

IRAQ

DETAILED ITINERARY

14 DAYS

Mar 16/26



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 Mesopotamian Marshes', which we explore by boat before visiting the Ziggurat (pyramid dating back to 2,100BC) of Ur and the Royal Tombs. Ur was also the birthplace of the Prophet Abraham. Next, we explore ancient Uruk, the site of the first written words and the spiritual sites and shrines of Najaf and Karbala. Visit Al-Ukaidir fort and 1600 year old Al-Qiser Church, out in the desert. We continue to the fabled, ancient city of Babylon (UNESCO) to explore its ruins as well as one of Saddam Hussein's Palaces, before spending time in the capital of Baghdad with its palaces, madrasses and

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-Ukaidir 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 09 - Oct 22, 2026 - **\$6995 USD**

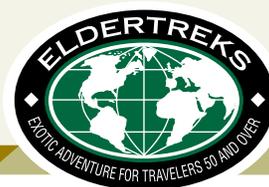
Activity Level: 2

Comfort Level: Some long drives.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We stay in comfortable accommodations with private bathrooms.

ELDERTREKS



SMALL GROUP
EXOTIC ADVENTURES
FOR TRAVELERS 50 PLUS

markets. We also venture out to 2 wonderful ancient sites of Ctesiphon and Dur Kurigalzu Ziggurat. Continuing north, discover ancient Samarra (UNESCO) with its Great Mosque and Spiral Minaret, Ashur (UNESCO), and the ruins of Hatra (UNESCO), a once powerful desert fortress. Enjoy a tour of the old town of Mosul and Nimrud, famous for its stone reliefs.

We explore the beautiful mountainous region of Kurdistan. Explore monasteries, tombs, and Assyrian villages. Visit Lalish, holiest temple of the Yazidis. Drive and hike 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.

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

We start our day with a visit to the Basra Museum which was also one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces. Explore the historic architecture and cultural heritage of Old Basra including traditional merchant houses, an old tea House, Armenian church, Jewish Synagogue, St Thomas Chaldean Church, all a reflect



Mesopotamia Marshes





the city's rich trade history and religious diversity. Enjoy lunch in an old traditional tea house.

In the afternoon, we take a boat trip on the Shatt al-Arab River, which is formed from the meeting of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers before emptying into the Persian Gulf. We will pass by the Italian Bridge and Saddam Hussein's palace and yacht and later have a chance to go inside his personal yacht.

Overnight in Basra.

DAY 3 • CONFLUENCE OF THE EUPHRATES & TIGRIS RIVERS; MESOPOTAMIAN MARSHES BY BOAT; TO NASIRIYAH

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.

