

Iraq - A Journey to the Cradle of Civilization

Practical information

Arrival & visa procedures:

Visa

As of March 15th 2021, the Iraqi government launched a visa on arrival for Iraq program that allows citizens of 38 countries to apply for a visa on arrival at Baghdad, Najaf and Basra airports.

The following nationalities are eligible for visa on arrival for Iraq:

- USA, UK, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland
- European Union countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Once arriving at the airport, you will need to queue at the visa desk next to the immigration counters. You are required to fill out a simple form and hand over your passport. This process can take up to 30-60 minutes. Your name will be called and you're required to hand over \$75 to \$ 80 USD in cash for your visa-on-arrival processing fee. Please ensure you have the correct amount of change. You will then be handed your passport with your new visa included in your passport. You may then simply make your way through immigration.

Airport arrival/departure transfers: Please note that there is one group arrival/ departure transfer included in the package. The current schedule is uploaded on our website. Due to the specific security requirements at the Iraqi airports, we cannot help with pre-paid additional transfers. There are only a few taxi companies allowed to operate within the airport. Upon arrival at Baghdad airport, you can taxi a taxi directly from the arrival's hall, which can take you to the hotel. The price should be about 30-40 USD. If your departure flight is different than the group transfer, our local guide will help you arrange the taxi to the airport. It will cost about 40 USD and cannot be pre-paid.

Covid-19 requirements: According to the most recent update, you do not need a vaccination certificate or PCR test to enter the country. However, we advise always carrying your proof of vaccination with you just in case.

Entry fees: The entry fees are not included in the package price. Please allow about 150-170 USD for the sites visited in the itinerary.

Money & currency: It is highly recommended to bring all the money you expect to spend in cash in USD.

Euro and other currencies are more difficult to exchange. In the majority of cases, ATMs do not accept international cards. Cards are NOT widely accepted in shops or restaurants either.

Budget: You can expect to pay between 10 USD and 20 USD per meal, depending on the type of restaurant. In local eateries, it might be cheaper. You need to calculate your daily budget and expenses (plus entry fees) and bring all the necessary amounts in cash in USD.

Checkpoints: There are a lot of military checkpoints throughout the country - at the entrance of cities and on the roads as well. Most checkpoints are pretty straightforward, you either get through or they just quickly check your passport. Some might take longer to get through. Your tour leader or local guide will collect your passports and hand them over to the security guard.

SIM cards & Wifi: You can get a SIM card at a phone shop at the cost of about 10 USD for 3-5 GB (Zain Mobile operator)

Most hotels and restaurants have a relatively good Wi-Fi connection.

Dress code for men: Both men and women should dress modestly, no shorts are allowed (especially in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala). No earrings are allowed either.

Dress code for women: You should dress modestly and respectfully at all times. It's recommended not to wear clothes showing your shoulders or legs or tight clothes highlighting the body. Women do not need to wear a headscarf at all times, however, it's advisable to always have one with you. You will be required to cover your hair when entering mosques. In the cities of Najaf and Karbala (especially around the shrines), an abaya is mandatory for women. If you cannot get one before the trip, you will be able to buy it on the first day in Baghdad. Makeup and earrings are not allowed in Najaf and Kerbala. You will not be allowed to enter the shrines barefoot, please bring socks with you.

Other things to note:

- Due to security reasons, some mosques or other sites might not allow you to enter with a big bag. In this case, you will be requested to leave it in the entrance wardrobe. Cameras might also be forbidden inside the mosques.
- Even though we try to have the most up-to-date information regarding the sites visited, we might be stopped from visiting some of them. There have been cases where security has stopped groups from entering certain sites without prior notice. Keep in mind, that in some of the sites, archeological and conservational work is still in progress, which might be a reason we are denied entry to certain sites. While we do not currently have any notice that there might be issues in our March group, we would like to ask you to please keep these things in mind and be understanding in case they do happen.

We wish you an unforgettable trip, Penguin Travel Team

