



Unveiling Ancient Treasures: Epic Iraq Tour

October 20 - November 03, 2024

Led by Dr. Micki Pistorius of Ancient Origins and Local Guide

Sunday, October 20
Arrive in Basra (Iraq)



Upon arrival at Basra Airport, meet and transfer to *Movenpick Hotel* for check-in, rest, and then head to visit the Basrah Museum, housed in a former palace of Saddam Hussein. Its collection is related to Mesopotamian, Babylonian, and Persian civilizations, as well as the history of the city itself. It opened its doors to the public in March 2019. Transfer to *Zenat Al-Hayat Movenpick Hotel* for check-in and overnight. **(L,D)**

Note: Standard check-in time is 2:00pm, but we will do our best to have an early check-in in case of early arrival.



Monday, October 21
Basra - Nasiriya (Eridu, Tell Al-Ubaid, Larsa & Ur)



Begin the day with a visit to Tell Al-Ubaid and Eridu. We will tour in 4x4 cars. These ancient sites in southern Iraq were home to some of the world's earliest civilizations. **Tell Al-Ubaid** was a Sumerian city that flourished around 4000 BCE, while **Eridu** was a city in ancient Mesopotamia and one of the earliest cities in the world, dating back to 5400 BCE.

Also, visit **Larsa**, "Tell es-Senkereh" an ancient city-state in southern Iraq that was a significant power during the second millennium BCE. It is known for its impressive architecture, its political and economic influence in the region.

Continue to **Ziggurat of Ur**. Its architectural characteristics are similar to the Tower of Babel mentioned in the Bible, and there are towers of a temple complex dedicated to the lunar god Nanna. Tour the archeological city of Ur, believed to be the birthplace of prophet, Abraham. Continue to Nasiriya and transfer to *Sumerian Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Tuesday, October 22
Nasiriya (Uruk)



After breakfast, drive to **Uruk**, an ancient Sumerian city in southern Iraq dating back to the 4th millennium BCE. It was one of the most important cities of ancient Mesopotamia and is known for its massive ziggurat, temple complexes, and the world's oldest known writing system, cuneiform. Uruk was the capital city of Gilgamesh. There are three major tells within the site: **The Eanna district, Bit Resh (Kullaba), and Irigal**. Archaeologically, the site is divided into six parts, the É-Anna ziggurat 'Egipar-imin, the É-Anna enclosure (Zingel), the Anu-Antum temple complex, BitRes and Anu-ziggurat, Irigal, the South Building, Parthian structures including the Gareus-temple, and the Multiple Apse building, and the "**Gilgameš**" city-wall with associated **Sinkâsid Palace** and the **Seleucid Bit Akîtu**. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Wednesday, October 23
Nasiriya (Lagash)



Begin the day with a visit to **Lagash**, a city-state in ancient Sumeria. It was known for its advanced irrigation systems, impressive architecture, and for producing some of the earliest known legal codes, such as **the Code of Urukagina**.

It is also called **Tell Al Hiba**, one of the oldest cities of the Ancient Near East. Visit **Girsu** now called "**Tell Telloh**" and the ancient site of **Nina (Tell Zurghul)** which is approx. 6.2 miles away and marks the southern limit of the state. Nearby Girsu (modern Telloh), about 16 miles northwest of Lagash, was the religious centre of the

Lagash state. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Thursday, October 24

Nasiriya (Nippure & Borsippa) - Karbala



Enjoy breakfast and then head to visit **Nippur**, an ancient city in Mesopotamia. It was a religious and cultural center, with important temples dedicated to Enlil and the goddess Inanna were home to some of the world's oldest known libraries.

Enjoy lunch and then continue the drive to **Birs Nimrud**, an important ancient city of **Sumer**, built on both sides of a lake about 11 miles southwest of Babylon on the east bank of the Euphrates. The Ziggurat is today one of the most vividly identifiable surviving ones, identified in the later Arabic culture with the **Tower of Babel**. However, modern scholarship concludes that the Babylonian builders of the Ziggurat in reality erected it as a religious edifice in honour of the local god Nabu, called the "son" of Babylon's Marduk. Transfer to *Baron Hotel* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



By Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg) - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0,