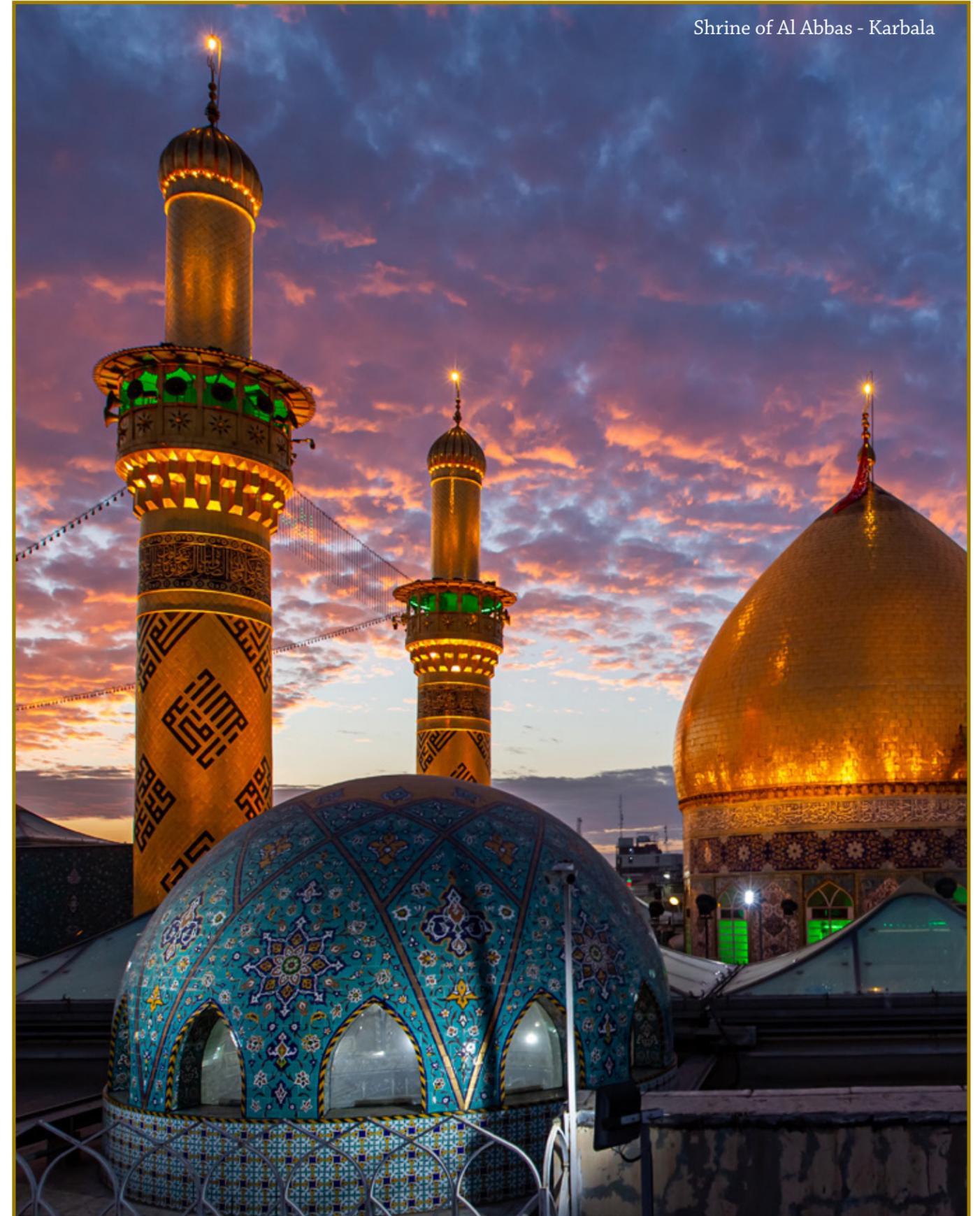
We will have a traditional dish caught in the marshes called masgouf, served in a traditional reed building. After lunch we explore the Marshes by boat. In the late afternoon, we continue to Nasiriyah where we will have dinner and spend the night.

Overnight in Nasiriyah.

DAY 4 • ZIGGURAT OF ANCIENT UR; URUK (UNESCO); TO NAJAF

This morning we drive to the ancient city of Ur with its impressive ziggurat (built around 2100 BC) and its adjoining Royal Tombs. This is also where the Bible (Genesis 11:28-31 and Genesis 15:7) refers to being the birthplace of Abraham.

