

Georgia & Armenia 16 Days

Georgia



Day 1: Arrival in Tbilisi - 3.6.2023

Reception at the Tbilisi airport and transfer to the hotel. Short walk around Tbilisi. Spend an hour at one of the sulphur baths Tbilisi Chreli Abano.

Or just relax before we have our first dinner in Georgia.

Overnight stay in Tbilisi (-/-/D) - Sulfur bath at extra cost



Day 2: Tbilisi city tour - 4.6.2023

Sightseeing tour in Tbilisi Old City starts after breakfast. Mediaeval churches Metekhi (13. c.), Anchiskhati (6. c.) and Sioni (13th c.), synagogue, mosque and Narikala Fortress (4. c.). After a stop at the oriental baths-district and Freedom Square, the tour goes further along central Rustaveli Avenue. Subsequently, the schedule foresees a visit to the National Museum with the Treasure Chamber of Georgia. The museum collection contains i.a. fascinating goldsmith's artworks of ancient Colchis.

A delicious welcome dinner in a traditional restaurant concludes the first day.

Overnight stay in Tbilisi (B/-/D) - stop for lunch at a cafe.



Day 3: Mysterious semi-desert Gareja - 5.6.2023

The route heads south-east into the Steppe Desert Gareja. The first visiting point of the day is the Lavra Monastery of David Gareji, followed by a small hike to the caves of the Udabno-Monastery with impressive frescos and spectacular view over the bizarre desert landscape at the border to Azerbaijan (a 45 min. climb, total time of the hike approx. 2-3 h.). The trip proceeds to Jimiti, a

very old, typically Kakhetian village. Here you can enjoy lunch and house made wine at a local family's place, which gives you an excellent insight into daily life and activities, such as bread baking and winemaking in the traditional way. A late-evening trip to the medieval town Signaghi offers a relaxing finale for the day.

Overnight stay in Signaghi (B/L/D)



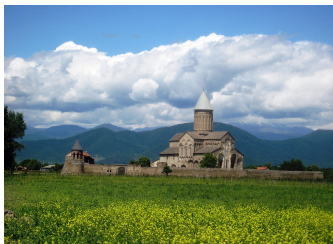
Day 4: Wine Region Kakheti - 6.6.2023

Signaghi, Mosmieri wine estate, Tsinandali, Vardisubani, Alaverdi Cathedral, Telavi

We start the day with a relaxed walking tour through the wriggling lanes of Signaghi with a breathtaking view over the vast Alazani Valley.

Next we continue our journey along the Wine Route visiting the Nekresi Monastery en route. The Nekresi complex includes the oldest church in Georgia (4th c.), still echoing the architectural style of Zoroastrian temples, and an ancient Georgian wine cellar, where, in accordance with the traditional "Georgian method", wine is stored in Kvevris (pottery amphorae) embedded in the earth. We also visit the Gremi Monastery with its Museum of History. After lunch and wine degustation at the Mosmieri wine estate, we visit the former princely residence Tsinandali with its famous wine cellar. The residence is a remnant of the onetime splendor of the 19. c. Kakhetian nobility. Finally we make a short detour to a local Kvevri potter in Vardisubani. The Georgian Kvevri-wine producing method counts more than 8.000 years and ranks among the oldest of the UNESCO world cultural heritage. Making a Kvevri is a very special form of pottery, and there are only a few masters who carry on the traditional craft. During the walk in his small garden-museum you visualise how Kvevris are made and how Georgian peasants and winemakers mature their wine in the traditional Georgian way. In the evening, we take a relaxed stroll through Telavi, the district capital.

Overnight stay in Telavi (family run hotel) (B/L/D)



Day 5: The Georgian Military Road - 7.6.2023

Gombori Mountains, Ananuri, Stepantsminda, Darial Gorge

Today we head to the Great Caucasus. Shortly after leaving Telavi, Next, we visit the mighty Alaverdi Cathedral (11. c.) the biggest cathedral of eastern Georgia, whose monks carry on the tradition of Alaverdi wine producing over centuries. We continue our journey along the Gombori Mountains first and then along the old Military Road up to Stepantsminda at the foot of the majestic Mt. Kazbegi.

