Tour Code
AZ1

ADVENTURESABROAD

THE CAUCASUS

Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia

15 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Baku

Today we arrive in Baku, Azerbaijan, where ancient winds carry whispers of Persian merchants and Soviet dreams across cobblestone streets.

This extraordinary city pulses at the crossroads of continents, where Europe meets Asia in a symphony of architectural contrasts. The UNESCO-listed Old City spreads its medieval maze below us while the iconic Flame Towers pierce the sky like golden torches, their LED displays painting the Caspian shore in brilliant hues each evening.

Overnight in Baku.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Baku: City Tour

Within the fortress walls of Iceri Sehir, we step into a living museum where 12th-century stones tell stories of Silk Road traders and Shirvan shahs. The Maiden's Tower rises before us like a stone sentinel, its ancient fire beacon once guiding caravans across desert routes that connected distant empires. Local legend claims a princess leaped from its heights rather than marry against her will—a tale that echoes through narrow alleyways where craftsmen still work silver and silk.

The Palace of the Shirvanshahs unfolds its 15th-century elegance, revealing ornate courtyards where Persian poetry once filled evening air. Each carved stone arch and geometric pattern speaks of Islamic architectural mastery, while underground chambers whisper secrets of royal intrigue and diplomatic negotiations that shaped regional power.

Later, we encounter Baku's bold architectural future at the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Center, where flowing white curves seem to defy gravity itself. This Zaha Hadid masterpiece embodies Azerbaijan's confident leap into the 21st century, hosting world-class exhibitions that celebrate both local heritage and global artistic innovation.

Overnight in Baku.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Baku: Gobustan National Park

Our morning excursion carries us south toward ancient mysteries carved in stone. At Gobustan National Park, we discover humanity's longest-running art gallery—40,000 years of petroglyphs scattered across wind-carved boulders rising from Azerbaijan's semi-desert. These rock engravings reveal Stone Age hunters pursuing wild horses, Bronze Age warriors wielding spears, and ritual dancers celebrating harvests under prehistoric skies.

The UNESCO-protected landscape stretches endlessly, punctuated by bubbling mud volcanoes that gurgle and pop like natural cauldrons. These geological wonders, created by underground gas pressure, emerge from earth in miniature volcanic formations that seem almost alien against the barren plateau.

Returning to Baku, we pause at Martyrs' Cemetery, where fallen heroes rest on hillsides overlooking the Caspian Sea. The view encompasses the entire capital—from medieval towers to modern skylines—revealing how geography shaped this strategic port city's destiny. Later, we stroll Seaside Boulevard, the beloved promenade where Bakuvians gather at sunset, creating a Mediterranean atmosphere along Caspian shores that has charmed visitors for generations.

Overnight in Baku.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Baku - Shemakha - Sheki

This is a full day of travel and sightseeing.

Today we embark on a journey through the heartland of Azerbaijan, exploring ancient cities steeped in history and natural beauty. Our first stop is Shemakha, once a thriving capital and trade center. We'll visit the majestic Juma Mosque, a magnificent 19th-century architectural marvel. The Yedi Gumbez, or Seven Tombs, will offer a glimpse into the region's royal past, as we explore the ornate mausoleums of the Khans of Shemakha.

Continuing our journey, we arrive in the picturesque town of Sheki, nestled amidst the forested hills of the Caucasus Mountains. This ancient settlement, dating back over 2,700 years, boasts stunning architecture and a rich cultural heritage. We'll visit the Khan's Palace, a masterpiece of Islamic architecture adorned with intricate mosaics. The History Museum will provide insights into the region's past, while a stroll through the bustling market will offer a taste of local life.

Overnight in Sheki.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Sheki, Azerbaijan - Telavi, Georgia

The Greater Caucasus foothills guide us toward new frontiers as we approach the Azerbaijan-Georgia border at Lagodekhi. Here, customs formalities (which can take a while) remind us we're crossing between nations, yet the landscape speaks a common language of soaring peaks and ancient trade connections. This remote crossing follows routes that once carried Chinese silk and Indian spices toward European markets, a fragment of the legendary Silk Road that linked civilizations.

Georgia welcomes us with towering white poplars and glimpses of snow-capped summits piercing morning haze. In Kakheti Province, we discover architectural monuments that survived centuries of invasion and transformation. Alaverdi Cathedral rises like a stone prayer from the 11th century, its walls echoing with Georgian Orthodox chants that have resonated here for nearly a millennium.

At Gremi Complex, we explore remains of a once-flourishing Renaissance town that controlled regional trade until Persian armies reduced it to romantic ruins. The surviving bell tower and palace walls reveal how Georgian kingdoms balanced between Byzantine Christianity and Persian Islamic culture, creating unique architectural fusion.

Overnight in Telavi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Telavi - Davit Gareja Monastery - Tbilisi

Kakheti's legendary wine country unfolds around us -- rolling vineyards that have produced amber wines for 8,000 years, creating the world's oldest viticulture region. Ancient qvevri clay vessels buried in cellars continue traditional fermentation methods that predate Roman conquests, their amber wines capturing Georgia's soul in every sip.