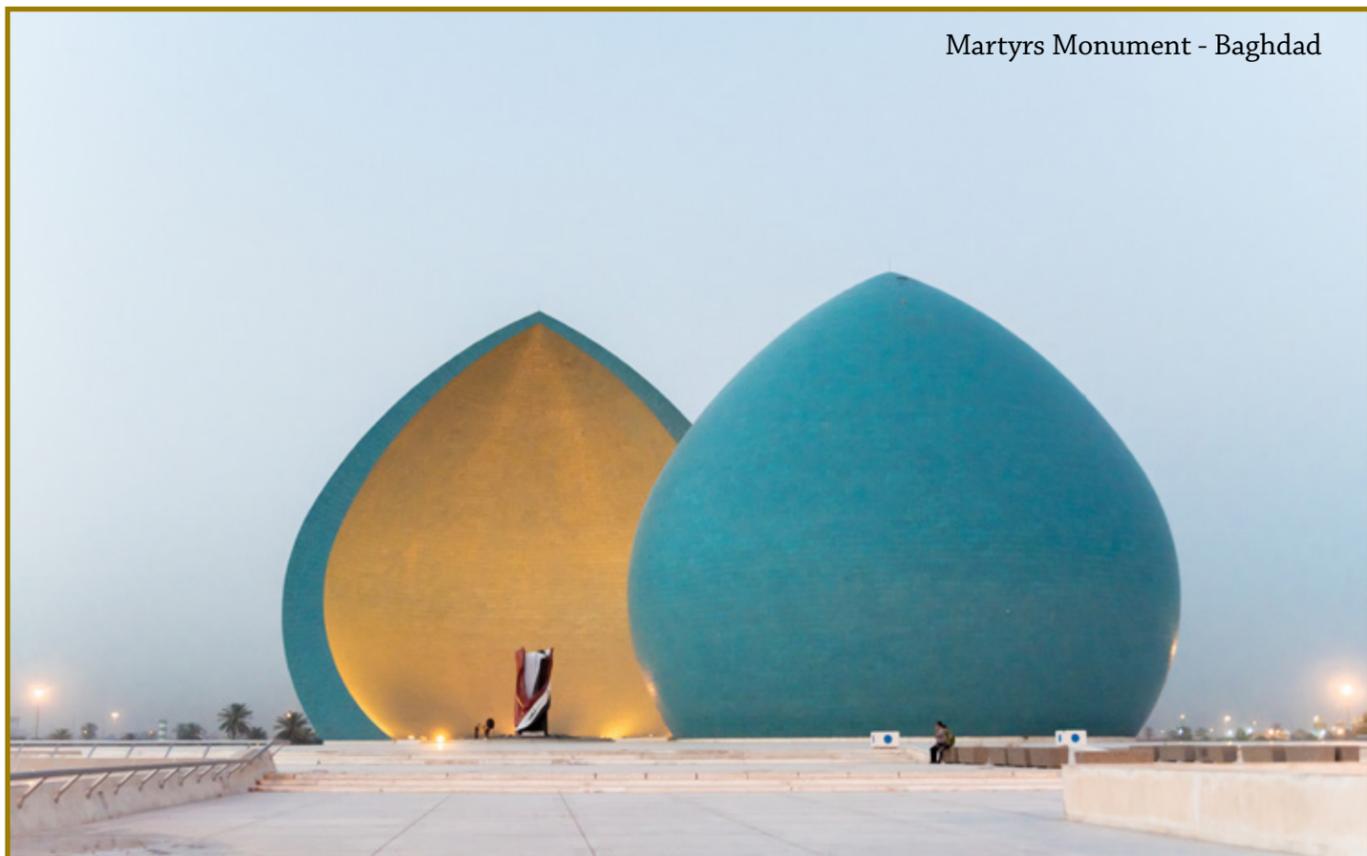
Later, we continue to Uruk a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's first cities and a true cradle of civilization. Explore the ruins of Uruk



Shrine of Al Abbas - Karbala



Save Iraqi Culture Monument - Baghdad



Martyrs Monument - Baghdad

and learn about its historical significance as this is believed to be the site of the 'first written Words'.

In the afternoon, we travel to Najaf. In the evening we will visit the Imam Ali's Shrine, one of the most sacred sites in Shia Islam. We will have the opportunity to visit inside the shrine and experience its profound spiritual significance amongst the throngs of pilgrims.

Overnight in Najaf.

DAY 5 • WADI AL SALAM, LARGEST GRAVEYARD IN THE WORLD; AL-UKHAIDIR FORT; TO KARBALA

We start our day with a visit to Wadi Al Salam, the largest graveyard in the world. It is estimated to have up to 9 million graves!

Next, we drive to Al-Ukhaidir Fort (on the UNESCO tentative list), an impressive early Islamic fortress known for its unique defensive structures and architectural significance. Not far from the Fort, we venture out to a 4th century abandoned church, in a state of ruins, surrounded by desert.

Finally, we travel to Karbala to visit Imam Hussein's Shrine, a sacred pilgrimage site of profound importance for Shia Muslims.

Overnight in Karbala.

DAY 6 • ANCIENT BABYLON (UNESCO); CTESIPHON (UNESCO); TO BAGHDAD

Today we travel to the Mesopotamian city of Babylon and explore the ruins of this legendary ancient city. Few city's from the ancient world have the myths and legends with that of Babylon. The mystery associated with the Hanging Gardens of Babylon have been lingering for millennium. Learn about recent theories that challenge where the Hanging Gardens may have actually been. We then visit Saddam Hussein's Palace, with stunning views overlooking

the ruins of Babylon. Enjoy lunch at a traditional Iraqi restaurant.