Lunch at the Mirziashvili's, a family of musicians, members of the Ensemble Ananuri. After visiting the richly ornamented Ananuri Fortress Complex (17. c.), picturesquely embedded in the Zhinvali Reservoir landscape, the journey continues via the Cross Pass at the altitude of 2.395m to Stepantsminda (former Kasbegi) at the foot of the Kasbegi Glacier. Short trip to the Russian border over the wild Darial Gorge, the millennia-old battleground for aggressors, baptized with the name "Gate to the North".

Driving distance: approx. 210km,

Overnight stay in Stepantsminda (B/L/D)



Day 6: Mount Prometheus & the wine estate, Ateni - 8.6.2023

Gergeti Trinity Church, Vacheishvili wine estate

After breakfast drive to the pilgrimage church Tsminda Sameba (Gergeti Trinity Church, 14. C., 2.170m), standing in proud solitary splendour in front of a spectacular panorama of the Kazbegi Summit (5.047m), the highest mount in the eastern Greater Caucasus. As the legend says, Zeus chained Prometheus on the top of the mount as a punishment for bringing fire to

mankind.

The journey back leads along the Military Road first and then onwards along a branch of the ancient Silk Road to the idyllic family-run wine estate of Nika Vacheishvili in Ateni, which grows the rare endemic vine Atenuri, resulting in fine wines. Dinner, wine degustation and the beauty and peace of the countryside round off the day.

Overnight stay in Ateni (B/P/D)



Day 7: The ancient Silk Road - 9.06.2023

Atenis Sioni, Uplistsikhe cave-city, Mtskheta, Jvari, Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, Ananuri Fortress After breakfast we visit the Ateni Sioni Church (7-10. c.), a cross-cupola church with medieval depictions on the life of Mary (12. c.). In the afternoon journey to the ancient cave-city Uplistsikhe situated on the broad valley of the river Mtkvari (Kura), where bizarre rock ruins are silent witnesses to the sometime grandeur and importance of the ancient trading base. En route, we also visit Mtskheta, the old capital of Georgia

at the crosspoint of the Military Road and the Silk Road. Visiting the Jvari Monastery (7. c.) looking over the old capital and the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11. c.), the heart and soul of Georgia in the centre of Mtskheta.

Driving distance: approx. 120km,

Overnight stay in Mtskheta (B/P/D)

Armenia



Day 8: Journey to Armenia - 10.06.2023

Sanahin & Haghbat monasteries, Dilijan

Today, we start our journey to Armenia. We drive to the Georgian-Armenian border near Sadakhlo to meet the Armenian team and change buses. After an half-an-hour's drive on the Armenian territory, we visit our first monasteries in Armenia: Sanahin (10. c.) and Haghbat (10.-13. c.), both UNESCO world cultural heritage sites.

We continue our way to Dilijan, one of the popular resorts of the country. The green forest and the water-rich northern province Tavush forms a pleasant contrast against the barren South of Armenia. In the evening we enjoy a relaxed walk through Dilijan.

Overnight stay in Dilijan ((B/L/B)



Day 9: Sevan Lake & Sevanavank Monastery - 11.06..2023

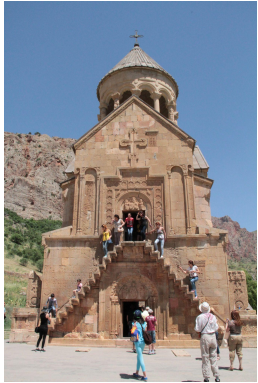
Sevan lake Monastery, Noratus Graveyard, Orbeliani Pass, Selim Pass, Goris

Our first destination for today is the Sevan Lake at 1.900m, one of the highest-altitude lakes in the world. At the north-west edge of the lake, we climb steps and a narrow pathway leading to the Sevan Monastery (9. c.), lying majestically high up on a mountain ridge. We continue the journey through one of the impressive passes of Armenia, the Orbeliani Pass (2.410m). We also visit a caravanserai from the 13. c. Here, just like the merchants of the ancient Silk Road, you can enjoy a breathtaking

view over the Selim Valley and the mountain range of Vayots Dzor. Drive to Goris.

Driving distance: approx. 290km

Overnight stay in Goris (B/L/D)



Day 10: Biblical Mount Ararat - 12.06.2023

Lalidzor, Tatev Cableway, Novarank Monastery, Khor Virap Monastery, Yerevan

Today's route takes us to the viewpoint of Halidzor. From here, we continue the journey by the longest cable way of the world to Tatev Monastery complex. After sightseeing the monastery, the journey takes us to the Novarank monastery (13. C.) in the gorge of Amaghu. After lunch, we continue to the Khor Virap monastery in the Ararat province. The monastery at the foot of the Mt. Ararat is baptized after Gregor the Enlightener, the apostle of the Armenians. From here you can enjoy a far-reaching view of the holy Mt. Ararat and the border to Turkey. Well-refreshed we drive to Yerevan.

