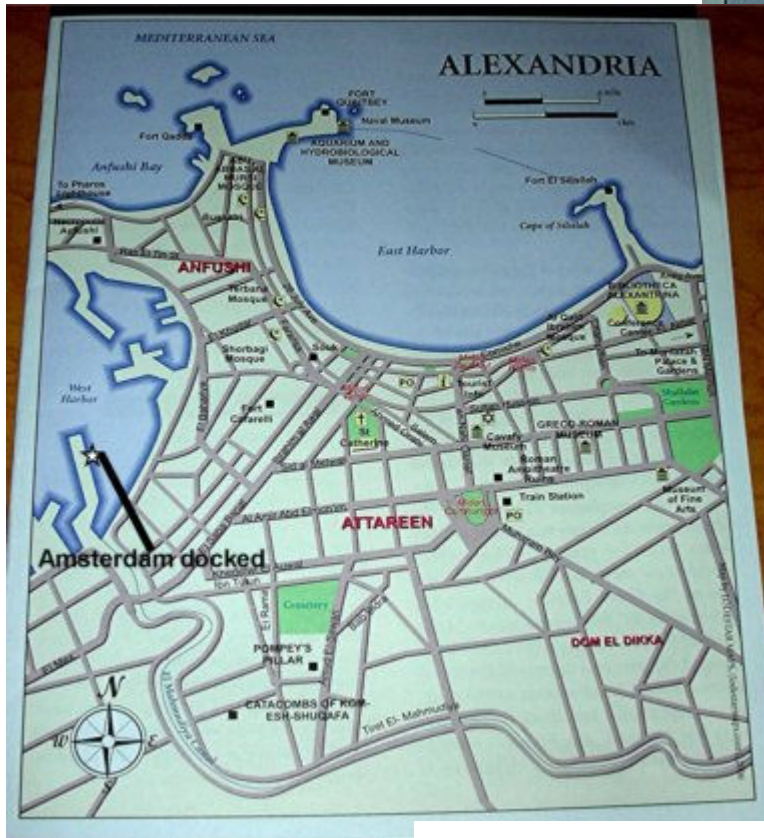
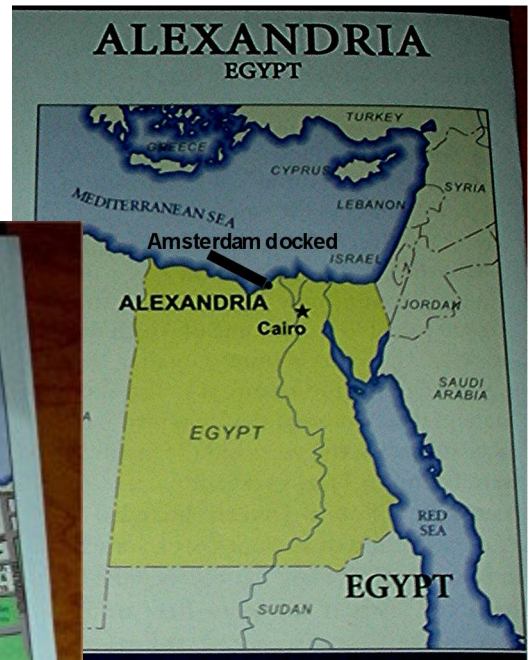
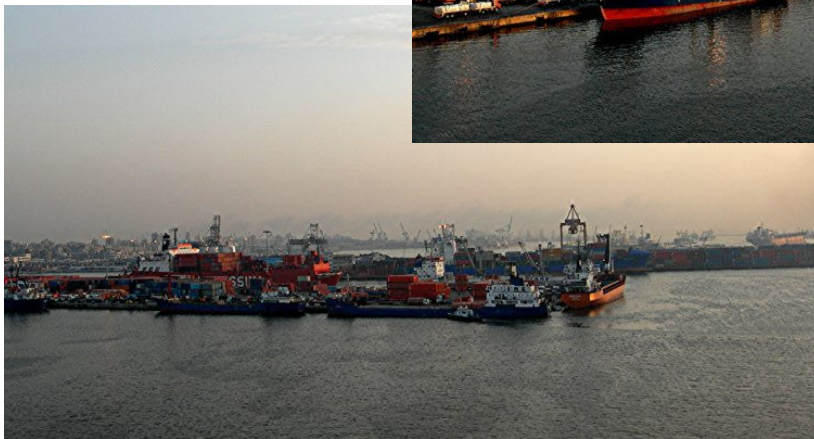


4/4/07 Day 79 – Alexandria - Wednesday, 4 April, 2007: The Amsterdam arrived in Alexandria in the morning while it was still dark. We were docked in West Harbor. Here is where we were located on the map.



