are five reserves in South Sinai, namely:

1- Ras Muhammad National Park

It is the first national park established in Egypt and it had been declared officially as a natural reserve in 1938 on an area of 97 Km², yet it did not get sufficient attention until 1989. An integrated plan has been set to develop it until its area reached about 480 Km². It locates in the meeting point of the Suez Gulf and Aqaba Gulf. It is characterized by coral beaches, colored fish, endangered marine tortoises, and rare aquatic creatures. It is surrounded by coral reefs from all marine sides and it has unique form that affects natural life in the park. Moreover, “earthquakes” formed water caves under the island.
Natural Features

Ras Muhammad National Park has a unique geological formation that has great impact in forming its surface, such as the “Magic Lake” and the “Salt Lake”. It has also many species of coral reefs that attract great numbers of fish that gives it great importance as fishing areas in addition to practice diving and viewing fish.

Biodiversity:

The park is void of all signs of life; whereas, it is the homeland for many reptiles and mammals that are not seen as they are night creatures. Moreover, there are residing birds and different plant species.

Flora

Mangroves are common in the reserve and are known for their fish and invertebrates. The plants in this area serve as a winter shelter for many European migratory birds to breed in South Sinai.

Fauna

Many mammals exist in the park such as desert foxes, wild rabbits in addition to sea creatures such as dolphins, sharks, many sea fish and many birds such as falcons.
Environmental and Tourist Importance

It is one of the richest places in the world in natural wealth and rare marine features. It was placed on the world’s tourist map as it has many types of tourism. The tourist importance of the park is as follows:

- Its natural beauty attracts tourists due to the beach areas that are suitable for practicing water sports especially diving.
- It has some water caves and the ancient earthquakes area that show its charming beauty.
- It has the Eel Garden which is a distinctive area for diving and observing the Eel life.
- It has the Magic Lake that depends on the ebb and tide movement.
- It has many mountains that are different in colors and formations.

2-Saint Catherine National Reserve

Saint Catherine region has been declared a natural reserve in 1988 with an area of 4250 km². It was, also, declared as a World Cultural Heritage site in July 2002, within the framework of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. It includes the high mountains area in Egypt, which represents the natural
ecosystem of upland areas. It is characterized by the highest mountain tops in Egypt, so it became a destination of tourists from all over the world for its abundant natural wealth and cultural heritage. It is a natural habitat for several biological plants and animals. The following are some examples of the natural wealth that exists in Saint Catherine National sanctuary:

**Wildlife**

There are 25 species of mammals such as the Egyptian deer, wolves and foxes and 27 species of reptiles such as snakes. There are also 50 species of birds such as eagles, falcons, owls and crow and 40 species of insects such as Sinai blue butterfly.

**Flora**

Saint Catherine National reserve is the most important natural home for rare plants in Sinai; about 472 species which exist only in Egypt such as medicinal and forage plants.

**3- Archaeological Heritage**

South Sinai Mountains were chosen as a natural reserve due to their civilized history, natural resources and religious tourism value. In Saint Catherine city, there is Saint Catherine’s Monastery, its main church and its famous library. Moreover, there is Mount Moses, Mount Abbas and the Holy Family route.
4- Nabq Sanctuary

Nabq has been declared a natural reserve in 1992 with an area of 600 km². It is 35 Km far from the North of Sharm Sheikh. It stretches between Sharm Sheikh, Dahab and Wadi Um Adawi, South Sinai.

**Biodiversity:**

It has a high density mangrove forests that extends for 4.5 km along the shoreline. It is the biggest collection of mangrove plant on Aqaba gulf.

**Flora:**

The mangrove stands densely at Nabq along the shoreline at the mouth of Wadi Kid. Its ecosystem works at keeping out most of the salts from the seawater. The area includes the biggest collection of Arak trees in Egypt. Moreover, its ecosystem works at fixing the dunes.

**Fauna:**

It has a rich wildlife represented in many wild animals such as deer, foxes and others. It also contains many invertebrates, rodents and reptiles as well as migratory and resident birds.

**Environmental, Tourist and Scientific Importance**
• It is characterized by coral reefs that attract tourists especially divers.
• It offers geomorphology diversity that gives it importance as a natural sanctuary for various wild animals.
• It provides traditional industries such as Bedouins fashion.
• It is the best place for safari tourism lovers.

5- Abu Gallum Reserve

It was declared as a nature reserve by the Cabinet Resolution No. 1511 of 1992 that was amended by Resolution No. 33 of 1996. Abu Gallum region is bordered from the north by the line connecting between the intersection of Sharm Sheikh/Taba with Wadi Al-Rassassa, at a depth of 3-5 Km from the coral reef at the east, and to Wadi Tallat Al-Morra at Gamra Mountain until it meets Sharm Sheikh/Taba road at the south. From the west, it is bounded by Sharm Sheikh/Taba road.

