



**BEYOND  
THE PATH  
ADVENTURE**

## Iraq – between the Tigris and Euphrates 9 Days

trip, nature, culture and sightseeing

*An exceptional expedition to the places considered to be the cradle of our civilisation. During the tour, we will visit the fascinating heritage sites of ancient Babylon and Assyria and newer ones – dating back to the Arab and Ottoman eras. We will have an opportunity to see the cultural and religious diversity of Iraq, numerous branches of Christianity, Yazidis, and also Iraqi Sunni and Shia Muslims. We will visit little-known regions of the south Iraq. Furthermore, we will have an opportunity to admire the Ahwar Marshlands and we will take a boat tour along the Shatt al-Arab River.*

**You are welcome to take part! BTP Adventure.**

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### Program :

#### ❖ Day 1 - Baghdad

Arrival at the Baghdad airport and transfer to the hotel. An organizational meeting will be held at the hotel. Dinner in one of local restaurants. D.

#### ❖ Day 2 - Baghdad

From the morning, we will start visiting the fascinating city of Baghdad. At the beginning, we will see what is left from the formerly priceless and vast collection of



the National Archaeological Museum of Iraq. In the afternoon, a drive through Baghdad – we will see some of the most important sites: the Freedom Square and the al-Shaheed Monument, also known as the Martyr's Memorial – a memento of the Iran–Iraq War that led to the fall of Iraq in 1980s. In the evening, transfer to the hotel, dinner and rest. B.L.D.

### **Day 3 - Samarra, Malwiya Minaret**

In the morning, we will set off to the one-day trip to Samarra – one of the oldest towns of Iraq. The most important sights will be the remaining structures of the Great Mosque of Samarra, with their most prominent “snail shell minaret”. Construction of the 33 m minaret was started in 848 and finished 851, in the times of Abbasid caliphs. In 2007, the Malwiya Minaret was entered into the UNESCO World Heritage List. In the afternoon, return to Baghdad. Dinner at our hotel. B.L.D.

### **❖ Day 4 – Ctesiphon, Babylon, Karbala**

After breakfast, we will set off to see the ruins of the ancient capital of the Persian Parthian Empire – Ctesiphon. The ruins are located on the Tigris shore. Our sightseeing will include a visit to the remains of the palaces of the first rulers from the Sasanian Dynasty. Afterwards, we will go to the excavation site where the Babylon ruins were discovered. Visiting the Babylon ruins - we will walk through the reconstructed Ishtar Gate and visit the museum. Another stop on our trip will be the Euphrates shore where one of the most impressive palaces of Saddam Hussein is located. In the afternoon, a drive to Karbala – a sacred place of Shia Muslims. The



town was founded at the place of death of Imam Hussain ibn Ali – grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, killed at a battle in 680. It is the location of the most sacred Shia sanctuary that attracts thousands of pilgrims, not only from Iraq. Dinner and night rest at the hotel. B.L.D.

#### ❖ Day 5 – Al Ukhaidiri Kufa Najaf

In the morning we will drive to the exceptionally well preserved remains of a fortress from the times of Abbasid caliphs, Al Ukhaidir. The fortress was finished in 775 AD but the history of this place dates back to much older times, which is indicated by numerous artefacts from the Sasanian and Parthian times. Next we will go to Kufa, where we will visit the house of imam Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad). After lunch and a short walk around Kufa we will continue the drive to Najaf, the most important place for Shia Muslims apart from Karbala – a town and sanctuary. We will see (if possible) the place where Imam Ali, the most faithful companion of the Prophet Muhammad, the husband of the only daughter of the Prophet, Fatima, and the fourth caliph, was murdered. We will visit the sanctuary and the town. Dinner and night rest at our hotel. B.L.D.

#### Day 6 – Ur, Uruk, Nasiriyah

.In the early morning, we will set off from Najaf to the site where ruins of the ancient Babylonian town of Uruk are located. After lunch, we will continue our journey to the ruins of legendary Ur. At the beginning, the ziggurat in Ur which might have been



a model for the Biblical Tower of Babel. Then we will have a walk among the remainders of a town which was the birthplace of Abraham according to the Bible. In the evening, arrival in Nasiriyah. Dinner and night rest at the hotel. B.L.D.

### **Day 7 - Ahwar Basra, Shatt Al-Arab**

We will start the sightseeing in As Sulaymaniyah in the morning from a visit in the Kurdistan museum where we will see collections from different historical eras, including the oldest artefacts from the beginnings of civilisation. After the visit at the museum, we will drive to Halabiyah – a town that fell victim to a gas attack on 16 March 1986. During the attack of the Iraqi army more than 5,000 people were killed, and 10,000 were injured and hospitalised. Despite its tragic past, the town is still inhabited – the Genocide Monument and Museum are currently located there. In the afternoon, we will set off for the mountain regions near the border with Iran. We will visit the Ahmed Awa Waterfalls, where we will have lunch in the mountain scenery. In the afternoon, return to As Sulaymaniyah. Dinner and night rest at our hotel. B. L. D.

