



Iraqi Kurdistan Adventure with Richard Bangs

10 Days



The Adventure Company | EST. 1969

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Iraqi Kurdistan

➤ Adventure with Richard Bangs

Iraqi Kurdistan is a historically and culturally rich region with a turbulent legacy, but opportunities for travel here do exist. Join MT Sobek on an exploratory adventure through this minimally touristed area, experiencing first-hand its past glories and present struggles. Behold ancient Erbil - the world's oldest continuously inhabited city, tour third-century monasteries, the world's oldest-known bridge and aqueduct ruin, a biblical prophet's tomb, a mysterious Yazidi Pilgrimage site, explore Neanderthal Shanidar Cave, and learn about the moving history of Halabja. With expert guides leading you every step of the way, this is a unique chance to explore a spellbinding region of Iraq.

Details

Arrive:	Erbil, Iraq
Depart:	Erbil, Iraq
Duration:	10 Days
Group Size:	6-14 Guests
Minimum Age:	16 Years Old
Activity Level:	

Testimonials

"Wow, I had a wonderful time in Iraqi Kurdistan and Balin is a fantastic guide! The mountain scenery is really exquisite, but it was the local people who drove this trip for me."

Marilyn A.

"Iraqi Kurdistan is an amazing country with a fascinating and ancient history. Balin Zrar is an extraordinary guide with excellent knowledge of his country's stories and customs."

Mary G.

GOT QUESTIONS? SPEAK WITH AN EXPERT.

 1-800-974-0300

 info@mtsobek.com

Why Take This Trip With Us?

REASON #01

MT Sobek has been trailblazing edgy and unknown destinations for 50 years and creating exploratory adventures that few other companies run.

REASON #02

You will be in the company of expert guides who have over 25 years' experience leading groups in the Middle East and in Iraqi Kurdistan.

REASON #03

We have successfully operated trips throughout the Middle East, including to Iran, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

What to Expect



ACTIVITIES

Cultural touring by private van and on foot, with easy walks to discover ancient towns and historical wonders.



LODGING

Elegant resorts with spacious rooms and modern amenities.



CLIMATE

It's temperate and dry. Temperatures range from the low 50's to mid-70's F in March and from the mid-70's to low 100's F in September.

Meet Our Guides

Our expert guides and trip leaders are truly the key to our trips' success. Many are locals who live in-country year-round; others have made it their second home—all are passionate, enthusiastic and endlessly knowledgeable. Meet two of the guides that might be on your trip.

Richard Bangs

Balin Zrar

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Itinerary

DAY 1

ARRIVE IN ERBIL, IRAQ

Upon arrival at Erbil International Airport, in the capital of Kurdistan, meet your guide outside of customs and transfer to the hotel. Have a drink in the lounge while receiving a briefing on your stay in Kurdistan, then enjoy a welcome dinner with the group.

Meals: D

DAY 2

EXPLORE THE CULTURAL TREASURES OF ERBIL

After breakfast, tour the 7,000-year-old Erbil Citadel — the oldest continuously inhabited city on earth, currently under UNESCO-funded restoration. Once a Sumerian city, journeying Abraham allegedly passed through here, and Darius III fled here after facing defeat by Alexander the Great. Explore the citadel's famous Kurdish Textile Museum, then browse the food market and Qaysari Bazaar for jewelry, carpets, antiques, and delicacies. After a lunch of local cuisine, briefly visit 12th-century Choli Minaret, one of Erbil's most famous landmarks. Dinner is at the hotel's fine restaurant.

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 3

VISIT LALISH & ANCIENT SITES EN ROUTE TO DUHOK

Depart Erbil for fourth-century Dayro d-Mor Matay Monastery (St. Matthew's Monastery) and a tour conducted by the monastery's monks, then continue to Gaugamela, site of the famous battle between King Darius III and Alexander the Great. Behold amazing Jirwana, the world's oldest-known bridge and aqueduct (from 690 BC). After lunch of traditional Kurdish fare, visit holy Lalish — pilgrimage site of the mysterious and fascinating Yazidi people — for a unique cultural experience amidst its famous shrines and welcoming residents. Arrive in Duhok in time for dinner.

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 4

TAKE A DAY TRIP TO ALQOSH

Today visit Alqosh, the tomb of Old Testament prophet Nahum (7th-century BC), and ancient monasteries and churches carved into the mountains, including Rabban Hormizd Monastery, founded around 640. After lunch, in the beautiful region of Sarsinc near Gara Mountain, explore the ruins of Saddam Hussein's ten palaces, replete with man-made lakes and miles of sandstone steps alongside streams that led into the mountains where rocket emplacements guarded the valley. Return to hotel for dinner and an evening of local entertainment at one of Duhok's finest restaurants.

