



INTRODUCTION

Our fixed date departures are designed as a budget-friendly option for any travellers who would like to join others in a group tour to explore and experience Iraq with one of the country's leading tour providers. The maximum group size will be 15 people and there is no minimum group size. Every scheduled tour will run, even if only 2 passengers have booked.

Accommodation is based on two people sharing a twin or double room, with an option for a single person supplement (at extra cost) if a single room is preferred.

Arrival airport transfers are included on whatever day you arrive before the tour starts. Departure transfers are included on the day the tour ends and the following day. If you wish to stay longer in Iraq, you would need to arrange your own transport to your departure airport.

Our fixed date departure tours include 10 nights accommodation in 4* hotels (although local hotel standards mean these are more akin to western 3* hotels). If you wish to extend your stay - arriving earlier than the tour start date or departing after the tour end date, we would be happy to help book additional nights for you, which would usually cost \$80 per night.

Iraq Tours is a licensed tourism company and all Iraq Tours guides are trained and licensed. We use modern vehicles and employ professional drivers. On each of the tours, you will have a guide and a driver with you for the duration of the tour.



DAY 1 | BASRA | 25th SEP

Our tour will start in Basra in the morning. If you are arriving on that day, you will be warmly greeted upon arrival at Basra International Airport and transferred into the city, for breakfast or tea - your first taste of Iraqi tea! - or breakfast, if you arrive on an overnight flight. If you arrived in the day/s preceding the tour start date, airport transfers will still be provided and we will provide you with the meeting point and time.

Our sightseeing will then commence, starting with **Basra Museum**, which is a fantastic modern museum housed in a former palace of Saddam Hussein, situated within a complex of his former palaces. It is an excellent museum, with collections from Mesopotamian, Babylonian and Persian civilisations.

From there, we will visit a historic area of the city, famous for its **Shanashel** heritage houses, with their unique wooden balconies, stained glass windows and large courtyards. Many of these are in poor condition but restoration work is underway and we will hopefully be able to step inside one which is being restored for public access. We will also take tea in a lovely al-Hassoon Museum teahouse which the owner has made into a little museum formed of his personal collection of vintage Iraqi items.

We will then stroll through the **Souq al-Ashar**, which offers a vibrant glimpse into Basra's rich culture, with its lively stalls filled with spices and fresh produce.

After that, we will visit the **Imam Ali mosque (Al-Khutwa)**, the second mosque built in the Islamic world, offering our first glimpse into Iraq's Islamic history.

Later, we will stroll along the corniche beside the river and (if accessible) visit **Saddam Hussein's former personal yacht**. Then, we will take a short boat trip along the **Shatt al-Arab** River which flows through Basra, to see Saddam's former palaces from a different perspective as well as Basra's striking bridge, stretching across the width of the river, before finding a nice restaurant for supper.

OVERNIGHT BASRA (ATLAS HOTEL)



DAY 2 | BASRA – MARSHEs – NASIRYAH | 26th SEP

We will start our day at with a visit to **Al-Qurnah** to see the **Tree of Adam**, believed by local people to have grown where Prophet Adam descended to earth, and where Prophet Abraham is thought to have prayed. While this belief is not rooted in Islamic tradition, it is a respected site amongst locals and foreign visitors alike.

Nearby is **Al-Multaqa**, where the **Tigris** and **Euphrates** rivers converge to form the **Shatt al-Arab** river.

Then, we will head to the **Marshes of southern Iraq**, the largest wetlands in the Middle East and now part of an expansive UNESCO World Heritage Site. These marshes provide a habitat for many unique bird and fish species and are home to thousands of Marsh Arabs, who have lived a traditional way of life here since Sumerian times. The Marsh Arabs continue to return to their historical homeland after the marshes – infamously drained by Saddam in the 1990s – started being re-flooded after 2003.

We will pause here to rest, enjoy traditional tea and meet some local people, before taking a boat trip through the maze of the marshes on a traditional boat called a **“Shakhtura,”** a unique and beautiful experience.

For lunch, we will have the option to enjoy **Masgouf**, a famous dish of fish slow-grilled using reeds instead of wood, inside a traditional reed house known as **“Al-Mutheef”**.

