



# Iraq

## Includes »

Baghdad .....	157
Southern Iraq .....	158
North of Baghdad .....	159
Iraqi Kurdistan.....	160
Dohuk .....	161
Al-Kosh .....	164
Akre .....	165
Gali Ali Beg & the Hamilton Road .....	166
Erbil .....	167
Sulaymaniyah .....	172
Understand Iraq .....	176
Survival Guide .....	180

## Best for Nature

- » The Hamilton Road (p166)
- » Amadiya (p164)
- » Ahmadawa (p175)

## Best for Culture

- » Martyr Sami Abdul-Rahman Park (p169)
- » Family Mall (p171)
- » Al-Kosh (p164)
- » Grand Bazaar (p173)
- » Amna Suraka (p172)
- » Lalish (p163)

## Why Go?

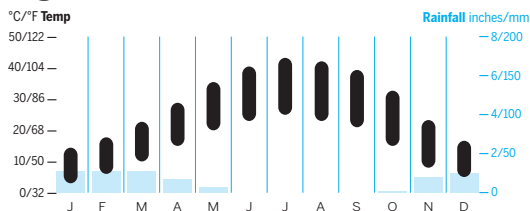
Torn between its glorious past and the turmoil of its recent bloody history, Iraq is a country of contradictions. It is the birthplace of writing and the legendary home of the Garden of Eden, Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Epic of Gilgamesh. But it is also a place of unimaginable horrors.

Since the 2003 US-led invasion, Iraq has been caught in a cycle of violence. Although there is finally some light at the end of the long, black tunnel, with the exception of Iraqi Kurdistan much of Iraq remains too dangerous for independent travellers. The future is far from certain, but with its rich history and warm hospitality, Iraq could soon become one of the great travel destinations of the Middle East, *insha' Allah*.

Due to the unstable security situation, we were unable to independently travel outside of Iraqi Kurdistan to update this chapter. Arab Iraq is currently off limits to independent travellers, so research for this part of the country was done using local contacts, the internet and other sources.

## When to Go

### Baghdad



**Mar** Join the locals in welcoming in the Kurdish New Year with bonfires, picnics and dancing.

**Apr** Mountains dusted in snow, valleys carpeted in wild flowers. Iraqi Kurdistan looks good right now!

**Oct** Goodbye summer heat, hello autumnal colours and the first snowfall in the mountains.

## Warning

Iraq is a war zone. The majority of the country has been in a state of war since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although the security situation across much of the country has improved considerably in the last couple of years, Iraq remains a dangerous,

volatile and unpredictable country. The ongoing conflict is a complex and multifaceted war with no discernible battlegrounds, front lines or combatants.

The risks are omnipresent and varied: terrorist attacks, military combat operations, suicide bombings, improvised explosive de-



## Iraq Highlights

**1** Join picnicking families and wedding parties by the dozen – experience park life Iraqi style in the **Martyr Sami Abdul-Rahman Park** (p169) or **Azadi Park** (p174)

**2** Visit one of the glossy **shopping malls** (p171) and understand why Erbil is being touted as the ‘new’ Dubai

**3** Be awed by the mountain grandeur as you travel the impressive **Hamilton Road** (p166)

**4** Sit back and admire the view over fertile plains and snowy mountains from the lofty village of **Amadiya** (p164)

**5** Scramble up the steps to the **Rabban Hormizd Monastery** (p164), set like

an eagle’s nest high in a cliff face

**6** Tie knots and pray for a better future for Iraq in the Yazidi holy site of **Lalish** (p163)

**7** Reflect on the horrors of the recent past in Sulaymaniyah’s **Amna Suraka** (p172), a former Saddam-era prison turned war-crimes museum