

# Tours Catalogue

A comprehensive guide for  
Bil Weeked's Iraq tours

# About

## Rehlat Al-Utla / Bil Weekend



# Who We Are

Bil Weekend is the leading tour operator in Iraq that was built with passion and action for years. We have learned from the toughest experiences and helped develop the tourism market and infrastructure in Iraq. This allowed us to get a head start and be able to craft our connections with various stakeholders and know all the ins and outs of tourism in Iraq.

Our multi-phase selection and training of our tour guide staff, hand-picked drivers, destination tour partners and knowledge of government procedures makes us proud to say that we are the all-in-one operator.

# Our Services



## Tour Guides

Whether you are traveling solo, in a group trip, or with your family, Bil Weekend will match you with a professional guide who will personalize your vacation offering a range of fascinating and unique experiences that bring each destination to life.

Our tour guides are licensed and professional and will make sure to take care of every need.



## Transportation

Our goal is to provide you with the most convenient transportation to get to your destination. We operate a 24-hour in-house dispatch center and are able to get you any vehicle you need at any time.

Our fleet includes VIP cars, VIP buses, Saloon cars, full-size SUVs, mini buses that seat up to 8-10 passengers, buses seat up to 12-20 passengers, and Coach buses that seat up to 45 passengers.



## Entry Tickets

We facilitate entry tickets to all heritage sites and museums in Iraq, whether on weekdays, weekends, or holidays.



## Visa Fast Track

We guide you and take care of the bureaucratic procedures for you to smoothly enter Iraq.

# Our Services



## Airport Transfer

After a long flight, you will receive a safe and reliable transfer from one of our professional and friendly drivers who will take you from any airport or land port in Iraq to your hotel or place of stay.



## Accommodation

Book with us to find the best hotel deals in Iraq that fit your unique travel style. Tell us your accommodation requirements for this piece of our customized experience.



## Group Trips & Private Trips

We specialize in group tours and have vast experience and knowledge working with all sizes of groups and meeting the demands of each participant to ensure satisfaction. We perfected this during our domestic trips when we started, and we organized the most group trips in the country for our international partners and their guests.

Also, we can customize your private trip according to your interests, the places you want to visit, the number of days you are staying, and the services you are looking for.



# BAGHDAD



# Discover The Hidden Treasures of Old Baghdad

Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, holds a significant place in history as the center of the Islamic Golden Age during the Abbasid caliphate. It was renowned for its advancements in science, culture, and art, fostering intellectualism in a diverse, multiethnic environment. Today, Baghdad is designated as a UNESCO Creative City of Literature, hosting annual cultural festivals.

As Iraq's largest city, it offers a variety of attractions including local cuisine, vibrant markets in the Old Town, and historical sites like the Ziggurat of Dur Kurigalzu and the Taq Kasra. The Iraq Museum is a key destination for those interested in Mesopotamian civilizations, while visitors can also explore statues inspired by the tales of "1001 Nights" scattered throughout the city.





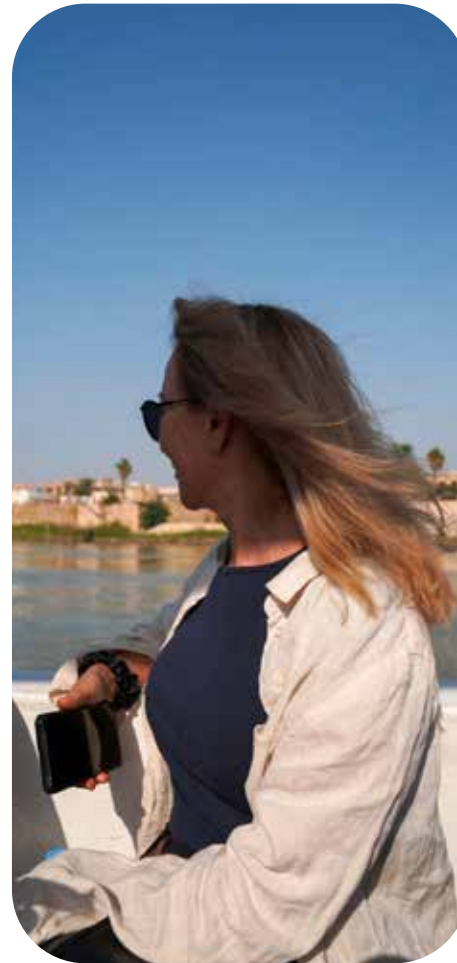
## Explore Bustling Markets

- Al Safafer (Copper Market): Immerse yourself in the craftsmanship and history of Baghdad's renowned copper market.
- Khan Al Mudalal (Antique Market): Discover unique antiques and treasures with stories of their own.
- Al Mutanabbi Street (Books Market): Wander through Baghdad's literary heart, where books and ideas flourish.



## Discover Old Baghdad's History

Madrasa Mustansiriya & Abbasid Palace: Learn all about the greatness of the Abbasids and take a look at Baghdad during its golden ages.



## Cruise the Tigris River

Boat Tour near Al-Mutanabbi Street: Enjoy a serene boat ride offering breathtaking views of Baghdad's iconic riverbanks.



## Indulge in The Local Cuisine

- Qaimar Arab for breakfast: Start your day with a traditional breakfast known for its rich flavors.
- Masgouf for lunch: Experience the authentic taste of Baghdad with Iraq's national dish.
- Grills for dinner: Savor a variety of great traditional grills.



## Iconic Landmarks

- Statues from Arabian Nights: Discover the statues that bring the tales of One Thousand and One Nights to life.
- The Freedom Monument: Visit the square that resembles a turning moment for the history of Iraq.
- Save Iraqi Culture Monument: Witness a testament to the resilience of Iraqi culture.



## Drive through the Green Zone

Discover the most well protected and important areas in Baghdad and learn about its history.



## Visit Religious Sites

- Holy Shrines and Mosques: Explore the spiritual heart of Baghdad with visits to Imam Al Kadhum, Abu Hanifa, and Sheikh Al Gilani.



## Historical Sites and Museums

- Iraqi Royal Family Cemetery: Reflect on Iraq's royal history.
- Iraq Museum: See thousands of pisces and relics that date back to the cradle of civilization.
- Baghdadi Museum: Learn about the folklore and traditions of Baghdad.



## Visit Ancient Wonders

- Ziggurat of Dur Kurigalzu: Behold the tallest Ziggurat in Iraq.
- Ctesiphon Arch: Discover the second largest single span vault of unreinforced brickwork in the world.



## Thematic Tours of Baghdad

- Baghdad Art Tour: Explore the vibrant art scene and meet local artists.
- Baghdad Food Tour: Savor the diverse flavors of Iraqi cuisine.
- Baghdad Literature Tour: Discover why Baghdad is a UNESCO Creative City of Literature.