After lunch, we drive to ancient Ctesiphon, capital of the Parthian & Sassania Empires. Ctesiphon is famous for having the largest barrel arch in the world.

We continue to Baghdad where we will check into our hotel. Dinner this evening will be in a local restaurant.

Overnight in Baghdad.

DAY 7 • BAGHDAD; IRAQ MUSEUM; DUR-KURIGALZU

Today, we visit the Iraq Museum*, home to an extensive collection of artifacts showcasing Iraq's rich and ancient history.

We also stop at the Martyrs Monument and Al-Shaheed Monument, a memorial dedicated to Iraqi soldiers.

We drive to Dur-Kurigalzu, an ancient city just outside of Baghdad, to see its well-preserved ziggurat and learn about its historical significance.

Overnight in Baghdad.

*The Iraqi museum has been closed for renovations and is scheduled to open again the beginning of January 2026.

DAY 8 • EXPLORING BAGHDAD

This morning, we will explore some of Baghdad's bazaars, street markets and stunning Islamic architecture.

Baghdad's historic sites include the Mustansiriya Madrasa, Abbasid Palace, the coppersmith market, Shabandar café (most famous tea house in Baghdad) and Al-Mutanabi Street, famous for its book market.

We have lunch at a traditional Iraqi restaurant.

Afterwards, enjoy a boat ride on the Tigris river.

Overnight in Baghdad.



Malwiya Minaret (Samarra)



Ctesiphon



Al Akhdar Castle



Hatra

DAY 9 • GREAT MOSQUE OF SAMARRA (UNESCO); ANCIENT ASHUR (UNESCO); TO MOSUL

Today we travel to Samarra to visit the great mosque and 8th century Abissid landmark, and UNESCO World Heritage Site. The site is known for its famous 52 metre (171 feet) high minaret with its spiral staircase.

We continue to Abu Dulaf Mineret, also built in the 8th-century surrounded by desert landscape.

After lunch, we continue to Ashur (UNESCO) which dates back to the 3rd millennium BC. It was the first capital of the Assyrian Empire, (14th-9th centuries BC), It also served as the religious and trading capital of the Assyrians, named after the god Ashur.

Later, we arrive in Mosul and check into our hotel.

Overnight in Mosul.

DAY 10 • ANCIENT HATRA (UNESCO); OLD TOWN OF MOSUL; NIMRUD (UNESCO)

We begin our day with a very early departure to Hatra to ensure sufficient time at the site. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is renowned for its remarkably well-preserved temples and fortifications of the Parthian Empire (200 BC–220 AD). We explore the impressive ruins and experience the grandeur of this once-powerful desert fortress.

We then return to Mosul, where we tour the Old Town and walk through the bustling streets of the Old Market, a place where history and modern life coexist. We also visit areas of the old city that were destroyed during the war with ISIS, offering insight into Mosul's recent history and resilience.

Later in the day, we travel to the archaeological site of Nimrud, the ancient Assyrian capital. Here we explore the ruins of the royal palace, massive stone reliefs, and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III at this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Overnight in Mosul.

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

We begin the day with a visit to Mar Mattai Monastery, one of the oldest Christian monasteries in Iraq, perched high on a mountain with stunning panoramic views. We explore its impressive architecture and learn about its long and fascinating religious history.

We then continue to Al-Qosh, a picturesque Assyrian village with deep historical and cultural roots. Here we visit the Tomb of Nahum, believed to be the burial place of the Biblical prophet, a sacred site for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. We take time to walk through the charming streets of Al-Qosh, offering a glimpse into Assyrian heritage and daily life.

We also explore the Monastery of Rabban Hormizd, dramatically nestled in the hills near the village, learning about its spiritual significance while enjoying the serene surroundings.