Flora

It is one of the most magnificent reserves in Egypt as it includes mountains and narrow valleys, where grass grows in these valleys between the mountains of the reserve. Moreover, there are some trees with medical benefits that some inhabitant birds and animals
feed on. Thus, it is necessary to walk on the specific paths for the preservation of the existing plants as it is an environmentally sensitive area.

**Fauna**

There are some rare birds and resident animals such as falcons, eagles and others. This is in addition to mammals and reptiles such as lizards and dangerous snakes as well as sea animals represented in coral reefs and fish such as sharks, dolphins and others.

**Environmental and Tourist Importance**

- It includes diverse ecosystems of coral reefs, marine organisms, seaweeds, lagoons and others.
- It is distinguished by its natural landscape where the mountains are near the beach and are full of animals, birds, and wild plants. This richness makes the reserve a tourist attraction to those interested in diving and observing birds.
- The presence of a visitor center, which includes a hall for visual display, in addition to what the center provides to visitors with information about diving sites in the reserve
6- Taba Reserve

It was declared a natural reserve by a Cabinet’s Decree in 1998 with an area of 3595 km². It exists in the South of Taba. It is characterized by geological formation, the existence of archeological sites dating back to 5000 years ago, rare wildlife, natural beautiful landscapes and the traditional heritage of resident Bedouins.

Biodiversity:

Taba reserve distinguishes with the diversity of rare animals and plants which are threatened by extinction. It comprises about 25 species of mammals such as Dorcas deer, Nubian caribou, and about 50 species of rare resident birds. Regarding plants, it contains important species such as Acacia trees, and other common species. The valleys of this reserve service as a sanctuary for wildlife such as deer, birds, Nubian caribou, in addition to rare birds such as eagles, falcons and others.

Environmental and Tourist Importance

It is characterized by its traditional heritage of the Bedouins life which makes it a tourist attraction point; in addition to the revitalization of eco-tourism and desert trips. Furthermore, tourists visit small oases and climb mountains. Many Bedouins work with tourists as guides and host them in Bedouin villages that attract many tourists.
Chapter III

Tourism in Sinai
Sinai…

Tourist and Archaeological Treasures

Natural Reserves

2021
Tourism potentials in Sinai vary according to its historical, environmental, cultural and tourism heritage; including roads, castles and historical cities. Furthermore, there is a variety of tourist attractions, which have natural and historical features. Sinai is a precious tourist treasure; the discovered part of it has impressed the world, whereas the vast majority of this fortune still promises of great tourism growth. Sinai combines all the elements of successful tourism: climatic and natural factors, whether on land or sea, suitable for all types of tourism, topped by recreational such as beach, diving and water sport tourism in the Gulf of Aqaba, then medical tourism in addition to herbal treatment, especially in Catherine. In Sinai, the ingredients for many other types of tourism are also available, such as festivals and races, the most famous of which is camel racing and related folk carnivals. Finally, the importance of Sinai cities in terms of conferences tourism increased, especially in Sharm El Sheikh, which has hosted a lot of major international political conferences and dozens of other specialized ones. Regarding natural reserves, there is the scientific tourism, known as flora and fauna; i.e. studies of botanical and animal environments. In the valleys and mountains of Sinai, the safari and adventure tourism become more active. The following are the most important types of tourism in Sinai:
First: Leisure Tourism

It is the richest and most widespread tourism in Sinai, due to the availability of natural resources, which, in turn, is a result of the richness of the environment with mild climate, sandy and rocky beaches in addition to the underwater treasures; coral reefs, rare fish and other marine organisms. Moreover, there is infrastructure for such tourism, which is divided into two parts; beach tourism, and diving tourism.

• **Beach Tourism:**

This tourism is popular in coastal areas that are characterized by soft sandy beaches, and a shallow stretching sea with clear water free of rocks. These specifications are repeated in more than one location on the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Suez. The coast of the Mediterranean Sea extends from Balouza and Bir Al-Abd in the west to Rafah in the far east of Sinai through Arish, Sheikh Zuweid and Bardawil Lake. This long and stretched beach is marked by its soft white sand
and clear water. In Arish, particularly, the palm trees are queued along the beach, so that it is known as “Palm Beach”. Tourism on Arish beaches, in particular, witnesses a great turnout especially local tourism, as well as the number of tourist villages near these beaches. The Gulf of Suez incorporates Ras Massalla, Ras Sidr, Ras Matarma and Al-Tur which are tourist areas in addition to Abu Zenima and Abu Rudeis that are industrial zones. The beach is interspersed with many bays and land heads in the Gulf water. These beaches are distinguished by soft white sand, clear and shallow water over long distances, as well as moderate climate throughout the year. Moreover, it is close to Cairo and other cities of Egypt, which makes it a suitable destination for local tourism as well as one-day trips. In Ras Sidr, there are many magnificent tourist villages and projects; furthermore, Al-Tur Beach is not less impressive than Ras Sidr, especially in the area of Palm Beach. It is one of the most beautiful tourist areas that combine palm plantations with the beach confined between the Gulf water and the mountain range in the east. Likewise, Moon Beach in Al-Tur has its own nature; it is stretchily extended in the water and can take a panoramic view of Al-Tur entire city. It is the most popular beach in Dahab, where it is full of movement and delight all the time, so, the visitor can enjoy the golden sands either by walking along the beach or having a distinctive sunbathing.
• **Diving Tourism:**