Al Mutanabbi Street (Books Market)

Shabender Cafe

Al Safafer (Copper Market)

# BABYLON



# A Legendary City in Ancient Times

A legendary city in ancient times, and once the vibrant capital of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Its Hanging Gardens, renowned for their beauty, were counted among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Babylon held the title of the world's largest city twice in history: first between approximately 1770 and 1670 BCE, and later from about 612 to 320 BCE. It's thought to have been the first city ever to have a population exceeding 200,000 - a testament to its ancient grandeur and influence.

## Facts

- UNESCO World Heritage site since 2016.
- The only city that has been mentioned in the holy books of the 3 Abrahamic religions: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Holy Quran.
- In 2003 it used to be a camp for the Polish and American troops during the war.
- The city where Alexander The Great passed away.

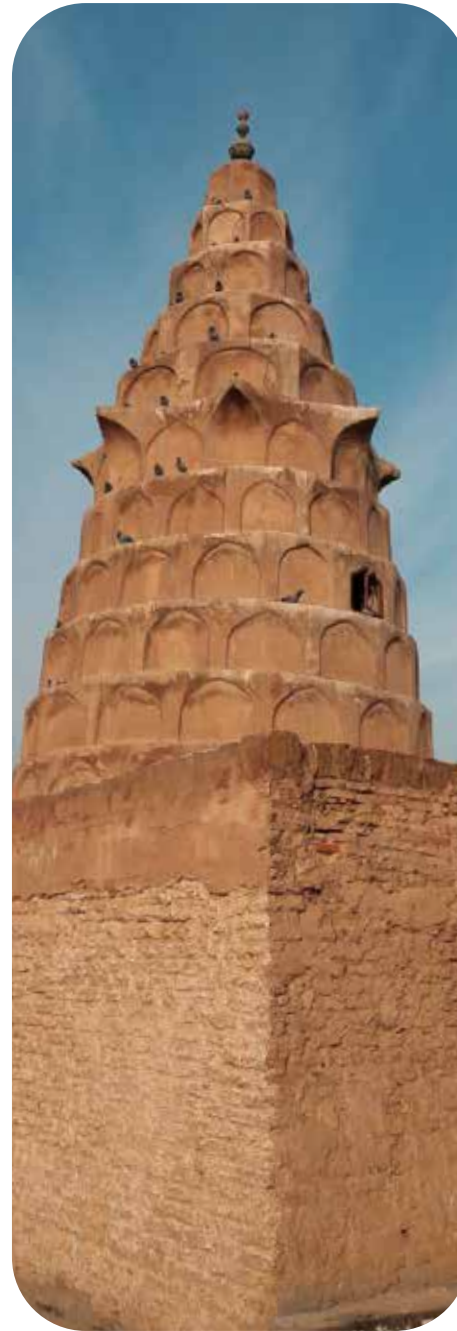
Walk along Al-Maukib Street and see the foundations of the actual Ishtar Gate, the Babylonian temples, and the Lion of Babylon. Wander through the Maze of Babylon and find the original foundations of the Tower of Babylon. Hear stories about Nebuchadnezzar II and the Hanging Gardens. Learn how the real Ishtar Gate ended up in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin and about its reconstruction in the 1980s. Enjoy interesting tales about the presidential palace on the hill, built in the 1990s by a dictator who never visited it again.





## Borsippa

Also known as Birs Nimrud, located 17 kilometers south of Babylon. It boasts a surviving ziggurat that rises to an impressive height of 47 meters, making it one of the most identifiable ziggurats from ancient times. Originally constructed by the Sumero-Akkadian civilization, the ziggurat was dedicated to Nabu, the local deity known as the "son" of Babylon's Marduk.



## Al Kifl

Al Kifl is situated near the Euphrates River and is renowned for the Al-Nukhailah Mosque, which houses the tomb of Dhul-Kifl. According to religious traditions in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Dhul-Kifl is identified with the biblical prophet Ezekiel. This site holds significant religious importance, serving as a major pilgrimage destination for Jews and a holy place revered by Muslims seeking spiritual connection and reflection.