### **Day 8 - Basra**

From the morning, a walk around Basra – a town whose history starts with the first caliphs. At those times, it was a harbour and an important military garrison. Although Basra suffered considerable destruction in the 20th and at the beginning of the 21st century, numerous monuments and structures dating back to the Ottoman era can be seen there. Dinner and night rest at the hotel. B.L.D.



### ❖ Day 9 - Flight back from Erbil

After breakfast, depending on the departure time, transfer to the airport. B.

### Dates :

- 12 December to 20 December 2020
- 09 January to 17 January 2021

### Price per person depends on the number of travelers :

- |             |        |
|-------------|--------|
| • 4 persons | 3300 £ |
| • 5 persons | 2950 £ |
| • 6 persons | 2750 £ |

### The price includes

- Accommodation: 4-star hotels in Iraq
- Transfers and drives in Iraq
- Meals according to the schedule  
B- breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner
- Services of local guides and security guards – if necessary
- Admission tickets for the visited sites and national parks
- Tips
- The invitation to obtain a visa if it is necessary
- Cruise on the Shatt Al-Arab River



## The price does not include:

- Costs of the main flight to and from Iraq
- Iraqi visa cost
- Travel insurance
- Meals other than those listed in the final itinerary.
- Personal expenses and souvenirs
- Additional beverages

## Final notes

→ Depending on the political situation, the length of the tour and the order of visited places may change. In a situation of a serious threat to travellers' safety, the tour may be cancelled. We will keep you updated as to whether the expedition is possible.



## Iraq Trip notes

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### 1 - Tour description

The length of the tour is 9 days. We will start from Baghdad and end in Basra. The trip highlights are ancient architectural remains of the towns of Ur and Uruk, Babylon and Ctesiphon. A very important element of the tour will be the sightseeing of Baghdad and Shia sanctuaries in Najaf and Karbala. The close encounter with the culture and traditions of Iraq inhabitants may prove an unforgettable experience. The tour will be a sightseeing trip to a Middle East area that is historically and culturally exceptional. It will be oriented on sightseeing and cultural tourism. Because of the special nature of the visited places and of the expedition features, the travellers should be able to participate in walking tours of towns and historic sites as well as in short hikes to vantage points or in motor boat cruises. Accommodation is planned in hotels and we will use passenger cars and minibuses for transfers. No long hikes or activities that require strenuous physical effort are planned during the tour. The itinerary was designed to enable best possible viewing of the places away from mass tourism routes, while meeting basic safety standards and ensuring comfort to the travellers. Bear in mind that Iraq is mostly inhabited by Shia and Sunni Muslims, which means the need to respect cultural differences and adhering to the appropriate dress code.

**Depending on the political situation, the length of the tour and the order of visited places may change. In a situation of a serious threat to travellers' safety, the tour may be cancelled. We will keep you updated as to whether the expedition is possible.**



## 2 - Visas and documents

- Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after the planned end of the tour.
- Before departure, you must obtain the tourist visa at one of your nearest embassies of the Republic of Iraq. Having booked the tour, the travellers will receive a letter of invitation necessary for obtaining the visa. The completed visa application in 2 copies, four current colour photographs and the visa fee payment for the Iraqi Embassy will also be necessary.
- When you book the tour, we will send you the official invitation from our contractor in Iraq. The invitation is necessary to obtain the tourist visa.
- To obtain a visa, you may use the services of visa agents or the help of BTP Adventure.
- You should take with you for the trip a photocopy of your passport (the photo page) and an additional ID document.

## 3 - Health and vaccination

- Before departure, we recommend a consultation with a family physician and a tropical medicine specialist.
- Vaccination against tetanus, diphtheria, viral hepatitis A and B and typhus is recommended.
- The risk of malaria is very low.
- We recommend visiting <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.
- During our expedition, we will drink only bottled water. You should avoid ice in your beverages and eating raw or undercooked foods. Medical care is at a good level, especially in Baghdad. Medical services are provided for a fee.
- Because of difficult travelling and accommodation conditions and particularities of the country, good general health and physical fitness are necessary. Please take with you a first aid kit and a sufficient supply of your regular (prescription) medicines, if any. Some useful contents of the first aid kit:
  - insect repellents
  - high sun protection cream (recommended SPF 50)





- disinfectants, wound dressing materials
- analgesics and antipyretics
- anti-diarrhoeals, electrolytes and vitamins

#### 4 –Insurance

- Insurance is not covered by the tour price. Having valid insurance is a condition for taking part in the trip. We recommend taking out insurance that will be appropriate for the planned itinerary and for your individual state of health and needs. Please send us the proof of your insurance contract.
- You can purchase insurance on your own on the website of Axa or any other insurance company: <https://www.axa.co.uk/travel-insurance/>.
- BTP Adventure may help you obtain adequate insurance cover. If you want our help, please contact us.

