

Traveling to Iraq



Safety advises

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Do not travel

More details: <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Iraq>

U.S. Department of State: Warning

More details: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/iraq-travel-warning.html>

Global Affairs Canada: Avoid all travel (with regional advisories)

More details: <http://travel.gc.ca/destinations/iraq>



About your destination

Iraq (/ræk/, /rk/, or /aræk/; Arabic: al-‘Irq, Kurdish: Êraq), officially the Republic of Iraq (Arabic: Jumhryat al-‘Irq; Kurdish: Komar-i Êraq), is a country in Western Asia. The country is bordered by Turkey to the north, Iran to the east, Kuwait to the southeast, Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan to the southwest, and Syria to the west. The southern part of Iraq is within the Arabian Peninsula. The capital, Baghdad, is in the centre of the country and its largest city. The largest ethnic groups in Iraq are Arabs and Kurds. Other ethnic groups include Assyrians, Turkmen, Shabakis, Yazidis, Armenians, Mandeans, Circassians, and Kawliya. Around 95% of the country's 36 million citizens are Shia or Sunni Muslims, with Christianity, Yarsan, Yezidism, and Mandeism also present.

Iraq has a narrow section of coastline measuring 58 km (36 miles) on the northern Persian Gulf and its territory encompasses the Mesopotamian Alluvial Plain, the northwestern end of the Zagros mountain range, and the eastern part of the Syrian Desert. Two major rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, run south through the centre of Iraq and flow into the Shatt al-Arab near the Persian Gulf. These rivers provide Iraq with significant amounts of fertile land.

The region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, historically known as Mesopotamia, is most often referred to as humanity's cradle of civilisation. It was here that mankind first began to read, write, create laws, and live in cities under an organised government—notably Uruk, from which Iraq was derived. The area has been home to continuous successive civilisations since the 6th millennium BC. At different periods in its history, Iraq was the centre of the indigenous Akkadian, Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian empires. It was also part of the Median, Achaemenid, Hellenistic, Parthian, Sassanid, Roman, Rashidun, Umayyad, Abbasid, Ayyubid, Mongol, Safavid, Afsharid, and Ottoman empires, and under British control as a League of Nations mandate.

Iraq's modern borders were mostly demarcated in 1920 by the League of Nations when the Ottoman Empire was divided by the Treaty of Sèvres. Iraq was placed under the authority of the United Kingdom as the British Mandate of Mesopotamia. A monarchy was established in 1921 and the Kingdom of Iraq gained independence from Britain in 1932. In 1958, the monarchy was overthrown and the Iraqi Republic was created. Iraq was controlled by the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party from 1968 until 2003. After an invasion by the United States and its allies in 2003, Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party was removed from power and multi-party parliamentary elections were held in 2005. The American presence in Iraq ended in 2011, but the Iraqi insurgency continued and intensified as fighters from the Syrian Civil War spilled into the country.