

somewhere in Northern Iraq

📍 37°02'32.6"N 44°00'57.1"E

Where: Zagros Mountain Range



What: Jeep Grand Cherokee 4.7 High Output

An almost mythical piece of engineering still powers through the world's roughest terrains in its original form. Not a single piece on this vehicle has been changed from factory setting; however, almost all parts have been swapped to make it as reliable as if your life depended on it in these remote areas. And rely on it we did. The only mechanical difficulty we encountered was a 545RFE breakdown, meaning we had to change the whole transmission. Interestingly enough, this was a mere 48 hour intervention, which even by European standards is remarkable. Even more, if you consider the location... the Mosul, Erbil, Kirkuk triangle. Since then, the climbing capabilities of our WJ have not been inhibited and its two ton weight proves how featherlike it is when compared to the rest of the off road talents. The comfort and speed in which it carries us around is unparalleled. At high speeds most of the power is directed to the rear wheels so it moves like a sports grand tourer. Engage low speed and all three differentials become active to allow stiffness and powerful to prevent standstill. Come and learn.

Which: We have fitted the latest of overland dream rubbers on 17-inch alloy rims in size 235/65. We haven't regretted this dimension at all, although our thoughts prior to the trip were with higher sidewalls, to accommodate for off road softness and durability. None of that was an issue and not a single puncture. Should we be travelling without a spare then? The honor goes to the Cooper Discoverer AT 4S which is fit for all four seasons, cold to hot climate. An off road tire so ubiquitous that it performs outstandingly on all surfaces from tarmac to sand to water to snow. With it we covered a distance from Skopje (Northern Macedonia) to the Iraqi border in a mere 24 hours. This tire goes from 160 km/h on asphalt into rock climbing mode or Paris Dakar gravel speeds in an instant. We were surprised.

Why: Is it finding your inner peace? Is it adventure? It is places where we are alone that bring us closest to ourselves and the solitude we encountered here was both frightening and soothing. We exited the country just days prior to the political insanity happening. The kindest of people reside here and one should visit.

WHAT ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA SAYS ABOUT THE ZAGROS MOUNTAIN RANGE

Zagros Mountains, mountain range in southwestern Iran, extending northwest-southeast from the border areas of eastern Turkey and northern Iraq to the Strait of Hormuz. The Zagros range is about 990 miles (1,600 km) long and more than 150 miles (240 km) wide. Situated mostly in what is now Iran, it forms the extreme western boundary of the Iranian plateau, though its foothills to the north and west extend into adjacent countries. The oldest rocks in the Zagros range date to Precambrian time (that is, before 541 million years ago), and the Paleozoic Era rocks that date to between 541 million and 252 million years ago are found at or near the highest peaks. Most of the rocks in the mountain range, however, are limestone and shale from the Mesozoic Era (252 million to 66 million years ago) and the Paleogene Period (66 million to 23 million years ago). The range was primarily formed by orogenies (mountain-building episodes) driven by the movement of the Arabian Plate underneath the Eurasian Plate during the Miocene and Pliocene epochs (23 million to 2.6 million years ago). The highest point in the range is Mount Dena, elevation 4,409 metres, located in the middle Zagros. Passes through the mountains are used for reaching the fertile intermontane plains, which lie at elevations above 1,500 metres. The rivers draining the range's western face are strong and perennial, flowing through enclosed plains or ravines. Rainfall in the region is about 1,000 mm annually. The mountains are an imposing natural barrier and have traditionally provided the boundary between cultural and political entities, including the early Mesopotamian and Median cultures, the Parthian and Roman empires, and, more recently, the Persian and Ottoman empires. The mountains and foothills that approach the range are home to a significant portion of Iran's population, including, in addition to ethnic Persians, significant numbers of Assyrian Christians, Kurds, and Turks as well as Lurs, Bakhtyāri, and Qashqāi tribal groups. The traditional economy is based largely on animal husbandry, and the production of high-quality rugs and carpets has long been a mainstay of the region. Large reserves of petroleum are located in or near the southwestern foothills.