Baghdad sheds vestiges of long war and disorder

But as city discards barriers, shortcomings emerge

By Sharan Bhasin

BAGHDAD — For weeks now, Capt. Ghassan Ghani and his team of workers, cranes and long-bed trucks have been stripping away what he calls a “ghost of war” from the riverfront, where since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, the 200-foot concrete barrier lining Baghdad’s major roads and buildings as protection from suicide car bomb attacks.

The barrier was part of a Baghdad Operations command, expected to be a two-day event as a chance for Iraqis to finally take back their city from the hands of an army they say was installed beyond the city’s control — a metaphor for the decades of U.S. military occupation and the West’s inability to get its bearings in Iraq.

But in the final days of the barrier’s demolition, on Thursday, Ghani watched as workers on the banks started cutting the large slabs, known as T-walls, that had long towered over a motorway the Iraq capital calls downtown. As the T-walls swung away, a shock of green emerged — an attempted surge of palm trees adorning the center of a gate.

“It’s time to do this,” said Ghani, “so that the old Baghdad can finally be seen.”

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TIPSHEET

Dig into the Year of the Pig

By Jonathon D. Lawford (1) Discover hidden pockets in a big towel that packs small; get plenty of traction with featherweight amphibious footwear; power up cute acoustics from tiny, animal-shaped Bluetooth speakers; and grow a stashable pouch into a wheel-aboard bag.

Small things, big effects

BIG SPREAD

A large lightweight multicultural towel can be a godsend multilingual travelers around the world. Our Monster Towel has a generous size and a light, quick-drying fabric with terry loops on both sides. The towel can double as a pillow or beach blanket. It can be washed in a washing machine and dried in a dryer. It's made from a blend of polyester and cotton. The towel can be used as a beach towel, bath towel, and Beach Towel. It's machine washable and dryable.

SHOW A CASHEMERE

Casbeach Designer Cashmere will be the next best thing. The light-weight fabric is the perfect accessory for any occasion. It's perfect for travel and can be folded into a handy travel size. The material is made from 100% cashmere and is machine washable.

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Tahiti airfare and hotel from $1,499

Want a tropical escape? Air Tahiti Nui has an airfare-and-hotel Tahiti package that includes a seven-night stay at the Manava Beach Resort and Spa, including round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations, and meals. The package is available for travel from San Diego International Airport to Papeete, Tahiti. The cost is $1,499 per person, double occupancy.

Gears

MONSTER TOWEL

The Monster Towel is designed with a quick-drying fabric and lightweight design. It can be used as a beach towel, bath towel, and Beach Towel. It's machine washable and dryable. The towel features absorbent microfiber, which is ideal for beach and pool use. The towel also comes with a zippered compartment that can be used to store small items.

BLUETOOTH BUDDY

My Audio Pets are available in 17 big-eyed animal shapes and include a unique little hole in their head for belting in your pet. The new My Audio Pet headphones have a mic and a speaker. The headphones have a choice of six colors, which you can switch using an LED indicator light and an included mini USB port. The headphones have a choice of six colors, which you can switch using an LED indicator light and an included mini USB port. The headphones have a choice of six colors, which you can switch using an LED indicator light and an included mini USB port.

Space changer

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TURS & CRUISES

For the packed count, feed and islands of water-based travel, consider a trip to Ireland. For a more remote touristy and Gaelic experience, consider an expedition to the outer hebrides of Scotland and the Hebrides islands. This new, eight-day 12-part European cruise by Celebrity Cruises calls at eight locations, including a stopover of 72 hours or less, allowing you to explore the country and its attractions.

Norway

Ferry to fjords

Explore the rugged coast, fjords and islands of western Norway. Consider a ferry to Ireland for a more remote touristy and Gaelic experience. Consider an expedition to the outer hebrides of Scotland and the Hebrides islands. This new, eight-day 12-part European cruise by Celebrity Cruises calls at eight locations, including a stopover of 72 hours or less, allowing you to explore the country and its attractions.

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New Zealand:

From LAX, $699

There is no better way to discover New Zealand than with a Celebrity Cruises cruise. The new, eight-day 12-part European cruise by Celebrity Cruises calls at eight locations, including a stopover of 72 hours or less, allowing you to explore the country and its attractions.

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Kick off your wellness goals this fall with a trip to Baja California Peninsula. Consider a trip to San Diego International Airport. From LAX, $699

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