

IRAQ

DETAILED ITINERARY

14 DAYS

Mar 17/25



Journey to modern day Iraq , a destination of incredible diversity, embracing a welcoming culture in a land known as the 'Cradle of Civilization'! Explore the wonders of ancient Mesopotamia, home to the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians! From Basra in the south to Erbil in the north, the first systems of writing and of justice are believed to have originated from this historic region, with a history dating back almost 7,000 years.

Our adventure starts in Basra before heading north-west to the 'The Marshes', which we explore by boat before visiting the Ziggurat (pyramid dating back to 2,100BC) of Ur and the Royal Tombs. Next, we explore ancient Uruk and the spiritual sites and shrines of Najaf and Karbala. We continue to the fabled, ancient city of Babylon to explore its remnants, as well as one of Saddam Hussein's Palaces, before spending time in the capital of Baghdad with its palaces, markets and stunning Islamic architecture.

Continuing north, discover ancient (UNESCO) Samarra with its Great Mosque and Spiral Minaret and the ruins

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

- 14 land days • Maximum 16 travelers • Starts in Basra and finishes in Erbil • All meals included • See the ancient Arch and city of Ctesiphon • Explore the ruins of ancient Babylon • Visit Al-Ukhaidir fortress • Journey to the religious and spiritual sites of Karbala and Najaf • Explore the great Ziggurat of Ur • Meander through the Mesopotamian Marshes by boat • Visit the Malwiya Minaret in Ancient Samarra • Enjoy the Parthian ruins of Hatra (UNESCO) • See the ancient Arch and city of Ctesiphon • Hike to Shanidar 'Neanderthal' cave • Enjoy the Christian, Kurdish and ancient sites of Erbil

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Mar 20 - Apr 02, 2026 - **\$6995 USD**
Oct 20 - Nov 02, 2026 - **\$6995 USD**

Activity Level: 2

Comfort Level: Some long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We stay in comfortable accommodations with private bathrooms.

ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

of Hatra (UNESCO), a once powerful desert fortress. Enjoy a tour of the old town of Mosul with churches and Nimrud (UNESCO) with its palaces, massive stone reliefs and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Finally, we explore the beautiful mountainous region of Kurdistan. Explore monasteries, tombs, and Assyrian villages. We drive to Shanidar Cave, home to Neanderthals dating back 65,000 years.

Finally, we finish our adventure in Erbil, an early center of Christianity and the capital of the Kurdistan region and one of the most ancient cities in the world dating back to 2300 BC. Mesopotamia, and now modern Iraq, have throughout history experienced great prosperity and epic wars. After recent turmoil, be among the first to return to see and experience the culture and cuisine of modern day Iraq and the ancient history of Mesopotamia and the Cradle of Civilization.



Baghdad



DAY 1 • ARRIVE IN BASRA, IRAQ

Meet your local representative on arrival at Basra International airport and transfer to your hotel. Remainder of day at leisure until meeting your fellow travelers and tour leader at the welcome dinner this evening.

Overnight in Basra.

DAY 2 • BASRA SITES

Discover the historic architecture and cultural heritage, including traditional merchant houses, that reflect the city's rich trade history. Visit St Thomas Chaldean Church and learn about Basra's religious diversity and the history of its Christian community. We can visit the Basra museum (if it is open). Enjoy a seafood lunch as Basra is famous for its fresh and flavorful seafood cuisine.

In the afternoon, we take a boat trip on the Shatt al-Arab river, which is formed from the meeting of the



Mesopotamia Marshes



Ziggurat of Ur (UNESCO)



Mesopotamia Marshes





Mesopotamia Marshes



Tigris and Euphrates rivers before emptying into the Persian Gulf. We will pass by the Italian Bridge and Saddam Hussein's palace and yacht.

Overnight in Basra.

DAY 3 • NASIRIYAH VIA THE MESOPOTAMIAN MARSHES; ZIGGURAT OF UR (UNESCO)

We depart Basra and travel north-west to Nasiriyah. Our first stop is the Mesopotamian Marshes, nestled in the floodplain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and is the largest wetlands in the Middle East. Mesopotamia means "land between two rivers". The wetlands provide a habitat for hundreds of birds and fish species, water buffalo and home to thousands of Marsh Arabs who call this home. Some historians believe that these marshlands were once the biblical Garden of Eden. Some of the earliest civilizations lived here including the Sumerians who created the first written language around 3500 BC. We will explore the Marshes by boat and enjoy lunch caught in the Marshes.