Friday, October 25

Karbala (Al-Ukhaider & Babylon) - Baghdad



Early morning visit to **Al-Ukhaider Fortress**, a historic fort west of **Karbala Governorate** built during the Abbasid era. It is known for its impressive structure, which includes towering walls and watchtowers. Visitors can explore the different sections of the fortress, which

has played an important role in Iraq's history. After a break to take your picnic lunch, continue to visit **Babylon**, an ancient city in central Iraq known for its rich history and archaeological remains. The Great Gate and the Tower of Babel ruins are some of the most notable structures in the city. Explore the city's ruins, including the **Ishtar Gate**, one of the best-preserved structures from ancient Babylon. Continue to visit **Kish** in **Tell al-Uhaymir** (1hr. 14 min.), an archeological site in central Iraq dating back to the Sumerian civilization. Explore the remains of the ancient city, including the Ziggurat, the largest structure on the site. Kish was an important center of trade and religion during the Sumerian period, and its remains provide valuable insights into civilization. Upon arrival in Baghdad, transfer to *Noorland Hotel* for check-in. Dinner at a nearby restaurant then return to the *Hotel* for overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Saturday, October 26

Baghdad (Samarra)



Begin the full-day tour with a drive to **Samarra**, an ancient city in central Iraq known for its impressive ruins and Islamic heritage sites. The city was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th century and boasts numerous historical monuments. Visits include the **Abu Dulaf Mosque**, considered one of the largest mosques in the world. It was built during the Abbasid period in the 9th century AD and is named after a Sufi saint, Abu Dulaf al-Qadri. The mosque has a unique design with a square plan, four minarets, and a central dome. The exterior is decorated with intricate geometric designs, while the interior has elaborate calligraphy and tile work. The mosque is an important historical and religious site for Muslims and attracts many visitors from around the world. **Dar al-Khalifa**, also known as "**Jawsaq Palace**," is historic and was built during the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th century AD and served as a summer residence for the caliphs. The palace was initially decorated with lavish mosaics, frescoes, and other artistic features and is considered an outstanding example of Islamic art and architecture. Today, the palace is open to visitors as a

museum, displaying artifacts and exhibits related to the history of the Abbasid period.

Also, visit **Al-Mutasim Rest House**, a historic site built during the Abbasid period as a royal palace by Caliph al-Mutasim in the 9th century AD. The palace was later converted into a rest house and used to accommodate visitors to the city. The site features a courtyard, a mosque, and several rooms used to house travelers. The palace has been well preserved and restored over the centuries, and visitors can still see the beautiful tile work and intricate carvings that adorn the walls and ceilings of the building. The site is a popular destination for tourists and history enthusiasts interested in learning about the rich cultural heritage of Iraq.

Continue the drive and visit **Tell al-Alij** viewing mound, a historic site that offers panoramic views of the surrounding area, and the **Malwiya Spiral Minaret**, a unique architectural structure located in the ancient city of Samarra in central Iraq. Built in the 9th century CE during the Abbasid Caliphate, the minaret is notable for its distinctive spiral ramp, which winds around the outside of the tower and leads to the top. The tower itself is over 50 meters tall. The Malwiya Minaret was originally part of a complex of buildings that included a mosque and a palace, and it is thought to have been used as a symbol of power and prestige for the Abbasid rulers. Today, the minaret remains an important cultural and architectural landmark, attracting visitors from around the world. Despite being damaged over the centuries, including by military conflicts, the Malwiya Spiral Minaret has been extensively restored and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Sunday, October 27 Baghdad (Ctesiphon & Wasit)



Begin the day with a drive to **Ctesiphon**, an ancient city located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River in modern-day Iraq. The city was founded in the 3rd century BCE and served as the capital of the Parthian Empire and later as the capital of the Sassanian Empire. Ctesiphon was known for its impressive architecture, including the Taq Kasra arch, one of the largest single-span arches in the world, which served as the main entrance to the royal palace. The city was also an important center of trade and commerce, with a strategic location on the Silk Road connecting the East and West. Today, the ruins of Ctesiphon are a popular tourist destination, and the site has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, the ongoing conflict in Iraq has posed a threat to the preservation of the site, and efforts are being made to protect and conserve the cultural heritage of this important historical city.

Continue the drive to **Wasit** - early mosque (3 hrs.), an ancient city in central Iraq known for its rich history and archaeological remains. It is one of the most notable structures in the city, dating back to the Umayyad period. Visitors can explore the city's ruins, including the remains of the city walls, houses, and the mosque. Wasit was an important center of trade and culture during the medieval period, and its remains provide valuable insights into the region's history. Return to **Noorland Hotel** for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Monday, October 28 Baghdad (Iraq Museum & Selusia)



Begin the day with a visit to the **Iraqi National Museum**, one of the Middle East's largest and most important museums. The museum houses a vast collection of artifacts and exhibits related to the history and culture of Iraq, including artifacts from **Mesopotamia**, the cradle of civilization, and other periods of Iraqi history. The collection includes ancient artifacts such as pottery,

statues, cuneiform tablets, jewelry, Islamic art, and other cultural objects from different periods of Iraqi history.