It was a calm hazy day. Here is what the port of Alexandria looked like around the Amsterdam.

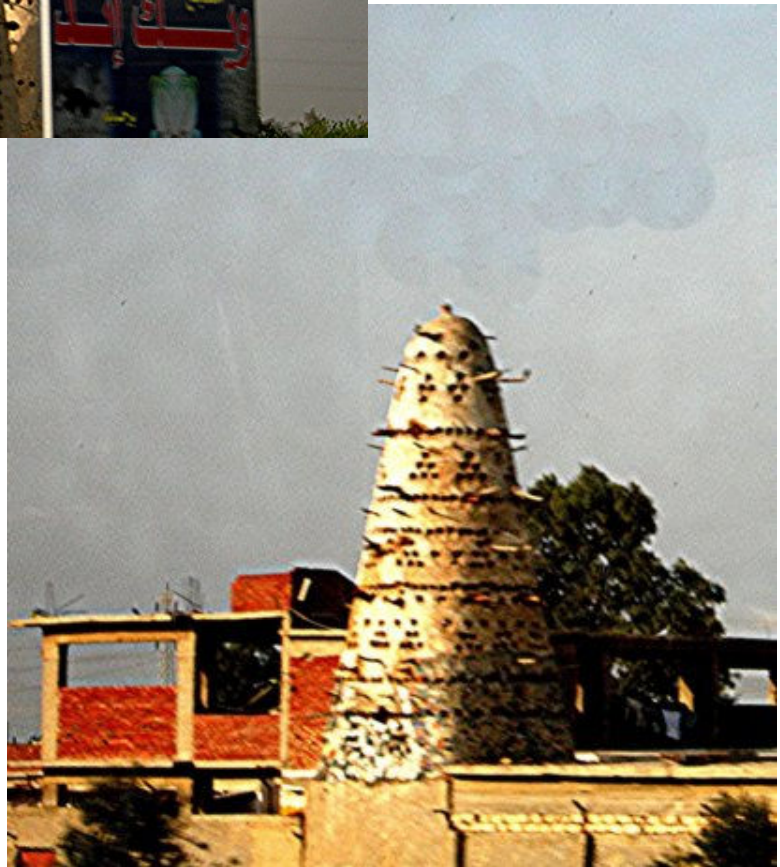




Although we were docked in the ancient city of Alexandria our attention was focused on the early morning bus tour to Cairo and the Pyramids at Giza. The bus ride to Cairo took about 3 hours as we