In the afternoon, we continue to the ancient city of Ur (UNESCO). Highlights include the royal tombs and the impressive Ziggurat of Ur, built around 2100 BC. According to the Bible (Genesis 21: 5), Ur was the birthplace of Abraham.

Overnight in Nasiriyah.

DAY 4 • URUK (UNESCO) CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION; TO SPIRITUAL CENTER OF NAJAF

This morning we drive to Uruk a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's first cities and a cradle of civilization. Explore the ruins of Uruk, walking through its ancient structures and learning about its historical significance.

In the afternoon, we travel to Najaf where we drive through Wadi Al Salam, the largest graveyard in the world. We continue through the bustling local market until we get to Imam Ali's Shrine, one of the most sacred sites in Shia Islam, where we will have the opportunity to visit inside and experience its profound spiritual significance.

Overnight in Najaf.

Shrine of Al Abbas - Karbala





Save Iraqi Culture Monument - Baghdad



Martyrs Monument - Baghdad



DAY 5 • VISIT AL-UKHAIDIR FORT; TO KARBALA; IMAM HUSSEIN'S SHRINE

Visit Al-Ukhaidir Fort, an impressive early Islamic fortress known for its unique defensive structures and architectural significance.

After exploring the fort, we travel to Karbala to visit Imam Hussein's Shrine, a sacred pilgrimage site with deep spiritual significance, where we will have the opportunity to visit inside and reflect on its profound importance

Overnight in Karbala.

DAY 6 • ANCIENT BABYLON (UNESCO); TO BAGHDAD

Today we travel to the Mesopotamian city of Babylon and explore the ruins of this legendary ancient city. We then visit Saddam Hussein's Palace, overlooking the remains of Babylon. Enjoy lunch at a traditional Iraqi restaurant, savoring authentic local cuisine.

After lunch, we visit Firdos Square, the historic site known for the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue. See the Shahrazad and Shahryar Statue, depicting iconic characters from One Thousand and One Nights.

Overnight in Baghdad.

DAY 7 • BAGHDAD CITY TOUR

Today, we visit the Iraq Museum, home to an extensive collection of artifacts showcasing Iraq's rich history. We explore the Al-Shaheed Monument, a stunning memorial dedicated to Iraqi soldiers.

We drive to Dur-Kurigalzu, an ancient city near Baghdad, to see its well-preserved ziggurat and learn about its historical significance. Finally, we experience modern Baghdad (if time permits), exploring the city's vibrant culture and contemporary life.

Overnight in Baghdad.

DAY 8 • BAGHDAD SITES; ABBASID PALACE

This morning we visit the impressive Abbasid Palace, a symbol of Baghdad's rich history. Next, we spend some time at the Mustansiriya Madrasa, known for its stunning Islamic architecture. We experience real life as we visit the vibrant coppersmith markets and see artisans at work, followed by a stroll down Al-Mutanabi Street, famous for its book markets. We have the opportunity to view the exterior of the Arch of Ctesiphon, an impressive historical landmark.

We have lunch at a traditional Iraqi restaurant where we can enjoy a delicious meal featuring authentic Iraqi dishes. Afterwards, we walk through Tahrir Square, a central hub of cultural significance in the capital.

Overnight in Baghdad.

DAY 9 • SAMARRA (UNESCO); HATRA (UNESCO); TO MOSUL

Today we travel to Samarra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its historical and architectural significance. We visit the Great Mosque of Samarra, an 8th-century Abbasid landmark. Admire the Spiral Minaret, an iconic structure that defines Samarra's skyline.

We continue to Hatra, our second UNESCO site of the day with its remarkably well-preserved temples and fortifications. Explore the ruins of Hatra, experiencing the grandeur of this once-powerful desert fortress.

Later, we arrive in Mosul and, if time allows, we can take a night tour of the city, discovering its landmarks and connecting with locals.

Overnight in Mosul.



Malwiya Minaret (Samarra)



Al Akhdar Castle



Ctesiphon



Hatra



DAY 10 • OLD TOWN OF MOSUL; NIMRUD - MOSUL CHURCHES

Begin the day with a tour of the Old Town of Mosul, a city rich in history and culture. We explore the bustling streets of the Old Market, where history and modern life coexist.

Afterwards, head to Nimrud, an ancient Assyrian city renowned for its historical significance, as we explore the ruins of the royal palace, massive stone reliefs, and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III at this UNESCO site. We visit some of the city's notable churches, such as St. George's Church and Al-Tahira Church. At the end of the day, enjoy a traditional dinner with time to reflect on the day's journey through ancient ruins and sacred sites.