Continue the drive and visit to **Selucia**, an archeological site in central Iraq dating back to the Hellenistic period. It was an important center of trade and culture during that time and played a vital role in the region's history. Visitors can explore the city's remains, including the remains of the city walls, houses, and the temple of Zeus. Return to *Noorland Hotel* for dinner and overnight.

(B,L,D)



Tuesday, October 29



Baghdad (Abassid Palace, Bab alwastani & Aqargouf)

Begin the day with a visit to the **Abbasid Palace**, built in the 12th century AD by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Nasir li-Din Allah. The palace was distinguished by a distinctive architectural design, as it contains a central courtyard and two floors of rooms, with beautiful arches and muqarnas in brick and an impressive Iwan with brick ceilings and facades. Head to visit the **Mustansiriya Madrasa**, an Islamic educational institution located in the heart of the **old city of Baghdad**, Iraq. It was founded in 1227 CE by the Abbasid caliph al-Mustansir and is considered one of the oldest universities in the world. The madrasa was known for its impressive architecture, with intricate decorations and a large courtyard surrounded by lecture halls, dormitories, and other facilities for students and teachers. The curriculum includes various subjects, including Islamic law, theology, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, and literature. Many famous scholars and intellectuals studied and taught at the madrasa over the centuries, making it an important center of learning and culture in the Islamic world.

Continue to visit the **Copper market**, one of the country's oldest and most famous markets, dating back to the Abbasid era. The market is known for its copper goods, including pots, plates, trays, lamps, other decorative items, and other handicrafts and souvenirs. Explore the narrow alleys and stalls of the market,

haggling with vendors and admiring the beautiful and intricate copper wares on display.

Also, visit **Mutanabbi Street**, known as the intellectual and cultural center of the city. Named after the famous 10th-century Iraqi poet Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi, the street has been home to many booksellers, publishers, and intellectuals for decades. The street features many bookshops, cafes, and galleries, where visitors can browse various books on various subjects, including literature, poetry, history, politics, and religion. The street is also home to many street performers, including musicians, artists, and storytellers, who entertain visitors with their talents.

Visit **Aqarqouf Ziggurat**, known as **Dur-Kurigalzu Ziggurat**, an ancient, stepped pyramid near the city. Built during the Kassite period of Mesopotamian history (14th -12th centuries BCE), it is one of the best-preserved Ziggurats in Iraq. The Ziggurat was constructed as a religious center and served as a temple dedicated to the god Ninurta. It is built from mud bricks and rises to approximately 52 meters.

Drive back to Baghdad stopping en route at **Bab al-Wastani**, also known as "**Bab Khorasan**", one of ancient Baghdad gates and is the only remaining gate today. The site was restored and can be overlooked from the **Muhammad al-Qassim Highway**. At the same time, the surrounding graves, and mosques which date back to Abbasid era, known as **Al-Wardiyya Cemetery**, were uprooted in order to build the infrastructure for tourism surrounding the gate. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Wednesday, October 30

Baghdad (Ashur & Hatra) - Mosul



After breakfast, begin the drive to **Ashur**, the first capital of the Assyrian Empire, which remained a major religious, political, and cultural center for over 2,000 years. The city was known for its impressive architecture, including its massive city walls, impressive palaces, and the Temple of Ashur, which was dedicated to the city's patron god. The temple was a major pilgrimage site renowned for its wealth and splendor. The city also played an important role in developing writing, art, and other ancient Near Eastern cultural aspects.

Continue the drive to **Hatra**, founded in the 3rd century BC, became a major trading center and a powerful regional political and military force. Hatra is known for its unique architectural style blend, combining Hellenistic, Parthian, and Persian elements. The city was surrounded by a large wall and featured many impressive buildings, including temples, palaces, and a grand theater. The temples were dedicated to various gods and goddesses, reflecting the diverse religious beliefs of the city's inhabitants. The city was also known for its highly skilled artisans, who produced intricate

works of art, including jewelry, pottery, and textiles. Hatra's importance declined after the Roman Empire sacked it in the 3rd century AD and was eventually abandoned. Transfer to *Modern Plaza Hotel* for check-in, dinner, & overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Friday, November 01

Mosul (Nimrud- Khorsabad) - Erbil



Begin the day with a visit to **Nimrud**, an ancient Assyrian city founded in the 13th century BC and became an important center of the Assyrian empire. The city was known for its impressive architecture and monumental art and was home to several important buildings, including the **Palace of Ashurnasirpal II** and the **Temple of Ishtar**. Head to visit **Khorsabad**, founded by the Assyrian king Sargon II in the 8th century BC and served as the capital of the Assyrian empire for a short time. The city was known for its impressive architecture and monumental art and was home to several important buildings, including the **Palace of Sargon II**. The palace was decorated with elaborate reliefs, sculptures depicting the king, and various mythological and religious scenes. Transfer to *Erbil International Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Thursday, October 31

