

Intrepid Travel Language Guides

Arabic Language Guide Script

Scott: Ah, excuse me, I've got a booking for a Felluca - I was told to ask for Allad

Allad: Ahlan wa sahlam, I am Allad. You must be Scott from Australia - where you from, Sydney or Melbourne?

Scott: That's me - I'm from Sydney. Looks like I'm in the right place at the right time and as always, the first one here. My mates will turn up - eventually.

Allad: Ahlan wa sahlam - welcome, come on board and we will talk while we wait, my brother is in Melbourne, very nice place !

Scott: Man, I'm so looking forward to this, three days just cruising the Nile - eating, sleeping - no crowds, no hassling, no noise, no chaos !

Allad: Foreigners love to swim in the Nile - there is too much pollution for me though. How long have you been in Cairo?

Scott: Just a week, but what a week ! i've never been so hassled anywhere !

Allad: You need to learn some Arabic so you will be left alone.

Scott: I've learnt two very useful ones so far - yes and no, aywa - laa. I don't suppose you'd like to teach me some more?

Allad: Aywa, my pleasure. And perhaps over the next few days you can help me with some English reading?

Scott: Sounds fair to me. I've nearly been driven crazy by 'What's yourname. Where you from' how do I answer in Arabic?

Allad: You say Ana ismi Scott. Ana min Australia.

Scott: Ok, so ana ismi Scott, Ana min Australia.

Allad: If you answer in Arabic you will be less likely to get jhassled. To ask a persons name - you say Ismak Eh?

Scott: Ismak Eh. Is Ahlan wa sahlam hello or welcome?

Allad: That means hello and welcome. Good Morning is sahal il-kheer - to which you must respond sahal ih-nur.

Scott: Sahah il-kheer - sahad ih-nur.

Allad: Good evening is masa il-kheer and the reply is masa in-nur.

Scott: Masa il-kheer, masa in-nur

Allad: Goodbye is ma'a salaema

Scott: Ma'a salaema. I've noticed that Arab men always shake hands when they see one another - is it ok for a foreigner to do this?

Allad: Yes, but wait for the local first. When you know someone well you shake hands and kiss each cheek. Wait for a woman to shake your hand, if she does not you must bow your head to her instead. Come, sit and share sheesha with me.

Scott: Ok, this is going to sound so dumb...but what exactly is in the pipe?

Allad: It is flavoured tobacco, this is my favourite - apple !

Scott: Actually I've been dying to try one, thanks Man!

Allad: In Arabic you mean shakran

Scott: Shakran. Does that mean ' no thank you ' is laa shakran

Allad: Very good, you are a fast learner.

Scott: How do I say please and excuse me?

Allad: Please is Min Fadlak and excuse me is an iznak. You will get far with this kind of Egyptian !

Scott: I've noticed that everyone seems to expect a tip - no matter what they've done - is this just for foreigners?

Allad: Ah, this is baksheesh - tipping yes but no more than that, it is also part of Islam - to give alms to the needy, it is also for services or if someone helps you. You are not expected to give large amounts, but often foreigners will give more than locals - so it may seem you are hassled more.

Scott: So a few piastres can be enough for someone to show you something?

Allad: Yes, exactly - this is also why it is often hard to get change in Egypt!

Scott: Yeah, right - I've noticed that too! Ok, so if I ask someone directions I should give a little baksheesh?

Allad: You may find they will show you the way for some baksheesh

Scott: So how do I say "where is" and "which way to"?

Allad: This is Fain and Ezay arooh

Scott: So Fain, Ezay arooh. What about "I don't understand"

Allad: This is anan mish faehem

Scott: Anan mish faehem. What about "Please say that slowly"

Allad: This is Min fadlak itkalem bebotq

Scott: Ok, so Min fadlak itkalem bebotq. Ok, so if tipping is baksheesh, what is bargaining?

Allad: A way of life my friend ! Price is always flexible in Cairo!

Scott: How do I say "How much is it" and "it's too expensive"

Allad: This is bi-kaem and da ghaali awi

Scott: So, bi-kaem and da ghalli awi

Allad: Very good. You should also know some numbers, I will teach you 1-10. wahid, itnayu, talaeta, arba'a

Scott: wahid, itnayu, talaeta, arba'a

Allad: khamsa, setta, sab'a

Scott: khamsa, setta, sab'a

Allad: tamanya, tesa, ashra

Scott: tamanya, tesa, ashra

Allad: wahid, itnayu, taleata, arba'a, khamsa, setta, sab'a, tamanya, tesa, ashra

Scott: wahid, itnayu, taleata, arba'a, khamsa, setta, sab'a, tamanya, tesa, ashra

Allad: Very good - you almost count like a local !

Scott: Ha Ha ! Hey, speaking of numbers, how do i ask for the bill?

Allad: This is el-hisaab

Scott: El-hisaab, right. What about ' I like this' and 'I don't like this' - seems to go with bargaining and bills !

Allad: Yes, you will find that stor-holders will offer you tea and want to talk - it is good to spend time with them and use some of your Arabic - you will get a good price then! I like this is Baheb de and I don't like this is mish baheb de

Scott: So Baheb de, mish baheb de. Can you tell me how to ask for a room - how do i say 'have a room' and may i see it'

Allad: You say Andak oda and Momken ashooof ha

Scott: Andak oda , Momken ashooof ha. Ok Allad, just a few more phrases then I think we'll take a break from our lesson today and kick back with some more of your apple smoke ! How do I say today, tomorrow, yesterday and now.

Allad: This is Elnahharda Bokra Imbareh Dolwakte

Scott: Elnahharda Bokra Imbareh Dolwakte, Oh - what about bus, train, taxi and boat - well not a felluca but boat

Allad: Yes, this is otobis, qatr, taxi and markeba and ticket is taskara.

Scott: Some safety stuff - police, hospital and doctor

Allad: My friend, Egypt is very safe, I hope you will not need these, You say Police, Mostashfa and Doctor

Scott: Yeah, me to - but if i do need them at least I'm insured ! So Police, Mostashfa and Doctor. Now just one more thing I'd like you to translate and you'll think I'm totally mad, but some of the backpackers I've hooked up with in the past have been pretty dodgy...'Don't shoot, these drugs aren't mine !'.

Allad: You will need a lot more Arabic if you are caught with drugs my friend! but say Ma tedrabshe, Elmokhadarat de mish betati

Scott: Allad, i think we're going to get along just fine, now how about some more of that sheesha !