

## Egypt

## Fencing keeps tourist hustlers at bay

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Anyone who has ever visited **Egypt's** rich archaeological heritage sites, including the pyramids, the sphinx and the ancient tombs will perhaps welcome new moves by the authorities to keep the hustlers at bay.

Tourists have typically been continually harassed to buy anything from a postcard to a stuffed camel or a T-shirt. The hustlers did not give up easily, following the tourists around and pressing them to buy their goods, while camels and donkeys owners did the same.

Soon, however, this could all be a thing of the past. Since August this year, when the Egyptian Minister of Culture, **Farouk Hosni**, opened the first stage of a \$26 million project, Egypt has been fencing up the Giza Plateau - one of the largest open archaeological sites in the world - with a 13 foot high fence complete with motion sensors and security cameras.

The surveillance system is based on 147 fixed cameras and 36 mobile cameras installed along the fence, in addition to 16 indoor cameras. Previous access to the area was free-for-all through a stone paved route.

Everyone including the locals now has to enter at the one and only entrance opposite the fast food KFC and pay an entry fee, freeing them up in one go from the hustlers who remain on the outside.

Later on, plans are afoot to bring in golf cart trains to transport tourists from the entrance up to the pyramids and the sphinx. Currently, only the Valley of the Kings west of Luxor uses them where they have been regarded as a blessing by older visitors out in the summer sun. There will also be a book store selling guidebooks and other paraphernalia to help people come to terms with what they have actually come to see.

A special lighting system will be installed, the nearby roads will be paved and there will also be parking lots for tour buses as well as a first-aid and police complex.

The biggest problem, however, is that in taking this dramatic step, the authorities have in one fell swoop eliminated one of the most eye-catching aspects of the pyramids – the rolling desert that stretched out to the horizon from the pyramids and the sphinx.

But that, as they say, is probably the price of progress.

*by Brian Salter*