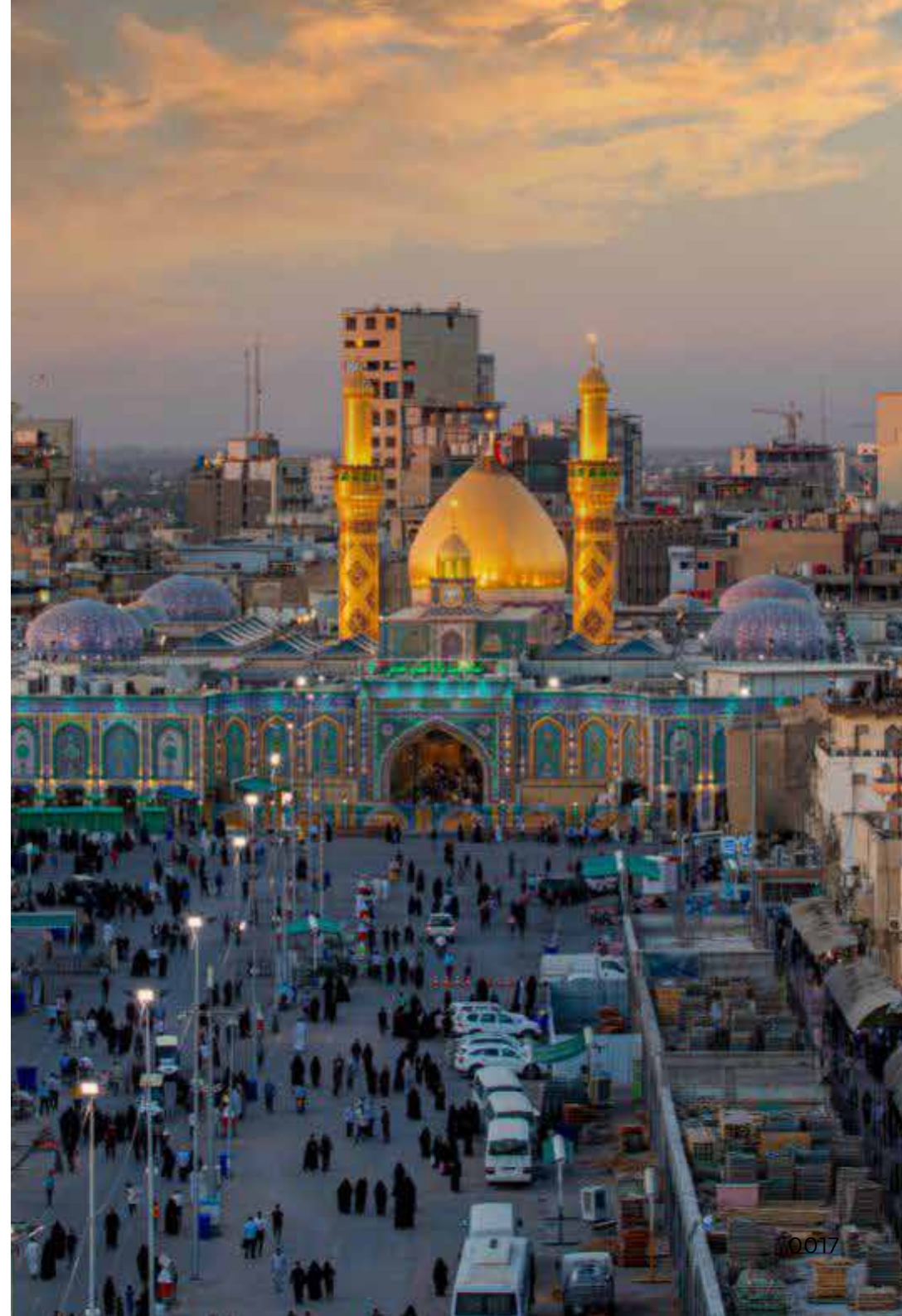
# KARBALA



# Renowned for Its historical Significance

The site of the Battle of Karbala in 680 ACE and the revered shrines of Imam Hussain and his brother Abbas. The name "Karbala" originates from the Babylonian words "Karb Illu," meaning "The god's prayer land". Each year, millions of Muslims worldwide commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein bin Ali during Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram.

The city sees up to 8 million pilgrims for this occasion. However, the main event is the Arbaeen, occurring 40 days after Ashura, which draws as many as 30 million pilgrims to the shrines. Pilgrims embark on journeys, many on foot, from across Iraq and over 55 countries, making Karbala a premier destination in Iraq.





## Imam Hussien & Abbas Holy Shrines

The experience of visiting the holy shrines is one that cannot be matched. We'll dive into the traditions of Shia during Muharram and Safar. We offer special experiences that we can customize with customers such as doing the pilgrimage during Arbaeen from any city and much more.



## Fortress of Al-Ukhaidir

Recognized as one of the Middle East's most formidable structures, the fortress stands as a remarkable structure that stands testament to the greatness of the Islamic empire with its amazing architectural innovation. Constructed during the Abbasid caliphate, this large rectangular fortress showcases the strategic foresight of its builders, positioned along crucial trade routes connecting Basra, Kufa, Mosul, and Damascus.



## Al Aqaiser Church

Al Aqaiser church, whose name means "mini palace", holds the prestigious title of being the oldest church in the Middle East, with origins dating back to the 5th century ACE. Located a short distance from the Fortress of Al-Ukhaidir, this ancient church symbolizes enduring faith and cultural heritage in the region, drawing visitors seeking insight into its rich history and significance.



## Khan Al Nukhaila

Khan al-Rubu', also known as Khan al-Nukhaylah, is a historically significant site in Iraq, located approximately 16 kilometers from the center of Karbala. Situated along the road leading to the city of Najaf, this Ottoman-era khan served as a vital resting place for caravans traveling between the two cities.

The khan's strategic location underscores its importance as a waypoint for merchants and travelers navigating the trade and pilgrimage routes in the region. Its architecture

# NAJAF





## Kufa

Situated on the western bank of the Euphrates River, this city holds a pivotal place in history as the original capital of the Abbasid Caliphate. It is distinguished by the presence of the house of Imam Ali and Iraq's second oldest mosque, known as the Grand Mosque of Kufa.



## Imam Ali Holy Shrine

Get to experience the amazing atmosphere and learn about the second most Important man in Islam for Shia Muslims. The place remained a secret for the first few decades after Imam Ali passed due to the politics of that time and see how it turned into one of the most important shrines for Shia Muslims. The shrine represents the Islamic architecture at its finest with the detailed and impressive decorations and patterns that are scattered around its walls.

Right next to the shrine there are two important things. One of them is the Valley of Peace cemetery which is on the tentative list for UNESCO heritage sites which is considered the largest and one of the oldest cemeteries in the world. The second thing is Najaf's Grand Bazar, a market that offers an authentic experience to Najaf.



## Wadi Al Salam Cemetery

Wadi Al Salaam, meaning "Valley of Peace" in Arabic, is a vast and sacred cemetery located in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq. Known as the largest cemetery in the world, it holds more than six million graves, making it a site of profound spiritual and historical significance.

Situated near the revered shrine of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first Imam of Shia Islam and the fourth Caliph in Sunni tradition, Wadi Al Salaam has become a deeply cherished resting place for Shias from Iraq and beyond. Many believers aspire to be buried in this ground, drawn by its proximity to the holy shrine and its spiritual significance.



## Najaf's Grand Bazaar

Najaf's Grand Bazaar is a lively, historic marketplace near the shrine of Ali ibn Abi Talib. It's a hub of activity, filled with shops offering spices, sweets, jewelry, and religious items like prayer beads.

The bazaar is more than a place to shop; it's a glimpse into Najaf's culture and traditions. Pilgrims and locals visit it, picking up essentials or souvenirs. With its vibrant atmosphere and deep roots in Najaf's history, the Grand Bazaar remains a cherished part of the city's identity.

# URUK



# The Ancient City of Sumer & Babylonia

Uruk, also known as Warka or Warkah, was an ancient city of Sumer and later Babylonia, located east of the present bed of the Euphrates River. This city played a crucial role in the early urbanization of Sumer in the mid 4th millennium BCE.

By around 3100 BCE, Uruk was the world's largest urban area, housing up to 40,000 residents with an additional 80,000-90,000 people in its surrounding areas. Uruk was home to the legendary king Gilgamesh, who ruled in the 27th century BCE and is the hero of "The Epic of Gilgamesh,"

the oldest piece of literature in history. The city's agricultural surplus and large population base supported trade, craft specialization, and the evolution of writing around 3300 BCE, evidenced by extensive pottery and the earliest known tablets of writing found during excavations. Uruk has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2016. The first letter ever written originated here, and it is also the site of the Warka Vase and the Mask of Warka, one of the earliest representations of the human face.

Visitors can explore the Anu/White Temple ziggurat and the ruins of the Temple of Gauri. A photo with the sign marking the site of the oldest written letters is a must. Discover more about the Japanese archaeological contributions and learn why many objects from Uruk are now displayed in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.



# UR



# Prominent City-state in Ancient Mesopotamia

Ur was a prominent city-state in ancient Mesopotamia, located in southern Iraq. It served as the political and religious capital of Sumeria during the Third Dynasty, also known as the Ur III Period (2047-1750 BCE). This era saw Ur reach its zenith, with significant contributions to cultural progress known as the Sumerian Renaissance. Key figures include kings Ur-Nammu and his son Shulgi, who transformed Ur into a thriving urban community. The Great Ziggurat of Ur, still standing today, dates from this period, alongside many ruins and cuneiform tablets.

Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2016, Ur was visited by Pope Francis in 2021. It holds significant historical importance for the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Babylonians and is believed to be the birthplace of Abraham of the Chaldeans. In Ur we will get to experience the center of one of the most important cities from the cradle of civilization and see its ruins and impressive structures such as the Great Ziggurat of Ur and the world's oldest still standing arch.