This type of tourism concentrates on the eastern shore of the Aqaba Gulf. It is a rocky beach in most of its areas, and it is followed by a great depth of water just after the coast. This area is one of the most beautiful tourist ones in the world due to its wonderful treasures: it has the greatest coral reef spaces, colorful fish and warm water all year long. It possesses a charming nature on land and underwater, surrounded by stunning natural formations with bays, warm springs, animals, birds, rare wild plants and diverse birds. Among the most prominent tourist sites on the shore of the Aqaba Gulf are Sharm El-Sheikh and Dahab city which has been transformed from a small Bedouin fishing town to be the best diving resort on the Red Sea. It attracts adventure seekers and nature lovers.

**Second: Historical and Archaeological Tourism**

The history of Sinai Peninsula is a comprehensive record of the Egyptian great events both in the far and near past. It has gathered the antiquities of the three divine religions, where a large number of
Islamic and Coptic monuments spread all over Egypt. Sinai considered an inseparable part of the civilization of the Nile Valley. And all the eras this civilization went through, including Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic, and Islamic left great monuments on Sinai land. There are many archaeological and historical tourist sites in Sinai, most notably Serabit Al-Khadim near Abu Zenima, where there is the temple of the goddess "Hathor", on the top of one of the high plateaus that are surrounded by the remains of the turquoise and copper mines used by the ancient Egyptians in the era of the middle and modern kingdoms BC. Near Serabit Al-Khadim, there is the Cave area with the remnants of its inscriptions. Serabit Al-Khadim is an important destination for tourists who are interested in archaeological sites. At the same time, many citadels in Sinai are witnessing a tourist turnout, most notably, the Citadel of Salah Al-Din on Pharaoh's island near Taba, whose marine location encourages the influx of tourist groups. Tourists interested in archeology also visit other castles, such as "Nakhl castle", which is located on the Suez/Taba international road. Historical roads gain additional importance in Sinai: on Horus road which is parallel to Sinai northern coast on the Mediterranean Sea, tourists visit many archaeological sites, particularly Pelusium (Al-Farama), Al-Felusyat, Al-Khweynat, Arish Castle and others. Some of these roads also gain a tourist importance, such as the road taken by the Holy Family to Egypt. Tel Al-Mashraba, Dahab, is considered an
archaeological area and includes Dahab sea port dating back to the era of the Nabateans from the second and first centuries BC to serve the trade movement between the East and the West through Sinai. South Sinai Zone for Islamic and Coptic antiquities discovered it in its excavations since 1989, and the area includes a lighthouse, warehouses for goods and offices for port service.

**Third: Sports Tourism**

Tourists practice sports in the Gulf of Musa, Tur Sinai, especially sports of water surfing. Musa Gulf is one of the best areas in the world in windsurfing due to the presence of wind currents throughout the year on average, and there is also another water sports like windsurfing and sailboat riding. Dahab is characterized by this sport due to the speed of winds, because the mountains surround it.

**Fourth: Medical Tourism**

There are many hot water springs in Sinai, such as the Pharaoh's bath. These baths have a therapeutic importance due to the presence of sulfur water, in addition to the mild climate, the unique location on the Suez Gulf and the sanctity of the region. It has a special status in the hearts of the followers of the three divine religions alike. It incorporates the following:
• Pharaoh's Baths

Pharaoh's Baths are 250 km from Cairo on the Gulf of Suez. It is a group of hot sulfur water springs with a temperature of 27 °C, flowing from Mount of Pharaoh bath in form of a pool with a capacity of approximately 3000 m³/day. Above it, there is a rock cave carved into the mountain used as a natural sauna bath due to the emission of heat from the sulfuric hot water from the bottom to the top of the cave. By analyzing the water, in terms of its chemical, bacteriological and natural properties, it has proven its excellent validity and effectiveness in treating many diseases, salient of which are: rheumatoid arthritis and rheumatism in various forms, diseases of the digestive system, kidney, lung, liver and skin, as well as sports injuries, in addition to its usage in cosmetic purposes. The concentration of sulfur in this water is among the highest rates of this element in all the mineral water in the world. Moreover, the climate is moderate and dry year-round and there are large warm sand areas that can be used in physical therapy.
• Moses’ Bath

The water temperature in Moses’ Bath (*Hammam Musa*) reaches 37 °C in summer and winter, which is useful in treating many diseases. Its water consists of five pure sulfur springs. It is located in Tur Sinai city.

