



# Iraq Treasures of the South Cultural Discovery

10 Days



*The Adventure Company* | EST. 1969

**MT + SOBEK**<sup>TM</sup>  
MOUNTAIN TRAVEL SOBEK


**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS**  
AS THE PIONEER OF ADVENTURE TRAVEL

# ➤ Iraq Treasures of the South Cultural Discovery

Visiting Iraq is a journey into the cradle of human civilization. Roam Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris, and tread in the footsteps of the world's earliest civilizations. Start in Baghdad, the present-day capital of Iraq, and explore ancient Babylon-home of Mesopotamian kings. Climb the Ziggurat of Ur, believed to be the birthplace of Abraham, and boat through the dreamy Tigris marshlands. Visit Uruk, the world's first city, and discover Najaf and Karbala, centers of the Shia faith.

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## Details

|                 |                                                                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Arrive:         | Baghdad, Iraq                                                                       |
| Depart:         | Basra, Iraq                                                                         |
| Duration:       | 10 Days                                                                             |
| Group Size:     | 4-14 Guests                                                                         |
| Minimum Age:    | 16 Years Old                                                                        |
| Activity Level: |  |

## Testimonials

*“Great experience every time with some of the most knowledgeable guides in their fields. We always come home with wonderful memories of the people we meet and things we see.”*

Bob J.

*“I have taken 12 trips with MT Sobek. Each has left a positive imprint on me—widening my view of the world and its peoples.”*

Jane B.

**GOT QUESTIONS? SPEAK WITH AN EXPERT.**

 1-800-974-0300

 [info@mtsobek.com](mailto:info@mtsobek.com)

## Why Take This Trip With Us?

### REASON #01

MT Sobek has been trailblazing edgy and unknown destinations for more than 50 years, creating exploratory adventures that few other companies run.

### REASON #02

You will be in the company of expert guides who have decades of experience leading groups in Iraq.

### REASON #03

We operate trips throughout the Middle East, including to Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

## What to Expect



### ACTIVITIES

Cultural touring by private vehicles and on foot, with well-paced walks to explore historical wonders.



### LODGING

Relax at the 5-star Babylon Rotana in Baghdad and the best available hotels in each city—all with Western-style rooms and most modern amenities.



### CLIMATE

Iraq is generally dry year-round with spring temperatures in the 60-80°Fs and fall temperatures in the 70-100°Fs.

## Meet Our Guides

Our expert guides and trip leaders are truly the key to our trips' success. Many are locals who live in-country year-round; others have made it their second home—all are passionate, enthusiastic and endlessly knowledgeable. Meet two of the guides that might be on your trip.

Shayan was born in Iran in 1995. In 1998, he moved to Iraqi Kurdistan to live with relatives. He has a degree in computer science from Cihan University. He is currently writing a book about "Shanidar Cave", the Neanderthals, and their brief history in Kurdistan. He is passionate about revealing the secrets of his nation to the people of the world, a gracious host and knowledgeable guide.

**Shayan Barzani**

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# Itinerary

## DAY 1

### ARRIVE IN BAGHDAD

Your MT Sobek guide will welcome you at Baghdad International Airport. Settle into the hotel and relax over a welcome drink, then dine in the hotel restaurant. Guests arriving early will have a chance to get a first glimpse of Baghdad on an optional sightseeing tour.

**Meals:** D

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## DAY 2

### EXPLORE BAGHDAD & STAND BENEATH THE ARCH OF CTESIPHON

Visit the 13th-century El-Mustansiriya madrasa (school), one of the oldest Islamic institutions of higher learning in the world, and marvel at its ancient water-powered alarm clock that once announced prayer times. Stroll down the bookstore-laden Al-Mutanabbi street, the heart of the city's cultural life, and delight in the symphony of clinking sounds at Souk al-Safareen, the coppersmiths' market. In the afternoon, head to Ctesiphon, the former winter capital of Parthian and Sasanian empires, and today best known for the monumental remains of the 1,400-year-old palace Taq Kisra, complete with its 122-foot-high Arch of Ctesiphon. Enjoy dinner at your hotel.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 3

### TOUR THE IRAQ MUSEUM & ANCIENT SAMARRA

After breakfast, delve into the ancient past at the Iraq Museum often called the Middle East Smithsonian for its 28 halls and artefacts as old as 10,000 years B.C. In the afternoon, journey to the holy city of Samarra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that traces its roots back to 5500 B.C. Explore its historic streets, gardens and palaces, and admire the majestic 9th-century Great Mosque (Al Malwiya Mosque) with its spiral minaret. Return to your hotel in Baghdad.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 4

### DISCOVER THE MYTHICAL BABYLON & TRAVEL TO KARBALA

Travel to Babylon, the ancient capital of southern Mesopotamia, and trace the footsteps of Alexander the Great. Tour Saddam Hussein's rebuilt Babylon with its vibrant aqua-blue Ishtar Gate (a reproduction of the original) and compare it to one of his once-opulent palaces just behind the complex. Continue on to Karbala, a holy city for the Iraqi Shia, holding the shrine of the martyred Imam Husayn Ibn Ali (died 680). Return for dinner at your hotel.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 5

