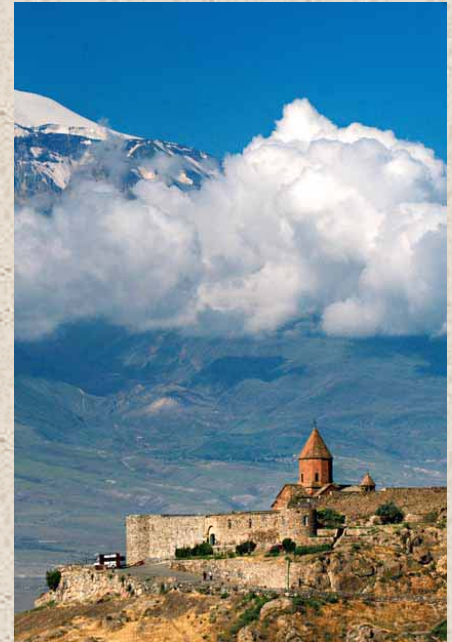


Armenia, Georgia & Azerbaijan – Travels in the Caucasus

Tour Code AGA

Departing 15 June 2010

The traditions of these three 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 Causasia. 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! Azerbaijan has a rich Islamic cultural heritage but also a strong and, still evident, Zoroastrian influence. We travel from the shadow of Mount Ararat to the shores of the Caspian Sea and experience a fascinating mix of religious tradition, people and culture.



Khor Virap Monastery set against Mt. Ararat, Armenia

ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to Yerevan, ARMENIA - Tuesday 15 June

Departure from Heathrow Terminal 1 on BML in the evening, directly to Yerevan.

Day 2 In Yerevan. City Tour – Wednesday 16 June

0630 hours arrival and transfer to our hotel (immediate rooms) located in the historic centre of the city for three nights. Morning at leisure. We spend the afternoon touring the historical and architectural highlights of Yerevan including the Erebuni Fortress. Welcome dinner at a local restaurant (B,L,D)

Day 3 Visit Echmiadzin Cathedral and Amberd Castle – Thursday 17 June

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 In Yerevan. Visit Geghard Monastery and Garni Temple – Friday 18 June

This morning we start with visits to the State Museum of Armenian History and 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 (B,L,D)

Day 5 Visit Khor Virap Monastery. Drive to Lake Sevan – Saturday 19 June

We start the day with an early drive south to the monastery of Khor Virap stunningly set against the backdrop of Mt Ararat. We head north to Lake Sevan, one of the largest high-altitude lakes in the world located at 1900m. After a traditional fish lunch 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 6 Visit Haghpat and Sanahin Monasteries. Drive to Tbilisi, GEORGIA – Sunday 20 June

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 a barbeque lunch we head for the border to cross into Georgia and drive to Tbilisi and transfer to a hotel located in the historic centre of the city for three nights (B,L,D)

Day 7 Visit Mtskheta and Gori – Monday 21 June

Our first visit of the day is to Mtskheta, the spiritual heart of Georgia, which contain the UNESCO heritage listed gems 6th century Jvari church and 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. We continue to the city of Gori, birthplace of Josef Stalin. We visit the house where he was born, now converted into a museum (B,D)

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Day 8 In Tbilisi. City Tour – Tuesday 22 June

We have a sightseeing tour of Tbilisi today and include the architectural heritage of its Old Town plus visits to the dominating Narikala Fortress and 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 Drive to Kabegi. Visit Gergeti Trinity Church – Wednesday 23 June

We head north this morning along the famous Georgian Military Highway for a stunning drive through the high Caucasus Mountains via Gudauri over Cross Pass (2395m) bringing us to Kazbegi. Here we board jeeps to take us to the beautiful 14th century Trinity Church, stunningly located below the towering massif of Mt Kazbeki. We return to Gudari for our overnight hotel (B,D)

Day 10 Drive to Tbilisi via Ananuri – Thursday 24 June

On our return journey to Tbilisi we stop at the 17th century Ananuri architectural complex comprising of two churches and a fortress. We continue to Tbilisi for our final evening in Georgia and enjoy a free afternoon at leisure in the capital (B,D)

Day 11 Visit Kakheti region. Cross to AZERBAIJAN – Friday 25 June

This morning we drive to the Kakheti region well known for its wine production. We visit the fortified 18th century town of Signaghi with stunning views across the Caucasus mountains to Daghestan. Later we enjoy a traditional Georgian lunch at a local family house. In the afternoon we cross the border at Lagodekhi into Azerbaijan and drive to Sheki. Two nights at a character hotel with dinner (B,L,D)

Day 12 In Sheki – Saturday 26 June

The historic town of Sheki is set amid a densely forested mountain area and has a wonderful atmosphere and charm. This morning we visit the Royal Summer Palace of the Sheki Kahns with its magnificent frescoes and stained glass. We also visit the 'Shebeke' workshop where local craft masters demonstrate centuries-old skills and get to try the local, and famous, *Sheki halva*. There will be time in the afternoon to stroll in the town's bazaar and visit one of its small museums (B,D)

Day 13 Visit Kish. Drive to Baku – Sunday 27 June

We visit the oldest church in the Caucasus at Kish before continuing our journey to the charming village of Lahij, a centre for Azerbaijani handicrafts, and the town of Shemakha, to view the Yeddi Gumbez (Seven Tombs). In the late afternoon we arrive at the capital of Azerbaijan and transfer to our centrally located hotel for three nights (B,D)

Day 14 In Baku – Monday 28 June

We spend the morning visiting Baku's historic and architectural highlights including the Maidens Tower and the medieval walled Palace of the Shirvanshahs. In the afternoon we visit the Petroglyph Reserve and eerie landscape features at Qobustan. (B,D)

Day 15 In Baku – Tuesday 29 June

A morning excursion to Absheron Peninsula to visit a Zoroastrian Fire Temple (*Ateshgah*) and naturally burning mountain (*Yanardagh*). We also see the medieval fortress in Madarkhan, that defended the peninsula. We return to Baku and have an afternoon at leisure perhaps to visit one of the capital's museum collections or art galleries. This evening we can enjoy a folkloric show with dinner in a medieval caravanserai (B,D)

Day 16 Fly London – Wednesday 30 June

Depart hotel after breakfast and transfer to the airport for the midday direct flight with BMI to London Heathrow (B)

Cost £1995.00 per person in a twin room (excludes international flights) Single supplement charge £400.00



Locals taking it easy, Lahij, Azerbaijan

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 in Georgia/Azerbaijan
- ▶ All departure and government taxes
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, visa fees, lunches in Georgia and Azerbaijan, drinks, guide and driver gratuities, BMI international return flight (available with Polani Travel ATOL No.5311 or direct with BMI from £700.00)

[Click here for booking form](#)