Overnight in Mosul.

DAY 11 • ROBAN HUMIZED MONASTERY; TOMB OF NAHUM; AL-QOSH VILLAGE; MAR MATTAI MONASTERY; TO DUHOK

We start the day with a visit to the Monastery of Roban Humized, nestled in the hills near Mosul. Learn about its religious and historical significance while enjoying the serene surroundings.

We continue to the Tomb of Nahum, a sacred site believed to be the burial place of the Biblical prophet Nahum. Explore the tomb and reflect on its importance in both religious and cultural history.

We continue to Al-Qosh Village, a picturesque Assyrian village with deep historical ties. Visit the ancient St. George's Monastery and walk through the charming village streets, offering a glimpse into Assyrian heritage and daily life.

Afterward, we proceed to Mar Mattai Monastery, one of the oldest Christian monasteries in Iraq, perched on a mountain with stunning views. Discover its fascinating history and impressive architecture. Finally, embark on a scenic drive to Duhok.

Overnight in Duhok.

DAY 12 • KURDISH HIGHLIGHTS; SHANIDAR 'NEANDERTHAL' CAVE; TO ERBIL

Today is a day of great variety as we start with a visit to Narzki Prison followed by Kabhan School and the ruins of Amedi. We also stop for views of the Great Zab River which starts at Van Lake in Turkey and flows into the Tigris River. The river has great historical significance bearing witness to some of history's great battles.

We continue to Shanidar 'Neanderthal' Cave, which was home to Neanderthals at least 65,000 years ago.

Our last stop is the Peshmerga Wall, which is a reference to the Peshmerga, who have historically been Kurdish guerrilla forces combating the ruling powers in the region of what is now Iraqi Kurdistan.

We now drive to Erbil via Soran as our final destination in Iraq.

Overnight in Erbil.

DAY 13 • HIGHLIGHTS OF THE KURDISH CAPITAL

This morning, we head to the Citadel of Erbil, one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world. Explore the citadel's fascinating history, enjoy panoramic views of the city, and visit its museums.

Take a break and enjoy the relaxing atmosphere at Machko Tea House, a cozy spot popular with locals, where you can savor traditional Kurdish tea.

Spend some time at Minaret Park, a beautiful green space with stunning views of the city and the iconic Sami Abdul Rahman Park, a large park perfect for a peaceful stroll or relaxing amidst nature. Discover the Ankawa Church & Museum, a historical site that offers a deep dive into Erbil's Christian heritage and the Kurdish-Assyrian community.

Tonight we will have our farewell dinner to reflect



Nimrod Relief

on the ancient wonders of Mesopotamia in a welcoming culture in modern day Iraq!
Overnight in Erbil.

DAY 14 • DEPART ERBIL

Today you are transferred to the airport for your flight home from Erbil.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. Small groups allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (portage), national guide, bus driver, restaurants and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE “EDUCATIONAL” TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, “educational”. We visit museums and local villages. We also have talks and discussions on many aspects of Iraqi history and culture, but this is only one aspect of what we do.

We believe that it is equally educational to meet new people on a non-commercial basis, visit their homes and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most “educational” moments are spent having a cold drink with locals in a street market.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All land transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We have our own vehicles for road travel — we use a van or coach. We also use boats in the Mesopotamian marshes and on the Shatt al-Arab river in Basra.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

We stay in comfortable, well located accommodations with private bathrooms throughout.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

Temperatures are hotter in the south with lows around 14 C (or mid 50's F) and highs into the low 30's C (mid 80's F)

Temperatures are cooler in the north with lows going down to 6 C (or 43 F) to daily highs around 18/19 C (or around 70 F)

There is not much rainfall in the south but typically rains more in the north. Rainfall in Iraq is seasonal and occurs mostly during the winter season during December through February for most of the country except in the north and northeast, where the rainy season is from November to April.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 USD (plus insurance if you desire it) is due as soon as you decide to go and will reserve your place on the tour. The balance of the land payment is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and these are outlined in the “Terms & Conditions” section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

**Please note those travelers with pre-existing medical conditions must take out travel insurance at the time of deposit*

10. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

All meals are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. In many cases, we simply order a number of shared dishes, so that we can try everything.

11. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed “What to Take” list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over enroute, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the adventure, please call our office for more details. A Trip Specialist will be happy to answer your questions. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.





Shrine of Imam Abbas - Karbala