Visit the Royal Cemetery, which is arguably of the great-est archeological findings in Iraq. The royal cemetery is where plenty of treasures from that time were found. We will also get to meet Abu Ashraf, who has guarded Ur for over 40 years, and hear inspiring stories about the site. Understand how many artifacts from Ur ended up in the British Museum.





## The Marshes Experience (Al Ahwar)

The Mesopotamian Marshes in southern Iraq, known for their biodiversity, are home to numerous bird species and the Marsh Arabs, who are thought to be descendants of ancient Sumerians. The marshes are crucial for migratory birds and support the Marsh Arabs' traditional way of life, including fish and rice cultivation. This unique wet-and environment has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2016 and is often associated with the biblical Garden of Eden.



## Bil Weekend's Full Immersion

Our experiences in the Marshes depend on how much a person is willing to try! It ranges from a quick boat tour and sightseeing to a few days sleeping at a reed house and living the authentic life of the marshes. During our visit we meet Abu Haider, a local guy from the marshes and visit the Al Hammar West and Central Marshes. We are going to learn more about the significance of the marshes and see why they are a UNESCO world heritage site.

# Basra



# Iraq's Key Maritime Trade Gateway

Basra holds a rich historical and cultural significance. Established in 636, it played a vital role during the Islamic Golden Age. In 2023, Basra hosted the football Arabian Gulf Cup for the first time in its history. Discover the rich history and vibrant culture of Basra, starting with a visit to the iconic meeting point of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers at Shatt al-Arab. Here, you can also check out the Tree of Knowledge in Al Qurna, a site steeped in biblical lore. Immerse yourself in the city's cultural heritage by exploring the Basra Museum, which showcases the region's fascinating past.

For a truly unique experience, spend the night at a yacht which once belonged to Saddam Hussein. This stay offers a glimpse into the life-style of the past, set against Basra's serene waters. As you navigate the city's historic canals, you'll encounter Shanashel houses of Old Basra which tells a story of the unique houses style of Basra. Basra's bustling fish market and spice bazaar are not to be missed. Here, you can sample the freshest seafood and a variety of aromatic spices that are central to Basra's culinary traditions. An Ashari boat tour on Shatt al-Arab provides a leisurely way to take in the scenic beauty and historical significance of the waterways.

Venture further to the date palm tree farms in Abu Al Khasib, where you can learn about the cultivation of these vital crops. The Basra railway station, with its historical significance, offers another layer of the city's rich tapestry. For sports enthusiasts, a tour of the Basra Sports City, a modern marvel, is a must. Conclude your day with a breathtaking sunset view from the highest building in Basra, where you can see the city bathed in golden hues. Basra's religious heritage is equally compelling, with several churches that reflect the city's diverse spiritual landscape.

As the day winds down, indulge in Basra's renowned seafood, which is celebrated for its freshness and variety. To cap off your experience, enjoy a performance of Al Khashaba music, a traditional form of Basra's local music that captures the soul of the city. Whether you're exploring ancient history, savoring local delicacies, or simply taking in the stunning views, Basra offers an unforgettable journey through time and tradition.

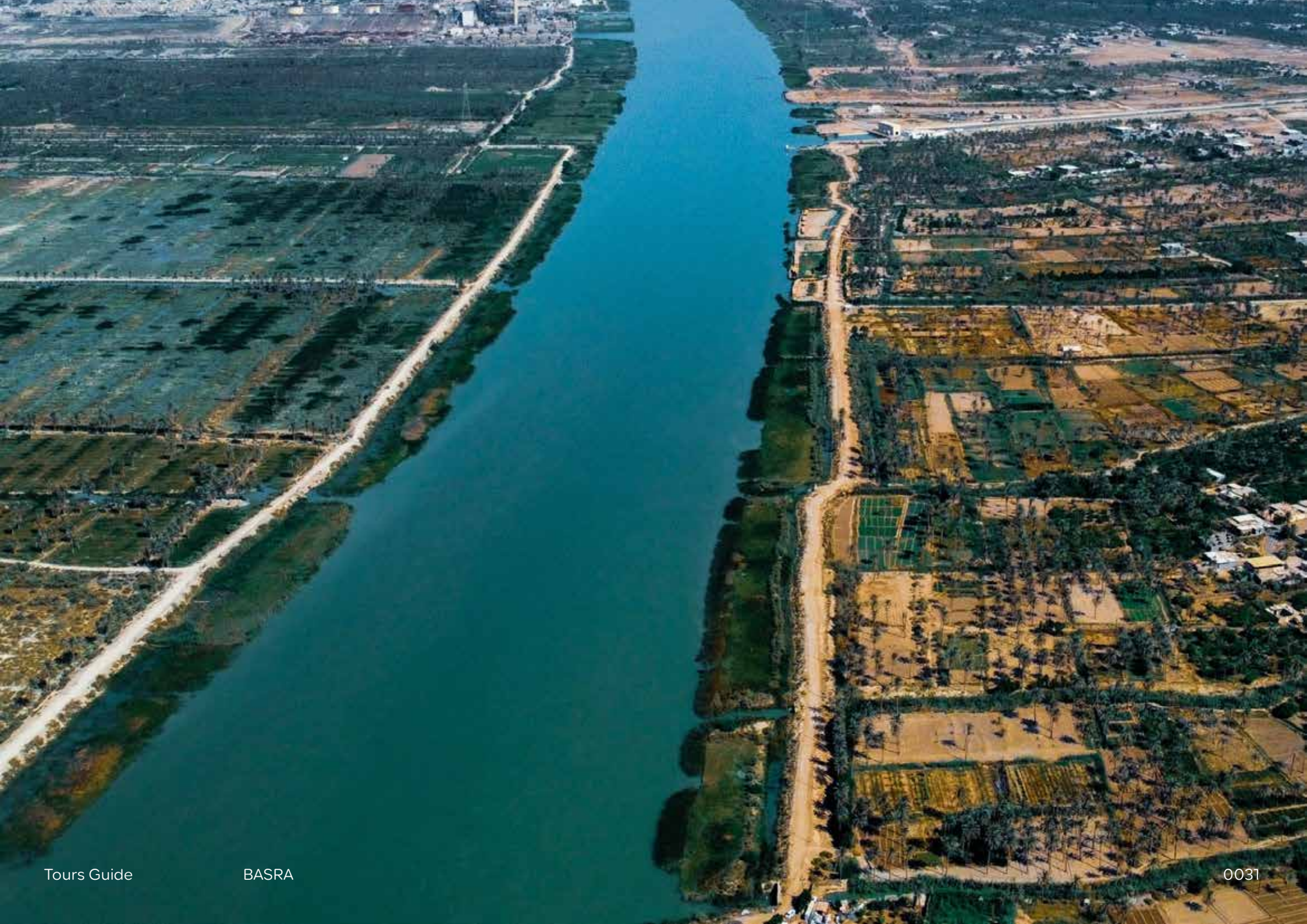


## Old Basra

Old Basra is full of charm and history, with its canals and the famous shanshel, the houses with wooden balconies that were both practical and beautiful. These intricate designs offered privacy while letting in light and air, perfectly suited to the city's hot climate.

