

# Egypt: Discover the Eco-lodges in the Siwa Oasis

Siwa is one of the world's last remaining pristine oases in Egypt, home to spectacular natural landscapes, ancient historical ruins and unique cultural traditions.

Famed as the location of the Oracle of Amon, whom Alexander the Great consulted before continuing his Persian conquest, Siwa exists today much as it always has. Majestic rock formations, lush groves and brilliant salt lakes that have nurtured and inspired its people since they settled here 12,000 years ago continue to enchant all who set foot in this secluded idyll in Egypt's Western Desert.

## The Oasis

Siwa Oasis, located about 70 km east of the Libyan border on the edge of the Qattara Depression, possesses an exceptional natural environment, a number of attractive archaeological sites and spectacular geomorphologic features. Living through the centuries in relative isolation has allowed the Siwan community to maintain their own identity and traditions. These qualities, all indicative of the potential that the oasis holds, dictate the importance of preserving its fragile eco-system, maintaining its cultural heritage and developing economic activities in a sustainable way.

In 1997 Environmental Quality International (EQI), a private firm established in 1981, began privately investing in Siwa through a series of community-based initiatives including several eco-lodges. The Siwa Sustainable Development Initiative is an integrated sustainable development plan that addresses economic, cultural and environmental challenges. EQI's investments in Siwa are in the following areas: (1) Lodging (2) Traditional Artisanship (3) Organic Agriculture and (4) Renewable Energy. Together, these activities have established a sustainable private-sectored development model which is socially and environmentally responsible.

## Adrère Amellal

Adrère Amellal is a Nature Lodge overlooking Lake Siwa and nestled at the foot of the White Mountain cliffs. Adrère Amellal has been built with indigenous material using traditional Siwan building techniques and styles which have a minimal impact on the environment.



Kershaf, a mixture of sun-dried salt rock mixed with clay, is used for wall building. This material maintains indoor temperatures at moderate levels. Ceilings are made of palm beams, while doors, windows and fixtures are made of olive wood from annual tree trimmings. Furnishings are simple, yet of the highest quality, drawing exclusively on local materials and designs.

Contemporary plumbing is used throughout. Wastewater is first settled in self-contained sedimentation tanks, allowing the supernatant to flow through perforated pipes into a sealed wetland where indigenous papyrus plants are grown to complete the biodegradation and waste reduction process.

Food prepared at the lodge is organically grown and predominantly local. Furnishing is simple, yet of the highest quality, drawing exclusively on local material and design. Accessories reflect the rich and colorful traditional handicrafts of the oasis. Adrère Amellal is not operated with electricity. Lamps and candles are used for lighting and on cold nights, coal-filled braziers are used for heating. Natural ventilation systems that rely on strategic positioning of doors and windows have been adopted, eliminating the need for air conditioning. All agriculture on the land is organic and free of chemicals.

Adrère Amellal has been designed to operate as a low-profile structure with no lighting and producing very limited noise. We have made minimal changes in the natural landscape of the area and furthermore we do not use chemical fertilizers of any kind on our property. We avoid interference with the natural habitats of the area in both the construction and operation of the eco-lodge.

### **Shali Lodge – Kenooz**

Shali Lodge – Kenooz, located on the other side of the lake in the town of Siwa, is the Village Lodge. Shali Lodge is situated nearby the hub of activity yet set into the serenity of a grove of palm trees. It is 5-minute walking distance from the Historic Shali Fortress. The lodge itself has become a local meeting point and is well liked by both visitors and Siwans alike.



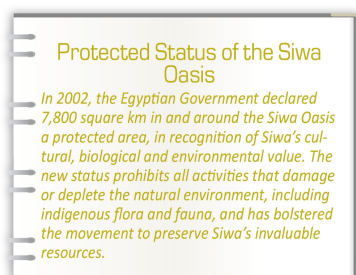
Moderately priced, the lodge offers 16 rooms and a warm and friendly atmosphere. The lodge also appeals to travelers who, regardless of cost, prefer spending their time in the center of activity. Shali Lodge has played an important role in ensuring that EQI is actively engaged and present in the village, thereby consolidating the partnership between the community and EQI.

### **Albabenshal**

Albabenshal, also in Siwa Town, is our Heritage Lodge. It is an 11-room lodge, located on the periphery of the Historic Shali Fortress. The rooms were constructed out of once inhabited kershef houses that had been destroyed by several factors including the migration of the original Siwan residents, looting and unusually heavy rains.



Albabenshal is a restoration project created through a process of restoring and restructuring dilapidated and abandoned homes. The lodge aims to revitalize this important area in Siwa and encourage the continued restoration of the remaining abandoned homes surrounding the Fortress.



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<http://www.adrereamellal.net>

<http://www.siwa.com>

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