OVERNIGHT NASIRYAH (SUMARION HOTEL)



DAY 3 | UR – URUK – NAJAF | 27th SEP

After breakfast, we will start the day by visiting the **Ziggurat of Ur**, one of the most distinctive architectural features of the ancient Mesopotamians and one of the best-preserved examples of these ancient four-sided ziggurats in Iraq. Ur is also where many of the most beautiful treasures of Mesopotamia were discovered, buried in the royal tombs. The reputed birthplace of the Prophet Abraham also lies within the ziggurat complex, although currently inaccessible to visitors.

We will also visit the nearby new **Tourist City of Ur**, a nearby modern site which has been under construction following the historic visit of Pope Francis to Iraq in 2021. It has some interesting architectural buildings, including a new church and an Italian-style open-air theatre, as well as a restaurant.

We will then drive towards Samawah, to visit the amazing ruins of **Uruk (Al Warka”)**, often referred to as one of the world’s first cities and famous for its association with Gilgamesh and also for being where the world’s first writing was invented. This is an expansive and fascinating site in the middle of the desert, where we usually spend several hours.

From **Uruk** we will drive to the holy city of **Najaf**, where we will have supper and where you have the opportunity for a magical night visit to the **Imam Ali Holy Shrine**.

OVERNIGHT NAJAF (JAR AL AMIR HOTEL)



DAY 4 | NAJAF-KARBALA | 28th SEP

Our first visit of the day will be to the **Imam Ali Holy Shrine** which contains the tomb of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. Shia Muslims consider Ali as their first Imam, while Sunni Muslims regard him as the fourth Sunni Rashid Caliph.

Then we will visit the world's largest graveyard - **Wadi al-Salaam** - containing nearly six million graves, and currently included on the Tentative UNESCO World Heritage sites.

From Najaf, we will head towards Karbala, another holy city for Shia Muslims. On the way, we will visit the mysterious and magnificent **al-Ukaidir** fortress and the ruins of the ancient, windswept **al-Aqiser** church, hidden in the desert.

Once we reach Karbala itself, we will visit the **Imam Abbas shrine**, which contains the tomb of one of the greatest Islamic and historical characters, and where we will witness fascinating rituals and traditions. Opposite this, in the shrine complex, is the **Imam Hussein shrine** which contains the tomb of the second son of Imam Ali and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. There will also be time to explore the bustling adjacent markets before we choose a restaurant for our supper.

OVERNIGHT KARBALA (AWLAD AL HASAN HOTEL)



DAY 5 | BABYLON | 29th SEP

We will start our day by driving to **Babylon**, where we will explore this fascinating and expansive site, including the remains of the Ishtar Gate, the reputed place of Alexander the Great's death and the wonderful Lion of Babylon statue. This is also the reputed site of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Then, if it is accessible to visitors on that day, we will visit **Saddam's Palace**, a modern palace (inspired by the former palace of King Nebuchadnezzar) on a steep manmade hill overlooking the site of ancient Babylon, and which still features images of the Iraqi strongman leader.

After that we will head to **Kish**, to explore the archaeological remnants of this once-important 5,000 year-old city, much of which today lies buried under the desert sands.

From Kish, we will drive to **Baghdad**, to check in to our next hotel, select our venue for supper and start to explore the nightlife of Iraq's capital.

OVERNIGHT IN BAGHDAD (NOORLAND HOTEL)



DAY 6 | BAGHDAD | 30th SEP

After breakfast, we will visit the fantastic **Iraqi National Museum**, which should have reopened, as it has been closed for refurbishment throughout the winter. Home to one of the world's most important collections of Mesopotamian antiquities, including Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations, there is much to see and visitors normally enjoy spending several hours here.

Then, we will visit the **Martyrs Monument**, which was dedicated to Iraqi soldiers who died in the 1980s Iraq-Iran war, although Iraqis today generally consider it a commemoration of all Iraqi martyrs from recent wars.

Next, we will visit **Al-Kadhimiya**, an important neighbourhood in Baghdad which, at its centre, has the bustling night market and the **Al Kadhimiya Holy Shrine**. This beautiful mosque and shrine complex contains the tomb of Imam Musa al-Kadhim - the seventh Shia Imam - and that of his grandson, Imam Muhammad al-Jawad.

We will then visit one of Baghdad's smallest churches, located in the Kadhimiya district of the city, where we will take tea with the custodian, find out more about the church's history and ask any questions you may have about what it is like to be a Christian in Iraq.

After that, we will visit **Liberation Square**, which is one of Baghdad's main squares which continues to play an important role in protests, marches, uprisings and revolutions, and drive past Baghdad's superb **Central Railway Station**, which is beautifully illuminated at night.

