

Armenia and Georgia – East of Byzantium

Tour Code AG

The traditions of these two countries are distinct, yet have also become interwoven during their long histories. This fascinating journey allows the traveller to savour the rich heritage and warmth of the peoples of Caucasia. Armenia adopted Christianity in the early fourth century and developed a magnificent architectural heritage that continued into Islam. Georgia, the land of Jason and the Argonauts, has a rich Christian history, stunning scenery, not to mention its excellent cuisine and wine!. We travel from the shadow of Mount Ararat to the shores of the Black Sea and experience a fascinating mix of religious tradition, people and culture.

Khor Virap Monastery set against
Mt.Ararat, Armenia © syderimages.com



ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Yerevan, ARMENIA

Departure from London Heathrow with Austrian Airlines.

Day 2 In Yerevan. City Tour

Early morning arrival and transfer to our hotel located in the historic centre of the city for five nights. After a morning at leisure we spend the afternoon visiting some of the historical and architectural highlights of Yerevan including the Erebuni Fortress and the Mother Armenia monument with a panoramic view of the city. Welcome dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 3 Visit Echmiadzin Cathedral and Amberd Castle

This morning we visit Echmiadzin, UNESCO listed religious centre of Armenia and seat of the Armenian Patriarch. After a traditional lunch at a family house, we visit Amberd medieval castle that once served as a summer residence for Armenian noblemen, located on the slopes of Mt Aragats, the highest mountain in Armenia (B,L,D)

Day 4 Visit Khor Virap and Noravank Monasteries. Winery tour

We start the day with a drive south to the monastery of Khor Virap stunningly set against the backdrop of Mt Ararat. We continue to Noravank Monastery, situated on the hill of a twisted gorge and a place of breathtaking natural beauty but also an architectural delight with its exceptional intricate exterior carvings. We pause in Areni, a famous wine producing town where we visit a small, family-owned winery and try the wine produced here. We return to Yerevan in the late afternoon (B,L,D)

Day 5 In Yerevan. Visit Geghard Monastery and Garni Temple

This morning we start with a visit to the National Library of Yerevan, the Matenadaran, with its world-famous illuminated Armenian manuscripts dating from the 6th century. Then we journey east of Yerevan to the 13th century rock-cut monastery complex at Geghard – an important spiritual centre of Armenia in the Middle Ages. We also visit the restored 1st century AD Roman Temple at Garni before returning to Yerevan in the late afternoon with a visit to a Brandy factory for which Armenia is so famous for (B,L,D)

Day 6 Visit Lake Sevan

We have a visit to the State Museum of Armenian History and before heading north to Lake Sevan, one of the largest high-altitude lakes in the world located at 1900m. Here we visit the 9th century Sevan monastery, perched on a cliff above the lake. We continue to the nearby resort of Dilijan surrounded by lush forest and with an interesting historic centre for one night (B,L,D)

Day 7 Visit Haghpat and Sanahin Monasteries. Drive to Tbilisi, GEORGIA

Reaching the Lori province we visit the two outstanding UNESCO listed monasteries of Northern Armenia, Haghpat and Sanahin, superbly located on either side of the Debed Canyon. After lunch we head for the border to cross into Georgia and drive to Tbilisi and transfer to a hotel located in the historic city centre for three nights (B,L,D)

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Day 8 In Tbilisi. City Tour

We have a sightseeing tour of Tbilisi today and include the architectural heritage of its Old Town and a visit to the National Art Museum. In the afternoon there will be some free time, perhaps to take a stroll along Rustaveli Avenue, the main street of the city or return to savour the atmospheric Old Town close to our hotel (B,D)

Day 9 Visit Kakheti wine region

This morning we drive into the Kakheti region well known for its wine producing. We enjoy superb views of Great Caucasus Mountains and valleys of Kakheti, acknowledge traditions and culture of the country and region, taste wines and delicious food with visits to a farmer's house to see a unique 300 year-old wine-cellar to a wine factory to taste manufactured Georgian wines followed by lunch at a local family accompanied by a Tamada-toast master. We enjoy home made Georgian dishes and (more) wine. We return to Tbilisi in the afternoon (B,L)

Day 10 Visit Mtskheta. Drive to Gudauri

We visit Mtskheta this morning; the ancient capital and religious centre of Georgia which dates to 3000 years old and explore the UNESCO World Heritage sites of the 6th century Jvari church and the 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral where the Robe of Christ is buried. Later we head north along the famous Georgian Military Highway for a stunning drive through the high Caucasus Mountains to Gudauri stopping at the 17th century Ananuri architectural complex comprising of two churches and a fortress. Two nights stay in Gudauri (B,D)

Day 11 Visit Trinity Church, Mt. Kazbegi

A stunning drive from Gudauri along the Tergi River over Cross Pass (2395m) brings us to Kazbegi. Here we board jeeps to take us to the beautiful 14th century Trinity Church, stunningly located at 2147m, beneath the towering massif of Mt Kazbeki. We also visit the dramatic Dariali Gorge leading to the Georgian-Russian border before returning to Gudauri with a stop to learn about Georgian icon-painting and 'Tekka' (wool artefact) making (B,D)

Day 12 Visit Gori. Drive to Kutaisi

We drive to Gori to see the Uplistsikhe Caves that date to the 1st millennium BC and where the Great Silk Road used to pass through. This is an old and interesting complex with dwelling quarters, wine-cellar, bakeries, a three-nave basilica church hewn out in rock and even an antic theatre. Later we visit Stalin's house, museum and carriage. We continue into Western Georgia which is very different from the East, with its cool springs, green fields and beautiful gardens. Our destination is the pretty ancient town of Kutaisi, the second largest in the country, where Jason and the Argonauts had stolen Golden Fleece. Dinner and overnight at a family guesthouse in Kutaisi (B,D)

Day 13 Visit Kutaisi. Drive to Batumi

This morning we visit historic Kutaisi including Gelati Cathedral (12th century), one of the earliest academies in Europe and a listed UNESCO World heritage site. Then we have some free time in the old part of the town and later drive to Batumi on the Black Sea. Upon arrival we have free time to enjoy the seaside Boulevard and explore town on our own. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at a hotel in Batumi (B,D)

Day 14 In Batumi. Drive to Tbilisi

We start the day at the Gonio Fortress (1st century) connected with the myth of Jason and Argonauts. Later we visit a local colorful agricultural market full of Georgian vegetables, fruits, spices and cheeses before heading to Batumi Botanical Gardens, which opened in 1912 and enjoy a pleasant walk. Later we meet our vehicle and drive back Tbilisi for our final evening. Farewell dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at a hotel in Tbilisi (B,D)

Day 15 Fly London

Transfer in the early hours to the airport for our flight departure to London Heathrow via Vienna with Austrian Airlines (B)

Cost £1895.00 per person in a twin room (excludes international flights) Single supplement cost £400.00



Price includes –

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Specialist national guides in each country
- ▶ All transportation - private a/c coach
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality and well located (local) four star hotels
- ▶ Full board meals in Armenia, half board meals in Georgia
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

PLEASE NOTE – personal travel insurance, visa fees, alcoholic drinks, guide and driver gratuities, international and domestic Turkish Airline flights are not included in the land tour cost (from £180.00 through Flight Centre UK) (Included meals denoted by B Breakfast, L Lunch, D Dinner)