



## Sequoia

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I had a few friends visiting Cairo, and having been recommended Sequoia by a friend, we went the last night they were in town and it was incredible! Not being sure about the need to make reservations, we went ahead and made them anyways. So when we arrived about 20 minutes late, our worries were laid to rest, seeing as the staff didn't seem upset (they even joked that they had given our table away – which gained me a furious look from my friends, and I know not to come between them and their food). We were shown to one of the tables overlooking the Nile (as opposed to further in, although take it from me, any location pretty much has an amazing view).

Sequoia is another example of the opportunities to be found in the gastronomically regenerated City of Cairo. It is not really a restaurant in the conventional sense (although one can eat well and informally), nor a café in the English or French sense (although one can drink good coffee and cappuccino). It is however very unusual and an eclectic mix of styles. It's subdivided into three different areas – Shebatta, Andrea Hookah Café and Yazeed.

Shebatta is apparently named after an Italian bread, shaped like a slipper (you learn something new every day) and is unique in that artwork is displayed for a period of one month. Andrea Hookah Café is named after or is also known as a shisha, whereas Yazeed is named after the Sufi philosopher Bestami Yazeed.

We were sitting in Andrea Hookah Café and let me tell you, it was a great night. The décor is chic, modern and atmospheric enough to match the rather exotic food (and by exotic I mean Oriental to me but exotic to my visiting friends). The wood floors play host to low tables surrounded by plush chairs and stools, and are accented by draped canopy's overhead. The tables are not too close together – there is no sense in crowding – but one can chat with a neighboring table and that seems to be what happens quite often (or maybe we were the only ones who didn't know other people). There is an attractive bar at one side where a few people can sit, again on stools, and select something to drink from the predominantly non alcoholic menu.

It does tend to be a little more of a club atmosphere at night, and can be a little rowdy especially as it attracts a mainly 20 something crowd.

The menu is pretty much standard oriental fare. It's broken down into cold and hot mezze's, grills and other main courses. If you plan to order mezze's, it's advisable to share, since the quantities are not exactly the most fulfilling, but by sharing, you'll get a more communal experience and be more satisfied. One thing well worth pointing out is the shisha choices you have. And I must say, neither I (excluding my visiting companions who found everything exciting) nor any of my other friends have seen such a wide range of shisha flavours. The waiter brings over a tray laden with small samples of what's on offer. You can smell each concoction which vary from the traditional to the unconventional, and then decide. Personally, I found the shisha's to be extremely delightful. They have a relaxing buzz and make a great accompaniment for conversation and a cup of tea.

My only real gripe was that the ambient temperature was at least a couple of degrees below comfort and I was tempted to ask my girlfriend back for my jacket as to keep myself warm. In all though, it was an enjoyable experience and somewhere I will visit again.