OVERNIGHT IN BAGHDAD (NOORLAND HOTEL)



DAY 7 | BAGHDAD | 1st OCT

For our second day of Baghdad sightseeing, we will start our day with a short **boat trip** across the **River Tigris**, alighting at the end of the capital's famous **Mutanabbi Street**. This is considered the oldest cultural market for the people of Baghdad, and is especially famous for being the city's main book-buying district. It is also a brilliant place for finding souvenirs.

Next, we will visit the Ottoman-era **Al-Qishla** in the **Al-Muwaffaqia School**, **before stepping back further in time when we** visit the **Al-Mustansiriya School**, the impressive well-preserved Abbasid-era remains of an ancient school.

Continuing our explorations of historic Baghdad, we will stroll through the **Old bazaar** and see traditional craftsmanship in the **Copper Market**.

We will take some time out to sip traditional Iraqi tea or a local speciality dried lime tea in the historic **Al-Shabander** cafe, one of Baghdad's oldest and most famous cafes, and take lunch in a nearby restored heritage house.

In the afternoon, we will visit **Ctesiphon**, which is considered a landmark in the history of architecture, featuring one of the world's earliest single-span unsupported brick arches. Although the site is currently closed to visitors, we can still have an excellent view of the impressive building over the wall. It is particularly charming at sunset.

Back in Baghdad in the evening, we will stop by the modern statue of **Shahryar and Scheherazade**, representing the famous story of **One Thousand and One Nights**, before heading to a nearby local restaurant for supper. Often, visitors like to choose a traditional slow-cooked Masgouf (fish) supper or other local cuisine in a heritage house converted into a unique restaurant.

OVERNIGHT IN BAGHDAD (NOORLAND HOTEL)



DAY 8 | SAMMARA – MOSUL | 2nd OCT

After an early breakfast at the hotel, we will set off for a long drive day toward northern Iraq, which features some marvellous stops along the way.

Our first stop will be to visit the **Samarra Spiral Minaret**, one of Iraq's most distinctive landmarks because of its unique ascending spiral conical design. As this has been closed for maintenance, we can take photos from outside and then we will head into the desert to visit the slightly smaller **Spiral Minaret of Abu Dalaf** which is absolutely stunning. We often have this remote site to ourselves and, if you wish, you can ascend the spiral minaret.

Our next stop along the way is **Tikrit**, where we can show you the village where **Saddam Hussain** was born and catch a glimpse, from the highway, of where he is reportedly buried.

We will then visit the archaeological site of **Ashur** which was once the capital of the powerful Assyrian Empire. The city once featured ancient temples, palaces and a ziggurat. Although the site stands in ruin and is suffering from desert encroachment, it still offers visitors a tantalising glimpse into the past.

Our final stop of the day is to explore **Hatra - the first Arab Kingdom**, where this impressive archaeological site rises from the desert. While spotting Saddam Hussein's initials on the new bricks that formed part of his rebuilding project, we will also learn about the recent history of the site, which was occupied by the Islamic State for two years and used as a training ground for child soldiers.

It is often beautiful at dusk, when we will leave and head to Iraq's second largest city of Mosul, where we will get our first taste of famous Mosul cuisine and check in to our hotel for a well-earned restful night.

OVERNIGHT IN MOSUL (AL BAROON HOTEL)



DAY 9 | MOSUL | 3rd OCT

After a good breakfast, we will start our day with a walking tour of the **Old City of Mosul**. This famous and beautiful historical part of the city was occupied by the Islamic State for two years and was one of the militants' last strongholds and the scene of some of the fiercest urban battles of the 21st century. Since Mosul's liberation, extensive building projects have been underway to restore the ancient buildings situated along the edges of quaint alleyways.

We will also visit the **Great Mosque of al-Nuri**, and see the restored pulpit where the self-proclaimed Caliph of the Islamic State Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared the establishment of ISIS, in a rare public appearance. The distinctive adjacent leaning minaret which had long been a symbol of Mosul was destroyed during the battle against ISIS, but has been painstakingly rebuilt.

After wandering through the souk and sampling more of Mosul's famous dishes for lunch, we will head out of the city to explore northern Iraq's Christian heritage, visiting the ancient **Rabban Hormizd Monastery in Al-Qosh**. Carved into the mountainside, this 7th-century monastery offers a fascinating glimpse into ancient Christian history and its world of monks and hermits.

