

# Travelviews

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## Quiet Egypt

Michelle Jana Chan's article ("The glories of Egypt – minus the tourist multitudes", November 5), made me immensely sad for some of the people my wife and I met in the country earlier this year.

We arrived on March 6, three weeks after Hosni Mubarak stood down, and spent 14 nights under the wing of Exodus Tours, visiting all the major sites, from Cairo in the north to Abu Simbel in the south. Like Michelle, we had the privilege of viewing the wonders without queuing and with no one obscuring the views. And despite the uncertainty on the streets, we never once felt threatened. We had a marvellous time. But we were very aware that our good fortune was bad news for those relying on mass tourism to make a living.

We consoled ourselves that all would be well because we were in the vanguard of the returning hordes. It seems we were over-optimistic; the hordes have not returned. Of course, the

continuing volatility hasn't helped, but I can't help thinking that if the Foreign Office travel advice doesn't change, and you have a tour operator you trust, now would be a very good time to visit Egypt.

*Ron Powell, by email*

Michelle Jana Chan's article on the drop in tourism to Egypt was interesting as a colleague has just returned with similar tales. We visited Egypt in 1998, five months after tourists were massacred at Hatshepsut's Temple, and we were welcomed with open arms.

Having been fans of Egypt over the years, we've visited Cairo, Alexandria, Luxor, Aswan and the Red Sea and cruised the Nile on a *dahabiya*. However, our experience in Luxor a year ago was probably our last in view of the constant haranguing the minute we left the hotel. The invitations to "lovely jubbly" felucca trips and rides on a caleche, taxi or camel, all at a

remarkable "Asda price", become very wearing.

Egypt has some architectural wonders, but if there are fewer tourists and just as many Egyptians, travellers do need to be aware of what might be in store.

*Helen Jackson, by email*