

Caucasus Journey

Join us on this *touring style* journey as we attempt to untangle the tempestuous history of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Scenically stunning, culturally diverse, historically interesting and just a tad perverse in relationships with bigger, noisier neighbours the Caucasus have been on our agenda for years. In May we are off to follow the back roads between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Commencing at Baku and concluding in Yerevan our itinerary will trace the trade routes and explore the cultural and religious heritage of this little known region.

Visit Baku, Gobustan, Sheki, Telavi, Signaghi, Tbilisi, Mtskheta, Dilijan, Lake Sevan, Khor Virap, Sisian, Yerevan.

NOTE: This journey includes Sisian, and concludes in Yerevan (not Tehran)



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| Length of trip | 19 days |
| Accommodation | Hotels. |
| Meals included | Yes |
| Travel Style | Coach, |
| Escort | SRA tour leader for more than 6 travellers. Local English speaking escort for 6 or less travellers. |
| Sightseeing and entry fees | Included |
| Maximum group | 12 |
| Commences | Baku 10th May 2012 |
| Concludes | Yerevan 28th May 2012 |
| COST | NZ\$8,550 based on twin share. Single Rm Sup NZ\$730 <i>(prices subject to change)</i> |



Itinerary at a Glance :

Thursday, 10 May 2012

Arrive Baku

Transfer to hotel. Dinner

Friday, 11 May 2012

Baku

Sightseeing in Baku will include a panoramic view of the city, the (15th C) Shirvan Shah's Palace, Maiden Tower (12th C) and Caravanserai. After lunch visit Absheron peninsular, Fire Worshippers Temple and Merdakan Fortress.

Saturday, 12 May 2012

Baku

Morning Excursion to "Golbustan", more than 4000 rock carvings which describe the mode of life of the ancient inhabitants. After lunch visit Art Museum.

Sunday, 13 May 2012

to Sheki

Get away early for the drive to Sheki. Along the way sightseeing will include short stops at the remarkable rock cut Diri Baba mausoleum in Maraza and the tombs in Shamakha. If road conditions permit we will head off into the Girdimanchai river gorge to wind up the gravel road to the copper crafts centre of Lahic (Lahij). Expect to arrive at Sheki late in the day.

Monday, 14 May 2012

to Telavi (Georgia)

This AM we explore Sheki, the Khan's palace, and the History Museum. PM depart for drive to Telavi, Continue to the Azerbaijan/Georgia border and on to Telavi.

Tuesday, 15 May 2012

Telavi

This morning visit Kakhetian Duke's garden and house museum. Continue to Nekresi Monastery (4thC) including a walk. Lunch with a local family before visiting Telavi Farmers' market and King Erekle's Palace museum. Later today free time to explore the town. Dinner tonight at a family guest house.

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

to Tbilisi

Full day sightseeing Kakheti region known for wine production. Stunning views of the Great Caucasus Mtns and valleys of Kakheti. Visit 18thC Sighnaghi and the ethnographic museum. After lunch visit local wine maker for demonstration of Georgian methods of wine making.

Thursday, 17 May 2012

Tbilisi

Visit the ancient capital and religious centre of Georgia, 3,000 yr old Mtskheta. Sightseeing today around the UNESCO World Heritage sites. Also visit Gori and Uplistsikhe Cave town. Conclude the day with a visit to Stalin's museum.

Friday, 18 May 2012

Tbilisi

Today we have time to explore Tbilisi and wander the 'Old City' lanes with its old-style balconies, ancient churches, winding streets, and charming shops.

Saturday, 19 May 2012

to Gudari

This morning we head off up the Military Highway to the picturesque alpine town of Gudari. Along the way we will stop at Mtskheta World Heritage site and at Anunuri.

Sunday, 20 May 2012

Up country to Kazbeki

Today we take 4X4 cars up valley to Kazbeki and to the nearby Juta valley. Conditions permitting we also visit Gergety Trinity Church.

Monday, 21 May 2012

To Dilijan

This morning we get on the road early for the drive to the Georgia-Armenia border at Sadakhlo. After crossing to Armenia we call into the UNESCO listed monastery complexes of Haghpat and Sanahin. Overnight at Dilijan.

Tuesday, 22 May 2012

Dilijan

We plan to get out and about in the scenic Dilijan National Park today. Our first call will be at the remarkable Haghartsin Monastery complex. After lunch we can rest up in the Dilijan old town or head off on one of the National Park trails

Wednesday, 23 May 2012

To Sisian

We get away early this morning for Sisian. On the way we call in at Sevanavank and Noraduz then follow the caravan route up the Selim Pass and cross into the Aroa valley and continue to Sisian

Thursday 24 May 2012

Sisian

Excursion to Zorats Karer "Armenian Stonehenge" with over 220 large stones dating from Hellenistic-Roman period. After lunch continue to Tatev, the 'eagles nest' monastery complex perched above the Vorotan valley.

Friday 25 May 2012

To Yerevan

Today we turn our attention East towards Turkey for the drive to Noravank where we wind into the hills to the stunningly scenic Noravank Monastery. PM its on to Khor Virap on the Turkey-Armenia border and Yerevan.

Saturday 26 May 2012

Yerevan

Today there are opportunities for sightseeing and free time to wander in Yerevan's leafy boulevards. Sites of interest are Erebuni Fortress, the wonderful Matanadaran library of illustrated manuscripts, museums and parks.

Sunday 27 May 2012

Yerevan city tour

This morning we will be out and about around the city to visit some of the key cultural sites, museums and monuments. This afternoon to the Apostolic Church in Echmiadzin.

Monday 28 May 2012

Conclude

Spend the morning at leisure until its time to transfer to the airport for our onwards flight