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Meals: B, L, D

DAY 5

HEAD EAST TO RAWANDUZ & KOREK MOUNTAIN VIA AMADIYA

Leave for the ancient fortress city of Amadiya and its 100-foot-high minaret, pass by a third-century synagogue, and visit an ancient Egyptian madrasa reportedly founded by the University of Cairo centuries ago. Continue to Barzan, stopping at the Mullah Mustapha Memorial to learn about Kurdistan's most famous leader. Pass — and, if you choose, climb to — the famous Shanidar Cave, where Neanderthal remains were discovered in the 1950s. Travel the incredibly engineered Hamilton Road to Rawanduz, where one of the world's longest cable-car lifts carries you to the famed Korek Mountain Resort.

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 6

HIKE IN RAWANDUZ GORGE

Today enjoy hiking in the stunning Rawanduz Gorge. Walk along a trail that borders the gorge, through a rocky valley crouched between the Korek and Bradost mountains. Enjoy a picnic lunch along the way. In the afternoon, return to Korek Mountain Resort to relax or explore the area. Enjoy dinner at the resort's restaurant, an incredible blend of culture and cuisine.

Activity: 3 hours/3 miles hiking with negligible elevation gain and loss

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 7

TRAVEL TO SULYMANIYA & THE AMNA SURAKA

Travel to Sulymaniya, stopping in the beautiful town of Dokan for lunch. Upon arriving in Sulymaniya, visit the infamous Sulaymaniyah's Amna Suraka, or Red House. The cavern-like entrance of this prison turned museum is covered with tiny mirrors representing the more than 185,000 Kurds who Saddam Hussein "disappeared" during his bloody reign of terror. Visit Sulymaniya's bazaar, famous Sha'ab teahouse, and, time permitting, Goizha Mountain to enjoy a spectacular view for hundreds of miles to the Iranian border.

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 8

VISIT SULYMANIYA MUSEUM & HALABJA

Visit the Sulymaniya Museum, Kurdistan's largest and Iraq's second-largest antiquities collection. Learn about the issues around preserving Kurdistan's antiquities. Depart for Halabja, one of the Kurdish villages attacked by

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Saddam's chemical weapons in 1988 that killed at least 5,000 people and injured an estimated 10,000. Today the city lives again — testimony to the Kurds' amazing resilience — and the Halabja Museum and Memorial Cemetery is both fascinating and moving. Gaze on the beautiful Ahmed Awa waterfall where we'll have a simple picnic lunch. Return to Sulaymaniya and freshen up in your hotel. A festive farewell dinner will be taken in one of Suly's fine dining establishments in the city.

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 9

KAYAK ON DOKAN LAKE & RETURN TO ERBIL

After breakfast at the hotel, depart for Dokan Lake for some pleasant kayaking. Enjoy lunch around the lake. On the way back to Erbil, visit Koi Senjaq, an ancient caravanserai (hostel on the ancient Silk Road), and old Jewish silver bazaar. Upon arriving in Erbil, check into the hotel and get ready for a wonderful farewell dinner.

Activity: 2 hours kayaking

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 10

DEPART FROM IRAQ

After breakfast at the hotel, have one final opportunity for a Q&A before departing for the airport and your flight home.

Meals: B

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Dates

Oct 10 - 19, 2023

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Inclusions & Exclusions

PRICE INCLUDES

- Expertise and services of our experienced adventure guides
- All accommodations as noted in the itinerary
- All breakfasts, almost all lunches and dinners as noted in the itinerary
- Snacks and water between meals
- Additional regional guides and experts on many trips
- Comprehensive Trip Planner with detailed pre-trip information
- Private guided tours at historic sites, museums, wineries and other select attractions as noted in the itinerary
- Special events and other select attractions as mentioned in the itinerary
- All gratuities at hotels and restaurants
- Equipment and experienced guides for activities as described in the itinerary
- Park and other entry fees (unless otherwise noted)
- Fares for trains, ferries and other modes of travel as listed in the itinerary
- Select transfers as mentioned in the itinerary
- Baggage transfers and portorage

PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- International airfare, airport taxes, and excess baggage fees
- Alcoholic beverages (MT Sobek provides wine at select events)
- Gratuities for MT Sobek guides and guide-drivers
- Travel Protection Program
- Personal expenses

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