

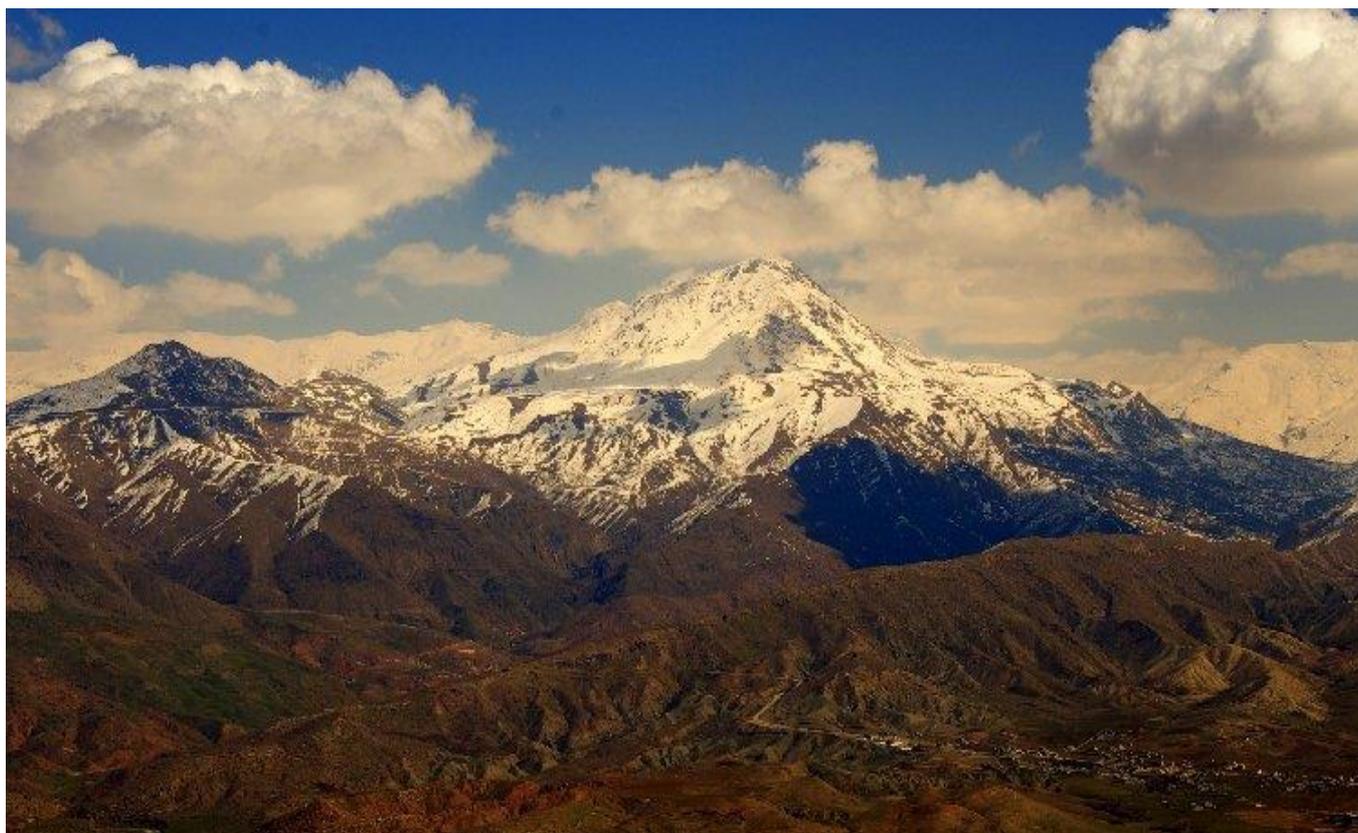


Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Southern Iraq - The Land Between the River

Tour Duration – 10 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●○○○○

Tour Pace

Moderate

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: Comfortable hotel accommodation with en suite (Best available properties)
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum 12
Start Point: Baghdad
End Point: Basra
Transport: Bus
Country Visited: Iraq



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Map Southern Iraq – The Land Between the Rivers



The Land Between the Rivers

Iraq is home to more archaeological and historical sites than any nation on earth. While the northern autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq has been freely accessible for decades, due to political circumstances and war, those located in southern Iraq have been all but closed off to the world's eyes. With the fall of Saddam Hussein and the recent improvement of security, these sites are now open for the intrepid traveller to visit. Follow in the footsteps of Abraham through the city of Ur of Chaldea; stand in awe at the gates of Babylon where Alexander the Great spent his last days and King Hammurabi ruled his Babylonian Empire. Spend a moment of reflection in some of the world's most important religious locations dating to the stargazing Chaldeans; home to some of Christendom's first churches, and today several of Islam's holiest cities and shrines. Begin your journey in Baghdad and for the next eight days experience what most lovers of history have only dreamed of seeing.



