Geography

Iraq, a triangle of mountains, desert, and fertile river valley, is twice the size of Idaho. The country has arid desert land west of the Euphrates, a broad central valley between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and mountains in the northeast.
The Great Mosque of Al-matuwakkil

Also known as the Great Mosque of Samarra, was built under the reign of Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil. He reigned in Samarra from 847 to 861. The mosque was built in Samarra, Iraq. Samarra is 125 km away from Baghdad next to the Tigris River. This was the second mosque built on this site and was built between 849-852 A.D. It was the biggest mosque of its time. Most of the mosque now lays in ruin except for the minaret and some the walls remain intact.
Ethnic Make-up: Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%-20%, Turkoman, Assyrian, or other 5%

There is also a distinct sub-group of Iraqi Arabs, called the Ma'dan or Marsh Arabs, who inhabit miles of marshy area just above the point at which the Tigris and Euphrates join together.
Hospitality

Hospitality is an Arab and Muslim tradition deeply engrained in the culture. Visitors are treated as kings and must always be fed and looked after. A tradition within Islam actually stipulates someone is allowed to stay in your home for 3 days before you can question why they are staying and when they will leave. Invitations to a home must be seen as a great honor and never turned down.
Iraqis consider family and honor to be of paramount importance. The extended family or tribe is both a political and social force. Families hold their members responsible for their conduct, since any wrongdoing brings shame to the entire family. Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationships, even business.

Nepotism is not viewed negatively; in such a culture it naturally makes more sense to offer jobs to family, as they are more trusted. It is common for large extended families to live in the same house, compound, or village. In urban areas, families do not necessarily live in the same house, but near each other.
The majority of Iraqis are Muslims regardless of ethnicity. During Saddam’s regime only Sunnis held real power.

With the overthrow of Saddam’s regime the Shia majority now hold more power and influence than in the past. As well as the power shift people have also been able to express their religious identities a lot more freely.
Cuisine

Iraqi food is strongly influenced by its neighboring countries, Turkey and Iran, in addition to a limited influence by Indian food – thanks to British occupation in the early 20th Century. In spite of that, Iraq has adapted these “foreign cuisines” to their taste.

One of the most famous Iraqi dishes, *Masgouf*, is a whole-skewered fish barbecued on an outdoor grill. It is known mainly by Baghdadis in Abu Nuas street, where restaurants and cafes stretch along the beach of the river Tigris.
Clothing

The traditional clothing for Iraq is called dishdasha for men and Hijab for women. The dishdasha is a long shirt at ankle length usually worn with long sleeves. The hijab is a long dress which is worn under the abaya a along black cloak that covers the body down to the feet.
Ancient History

Iraq was known as Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The people built advanced irrigation systems, developed cereal agriculture, and invented the earliest form of writing. The created a math system which our system is based on as well as the wheel and first plow.
The Crossed Swords

Said to be forged from the weapons of fallen Iraqi soldiers, bracket a parade ground and viewing stand, where Mr. Hussein reveled in the glory he felt was due to him. It is one of the largest public monuments ever built. At its dedication, Mr. Hussein rode a white stallion through it, passing over the helmets of Iranian soldiers that are cemented into the bases of the thrusting swords. It was a monument to a war against Iran that neither country won, despite savage losses on both sides. It was dedicated in 1989, barely a year before the invasion of Kuwait, another lost war and, in a way, the beginning of the end of his government.
Iraqi Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

After the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003, an important monument. In Baghdad, the Iraqi Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, was looted and damaged. In 2006, the U.S. military awarded a contract under the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) to fully renovate the landmark and provide the Iraqi Military Honor Unit with ceremonial uniforms.