

# Alexandria Threatened to Lose Its Treasures

## Thanks to Floods

Alexandria is the second largest city in Egypt and an important tourist destination for international visitors that are keen to learn about the culture and history of the nation. Its ancient treasures lie beyond the tourist-friendly beaches and there is a lot to learn and to see. The problem is that climate change is threatening to send another large area of the city underwater and there is little to be done to stop it.



The Nile Delta has always been prone to floods, but recently the situation has become direr. The delta is sinking as a result of climate change. The sediment that made up the basin is being eroded away and the Mediterranean Sea is rising at an ever increasing rate.

In the early 1990s, the level of the Med was increasing by 1.8 millimeters per year but this has now increased to 3.2mm. As a result, it is expected that 30% of the delta will be sunk beneath the water level as rapidly as in the next fifteen years. Floods have always been an issue in this region but the annual floods once served a purpose. The salt water brought in from the Mediterranean, which causes so much damage to local agriculture, was once washed away and replaced with fresh water. The construction of the Aswan Dam saw the end of that.

Alexandria is now at great risk of flooding and major disruption. One of the areas that will be worst hit in the region is the Egyptian city of Alexandria. The steady rise in the water level of the delta may sound gradual when put into millimeters, but it is believed that a simple increase of just half a meter would cause massive displacement in Alexandria as key areas become submerged.



1.5 million people could be forced to move away from the coast, causing massive disruption and uncertainty in a region that is already struggling economically. As Alexandria is a city that also relies on tourism, with 12.6% of the population there being involved in this industry, such evacuation could also

have a big impact on the tourism industry. Tourists will not want to come to an unstable area and there may not be the staff to accommodate them.

The other issue here is that the talk of destruction and displacement are not simply hypothetical. In October of 2015, a storm caused wide-spread disruption as the city was unable to cope with the impact. This may be Egypt's second largest city, but it is poorly prepared for environmental issues like this. The impact of high waves and driving rain caused apartment blocks to collapse and electricity lines fell, leaving many citizens to flee their homes in pitch darkness. To make matters worse, the city's drains were unable to hold the water and merely increased the floods.

What can be done to secure the future of this important city? Drastic measures have been suggested to try and protect the region from further damage – such as the \$300 million plan to build concrete walls at the beaches – but there are two major issues that Alexandria has to contend with here.



Firstly, for any significant improvement to be made, a large-scale overhaul of the delta needs to take place, rather than a series of short term measures. Secondly, the country's economic issues and lack of funding means that any major, beneficial action could be a long way from becoming a reality. Egypt has been ranked as one of the ten most vulnerable countries in regard to global warming, according to the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, but when it comes to measure to help and allow the country to adapt, it is down at 104.

It seems that the loss of Alexandria to the rising waters and floods is something that the local population have come to accept as an inevitability. They knew the city was in a poor state when it crumbled in the storm, they were not surprised to learn that the drains did not work and, perhaps most significantly of all, they know the history of Alexandria. Large portions of the ancient city lie miles out to sea, lost to rising sea levels and, with climate change speeding this process up, the water is sure to encroach on the modern city too.

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