

## IRAQI KURDISTAN

After long decades of repression and war, Iraqi Kurdistan is now undergoing profound socio-economic changes. Gated communities, shopping malls, and luxury restaurants display the immense wealth amassed by those who have been able to take advantage of the economic opening. These fortunate people want Kurdistan to become the new Dubai.



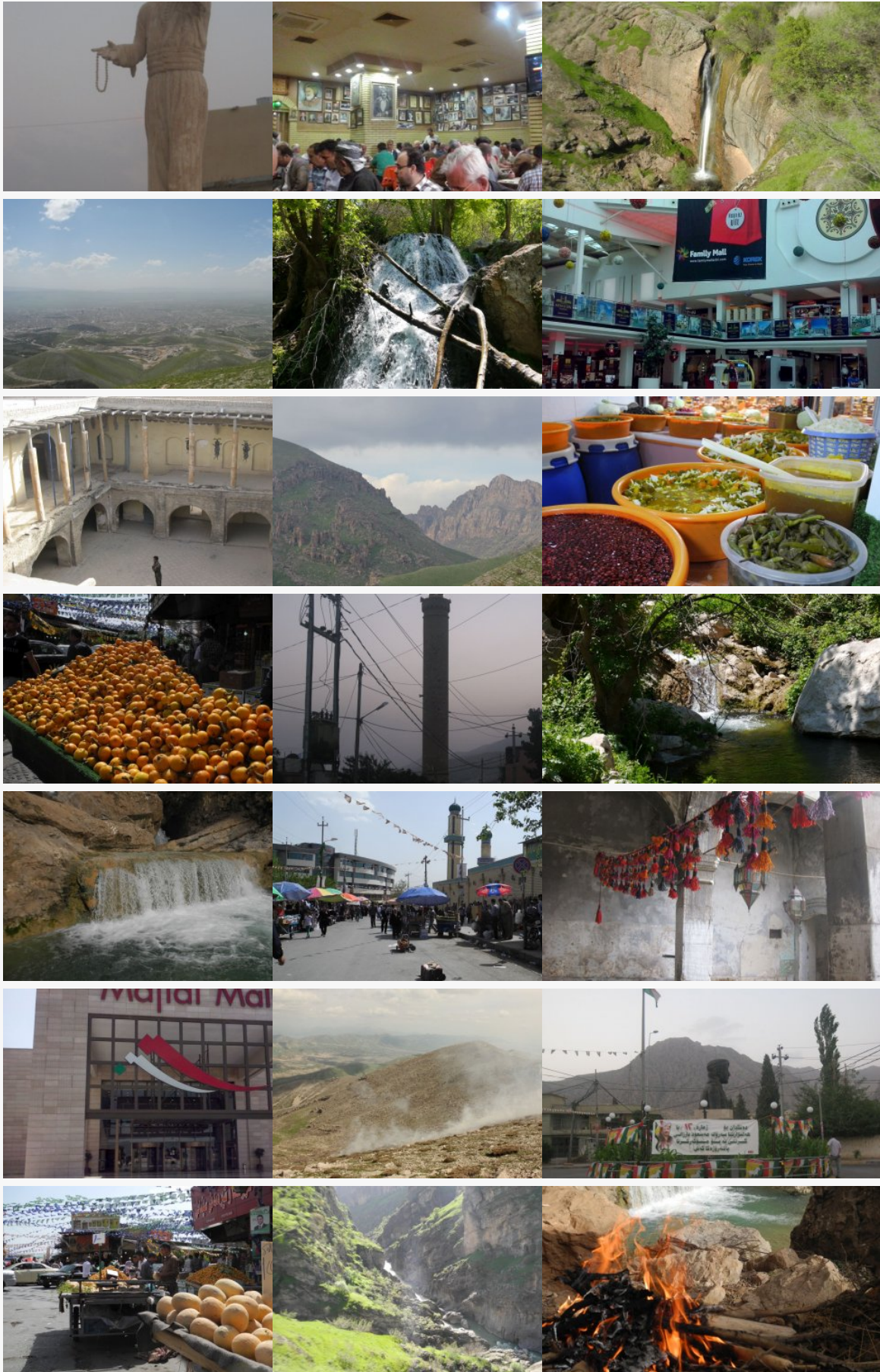
However, most of the society has other priorities: These range from wishing for an even-handed accounting for Iraq's dictatorial past to striving for gender equality, fighting corruption and authoritarian structures, and pushing for more active nature conservation. Iraqi Kurdistan's political future is also contested.