We venture into semi-desert landscapes to discover Davit Gareja Monastery, a 6th-century marvel carved into cliff faces by Syrian monks seeking spiritual isolation. Founded by Saint David of Gareja, these cave complexes house frescoes from the 8th to 13th centuries -- Byzantine artistry preserved in stone that tells stories of Georgia's golden age when Queen Tamara ruled an empire stretching from Black Sea to Caspian shores.

The area and footing can suffer from very changeable weather conditions. Your Tour Leader can provide further information en route, but kindly be advised that the nature, duration, and content of our visit is the prerogative of your Tour Leader.

As evening approaches, we reach Tbilisi, where sulfur springs first attracted King Vakhtang Gorgasali to establish his capital in this strategic valley between mountain ranges.

Overnight in Tbilisi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Tbilisi: City Tour

Tbilisi awakens around us like a living chronicle of Caucasian civilization, its name derived from "tbili" meaning warm—a reference to the sulfur springs that have drawn visitors since the 4th century. By the 12th century, this crossroads city had become one of the Silk Road's most important stops, where caravans paused to rest and trade between European and Asian markets.

We explore the Old Town's remarkable cultural harmony, where mosque minarets rise beside Orthodox church domes, and synagogues neighbour Armenian apostolic cathedrals. This tolerance reflects Georgia's position as a bridge between civilizations, where Persian, Byzantine, Arab, and Russian influences created unique architectural fusion. The famous sulfur baths of Abanotubani continue traditions that hosted everyone from Pushkin to local kings seeking therapeutic waters.

At Metekhi Church, we stand where Georgia's patron saint Shota Rustaveli might have walked while composing his epic "The Knight in the Panther's Skin." The National Museum reveals Georgia's complex relationship with Soviet occupation, while Rustaveli Avenue showcases 19th-century grandeur that earned Tbilisi the nickname "Paris of the Caucasus."

This afternoon, you can discover hidden courtyards and artisan workshops on your own explorations.

Overnight in Tbilisi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Kazbegi (Stepantsminda)

This morning we leave the capital and depart for Mtskheta, an ancient town of extraordinary importance to the Georgian nation, located about 20km out of Tbilisi. It was the capital of the eastern Georgian kingdom of Iberia (not to be confused with the European peninsula) from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century AD. Mtskheta was the site of Georgia's adoption of Christianity in 334 and remains the headquarters of the Georgian Orthodox Church. We visit the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th c.) and Jvari Monastery (6th c.); both are among the finest architectural monuments in Georgia.

We continue along the Georgian Military Highway, a historical road leading north from Tbilisi into Russia. It passes the spectacular Ananuri Fortress (we'll make a stop here), and then climbs the sides of the dramatic Aragvi River Valley, over the Jvari Pass (2395m / 7,857 ft) and down into Kazbegi (officially Stepantsminda; 1700m / 5577 ft). Surrounded by gigantic mountains, Kazbegi is a picturesque settlement overlooked by the biggest of them all -- Mount Kazbek (5047m / 16,558 ft) -- one of the six 5000+ metre peaks of the Caucasus.

Time permitting upon arrival, we'll begin our area sightseeing. The town and rugged surrounds provide some of the most picturesque scenes in Georgia.

Overnight in Kazbegi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Kazbegi Area

Mount Kazbek towers above us, one of the Caucasus's six peaks exceeding 5,000 meters, its glaciated summit piercing clouds that have gathered here since the last ice age. According to Greek mythology, this mountain chained Prometheus after he stole fire from the gods—a fitting legend for peaks that seem to scrape heaven itself.

We journey to Gergeti Trinity Church, perched at 2,170 meters (7,120 feet) like a stone prayer against the mountain's massive flanks. Whether we hike mountain trails or drive winding roads, the 14th-century church rewards us with panoramic views across valleys where avalanches carved their signatures in stone. From this sacred vantage point, the Caucasus reveals its true scale—an endless procession of peaks that separate Europe from Asia.

The village of Kazbegi (officially Stepantsminda) spreads below us, a mountain community where traditions survive in houses built to withstand winter storms that can isolate residents for months. Local shepherds still drive flocks to high pastures each summer, following transhumance patterns their ancestors established centuries ago when these valleys provided refuge from lowland invasions.

Overnight in Kazbegi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Kazbegi - Uplistsikhe - Akhaltsikhe

We descend from the mountains toward Gori, birthplace of Joseph Stalin, history's most controversial Georgian. We make a short stop at the small house where he was born, seen from outside, and consider how this city lives alongside a legacy it still struggles to reconcile with pride and historical trauma. We keep Gori brief so the day belongs to Uplistsikhe.

Eight kilometres away, Uplistsikhe ("the Lord's Citadel") reveals Georgia's pre-Christian past carved directly into living rock. This cave city flourished from the 7th century BC through the 15th century AD, its tunnels and chambers serving as a strategic Silk Road stronghold. We take our time here, exploring the large central hall where pagan rituals once honoured ancient gods, underground wine cellars that stored amber vintages, and a 9th-century church that marked Christianity's triumph over older beliefs, with time to wander the rock-cut streets and take in the views over the river valley.