Strolling through the old neighborhoods, is a reminder of Basra's rich past as a hub of trade and culture.

Though time has taken its toll on many of these old houses still capture the spirit of a city proud of its heritage.



# West of Iraq Al Anbar



# A Region of Immense Geological Diversity & Natural Beauty

Anbar province, the largest in Iraq, is a region of immense geological diversity and natural beauty. It encompasses cities like Hit, Al Baghdadi, Fallujah, and Haditha, each offering unique attractions.

The Euphrates River winds through the desert landscape, creating a striking environment. This area is renowned for its historical water wheels, and locally produced sesame and date syrup. Also, Al Habbaniyah Lake which is a beloved spot for domestic tourists, providing a refreshing oasis in the desert.

In early 2014, ISIS attempted to seize control of Anbar, but through the concerted efforts of the Iraqi government and local tribes, the province was liberated. Key military operations played crucial roles in reclaiming the territory, bringing peace back to the region.

In Fallujah, explore the old bridge and historic mosques that tell stories of the city's resilient spirit. Don't miss the opportunity to savor Fallujah's famous kebab meals, a local delicacy.

Experience the diverse sights along the Euphrates River, including the manmade waterfall in Al Baghdadi. Visit the water wheels in Hit and Haditha, which are listed as a UNESCO intangible heritage. Take a boat tour to fully appreciate the serene beauty of these towns. Haditha's sulfur water pond and the ancient Abbasid Bridge are must-see spots. Anbar is also known for its delicious local cuisine, offering flavors unique to the region.





# SAMARRA



# The Capital of The Abbasid Caliphate

In medieval times, Samarra served as the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and stands today as the only remaining Islamic capital that retains its original layout, architecture, and artistic relics. Located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, just 100 kilometers north of Baghdad, Samarra was the heart of the Abbasid Caliphate at its prime.

Re-nowned for its distinctive architecture, the city earned the nickname "Sur Man Ra'a," which means "delighted the one who saw," reflecting its historical beauty and vibrant atmosphere.

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2007, Samarra remains a significant symbol of Islamic history. Its status as the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and the preservation of its original city plan make it a unique and invaluable site. In Samarra, visit the great mosque, one of the largest in history, and gaze at the iconic Malwiya Minaret, known for its spiral design. Explore Al Mutawakkil Mosque with its smaller spiral minaret, known as Abu Dulaf. The Pond Palace is another extraordinary site, part of a 1 million square me-ter palace.

Hear intriguing stories about the palace and its pool, once supposedly a sanctuary for dolphins. Discover the Hamam and the Harem Palace, where original decorations from over a thousand years ago still exist. You can also learn about the modern history of the palace and the impact of the dictator who left his mark on this ancient site. Samarra's rich history and well-preserved relics provide a fascinating glimpse into the past, making it a must-visit destination for history enthusiasts and travelers alike.





# ASSUR



# Step into history and explore the ancient city of Assur

Once the capital of the mighty Assyrian Empire. Discover the revered Assur temple, a symbol of Assyrian identity and devotion to the god Ashur.

This archaeological treasure, located near Qalat Sherqat in northern Iraq, unveils centuries of rich heritage. Despite the challenges of time, Assur remains a UNESCO World Heritage Site, inviting you to witness the legacy of an empire.

Embark on this unforgettable journey to a place where history and culture converge.





# HATRA



# The Strongly Fortified Caravan City

Hatra was an ancient city located in the present-day eastern Nineveh Governorate in northern Iraq, in northern Mesopotamia. It was a strongly fortified caravan city and an important historic religious center, strategically positioned along key trade routes. Hatra was also one of the first Arab kingdoms established outside of Arabia. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1985, Hatra has a storied past. Unfortunately, it was controlled by ISIS between 2014 and 2017 and used as a camp during this period.

Interestingly, Hatra was the location for the only Hollywood movie ever filmed in Iraq, "The Exorcist." It also holds the distinction of being the capital city of the first Arab Kingdom. In Hatra, you can learn about the various ways ISIS utilized the site during their occupation and listen to firsthand accounts from locals about their experiences during this difficult time. Discover how the Italian mission from ISMEO undertook the restoration of the site, preparing it for tourism once more.

The site features seven main magnificent temples, some with Roman style columns that are still standing. Discover with us the religious practices of people in Hatra back then. In Hatra we could also engage in horse riding activities. Additionally, the area offers delicious local food, providing a complete cultural experience.





# Nimrod

The image shows the Nimrod archaeological site, a collection of ancient ruins in Iraq. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by the remains of several large, rectangular structures built with reddish-brown bricks. The walls are partially collapsed, revealing the interior spaces and the thickness of the masonry. The ground is uneven, with patches of dry grass and scattered debris. In the background, a more intact, single-story brick building with a flat roof and a central arched doorway stands on a slightly elevated platform. The sky is a clear, pale blue, and the overall scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of late afternoon or early morning.

# A Once-powerful capital of the Assyrian Empire

Discover the ancient city of Nimrud, a once-powerful capital of the Assyrian Empire, full of history and legendary artifacts. Walk through the remnants of grand palaces, decorated with intricate carvings and colossal statues, that reflect the glory of Iraq's past. While the city faced challenges, restoration efforts are reviving its majestic charm.

Explore the wonders of Nimrud and immerse yourself in the timeless legacy of one of the world's most remarkable archaeological treasures, a symbol of Iraq's rich history and a place of intrigue for explorers, historians, and travelers alike.

Your journey to Iraq's ancient heart awaits!



# MOUSL



# One of The Most Historical Cities in Iraq

Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, is one of the most historically and culturally significant cities in the Arab world. Due to its strategic location, Mosul has long served as a hub for international commerce and travel. Historically, the city has been known for its Mosuli marble and oil. Mosul's cultural diversity is noteworthy, as the city and its surroundings are home to an ethnically and religiously diverse population.

Mosul was a cultural center during the Assyrian period in Mesopotamia, an important city during the Abbasid Caliphate, and later during Ottoman period.

It has also continued to be significant in modern Iraq. The city was visited by Pope Francis during his historic visit to Iraq in March 2021.

Today, Mosul is undergoing massive reconstruction efforts, particularly through the UNESCO initiative to revive the spirit of Mosul, after being a major city controlled by ISIS between 2014 and 2017.

In Mosul, visitors can explore Old Mosul and see the reconstruction of key landmarks such as Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Al Tahira Church.

Mosul's Old Bazar, fish market, and spice market offer vibrant local experiences.

Reconstructed old houses, such as Baytna institution, reflect the city's efforts to restore its heritage. We can also experience some modern history of the city by visiting the neighborhood where the most intensive battle against ISIS took place.

Historical sites like the old Assyrian gates and the location of Nineveh, the city that is mentioned in the bible, can be visited as well.

Listening to stories from locals about their life during ISIS's control provides a poignant understanding of the city's resilience.