Mosul (Nineveh)



After breakfast, head to visit **Nineveh**, an ancient Assyrian city founded in the 3rd millennium BCE and grew to become one of the largest and most important cities in the ancient world, with a population of over 100,000 people. Nineveh served as the capital of the **Assyrian Empire**, a powerful empire that dominated the region for several centuries. The city was known for its impressive walls, palaces, and temples, including the **Temple of Ishtar**. However, the Babylonians sacked and destroyed the city in 612 BCE, marking the end of the Assyrian Empire.

Begin the day with a visit to **Tell Nabi Younnas**, believed to be the site of the ancient city of Dur-Sharrukin, built by the Assyrian king Sargon II in the 8th century BCE. The place was abandoned soon after its construction and was later used as a burial ground by the local population. The name "Tell Nabi Younnas" means "the hill of the prophet Jonah" in Arabic refers to the tradition that the prophet Jonah was buried at the site. The site contains the remains of several large buildings, including a palace, a ziggurat, and a temple, as well as numerous smaller structures and tombs.

Visit **Mosul Museum** (under renovation), established in 1952 and containing a vast collection of artifacts and antiquities from the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations and Islamic and Ottoman eras. The exhibition included sculptures, pottery, coins, manuscripts, and other objects of historical and cultural significance. However, during the ISIS occupation of Mosul in 2014, the museum was looted, and many of its priceless artifacts were destroyed or sold on the black market. Return to the *Modern Plaza Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**



Saturday, November 02

Erbil (Citadel & Bazaar)



Enjoy breakfast and then begin the drive to visit **Erbil Citadel**, a historic fortress located in the heart of Erbil, the capital city of the Kurdistan region of Iraq. With a history dating back over 6,000 years, the citadel has been continuously inhabited and is recognized as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Today, the citadel is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been restored to its former glory, with traditional architecture, museums, shops, and restaurants.

Continue the drive to the **Erbil Bazaar**, a bustling and vibrant market in the city's heart. The bazaar is the perfect place to explore traditional Kurdish culture and purchase local goods, including spices, textiles, jewelry, and traditional clothing. Enjoy bargaining with local vendors and trying traditional Kurdish food in one of the many restaurants and cafes in the bazaar. (Free time on own). Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

Optional: Visit to the Museum of Civilization, one of Iraq's largest and most comprehensive museums, showcasing the region's history and culture from prehistoric times to the present day. The museum features a variety of exhibits, including artifacts from ancient Mesopotamia, Assyrian and Babylonian empires, and Islamic civilization.



Sunday, November 03

Erbil - USA



Transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".



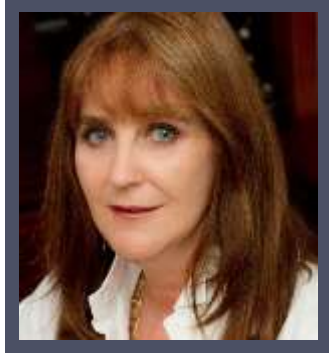
Tour Cost (Land Only): \$7,995.00

Per person sharing in double occupancy

Single supplement: \$850.00

Price is based on minimum of 8 participants and maximum of 12 participants

Dr. Micki Pistorius' journalist career commenced in printed and television media. She obtained a DPhil in Psychology, profiled hardened criminals, and authored several books on the subject. She completed BA Hons in Biblical Archaeology and has an



affinity for the Bronze Age. She trailed Odysseus from Mycenae on mainland Greece to Troy in Turkey, followed the footsteps of Alexander the Great to Taxila in Pakistan, and traced her Tancred crusader ancestral lineage to Hauteville in France. She lives and writes on a tropical island.

Tour Includes:

- Airport/Hotel/Airport transfers.
- Accommodation at mentioned hotels or similar in centrally located area.
- Meals as per the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Travel by private modern & air-conditioned car.
- 4-wheel drive for the Eridu, Tell Al Ubaid & Larsa visits.
- Mineral water in vehicle during tours.
- Entrance fees to all mentioned sites and museums mentioned.
- All activities as described in the tour.
- English Speaking guide.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters.

Tour does not include:

- International airfare USA - Basra / Erbil - USA.
- Iraq Visa (obtainable upon arrival for approx. \$77.00- to be paid in cash - subject to change).
- Items of personal nature (camera fees at sites, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Beverages or any alcoholic drinks with or without meals and any meals not mentioned.
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Travel protection insurance. (Highly recommended).