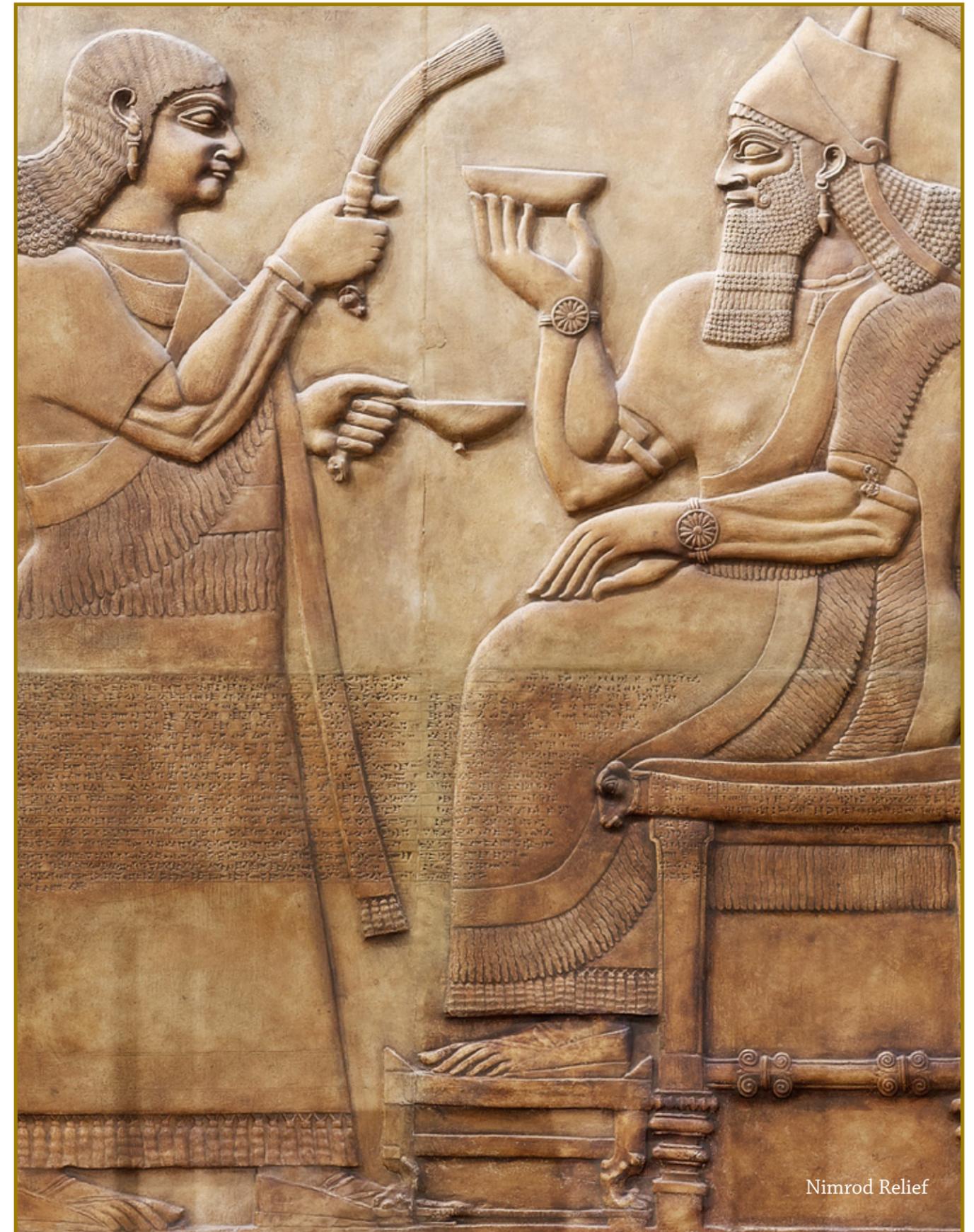
Finally, we embark on a scenic drive to Duhok.

Overnight in Duhok.

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

Today our drive takes us to the picturesque, historic town of Amedi, perched on a hilltop. Its history dates back more than 3,000 years. 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. One of our main stops here will be the Mosul Gate which was built in the 13th century.

We continue to Shanidar 'Neanderthal' Cave, which was home to Neanderthals at least 65,000 years ago. Climb the steps (15 – 20 minutes) up to the cave



Nimrod Relief

entrance where you can go inside.

In the late afternoon, we continue on to Barzan, where we check in for the evening.

Overnight in Barzan.

DAY 13 • HIGHLIGHTS OF THE KURDISH CAPITAL: CITADEL OF ERBIL; FAREWELL DINNER

This morning, we head to the Citadel of Erbil, one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world. Explore Citadel with its fascinating history while enjoying panoramic views of the city. We will

visit a small textile and gem museum.