Mosul also offers delicious local food and vibrant local music activities, making it a culturally rich destination for visitors.





جامعة  
النور

التساجع  
الاصول

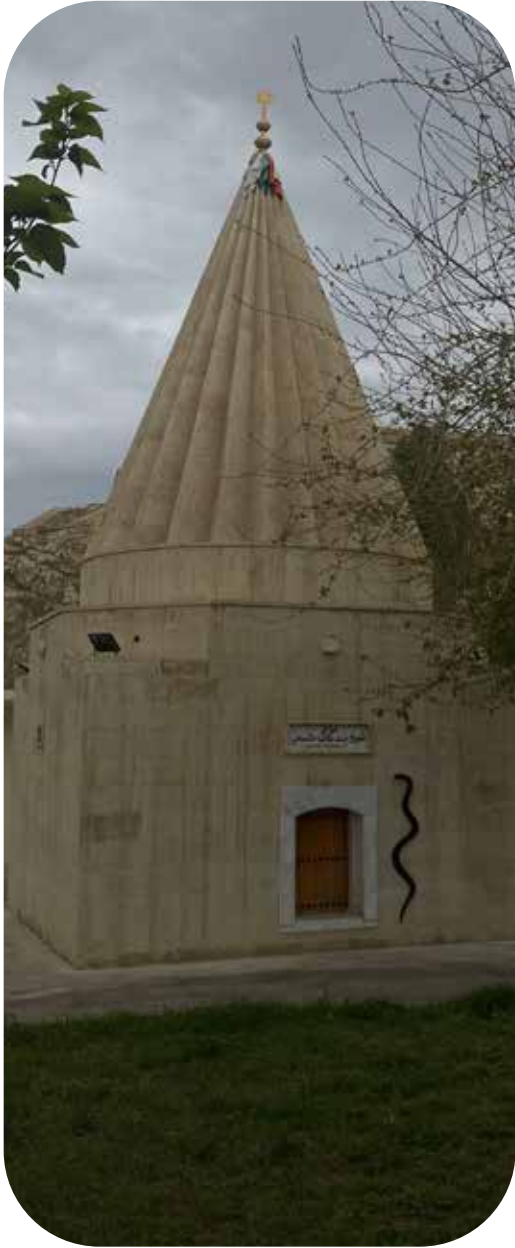


## Nineveh Cuisine

Mosul is a city where history and tradition come alive through its cuisine. From rich, hearty dishes to simple street food, every bite tells a story of culture and community. Among the highlights are kubba mosuliya, a flavorful dish of Bulgur wheat stuffed with spiced meat, and dolma, Chard leaves and vegetables filled with aromatic rice and lamb.

As part of our tourism experience, we offer a chance to immerse yourself in Nineveh's food and culture. Start your day with a traditional breakfast hosted by a local Christian family, where you'll enjoy homemade dishes and hear stories of Nineveh's vibrant past and present. This heartfelt interaction offers a rare glimpse into the warmth and hospitality that define the city.

The journey continues with a visit to a sesame factory, where you'll see the process of creating the city's famous tahini and sesame oil, staples in Mosuli kitchens. The aroma of freshly roasted sesame seeds fills the air, and you'll leave with a deeper appreciation for the craftsmanship behind these everyday essentials.



## Nineveh's Plains

The region around Mosul is one of the most diverse areas in Iraq, containing almost all the country's ethnicities and featuring an incredibly varied landscape. It is home to Syriacs, Arabs, Yazidis, Turkmen, Shabak, and Kurds, creating a rich cultural mosaic.

Historically, it was part of the Assyrian empire, one of the largest ancient empires, and is dotted with numerous archaeological sites.

Bil Weekend will take you to Baghdad, where you'll find the impressive Immaculate Church, one of the largest in the region. The church gained international recognition when Pope Francis visited it during his historic trip in 2021, prompting substantial renovations. Another highlight is Bashiqa, a town renowned for its demographic and typographic diversity.

Here, you'll visit holy places of worship for both the Yazidi and Christian communities, experiencing the unique spiritual and cultural heritage of the area.

No visit would be complete without meeting Abu Mark, a local guide who will take you on a personal tour of the town, sharing his extensive knowledge and experiences. His stories will provide an intimate look at the region's vibrant culture and history, making you feel truly at home.

Also, get to enjoy a delicious breakfast prepared by Abu Mark and his family. Then visit one of the best Tahini factories and learn the process of making Tahini.





## Lalish

Located between the Nineveh and Duhok provinces in Iraq, this temple stands as the holiest site in the Yezidi religion, a religion that is one of the oldest in the Middle East. Serving as the main pilgrimage destination for Yezidis, the temple is a spiritual heartland that offers a profound glimpse into this ancient faith. Visit the primary place of worship for Yezidis, where spirituality and history converge in a deeply sacred atmosphere.

Visiting specifically during the holy times for Yazidis will result in a much more Immersive experience in the rich culture of the Yezidi people, learning about their ancient traditions, beliefs, and customs that have been preserved for centuries. Exploring this town provides a rare opportunity to connect with one of the oldest religions in the Middle East, experiencing its spiritual depth and cultural richness firsthand.



## Mar Mattai Monastery

Perched on the slopes of Mount Alfaf in northern Iraq, the Monastery of Mar Matti is one of the oldest Christian monasteries in the world. Founded in the 4th century by Saint Matthew the Hermit, it is a revered site for Syriac Orthodox Christians and a testament to the region's rich religious heritage. The monastery, surrounded by breathtaking landscapes, offers a serene retreat for those seeking spiritual solace and a deeper understanding of early Christian history.



