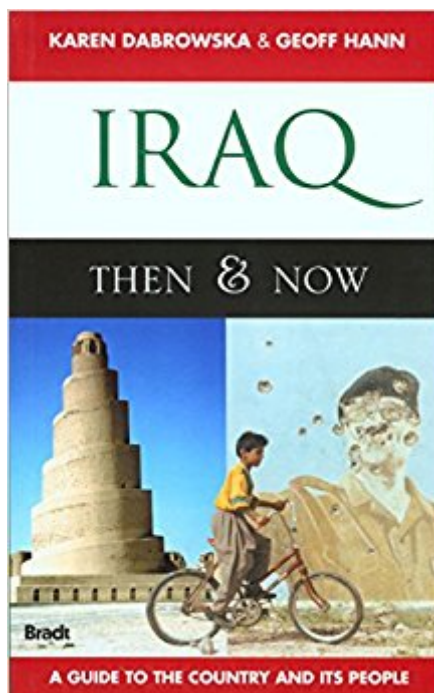


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Iraq: Then & Now (Bradt Travel Guide)



Synopsis

This new Bradt title responds to huge public interest in both Iraq and its people and is less a travel guide – certainly for the time being – and more of an objective account of Saddamâ™s regime as a whole, and the build-up to the recent conflict. Focusing on developments in post-Saddam Iraq, without ignoring the horrors which have occurred in the aftermath of the war, the author highlights the countryâ™s positive progression, with chapters such as ‘Iraqi Voicesâ™ – describing the hopes, fears and ambitions of Iraqis – and ‘Post-Saddam Iraqâ™ – where we get to hear the views of prominent politicians on the war and how it was handled.Â When Bradt published the first edition of its travel guide to Iraq, the country was slowly breaking free from the shackles of sanctions, Western tourists were returning in small numbers and it looked as if the fledgling tourist industry would grow. As in that travel guide, this new book introduces the magnificent ancient Iraqi civilisations and provides a historical background to the country, as well as providing updated practical information on which places are still open to visitors.Â

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Karen Dabrowska is a New Zealander journalist living in London who focuses on Islamic culture and conflicts. Geoff Hann runs his own tour company in the UK, specializing in Iraq andÂ the more unusual destinations.

Iraq: Then & Now provides a comprehensive look at the history, culture, and current events of Iraq. It is not as dry as a textbook although due to Iraq's status as a conflict zone, the book isn't quite as fun as an ordinary Fodor's or Lonely Planet guide. Except for a 14-page appendix, authors Dabrowska and Hann generally exclude information that would be useful to Western tourists because it is still mostly unsafe to travel there, except possibly to Kurdistan, as of its writing. The guide is fairly well-organized and easy to follow with good but small maps, a few nice photos, and a useful table of contents and index. The authors' discernible political bias against the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 does not ruin the book--Iraq: Then & Now is still useful and informative. The book also includes delightful little sidebars such as this one on Iraq's fauna about the post-invasion reemergence of honey badgers in Basra and the marshlands of the South: "The rumour mill became active and the British were held responsible for releasing the creatures to frighten the locals. The honey badger weighs up to 13kg [29 lbs], is one of the world's most fearless creatures and preys on jackals, antelope, foxes, crocodiles and snakes." The British Army denied the accusation.

Very good book, both educational and entertaining. Should be helpful for planning a trip to Iraq. The only thing I didn't like were some parts tended to drag on for a while and were boring and full of unnecessary information and details, the parts describing graphic violence were the most entertaining, but more would have made this a better book, for me at least personally.

With over 32 months of time spent in Iraq in the last five years, I found this "travel guide" extremely interesting. My soldiers and I spend months trying to determine various aspects of the culture and attempting to minimize our impacts. We have partnered with cultural anthropologists and other experts to help us understand subtleties between Sunni and Shia, urban and rural, sheiks and clerics. Much of our information collection centers around Islamic holidays and practices in order to maintain stability and promote Iraqi rule of law. This book serves as a useful reference for a variety of cultural and historic matters within Iraq. I have purchased numerous copies of this book to provide to my leaders to help sensitize them to issues like preserving historic sites, understanding refugee issues, and internally displaced persons. In one instance a young company commander stopped digging at a local Iraqi patrol base after finding shards of pottery and other possible historic remnants. Although the local Iraqi Army leader told him not to worry about it, the company commander reported the incident. After bringing scientists from Hilla, the team declared that the artifacts could potentially date back to Alexander the Great. The US Forces stopped digging and roped off the area to prevent any possible damage from military operations. I found this publication a

timely addition to my bookshelf and have opened it frequently to inform my soldiers about various cities and provinces in Iraq. Geoff Hann just led the first authorized western tour of Iraq since the start of the war, with the exception of his forays into Kurdistan in 2007. The ministry of tourism continues to grow capacity in order to maintain and improve cultural heritage sites, while welcoming travelers into the country. Of course, Iranian and other Shia pilgrims have been travelling to and within Iraq since 2003. They mainly visit the Shia religious sites of Najaf, Karbala, and Khadamiyah in Baghdad. However, Iraq seems to be stable enough in some areas (mainly Kurdistan in the north) to begin opening its borders to non-Muslims in order to share its rich heritage with the rest of the world. Although Iraq remains a country with dangerous elements, its security forces gain momentum each passing month. With the reduction of British and US Forces, we could see the tourist industry expand for westerners. For the time being, however, I would not take my family to most areas of Iraq. Too many extremists in the militias and former insurgents have the possibility of taking advantage of kidnapping opportunities presented by western tourists.

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