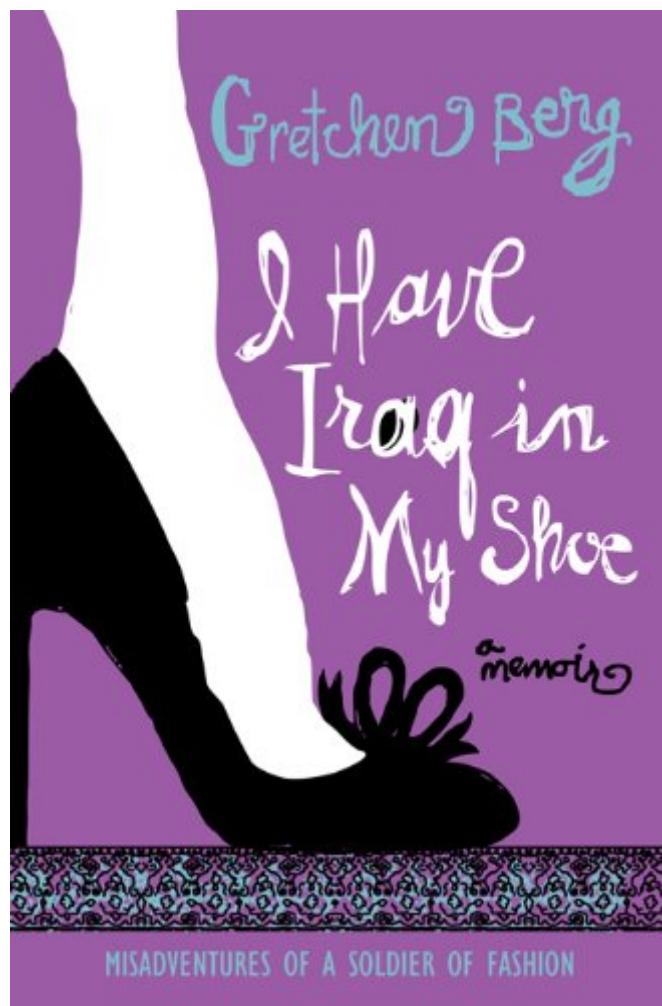


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# I Have Iraq In My Shoe: Misadventures Of A Soldier Of Fashion



## **Synopsis**

"I am not moving to Iraq to teach." How does a liberal American girl in red suede boots end up teaching English to conservative Muslim Iraqis in headscarves? Gretchen Berg has met the recession: she has eaten cereal for dinner, given up the gym membership, and come face to face with looming unemployment. To cope, she decided to uproot her life and move to the Middle East. She expected to make some good money, pay off some bad debt, and take some photos of camels. She did not expect to feel at home. She did not expect to fall for a student. She did not expect Diet Coke withdrawal. Irreverent, hilarious, and completely relevant, *I Have Iraq in My Shoe* takes a single, broke, fashion-conscious American female who prefers Project Runaway to CNN and tosses her into Iraq in exchange for cash and vacation time. Watch the desert sand fly!

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book was interesting in that the author was in Erbil and Suli, which are in Kurdistan, the northern part of Iraq claimed by the ethnic Kurds as their homeland. But most of the book is negative, either about the people she works with at the ESL school or about the culture and people

of Iraq/Kurdistan. She writes about everything in a lighthearted, humorous way, but it seems like her true personality is not so nice. She slams the friend who hires her after having worked with her for only a few months in Korea teaching English. She is getting paid \$75,000 a year. \$10,000 more than any other teacher at the school, even though she only has 2 students for much of the time! She has weeks and weeks of paid vacation, also. But she hates that the school expects her to answer the door to prospective students and give them a spiel about the school, which is in a rented house. She is living in this house rent-free, but goes on and on and on about how this is a huge imposition. She refuses to answer the doorbell on the weekends. Or when she is in her jammies. Or her bikini. I would think she would answer the door and hope to get some more students! She comes across very whiny and over-privileged. A romance (with a Kurdish student of hers) touted on the back cover comes to nothing - they don't even kiss! Towards the end of the book, she is even more negative about the Middle Eastern culture and how women must obey certain cultural rules there. She spends most of her time hanging out with other Westerners, drinking wine and shopping online for insanely expensive shoes (\$350 boots). She also admits to paying almost \$5,000 in oversized baggage fees, during her one year of working in Iraq. Ugh.

Loved the book! I'm usually more of a fiction girl - but this book was just up my alley. So entertaining, so descriptive, so lively - and yet so real. I can't wait for my book club discussion about this book next month. I'm sure the book will spark some lively discussion, as everyone has had to make choices as to how they were going to get through the Great Recession. Life altering decisions are often treated so depressingly in most books, so it is a fresh perspective to hear about someone making some tough decisions, completely altering their life, but doing so with lots of humor and grace. I hope to read a lot more from this author!!!!

Start-to-finish awesome. I loved every word. Berg's first book is a fantastic read as she proves to be a hilarious heroine who I wanted to travel with along for the ride. This was one of those rare books that I didn't want to actually finish, as I looked forward to each page. I hope she's working on a second one, though the experiences of a soldier of fashion in a war-torn country will be hard to top. I loved the conversational tone, paired with clever language (seriously, you will LOL but also appreciate the grammar and structure). Thanks, Gretchen, and well done!

I came across this book when I was searching for some information about Iraqi Kurdistan, where I was supposed to go with an NGO. I was totally delighted to find something like this, a western

woman's impressions of this country, how did she find it, what were the people like.... so I bought it immediately. Well, I did not find there anything I was expecting. I mean, the book was really fun read (I am not a native speaker so probably I missed some of the author's jokes, but I still found it really entertaining) and I think the author has a really witty style, but... I did not find any Iraq there. This story might as well have happened anywhere else in any more conservative country. The author spent months in a foreigner's compound not mixing with locals at all, except for her students. She did not describe a thing from Erbil's architecture or history or traditions.... She was very much trying to keep her lifestyle as it was in the US (if this is possible at all in such a totally different environment). She was complaining she could not find a diet coke or that she ran out of alcohol, that the local people smelled, that someone was constantly intruding her privacy, or that she could not eat sausages....This is a good read for holiday, but if you already know something about Middle-Eastern countries, do not expect to learn anything more.Finally, for the author- please do not consider this criticism :) I know you did not mean your book as some sort of encyclopedia. It's only that I travelled around Arabic countries and happen to study Middle East, so I might have different perspective. Anyway, thanks for your writing :)

I felt like she complained a lot in the book and was very self-righteous and ignorant about 'The Iraq' but overall it was funny and I learned some new things. It's an entertaining read and gives you a little more perspective about the Middle East although she really doesn't go out of her way to understand the culture and is always trying to escape into her own American views.

I found this book amusing, but it didn't really go anywhere. Having lived overseas as a child and again when my children were small, I can appreciate a lot of the struggle to feel at home in a strange place. Gretchen's descriptions of the people she met were interesting and gave me a better idea of what Iraq is like. However, she did seem to lack an appreciation for the experience.

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