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Baghdad

You will be met on arrival at Baghdad International Airport and after check-in to the hotel, enjoy a welcome drink and then dinner in one of the hotel's fine restaurants (depending on time of arrival). If you are arriving early, you can already start exploring a bit of Baghdad. Overnight in Baghdad - Palestine Hotel, Baghdad hotel or Al-Mansour Hotel. (D)

Day 2: Baghdad – Samarra - Ctesiphon

This morning, depart for the archaeological beautiful old city of Samarra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After the visit, return to Baghdad for lunch, and then continue on to Ctesiphon, an ancient city located on the left (northeast) bank of the Tigris River about 20 miles southeast of Baghdad, in east-central Iraq. It served as the winter capital of the Parthian empire and later of the Sasanian Empire. The site is famous for the remains of a gigantic hall, the Taq Kisra, which is traditionally regarded as the palace of the Sasanian king Khosra I (reigned AD 241-272). Return to Baghdad and, time permitting, we will enjoy a light city tour. Overnight in Baghdad - Palestine Hotel, Baghdad hotel or Al-Mansour Hotel. (BLD)

Samarra

In the medieval times, Samarra was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and is the only remaining Islamic capital that retains its original plan, architecture and artistic relics. In 2007, UNESCO named Samarra one of its World Heritage sites. Its origins date to 5500 BC.

Day 3: Baghdad city tour

We visit this morning the Archaeological Museum of Iraq and then the El-Mustansariyyaschool (Madrassa), one of the oldest Islamic institutions of higher learning in the world, established in 1227 by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustansir and located on the left bank of the Tigris River. In 1235 AD, the hours of prayer were announced by day and night via a monumental water-powered alarm clock located in the entrance hall. The Madrasah is still functioning in a new building, and is now part of the Al-Mustansiriya University following an expansion and restructuring of the original Madrassa in 1927. Later, head to Al-Mutanabi Street named after the 10th century classical Iraqi poet and explore Souk al-Safareen, the famous copper market. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight in Baghdad - Palestine Hotel, Baghdad hotel or Al-Mansour Hotel. (BLD)



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Day 4: Baghdad - Babylon – Karbala

Depart after breakfast for the city of Babylon. On arrival, tour the ancient city and one of the largest of Mesopotamia. Totally rebuilt under Saddam who practically resurrected a site, which was nothing but crumbling hills. The entire central palace of Babylon shines in 20th century fired bricks and yes, it is impressive to walk through these vast courts and to think that Alexander the Great died in this same throne room, surrounded by his mourning generals. The same famed Ishtar Gate is displayed at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin but here you can see the original layer of the processional way with the magnificent carvings. Right behind Babylon with gorgeous views over the Euphrates and the ruins towers one of the most impressive Palaces of Saddam. This one is open for people to roam around in. It has been looted to the last light bulb and filled with graffiti. The sheer size and cost of this palace and the fact that he most likely never even was there, indicates the magnitude of his madness and waste. Proceed to Karbala, a holy city for Iraqi Shia because it holds the shrine of the martyred Imam Husayn Ibn Ali, who died here in 680 and the subsequent conflict over succession of the caliphate, distinguished the Shia from the Sunni sects of Islam. Dinner and overnight in Karbala - Rayhaan Karbala by Rotana or The Baroon Hotel. (BLD)

Day 5: Karbala - Kifl - Kufa – Najaf

In the morning, depart for Najaf an Islamic holy city and home to the shrine of Imam Ali, Prophet Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law and the fourth caliph (656-661), on the way, we visit the town of Al Kifl with its shrine dedicated to prophet Ezekiel. Check into the hotel and in the evening visit the souk around the glittering shrine complex. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight in Najaf - Zamzam Hotel, Royal Wings Hotel or Barada Hotel. (BLD)

