

The New York Times The T List

April 3, 2024

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A Traditional Egyptian Sailboat, Restored for Luxurious Trips Down the Nile



Left: **Set Nefru**, a dahabiya (traditional Egyptian sailboat), on the Nile. Right: a view of the Nile from the primary cabin, decorated with antiques, original artwork and history books. Mark Anthony Fox

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In Pharaonic times, royalty and nobles traveled the Nile on *dahabiyas*, traditional wooden boats with two sails and private cabins. (“Dahab” means gold in Arabic; early forms of the boats were often painted to resemble that precious metal.) Steamships ultimately replaced the dahabiya in the late 1800s but lately the boat is back in style thanks to its slow pace and relative silence. This spring, a five-cabin boat called **Set Nefru**, originally built in the 1940s for a member of the Egyptian royal family, began accepting charters. Its Cairo-based owners — Margarita Andrade, the co-founder of the luxury linens brand Malaika; her husband, the lawyer Florian Amereller; and the entrepreneur Alexander Arafa — invested in a team of 50 craftspeople who restored it with reclaimed wood from historic palaces in Alexandria and laser-cut marble for the bathrooms. (Andrade and Amereller are also behind the Luxor hotel [Al Moudira](#).) In the process, they discovered a hidden Art Deco painting on the boat’s saloon bulkhead. The interior was otherwise returned to its former glory with vintage French and bespoke furniture, Limoges porcelain tableware and Egyptian bed linens from Malaika. For chartered voyages (typically three days or more), **Set Nefru**, which comes with a staff of 11 including a chef, **sets** sail from Luxor and makes its way toward Aswan, stopping at historical sites like the Temple of Horus and for visits (and sometimes meals) at small family farms along the Nile. Price on request, setnefru.com.