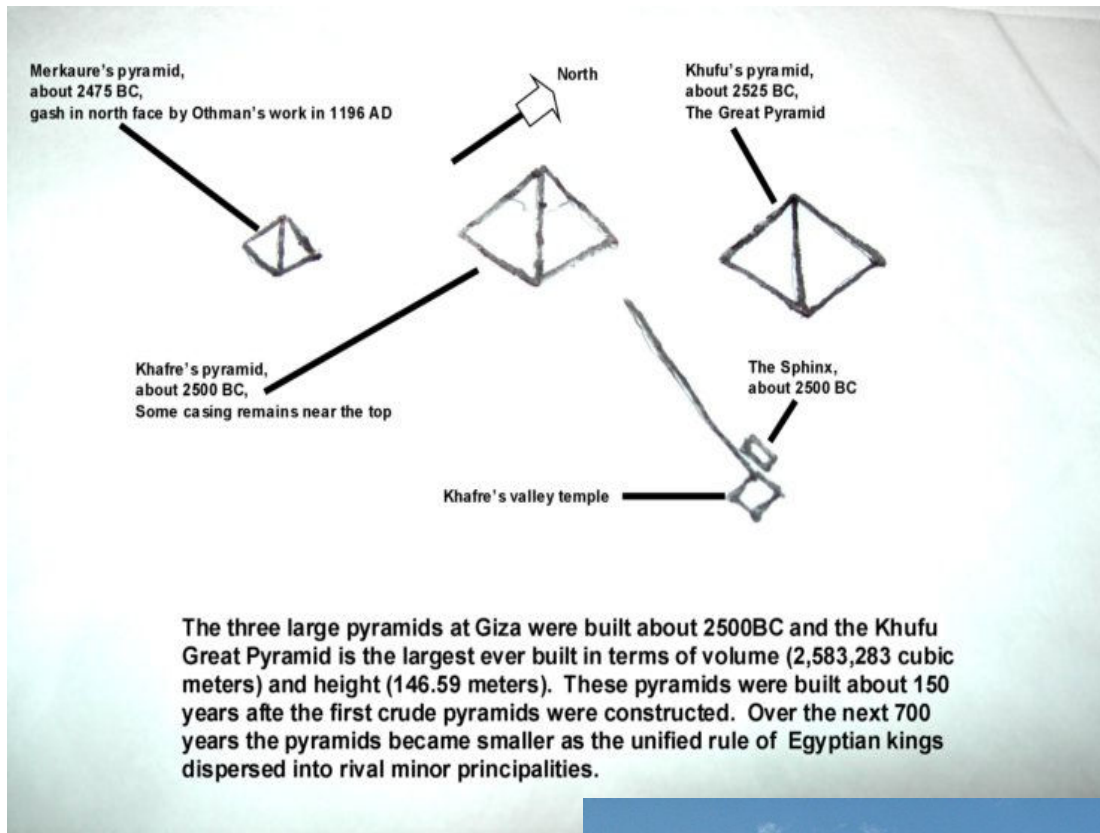
passed through flat countryside on a freeway toll road. Egypt is a right hand traffic country which is surprising in view of the British influence in the 1800s and early 1900s. We saw some of the pigeon houses that we had noticed on the Suez Canal the day before. Our guide, Tamer, explained that raising flocks of pigeons is a passion for many Egyptians. Even people living in cities sometimes put pigeon houses on the roofs of houses. The challenge of the hobby is to train the birds to fly in swarms around the area where they live and to obey commands whistled by the owner. The guide said that if you were invited to the home of a pigeon owner and he served you cooked pigeon then you knew you were among his most honored friends. We had never heard that the practice of raising pigeons occupied a prominent place in Egyptian culture. The pigeon houses we saw were large and made of masonry or some sort of lattice work that was plastered over and decorated. We must have seen at least one hundred large pigeon houses on the 6 hour round trip to Cairo from Alexandria and we probably missed a lot of small ones. Here are a couple examples.





The purpose of the tour was to see the world famous pyramids located at Giza near Cairo. The following sketch shows the three primary pyramids at the Giza site as well as the location of the Sphinx and Khafre's valley temple. The reference book we used for comments was "The Complete Pyramids", by Mark Lehner, Thames & Hudson Ltd., London, 2006.

We finally arrived at the Giza Pyramids. We saw the classic collection with three primary pyramids clustered on a plateau a short distance from the Sphinx. The Sphinx was carved out of the plateau and sits below the pyramids. There were hundreds of tourist buses and thousands of tourists. There were also plenty of Egyptian security people and the scene was orderly. Here are some of the pictures we took.



Here is Khafre's pyramid at 4500 years old with the original limestone casing near the top.







The blocks at the bottom of Khafre's pyramid are much larger than those further up.

On the right is the view looking straight up the side of Khafre's pyramid to the limestone casing at the top.





Khufu's pyramid is the largest pyramid in terms of volume, (over 2.5 million cubic meters or 95 million cubic feet) and about 146 meters high (488 feet). Khufu's pyramid was built about 2500 BC and our guide said that for about the next 4500 years no higher manmade structure was constructed until the Eiffel tower was built in Paris. Note the crowds of tourists.



And shown to the left is the pyramid of Menkaure with the scar caused by excavators in 1196 trying to dismantle it.



There is a narrow passageway leading to the burial chamber in Khafre's pyramid. Our guide had said the chamber was dark, empty, humid and uncomfortable so we didn't go in to the burial chamber.

There were lots of vendors and camels with their owners offering rides. Here Orlin deals with one of the vendors.







There were plenty of camels around. Even the police rode camels.

Martha, our neighbor on the Amsterdam from Memphis, Tennessee got a thrill from her ride on a camel.