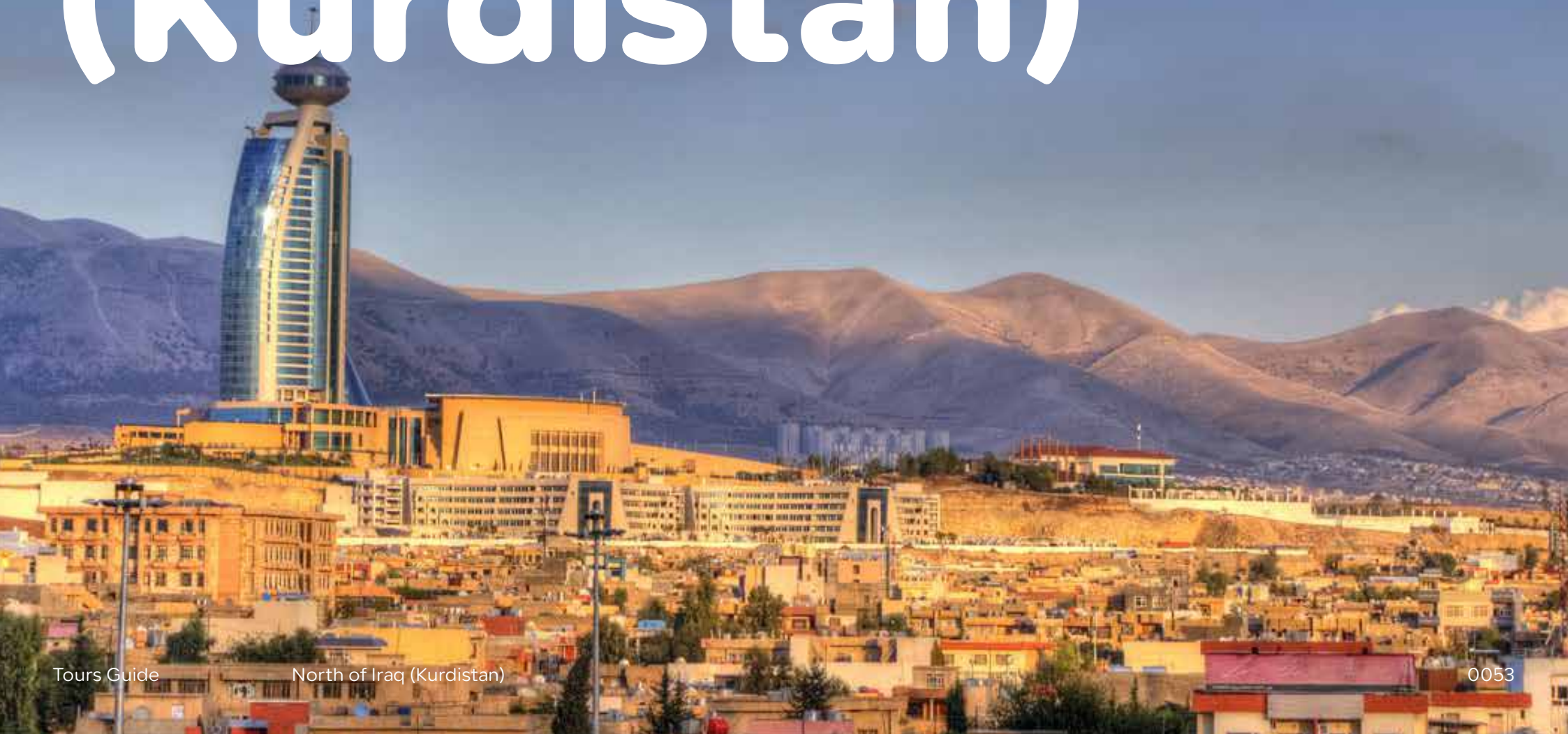
## Alqosh

Alqosh is a town steeped in history and cultural heritage. This marvelous town is known for its scenic beauty and spiritual significance. Alqosh is home to the ancient Monastery of Rabban Hormizd, carved into the mountainside in the 7th century. This historic monastery has long been a center of Christian learning.

Another significant site in Alqosh is the Tomb of the Prophet Nahum, a revered place of worship for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The tomb, which dates back to the 7th century BC, reflects the town's ancient heritage and its role as a crossroads of faith. The synagogue built around the tomb has withstood the test of time, offering a poignant reminder of the region's enduring spiritual significance.



# North of Iraq (Kurdistan)



# Duhok

The city is home to diverse ethnic groups, including Kurds who are the majority, while other minorities include Assyrians, Yazidis and Arabs.

Duhok has a lot to offer when it comes to historical sites. One of which is Amedi, a town built on a mesa (small mountain) in the broader Great Zab river valley. Amedi is known for its one thousand houses that cannot be more due to the area of the mesa that concludes it. Amedi alone has a handful of historical sites such as the ruins of a synagogue and a tomb attributed to Ezekiel. Another icon of the city is the Great Mosque of Amedi, which dates back to the 12th century and is the oldest and largest in the region.

Amedi was located along the historical silk road and it had 3 main gates, Bab Zibar to the east to Erbil, Bab Al Pasha to the north to Turkey and Bab Al Mosul to the west to the city of Mosul.

Another site that is within Dohuk is the Delal Bridge, which is a stone bridge over the Khabur river and it is about 115 meters long and 16 meters high. This bridge dates back to the Abbasid era, and is also known as the Abbasid Bridge.

Akre, an ancient town steeped in history, with roots dating back to Assyrian times. Akre is renowned for its traditional Kurdish culture and historic buildings, including Ottoman era architecture. It is also famous for its vibrant Newroz celebrations, where the town comes alive with fireworks and cultural festivities.

The location of Akre, high in the mountains, offers sweeping views of the surrounding valleys.





# Nowruz in Akre

Celebrating Nowruz in Akre is an experience unlike any other—a vibrant festival where tradition, culture, and joy come together in the breathtaking setting of the Kurdish mountains. Known as the "capital of Nowruz celebrations," Akre transforms every year on March 21st into a sea of light and color, with the iconic torch-lit march illuminating the hills and marking the arrival of spring.

Bil Weekend is proud to attend and share this unforgettable celebration with our guests every year. The day begins with exploring the town's charming streets, where locals in traditional Kurdish attire welcome visitors with open arms. The air buzzes with excitement, music, and the scent of freshly cooked Kurdish delicacies, creating an atmosphere of pure festivity.

As evening approaches, we join the crowds ascending the hills for the famous torch-lit procession. Thousands of torches light up the mountainside while traditional songs and dances fill the night. It's a moment of connection, not just to the Kurdish culture, but to the universal spirit of hope and celebration.



# Sulaymaniyah

It is a city in the eastern part of Kurdistan, surrounded by mountains, it also has multiple historical sites which are the following:

Qazqapan Cave also known as (the cave of the slave), An ancient tomb carved into a mountainside. Qazqapan dates back to the Median and Achaemenid periods (600-300 BC). You can view the rock cut tombs which are carved burial niches that were once used to bury high ranking individuals. And also sculptures and reliefs that depict religious and ceremonial scenes, providing insight into ancient Median and Persian culture.

Amna Suraka (Red Security, Red Prison) in Slemani, now a museum, served as the northern headquarters of Iraq's General Security Directorate from 1979 to 1991 during Saddam Hussein's regime. Many Kurdish nationalists, students, and dissidents were

imprisoned and tortured there. During the 1991 Battle of Sulaymaniah, the prison became a Baathist stronghold before being captured by Peshmerga forces.

Opened in 2003, the museum documents human rights abuses under Saddam. Funded by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Talabani family, and the Qaiwan Group, it features exhibits such as torture reenactments and a hall of 182,000 mirror shards honoring victims of the Anfal campaign.

Dukan Dam built between 1954 and 1959 on the Lesser Zab River in Iraq's Kurdistan Region, was designed for irrigation, hydroelectric power, and flood control. It became strategically important during Saddam Hussein's rule, particularly during the Iran-Iraq War and Kurdish uprisings, and the surrounding area witnessed violence during the Anfal Campaign.