Day 6: Najaf - Uruk - Nasiriya

Depart for Samawa, settled on both sides of the Euphrates River by the Himyarite tribe of Banu Quda'a around the 3rd century AD. Tour Warka, the excavated site of Uruk, the first city on earth, where writing was invented. Proceed to Nasiriya, the capital of the province of Dhi-Qar, near the ruins of the ancient city of Ur on the Euphrates River. In the evening, continue to Nasiriya for a stroll in its bustling souk before dinner. Overnight in Nasiriya - Gudia Hotel or Sumerian Hotel. (BLD)

Day 7: Nasiriya – Ur

In the morning, visit the Ziggurat of Ur built with similar characteristics as the Tower of Babel mentioned in the Bible and the towers of a temple complex dedicated to the lunar god Nanna. Tour the archaeological city of Ur, believed to be the birthplace prophet Abraham. After lunch, take a stroll in Nasiriya bustling souk before dinner. Overnight in Nasiriya - Gudia Hotel or Sumerian Hotel. (BLD)

Day 8: Nasiriya - Marshes – Basra

This morning, depart to the Marshes for a full day tour with a canoe ride. It is one of the largest ecosystems in the world and one of its strangest aquatic environments. The region is currently being rehabilitated after the dramatic and aggressive drainage policy conducted under the regime of Saddam Hussein. This immense body of water at the entrance to the Shatt-el-Arab, covered with reeds and dotted with lake-dweller villages, is home to the Marsh Arabs. This region was already inhabited 5,000 years ago, as witnessed by the Sumerianbas-reliefs. Since then, the population has retained a lifestyle built essentially around fishing, buffalo breeding and reed weaving. Continue to Basra and on the way to visit the Paradise of Aden where Tigris and Euphrates meet in amazing scene. Dinner and overnight in Basra - Shams Albasrah Hotel or Minawi Bash Hotel. (BLD)

Day 9: Basra

After breakfast, head out for sightseeing in the old city, along the stretch of the canal lined with the Ottoman Shenashil Houses. It is a sad shadow of Basra's former glory. Most of them are unoccupied and falling apart and possibly visits one of them, which were owned by a wealthy Greek merchant in the 19th century.



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Then ride in a boat on the Shatt Al-Arab, which is the river following the merge of the Euphrates and the Tigris, to view the sunset. Dinner and overnight in Basra. (BLD)

Day 10: Departure from Basra

Transfer on due time to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

Note: *Departure should be from Basra International Airport. If you would like to depart from Baghdad, flight or land transportation can be arranged at an extra cost. Please contact us for details.*

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation
Transport throughout
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas (visa available on arrival in Baghdad for most nationalities – approximately USD 75)
Drinks
Items of personal nature
Tips (Discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the exception of the Kurdistan region, at the time of writing the FCDO advise against all travel in Iraq. Please see - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iraq>

Safety of our travellers is our main priority and we want to ensure that this tour is absolutely safe to operate. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or if would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

The accommodation on this tour is primarily mid-range with reasonable levels of comfort and private bathrooms. However as Western tourism is not well established in the area, standards may fall short of what would be expected for example in Europe. Rooms will be en suite. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £5 - £10 / Dinner £5 - £10

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £1.20 / Water £0.50



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in Iraq. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: ATM machines are usually available but most are not connected to international banking networks for inter-bank withdrawals.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Card acceptance is very limited in Iraq, usually only in major international standard hotels which we do not use.

Local Currency: Iraqi Dinar

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollars

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Most clients will need a visa to visit Iraq. Most nationals can now obtain a visa on arrival and the cost is approximately USD 75.

Please check with us or with your nearest embassy for the most up to date details.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities. For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Vaccinations & Protection

We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The best and most comfortable time to visit Iraq is from February - March and October - December. The region receives little rain and temperatures when we operate the tour range from an average low of around 10 degrees Celsius to an average high of 35 degrees Celsius. We tend to avoid operating the tour in the summer months when temperatures are extreme.

Clothing

It is always wise to dress conservatively out of respect for the norms for this part of the world. When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night – in some areas it can get quite cool in the mountains. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun. You should make sure that you bring a waterproof jacket for any rainy days.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended and sandals for general travelling.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V and plugs usually have two round pins like most European countries or three pins as in the UK. It is recommended that you take a multi adaptor plug.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 28th July 2021.