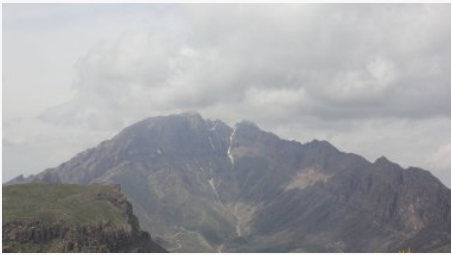
Many Kurds regard the project of self-government in northern Iraq as the realization of their long-held dream of a Kurdish state that transcends current national borders.

Others would rather see northern Iraq become a refuge for religious and ethnic minorities—while some are calling for the autonomous region to be reintegrated into the once prosperous

Republic of Iraq.

Iraqi Kurdistan's future is uncertain: While its military force, the peshmerga, has been able to repulse external attacks, the autonomous region is struggling with its identity: whether it will be authoritarian or participative remains to be seen.





## Unsere Highlights

### Sulaimaniyya

In Kurdistan's cultural capital, we attend exhibits of local artists and discuss their work with them, and are confronted with the Iraqi state's campaign against the Kurds in the former intelligence-agency headquarters and torture center, which is now a museum. Our discussion at a newspaper office centers on freedom of the press. Of course, we'll also visit the city's lively bazaar.

### Halabja

A visit to the memorial of the Baath regime's chemical-weapons attack on Kurdish civilians in 1988 directs our attention to the effects of the Iraq-Iran War.

### Amadiya

The 3,000-year-old city of Amadiya perches imposingly on a mountain. We tour its historical Christian and Jewish quarters and speak with inhabitants.

### Gara Mountain

A local guide introduces us to this rugged landscape, where we stay in mountain villages and meet local people.

### Briefings

Input on subjects such as internally displaced persons, economic dependency, relations with Baghdad, confronting IS, and the conflict between the PKK and Turkey help us to better understand the challenges facing Iraqi Kurdistan.

### Erbil

In Iraqi Kurdistan's capital city, we learn about the political system and Kurdish political parties. We'll also visit Erbil's 4,000-year-old Citadel and the Christian quarter, Ainkawa, which has a few bars.

### Lalash

A visit to the Yezidi temple complex introduces us to the genesis and doctrines of this religious community and the situation of minorities in Iraqi Kurdistan.

### Dohuk

In this city that boasts several universities, we talk with students of peace and conflict research and meet with representatives of a center for female victims of sexual violence.

### Current



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### Useful country-specific information

Health & vaccination

No special vaccinations are needed for a stay in Iraqi Kurdistan. Medical facilities have a good standard and advice is easy to get. In order to prevent cases of diarrhea, however, we recommend to avoid drinking tap water.

When it comes to the **Corona virus** (COVID-19), we follow the recommendations made by the [German Federal Foreign Office](#) as well as the local authorities and the German Embassy on site. In case of any change of the health situation, the tour might be subject to according changes we will inform you about as soon as possible.

#### Language

The official languages of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan are both Kurdish languages Sorani and Kurmanci, as well as Arabic. Furthermore, there are officially recognized minority languages, such as Armenian and Turkmen. English is lingua franca and will serve you well while travelling.

#### Local currency

Just like in the rest of the country, the official currency is the Iraqi Dinar.

It is very easy to exchange money (Euros or US Dollars) anywhere in the country or to withdraw cash with a debit or credit card, as the banks have numerous branches. We recommend to take a part of the money in cash, and take a debit or credit card with you as well. Withdrawal fees might vary according to the regulations of your home bank.

#### Security

The issue of security plays a big role in Iraq.

In planning out tours, we follow the recommendations and statements issued by the German Federal Foreign Office. Our route only leads us through areas deemed safe by the Office. While doing so, we keep close contact with the German Embassy and local authorities on the ground. In case of any change of the security situation, the tour route might be subject to according changes.

#### Visa

Visa are provided upon arrival at the airports in Erbil and Suleimaniyya.. It is thus not necessary to apply for a visa at the Iraqi Embassy in Germany. To receive a visa upon arrival, you need a passport with a minimum six months validity at the time of travel. The visa is free of charge.

Visa regulations might change at any time. If so, we will inform you in time before the tour start. Please let us know as soon as possible if you have any Israeli stamps in your passport, and/or do not wish to travel with your German passport.

For general information on our tours please click [here](#)

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