Driving distance: approx. 320km,

Overnight stay in Yerevan (B/L/D)



Day 11: Capital Yerevan, Ejmiatsin and Svartnots - 13.06.2023

Mount Ararat, Erebuni Fortress, Ejmiatsin, Svartnots Church

A city tour through Yerevan. Today, the capital of Armenia is a buzzing metropolis with modern architecture. Yet you see the traces of its turbulent past in every corner. In Yerevan we also visit Erebuni Fortress, built in 782 on the Arin-Berd hill (optionally a visit to the National Museum) and Cafesjian Museum of Modern Art. After that we drive to the neighbouring town Ejmiatsin, the centre of the Armenian apostolic Church. In the afternoon, we visit the Ejmiatsin Cathedral (4. c.), as well as the churches

Hripsime and the ruins of the round church Svartnots (all three UNESCO world cultural heritage sites, 7. c.). Drive back to Yerevan. Dinner with live accompaniment of traditional music.

Driving distance: approx. 160km

Overnight stay in Yerevan (B/L/D)



Day 12: Rocky monastery Geghard and sun temple Garni - 14.06.2023

Geghard Monastery, sun temple Garni, Manuscript Museum

Picturesquely embedded in the lightly wooded slopes at the edge of the Azat Gorge Valley, the UNESCO rocky monastery Geghard (12.-13. c.) belongs to the prettiest monasteries of the Caucasus. We visit a church hewn partially right into the volcanic rocks of the Azat Gorge. Here we can enjoy an exclusive vocal concert of medieval Armenian church music. Next, we visit the sun temple Garni dating back to the 1.c. A.D., where you can listen to the beautiful sound of the wind instrument Duduk, the national instrument of Armenia. Lunch at a local family's place will give you an insight into the country life of an

Armenian family. Together with the family members, we can bake Lavash, the traditional Armenian pita bread. In the evening we drive back to Yerevan and visit the Matenadaran Museum of Manuscripts with a collection counting more than 17 tsd. manuscripts.

In the evening, we taste brandy at the local brandy factory.

Driving distance: approx. 80km

Overnight stay in Yerevan (B/L/-) - optional dinner



Day 13: Highland of Armenia - 15.06.2023

Amberd Castle, Gyumri, Bavra

After breakfast, we drive to Amberd Castle (10.-13. c.). Though in ruins, this one of only a few feudal fortresses in Armenia still proudly crowns over the valley of the Aragat Mountains. Having visited Amberd, we continue our journey over Gyumri to Bavra, back at the Armenian-Georgian border, where the Georgian team is waiting for us. Today's final destination is Wardsia.

Driving distance: approx. 300km

Overnight stay in Vardzia (B/P/D)

Georgia



Day 14: Cave-city Vardzia -16.06.2023

Vardzia, Akhaltsikhe, Tbilisi

After breakfast we visit the cave-city Vardzia (12. c.) near the border to Turkey. The almost 500 m high rock wall towers the riverbank. A network of numerous hand-carved caves extends throughout multiple floors, interconnected via stairways, terraces and galleries. At its time, the cave complex contained streets, tunnels, residential premises and cupolas, libraries and baths. The absolute highlight of the site is the medieval fresco art of the cave churches, i. a. you can view one of the rarest pictorial representations of Queen Tamar depicted by her contemporaries. In the afternoon we continue our journey to Akhaltsikhe where we visit the recently rebuilt Rabat Fortress and the Rabat Museum. Among its very well-preserved exhibits, this local branch of the National Museum houses some of the most important findings from the region Samtskhe-Javakheti, one of the oldest settlement areas of Georgia. Finally, our journey leads us back to Tbilisi, where we enjoy our farewell dinner in a traditional restaurant.

Driving distance: approx. 280km

Overnight stay in Tbilisi (B/P/D)

Day 15: Departure - 17.06.2023

Transfer to the airport after breakfast or in the afternoon, depending on the flight.

Day 16: Arrival back in Singapore 18.06.2023