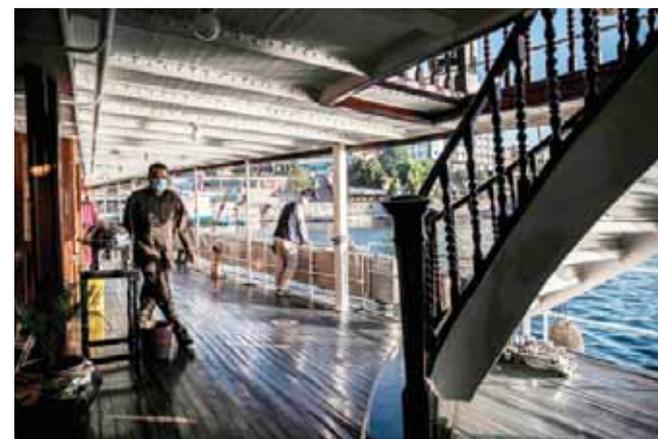




This picture shows a view of Aswan from the Old Cataract Hotel overlooking the Nile River in Egypt's southern city of Aswan. —AFP photos



A view of the deck of the Nile steam ship "PS Sudan".



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# Nile cruiser that inspired Agatha Christie sails on despite virus

More than a century after it first cruised the glittering waters of the Nile, the Steam Ship Sudan draws tourists following the trail of legendary crime novelist Agatha Christie. The SS Sudan, which towers over the traditional wooden sailing boats in Egypt's southern city of Aswan, inspired the British author sometimes dubbed the "Queen of Crime" to pen one of her most famous works in 1937, "Death on the Nile". The whodunnit tells the story of Christie's famous Belgian detective Hercule Poirot, investigating murder among the well-heeled travellers as they cruise the Nile.

"Agatha Christie's trip aboard the steamer, the atmosphere and its route... inspired her to begin writing the first chapters," said Amir Attia, the cruise ship's director. Built for the Egyptian royal family in 1885 and transformed into a cruise liner in 1921, the SS Sudan hosted the novelist with her second husband, archaeologist Max Mallowan, in 1933.

## Two-year waiting list

Among the ship's 23 rooms and suites, Attia says the writer's room is still "the most popular". Passengers are whisked away on

Christie's original itinerary, stopping at the same ancient archaeological sites, albeit with a difference—the liner now runs on diesel and solar power instead of coal. A staff of 67 keeps the vessel shipshape, and a luxury eight-day trip also including stays in two historic hotels sets travellers back around \$4,000, but there is a long waiting list to stay in the Christie cabin. "There are booking requests for up to two years in advance," he said.

While Egypt's key tourism industry has been hit hard by Covid-19 restrictions—with revenues slashed by more than a fifth from 2019-2020 — the ship's staff are insistent the pandemic will



This picture shows the steam ship "PS Sudan" cruising along the Nile river by Egypt's southern city of Aswan.



A view of the bathroom at the suite where British crime fiction writer Dame Agatha Christie is believed to have stayed.



A view of the suite where British crime fiction writer Dame Agatha Christie is believed to have stayed while writing her 1937 novel "Death on the Nile".