From there, will head to **Lalish**, which is the spiritual centre of the Yazidis, a unique people who follow an ancient faith and who were mercilessly targeted by ISIS. Adhering to Yazidi customs, we will step over the threshold into the magical **Lalish Temple**, a holy site for all Yazidis to discover more about the beliefs and practices of this community.

Thereafter, we will drive to Erbil, to sample some traditional Kurdish cuisine for our supper and check in to our hotel.

OVERNIGHT ERBIL (ERBIL VIEW HOTEL)



DAY 10 | ERBIL | 4th OCT

On our final full day, we will focus on sightseeing in Erbil, starting with a visit to the 7,000-year-old **Citadel**, one of the oldest continuously inhabited places in the world. Its rich history includes having once been a Sumerian City, a place where it is believed Abraham passed through on one of his journeys and is said to be where Darius III fled after his army's defeat by Alexander the Great. UNESCO is currently undertaking a significant restoration project, which may mean that access is restricted.

If accessible, we will visit the **Textile Museum** in the Citadel which, for several hundred years, has showcased ancient Kurdish fighting tools, traditional dresses and handmade rugs from different regions and eras of Kurdish history.

We will take tea at a traditional and popular cafe nestled at the foot of the Citadel, nearby several shops which offer a wide range of souvenirs, before exploring the covered **Qaysari Bazaar** and food market, sampling some traditional Kurdish sweets.

We will then see the 12th-century **Choli Minaret** - all that remains of the former mosque - and the city's largest modern mosque - the **Jalil Khayat Mosque** - an elaborate affair inspired by Abbasid and Ottoman architecture, completed in 2007.

Then, we will explore Iraq's Christian heritage at the new **Syriac Heritage Museum** in the Ainkawa Christian district, which expanded greatly after 2014, when the Christians of Mosul sought sanctuary there after being evicted from their homes by ISIS.

We will have our final supper together in Erbil's Christian district before heading to our hotel for some rest. Departures are often in the early hours of the morning but we will provide airport transfers for whatever time your flight departs from **Erbil International Airport**. If you have a later flight, we might be able to see a little more of Erbil in the morning.



INCLUDED:

- Private transport for the duration of the tour in a comfortable modern vehicle.
- Airport transfers at the start and end of the trip.
- Accommodation in 4-star hotels, all including breakfast.
- An English-speaking guide
- Driver for the duration of the trip.
- Cultural immersion - authentic experiences and interactions with local people and communities.
- Logistics: Airport transfers, bottled water, snacks and abayas (full-length garments which women must wear when entering Islamic holy sites in Iraq).
- Entrance fees to all sites (these are \$20 per person, per site)
- Boat trips in the marshes and in Basra.
- Iraq Tours team fees (accommodation and food for the driver and guide)

NOT INCLUDED:

- International flights to and from Iraq.
- Visa fees. The current cost of a 30-day tourist visa is \$110, per visa. You can apply for this yourselves, or we can do it for you, for \$120 per visa. We would need a recent passport photograph and a scan of the photo page of your passport.
- Lunch and dinner each day.
- Optional tips for the guide and driver.



Booking & Payment Confirmation

To ensure a smooth and secure reservation process, we follow a structured payment schedule:

- **30%** payment due 3 months prior to arrival to confirm the booking
- **70%** payment due 1 month prior to arrival *or* payable in cash upon arrival

This staged payment process allows us to prepare everything to the highest standard while offering flexibility to our valued guests.

For any questions or assistance, our team is always ready to help. We look forward to welcoming you to Iraq!

Cancellation Policy – Iraq Tours

At **IRAQ TOURS**, we understand that plans can change. Our cancellation policy is designed to be fair, transparent and considerate of both our guests and operational requirements.

More than 31 days before arrival

Full refund (100%) of received payments

22 to 30 days before arrival

Partial refund (70%) of received payments

11 to 21 days before arrival

Partial refund (30%) of received payments

1 to 10 days before arrival

No refund (0%) – payments are non-refundable



Refund Policy Update – Please Read Carefully

At **IRAQ TOURS**, we strive to ensure a seamless and transparent refund experience for all our valued travellers. As part of our refund process, a standard fee will be applied to cover essential administrative and bank transaction costs related to both sending and receiving funds.

For every **\$1,000 USD** refunded, a **\$100 USD** deduction will be made. This helps us maintain smooth operations and deliver timely refunds while covering necessary service and office charges.

We appreciate your understanding and continued trust in Iraq Tours. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to our support team – we're here to help.