#### 5 - Safety

- The Republic of Iraq is a country characterised by political instability and a major risk of an armed conflict. For the time being, actual terrorist threat and armed conflict risk exist in this country. We design our itineraries so as to avoid places that are potentially most dangerous (some districts of Baghdad and towns where armed struggles continue).
- **Despite the difficult situation, expeditions to southern Iraq are possible and conducted with the adequate precautions.**
- Owing to the good relations we have with local contractors, we keep following the news to be aware of any potential threats and safety risks. We also recommend you to read the latest news on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>.
- During the tour, please take seriously the instructions of our contractors, guides and tour leader.
- It is very important to respect local customs and abide by local laws and regulations. You will receive the necessary information on an on-going-basis from your local guides and the tour leader.



- It is strictly prohibited to take photos and make video recordings at military and police installations and at airports. You are also not allowed to take photos where people in military/police uniforms are present!!!
- Photographing people is possible only when they expressly agree to it. Taking pictures when the subjects have not allowed it often ends up with escalating aggressive behaviours.

## 6 - Money

The legal tender in the Republic of Iraq is the Iraqi dinar. Currency exchange is possible at the Baghdad airport, in most towns, in banks, in authorised foreign exchange points and in hotels. Using payment cards is possible in hotels and in some shops and restaurants. The best foreign exchange rate is for US dollars and euros.

For current foreign exchange rates see [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com) or install xe.com on your phone.

## 7 - Language

The official language in Iraq is Arabic. In the case of a group tour, the tour leader will speak English. For self-guided tours, you must speak Arabic, while English-speaking travellers must hire a local guide with a command of English.

## 8 - Weather

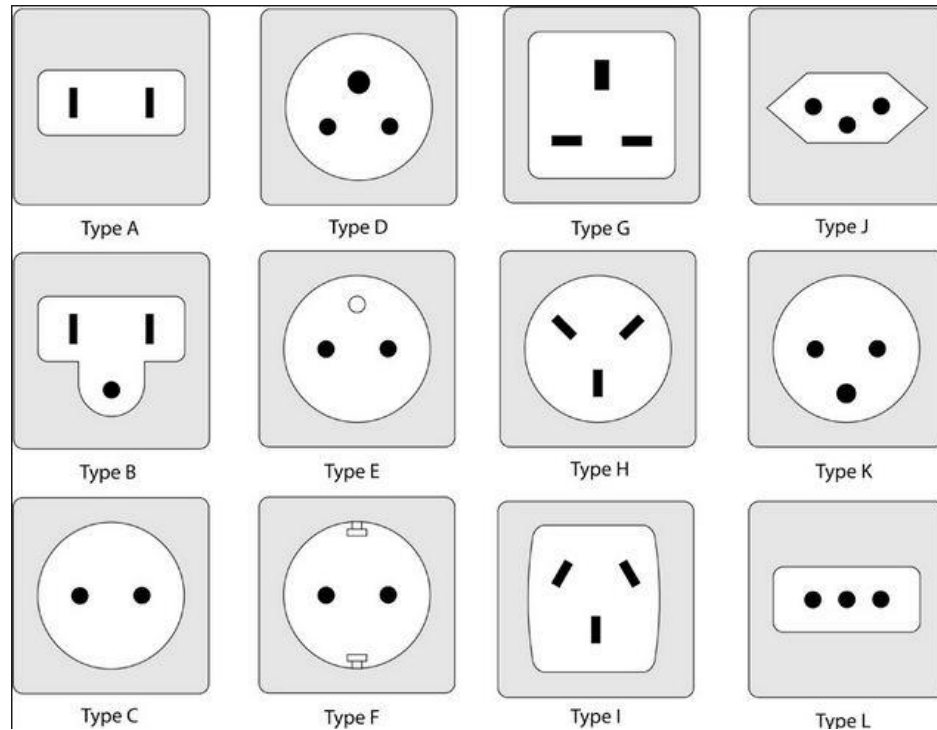
The tour dates are proposed in periods of the best possible weather conditions at the sites included in the itinerary. The best time for expeditions to Iraq is the period between November and the end of March. Temperatures rarely exceed +30°C during the day and may fall to about +12°C at night. Rainfalls may occur occasionally and are usually transient. High density of dust particles is a major issue. Sandstorms may appear. In the southern regions – Basra – the air is very humid which increases the sensation of heat. For detailed information see <https://www.meteoblue.com/en>.