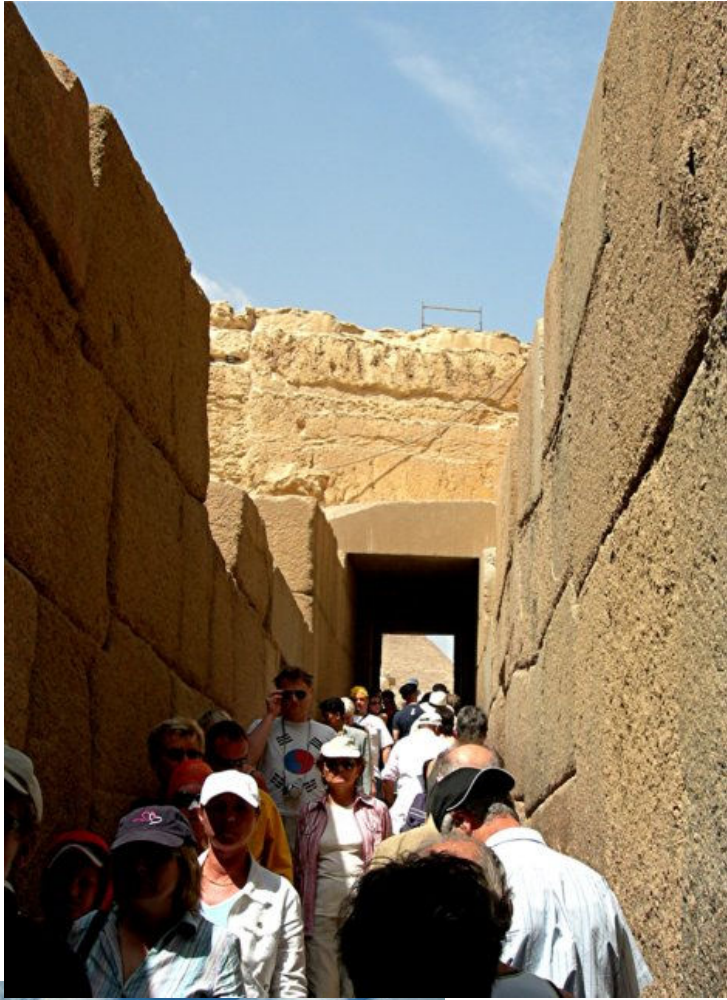
This is as close as we wanted to get.



After our tour of the pyramids we went down to Khafre's valley temple and the Sphinx. The Sphinx can be approached through Khafre's valley temple. Khafre's valley temple was cut out of the plateau where the pyramids sit and red granite was brought in to form the pillars and cross pieces.



A crowded passageway leads to the ramp that passes by the Sphinx on the way to Khafre's pyramid. You can barely see the edge of Khafre's pyramid silhouetted in the door opening.



We went up the stairs, through the opening and came into view of the Sphinx. It was smaller and more enclosed by the surrounding cliffs than we had anticipated but was still a grand creation of those ancient Egyptians about 4500 years ago. From this angle a portion of Khufu's Great Pyramid can be seen behind the Sphinx.



On the walkway to Khafre's pyramid which passed by the Sphinx, a tourist was posing so that in the picture he would appear to be holding up Khafre's pyramid with his hands. We wondered if the old Egyptian pyramid workers would have enjoyed this kind of humor.



The pyramids have colored light shows at night and these structures provide the light.

The people sit in these chairs shown on the right to watch the light show from in front of Khafre's valley temple and the Sphinx.



The buses were waiting to take us to lunch on the Nile River Boat Restaurant.

The drive through the outskirts of Cairo gave us an opportunity to get a photo showing just how close Cairo is to the pyramids at Giza. Khafre's pyramid is shown peaking through a Cairo city street in this photo to the right.





On the drive through Cairo we noticed that many of the buildings appeared to be under construction or that the construction had been halted before the building was completed. The guide pointed out that the tax laws are such that when a building is being constructed there are no taxes. Therefore, people tend to never complete construction of a



residence which they then live in without having to pay taxes on the improvements already in place. This photo from a moving bus is an example of many partially completed homes and apartment buildings that we saw with reinforcing steel sticking up and waiting for the final construction.

We arrived at the Nile Maxim Veranda river boat restaurant where we had an excellent meal. This was typical of the tours on the 2007 World Cruise that have been managed by Abercrombie & Kent in most of the ports. We have been very pleased with what they have done for us.





After a buffet of Egyptian food we were treated to music and a belly dancer put on a tasteful show for us.

After the show it was back on the bus and about a three hour ride back to Alexandria and the Amsterdam.

We got underway about 7pm headed for Ashdod, Israel where we plan a tour of Jerusalem and Bethlehem tomorrow.