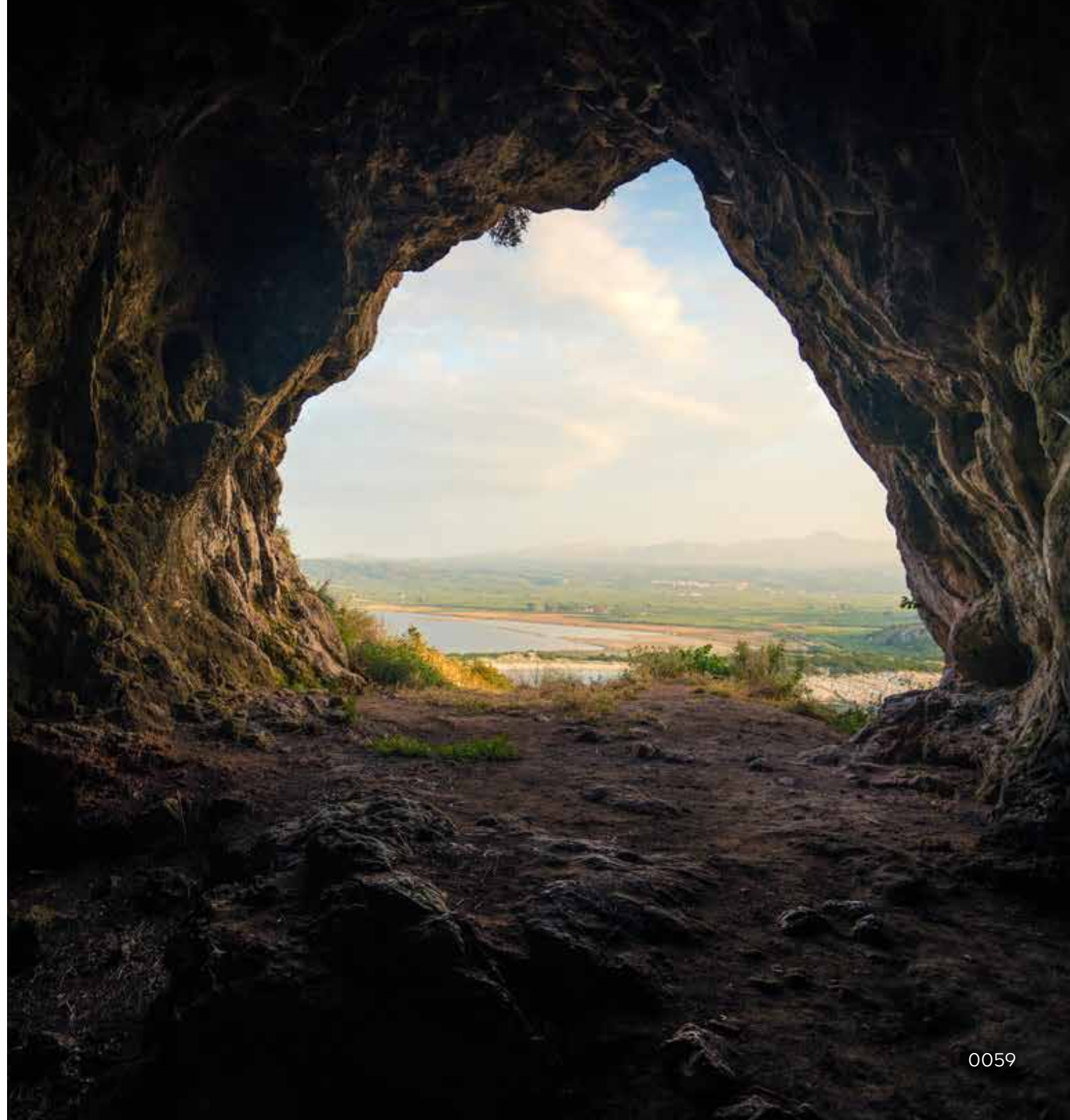
The dam, 116.5 meters high, created Lake Dukan, now a key site for tourism and recreation. Its hydroelectric power station supplies local energy, and the dam remains vital for agriculture and flood management. Despite environmental challenges, Dukan Dam continues to play a significant role in the region's development.

The Slemani Museum is Iraq's second largest museum, located in the city of Sulaymaniyah. It houses a vast collection of artifacts from ancient Mesopotamian civilizations, including Sumerian, Akkadian, and Assyrian relics. The museum plays a crucial role in preserving the cultural and historical heritage of the region, making it a key site for historians and visitors interested in the ancient history of Iraq.





The Hamilton Road, built in the 1930s by British engineer Archibald Hamilton, is an engineering marvel that connects Erbil to Iran through the rugged mountains. It played a vital role in facilitating trade and travel between the regions. The road, with its dramatic mountain passes and deep gorges, offers breathtaking views and remains a historic symbol of modern infrastructure in the Kurdistan Region.







# Erbil

It is the capital and the most populated city within the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Human settlement at Erbil may be dated back to the 5th millennium BC. It has a handful of historical and archaeological sites that are worth to visit and most commonly the following:

The Erbil Citadel, located in the heart of Erbil, Iraq, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in the world, with history dating back over 6,000 years. It sits on a prominent mound and has been a key cultural, political, and military center throughout history. The citadel features historic architecture, narrow alleyways, and traditional houses. In 2014, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. Restoration efforts are ongoing to preserve its rich heritage, making it a must for history enthusiasts.

The Mudhafaria Minaret, also known as the Holy Minaret, is a 12th-century landmark in Erbil, Iraq. Built during the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Al-Din, it stands 36 meters tall and features intricate brickwork with Islamic geometric designs. The minaret is part of the remnants of a once-grand mosque complex. Although the mosque has not survived, the minaret remains a significant example of medieval Islamic architecture in the region. It is a key historical and cultural symbol of Erbil, attracting visitors for its beauty and history.

Shanidar Cave, located in the Zagros Mountains of northern Iraq, is another significant archaeological site, particularly for its evidence of Neanderthal habitation. Excavations in the mid-20th century uncovered the remains of ten Neanderthals, some dating back over 65,000 years.

Notably, one burial site showed evidence of flowers being placed with the body, suggesting ritual behavior and symbolic thought. The cave also contains tools, animal bones, and other artifacts that provide insight into the lifestyle of early humans. Shanidar Cave remains a key site for understanding human evolution and prehistoric cultures in the region.

Bekhal Waterfall, a popular natural attraction surrounded by lush greenery and mountains. The waterfall cascades down rocky cliffs, creating a scenic and tranquil environment, especially in the spring and summer. It is a favorite destination for locals and tourists seeking relaxation and outdoor activities, such as picnics and hiking.

The area around Bekhal is equipped with recreational facilities, including restaurants and seating areas. Its proximity to other attractions like Gali Ali Beg and Rawanduz makes it a popular stop for nature lovers exploring the region's beauty.

Rawanduz, A historic town nestled in the mountains, Rawanduz was once a major trading hub during the time of the Ottoman Empire. The town is famous for its strategic location on the Silk Road and for its role in various military campaigns. Today, it's known for stunning natural landscapes, including gorges, waterfalls, and adventure sports like paragliding, making it a top destination for nature lovers.







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