## 9 - Communication, Wi-Fi, electricity



Mobile network coverage is available in most towns and villages. Purchase of a local SIM-card is possible but complicated. Before the trip, please enquire with your mobile network operator whether they have a contract signed with operators in Iraq and what the prices of call and SMS roaming are. To avoid a nasty surprise, we recommend disabling mobile data usage.

- Wi-Fi is available at most hotels and restaurants.
- Additionally, we recommend taking a capacious power bank.
- **Power sockets of type C, D and G. Voltage 220 V, frequency 50 Hz.**



## 10 - Accommodation

We are not able to guarantee a uniform accommodation standard at each of the planned sites during the stay in Iraq. Our priorities are your comfort, safety and appropriate location. We always place emphasis on the support of local community when selecting the sites for our accommodation. In general, rooms will be assigned on the assumption of two people sharing a twin room (rooms with individual bathrooms). The surcharges for single rooms are quoted in the “Price” section.

- Two overnight stays in 4-star hotels are planned during the trip.

## 11 - Flights



Costs of flight tickets are not covered by the tour price. BTP Adventure does not directly arrange and buy tickets for international flights. However, we may suggest the best connections and airlines. For this purpose, contact us by e-mail or call us.

## 12 - Transport

During the expedition, we will travel by passenger cars or minibuses. Depending on the daily agenda in the itinerary and the current situation as regards traveller safety, we will spend 4 to 8 hours travelling every day. Speed depends on the road surface conditions, terrain characteristics and number and length of stops. Moreover, our itinerary includes motor boat cruises on Ahwar Marshlands in the southern region of Iraq and a voyage on a small cruise ship on the Shatt Al-Arab River.

## 13 - Meals

Meals are included in the tour price, as specified in the itinerary. B – breakfast, L – lunch, D – dinner. Breakfasts will be usually offered in hotels. We will go for lunches and dinners to local restaurants. The cuisine of southern Iraq is a typical for Middle East – very tasty and varied. For information about the local costs of living see <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/>.

## 14 - Customs, culture, religion

Iraq is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. The southern part of Iraq is mostly inhabited by Shia Muslims. We will also visit Sunni regions. Because of cultural considerations and for safety reasons, it is advisable to learn about the recommended dress code. Visiting places of worship, especially sanctuaries in Najaf and Karbala, is possible only to a limited extent.

Women must wear headscarves at all public places, which includes some hotels and restaurants. Headscarves must be put on the head before landing in Baghdad. It is prohibited to wear garments with short sleeves above the elbow, low-cut blouses,



woman's suits, short skirts and dresses. Loose and long skirts and tunics are necessary. The tunic or manteau should come to mid-thigh. It is allowable to wear sandals and open shoes, both by women and men. When visiting some mosques and other places of worship, women may be asked to put on a chador that may be borrowed free-of-charge at the entrance to the building. You should bear in mind that there are considerable differences between the conservative province and relatively liberal large towns.

Men are not allowed to wear shorts and T-shirts. During official encounters, women do not give their hand to a man, and men do not give their hand to a woman. This custom is still observed in the province but is increasingly abandoned in large towns. Discussions about political subjects should be avoided. Iraqi people are curious about the world and tourists and are ready to take up such conversations.

**It is very important to respect local customs and abide by local laws. You will receive the relevant information from your local guide or the tour leader.**

## 15 - Useful equipment

For climatic and cultural reasons, loose garments will be most appropriate: long trousers, long skirts, long-sleeved shirts, which can be easily washed and will quickly dry. The most comfortable footwear for the tour will be lightweight boots. Palladium brand boots are recommended. Wearing open sandals is possible. Hiking boots are not necessary. The following are worth taking:

- sachet for documents and money
- wet wipes for body cleaning and antibacterial gels
- polar fleece jacket or warmer blouse, especially useful at evening and night times
- head cover and sunglasses – mandatory, the sun is no joke!
- comfortable summer clothes, useful during practically the whole trip
- light T-shirts/shirts
- useful odds and ends: torch, Swiss Army knife, sewing kit (usually is not needed but is not heavy and does not take much place), chargers, mug (for special occasions);



inflatable neck pillow, useful on the plane and during car rides; small wallet for the local currency; books to pass the time on flights and car rides

## 16 - Final notes

We will keep updating the detailed information on the safety and final itinerary of the tour. Before you decide to submit the booking form, please learn about the current political and sanitary situation in Iraq.

The planned expedition is an exclusive proposal prepared on the basis of our experience and knowledge of the local peculiarities and major sightseeing attractions of Iraq.

We are committed to ensure the best possible and safe and, as far as feasible, comfortable travelling through this little-frequented and extremely interesting country with a fascinating history.

With any questions please contact BTP ADVENTURE

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