### JOURNEY TO NAJAF & SEE THE HOLY PLACES OF SHIA MUSLIMS

Today travel to the holy city of Najaf, and along the way stop in the town of Al Kifl to marvel at its 7th-century Kufa Mosque, the holiest place for Shia Muslims. Then continue on to Najaf and after settling in the hotel, discover the shrine of Imam Ali. This masterpiece of Islamic architecture holds the tomb of Imam Ali, the fourth caliph who was the cousin and later son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. In the evening, soak up the buzz of the nearby souk and savor dinner at the hotel.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 6

### ROAM URUK, THE FIRST CITY ON EARTH

Head to Samawa, a city on the banks of the Euphrates River that holds the archeological site of Warka, also known as Uruk. Explore the magnificent remains of this ancient Sumerian city that thrived around 2900 B.C. and was supposedly the first city on earth. Continue to the busy hub of Nasiriya, one of Iraq's largest cities and the capital of the Dhi-Qar province with a picnic lunch in a local mosque along the way. In the evening, feel the city's pulse on a stroll through its bustling souk, then enjoy a local dinner.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 7

### EXPLORE UNESCO-LISTED UR & CLIMB THE ZIGGURAT OF UR TEMPLE

Tour the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ur, an ancient Sumer city believed to be the birthplace of Prophet Abraham. Climb up the steep stairs to the Ziggurat of Ur, a splendid temple dedicated to the lunar god Nanna and built the same way as the biblical Tower of Babel. After lunch, head to Nasiriya's lively bazaar for a dash of local buzz and a quest for souvenirs, from mabhara incense lamps to artisanal copperware and traditional sweets. Dinner tonight is at the hotel.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 8

### JOURNEY BY BOAT TO THE MESOPOTAMIAN MARSHES

Spend the day on the Tigris River, venturing into its dreamy marshes by boat. Navigate between islands of reeds and lakeside villages inhabited by Marsh Arabs, and take in the resplendent beauty of this unique aquatic environment inside a desert. En route to the town of Basra, stop to soak up the beauty of the Paradise of Aden (Garden of Eden) where Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet.

**Activity:** Full-day boat tour

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 9

### EXPLORE BASRA & WATCH THE SUNSET OVER SHATT AL-ARAB

Wander around the old city of Basra, once known as the Venice of the East for the Ottoman Shenashil Houses, traditional 19th-century residences that line its canal. Think back to the city's glory days as you explore one of the villas that was owned by a wealthy Greek merchant - a rare showcase of a bygone era. Wrap up the journey with a boat ride on Shatt Al-Arab, the river created by the Tigris and Euphrates merging, and soak up one last splendid Iraq sunset. Enjoy a farewell dinner tonight.

**Activity:** Full day cultural touring with sunset cruise

**Meals:** B, L, D

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## DAY 10

### DEPART FROM BASRA

After breakfast, transfer to Basra International Airport for your homeward-bound flights and bid farewell to Iraq.

**Meals:** B

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## Dates

Nov 1 - 10, 2024

For full terms and conditions please visit [www.mtsobek.com/terms](http://www.mtsobek.com/terms). Please note that our itineraries may be subject to change.

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## Inclusions & Exclusions

### PRICE INCLUDES

- Expertise and services of our experienced adventure guides
- All accommodations as noted in the itinerary
- All breakfasts, almost all lunches and dinners as noted in the itinerary
- Snacks and water between meals
- Additional regional guides and experts on many trips
- Comprehensive Trip Planner with detailed pre-trip information
- Private guided tours at historic sites, museums, wineries and other select attractions as noted in the itinerary
- Special events and other select attractions as mentioned in the itinerary
- All gratuities at hotels and restaurants
- Equipment and experienced guides for activities as described in the itinerary
- Park and other entry fees (unless otherwise noted)
- Fares for trains, ferries and other modes of travel as listed in the itinerary
- Select transfers as mentioned in the itinerary
- Baggage transfers and portorage

### PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- International airfare, airport taxes, and excess baggage fees
- Alcoholic beverages (MT Sobek provides wine at select events)
- Gratuities for MT Sobek guides and guide-drivers
- Travel Protection Program
- Personal expenses

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## ➤ **The World of MT Sobek**

At Mountain Travel Sobek, we believe life is an adventure and adventure is life.

As the originators, innovators and leaders in adventure travel for more than five decades, we passionately create, craft and share indelible, transformative journeys to the world's most memorable places. Our more than 200 unique and once-in-a-lifetime trips are designed to inspire and exhilarate, enliven and excite--opening eyes and minds through profoundly personal connections with nature and culture.

Our small group and custom adventures span the globe, and the spectrum—of interests, environments and activities—every one expertly planned and knowledgeably and passionately guided. And our commitment to making every experience a remarkable one has earned us preferred travel outfitter status for National Geographic Active Expeditions, Active New York Times Journeys, and Smithsonian Active Journeys.

We are *the* adventure company.

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### **Awards**



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