

## Activities at Ahlan Cairo

### Outline:

Ahlan Cairo offers activities that allow students to immerse themselves into Egyptian culture beyond the classroom or tourist sites. These activities equip students with nuanced knowledge of Egyptian culture in the arts, food, religion and more. The Ahlan dynamic emphasizes respect, communication, and equality through discussion that crosses cultural differences and helps to build international bridges and understanding. Through unique circumstances of each story, location, and aspect of culture, Ahlan participants are hence able to escape their comfort zones and reach out to learn and help in the world around them. These activities are discussion based and with a broad topic allow the exploration of related tangents and enable students to create memorable, interpersonal connections with those around them.

### Profile:

With a background and tourism and hospitality, Hamada, the head of activities at Ahlan Cairo, organizes enriching activities that are both educational and engaging. His extensive knowledge of Egyptian history and his experience working with students from all over the globe make him the perfect leader to showcase Egypt's fascinating and rich culture. Says Hamada, "Egypt is a misunderstood country, and I believe that Ahlan allows people to see Egypt for what it truly is, a beautiful place with a rich and majestic history. It is an unspoken goal of Ahlan to share our rich culture through the Arabic language, which is one of the most important in the world."

### Activities:


**Religion:** This cultural activity enables students to explore religion as a general concept as well as specificities of religions practiced in Egypt (with a particular focus on Islam and Christianity). Students will learn about the various sects and practices of religion in Egypt as well as how said differences manifest them in day-to-day life. Students will have the opportunity to attend a Sufi religious celebration, visit mosques and experience Coptic Cairo.

**Marriage in Egypt:** Marriage plays a large and important role in the fabric of Egyptian society. Weddings are often a work of art in and of themselves, providing ample opportunity for students to learn about a combination of cultural practices, music, and laws. This activity will highlight the process of marriage in Egypt from start to finish, highlighting the differences and similarities between cultural practices across regions and religious groups.

**Cooking:** Students will have the opportunity to learn how to cook several traditional Egyptian dishes that can be found in most households throughout the country. Classes will be hands on and special emphasis will be placed on ingredients as well as the role dishes play in culture and social life.

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**Locally sourced food and farming:** Students interested in agriculture will have the opportunity to learn about farming practices as well as weather and patterns specific to planting in Egypt. Additionally, students will also visit a local mango farm and observe farming methods firsthand.

**FEDA-NGO Visit:** The Federation for Economic Development Associations (FEDA) is an umbrella of NGOs which aims to promote entrepreneurship culture and improve business and investment environment for small businessmen. Students will visit to learn about the goals and mission of FEDA, as well as understand how it gives back to the community. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to spend a day at the FEDA daycare and play with the children.

**Architecture and Art:** Ahlan students will gain a deep understanding of Cairo's identity through its variety of ancient and modern art and architecture. They will examine how Coptic and Islamic architecture have shaped modern-day Cairo, as well as explore sites of both religious and urban art, and local and global design. This lecture will also include visits to downtown Cairo, Old Cairo and Museums.


**Language Exchange:** Students wishing to gain additional Arabic practice in a nurturing environment will have the chance to attend language exchanges with students, teachers, and friends of Ahlan Cairo. Not only will students be able to improve their speaking fluidity, but they will also exchange ideas and gain additional knowledge on important topics such as politics, gender roles, religion and society.

**Oriental Music - Introduction to Oud:** Ahlan students will learn the basic elements of Oud, in an introductory workshop. The workshop will cover the influence of Oud on Egyptian music as well as examine the history and evolution of Oud in ancient and modern Egyptian culture.

**Calligraphy:** Calligraphy plays an important role in Islamic art and religion. Students will have the opportunity to study the fundamentals of calligraphy in an introductory workshop, including uses, techniques and tools. Additionally, students will be able to visit the Islamic Arts Museum and see various calligraphic art styles.

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