• Ras Sidr Water Springs

Conceivably, only the residents of the city and a few of tourists who know Ras Sidr spring, it is about 9 km away from the city, and the temperature of its sulfuric water is 200 °C. The water rushes from the underground to pass through a canal that is split by the water itself, reaching a length of about 100 meters and a depth of about 2 meters, and then settles in a natural swimming pool filled with hot sulfur water, where the amount of water that comes out of the spring is about twenty cubic meters of water per day.

• Natural Herbs in Saint Catherine

Saint Catherine Reserve and City contains hundreds of rare plants and natural herbs, as Saint Catherine provides more than 472 types of medicinal herbal plants that are used in the treatment of many diseases such as sore throats, renal and many skin diseases.
Fifth: Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is concentrated in the region of Wadi Al-Raha, Saint Catherine Monastery, Mount Moses and the shrines of the prophets. Tens of thousands of tourists visit Sinai annually, among the most prominent religious sites:

- **Mount Moses:**
  
  At its peak, there is a chapel and a mosque. Tourists are keen on climbing the mountain after midnight to reach its peak before sunrise. Despite the discomfort of the journey and the difficulty of climbing the mountain, and then climbing 750 stairs made of stones, yet the view of the sunrise is a pleasure that worth all the hardship. The peaks of the surrounding mountains appear to be reddened with the rise of the sun.

- **Saint Catherine Monastery:**
  
  The monastery receives hundreds of tourists daily from around the world, to visit its main monuments and components such as the Great Church, the Burning Bush Church, the Fatimid Mosque, the monastery library, and hundreds of unique icons in addition to the incomparable unique mosaics.
• Tomb of Prophet Saleh:
  It is located at the entrance of Saint Catherine city.

• Tomb of Prophet Harun:

• Al-Banat Monastery:
  It exists in Firan Valley, and it was built at the same time of Saint Catherine Monastery. Firan Oasis was a major center for Christian monks in Sinai.
Sixth: Safari Tourism

The geographical formation of Sinai helped spread a distinct pattern of tourism, which is safari and adventure across the Sinai deserts, paths, and valleys. The paths and objectives of these programs vary from safari tourism; some of them head to the picturesque mountain ranges, salient of which is Saint Catherine Mountains. The most famous mountains that attract this type of tourism are the so-called Colored Canyon, which are mountains surrounded by unique paths that allow tourists to pass and enjoy the adventure of climbing. In addition, it is distinguished by its bright and varied rock colors and exciting formations. Among the most famous mountains that is in Wadi Watier near Ain Furtaka on the Nuweiba/Catherine road, as well as another mountain close to Catherine at the "Arada" valley. Each of them attracts hundreds of tourists every day for adventure, hiking, spending the day and sometimes overnighting. Other programs of safari tourism target visiting the distinct valleys and famous water springs such as Ain
Al-Qudairat in Al-Qassima area, Ain Umm Ahmed and Ain Furtaka. At the same time, many safari tourists go to wild hunting, in Arish, Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah in North Sinai, or in many areas in the south where such hunting is permitted.

**Seventh: Racing and Festival Tourism**

The most famous festivals in Sinai are camel races and festivals. It is a purely nomadic kind of sports. It witnesses a huge turnout from the participants and tourists. It suits customs and concerns of Sinai Bedouins, and this race associated with wide folkloric carnivals of costumes, customs, traditions and folk arts. Local and international camel races are held regularly in North and South Sinai at appropriate times every year, especially in the spring. Sinai paths are also suitable for car races of various distances and types, as well as international cycling races that are often organized in South Sinai.

**Eighth: Conference Tourism**

In recent times, this type of tourism has flourished in Sinai, especially in the city of Sharm El-Sheikh. The moderate climate, availability of facilities, communications, international airport and equipped halls in major hotels and others, added to adequate
accommodation promote to hold many political, scientific, specialized conferences and others.

**Ninth: Scientific tourism**

Sinai has many elements of scientific and research tourism, which include studies of the flora and fauna, especially in Saint Catherine and Ras Muhammad Reserves, as well as studying the movement and the global migrations of birds in Zaraniq and Ras Muhammad. These regions have tourism potentials especially for water lovers.