Walk through Erbil's old bazaar filled with friendly locals.

Tonight we will have our farewell dinner to reflect on the ancient wonders of Mesopotamia and the many friendly encounters with locals in modern day Iraq!

Overnight in Erbil.

DAY 14 • DEPART ERBIL

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



Shanidar 'Neanderthal' Cave

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?

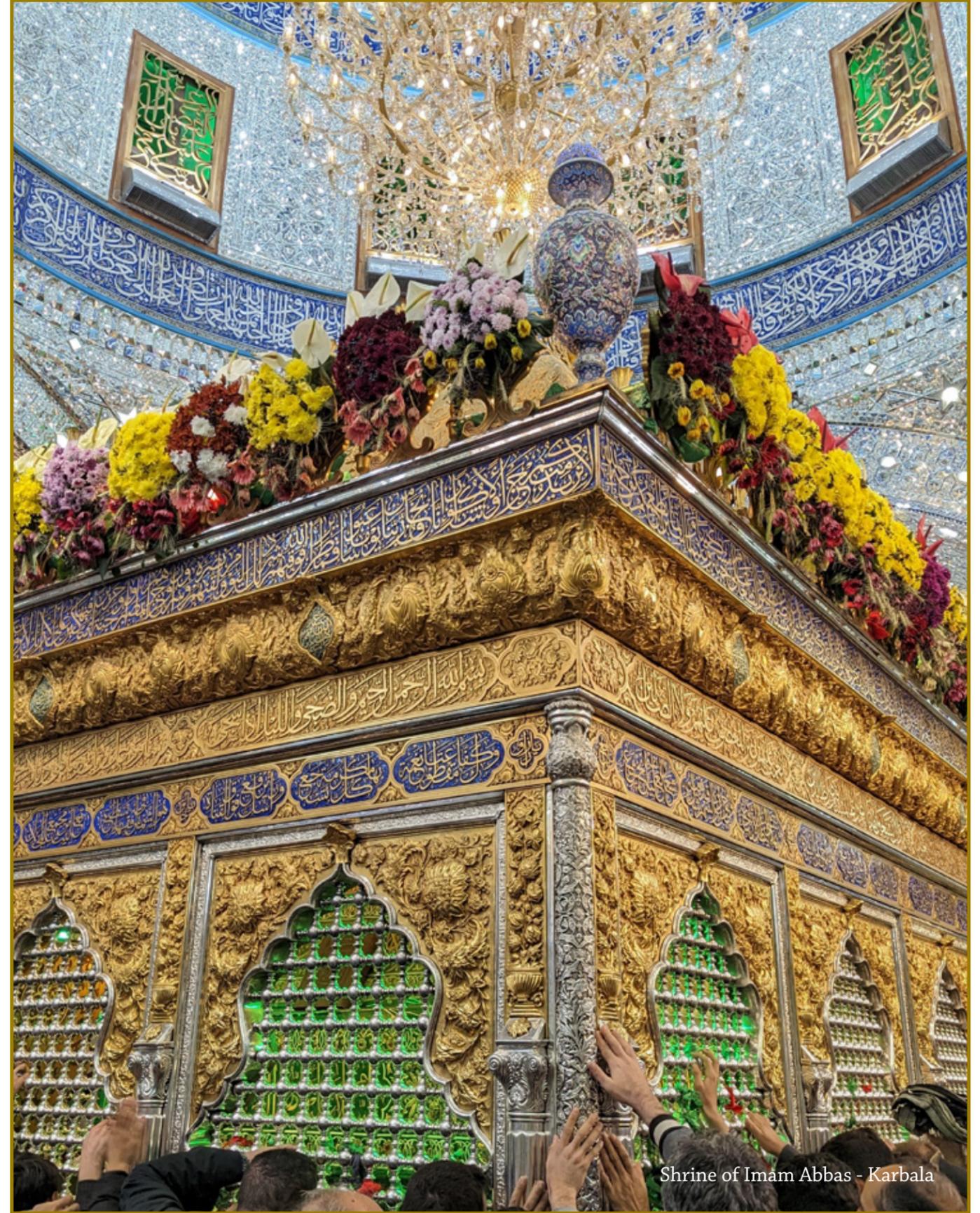
There is a detailed "What to Take" list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

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