Evening brings us to Akhaltsikhe, a multicultural crossroads where Georgian, Armenian and Ottoman influences created a unique architectural heritage. For centuries, this city of 50,000 served as an Ottoman administrative centre, its population predominantly Armenian until 20th-century upheavals reshaped demographics. Tonight, we rest in this historically complex city that embodies the Caucasus's intricate ethnic tapestry.

Overnight in Akhaltsikhe.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Akhaltsikhe - Vardzia, Georgia - Gyumri, Armenia

Vardzia awaits us like a medieval dream carved into cliff faces—a 12th-century cave city that Queen Tamara commissioned during Georgia's golden age. Between 1186 and 1189, craftsmen hollowed out an intricate network of tunnels, chambers, and churches that could shelter 50,000 people during invasions. This architectural marvel demonstrates medieval engineering genius, with sophisticated ventilation systems and hidden passages that connected multiple levels.

We explore tunnels where monks once chanted prayers echoing through stone corridors, royal chambers where Georgia's most celebrated queen held court, and the Church of the Dormition with its miraculously preserved frescoes depicting Queen Tamara herself—one of the few contemporary portraits of this legendary ruler who expanded Georgian territory from Black Sea to Caspian shores.

After crossing into Armenia at Bavra border, we reach Gyumri, a city that embodies Armenian resilience through centuries of triumph and tragedy. Founded as Alexandropol during Russian expansion, this cultural center showcases elegant 19th-century architecture built from local black tuff stone. Despite devastating earthquakes and political upheavals, Gyumri maintains its reputation as Armenia's cultural heart, where traditional crafts and contemporary arts flourish side by side.

Overnight in Gyumri.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Gyumri - Garni Temple & Geghard Monastery Complex - Yerevan

Our journey toward Yerevan pauses at two sacred sites where ancient and Christian Armenia express their deepest beliefs. Garni Temple rises from basalt cliffs like a piece of classical Greece transplanted to Caucasian highlands—the only surviving pagan temple in Armenia, dedicated to Mithra, god of light and truth. Built in the 1st century AD, this Hellenistic marvel served Armenian kings as a summer residence until Christianity's triumph relegated pagan gods to memory.

The 1679 earthquake reduced Garni to rubble, but 1970s reconstruction restored its elegant Ionic columns and sacrifice altar, creating Armenia's most photographed ancient monument. From temple steps, we gaze across Azat River gorge where geological forces carved "Symphony of Stones"—natural basalt columns that resemble a massive pipe organ frozen in volcanic rock.

At Geghard Monastery, 4th-century Christian faith carved its devotion directly into mountain stone. This "Monastery of the Spear" once housed the lance that pierced Christ's side, creating Armenia's most sacred pilgrimage site. The main chapel, built in 1215, demonstrates medieval Armenian architecture at its finest, while chambers carved from living rock amplify Gregorian chants into ethereal harmonies.

We visit a brandy factory for tastings that reveal why Armenian cognac earned legendary status, then enjoy lunch at a private home where traditional hospitality creates lasting memories.

Due to the size of our lunch today, we do not include dinner.

Overnight in Yerevan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 13 Genocide Memorial, Khor Virap & Lake Sevan

We begin at Tsitsernakaberd, the Genocide Memorial and Museum, which bears witness to the tragedy of 1915 when Ottoman policies destroyed Armenian communities across Eastern Anatolia. The eternal flame burns above the valley where Yerevan's founders built their fortress, while the museum's restrained exhibits honour 1.5 million victims through photographs, documents and testimonies that refuse to let history forget.

We continue south to Khor Virap Monastery, which rises from the Ararat Valley beneath biblical Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark is said to have found refuge after the flood. The complex marks the birthplace of Armenian Christianity, built over the dungeon where King Trdat imprisoned Saint Gregory the Illuminator for 13 years before converting to Christianity. Weather permitting, the monastery's setting against Ararat's snow-capped peak is one of the most iconic views in Armenia.

From the Ararat plain we head north to Lake Sevan, set about 1,900 m/6,200 ft above sea level and one of the largest high-altitude freshwater lakes in the world. Its deep blue water, ringed by mountains, shows a very different side of Armenia. We stop for lunch beside the lake, then take a boat trip on the water, weather permitting.

Overnight in Yerevan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 14 Yerevan: City Tour & Leisure Time

Yerevan spreads around us like an open history book written in pink tuff stone, its rosy hue earning the capital nickname "Pink City." Founded in 782 BC, 29 years before Rome, this ancient settlement has witnessed Urartian kings, Persian satraps, Arab caliphs and Soviet commissars, each leaving architectural signatures in one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, a title Damascus often claims too.

At Matenadaran Manuscript Repository, we discover treasures beyond gold: ancient Armenian texts that preserved classical Greek philosophy, Persian poetry and medieval science when European libraries burned. These illuminated manuscripts, including works by Aristotle and Plato surviving only in Armenian translation, represent humanity's intellectual heritage rescued by scribes who understood knowledge's fragility.

Republic Square showcases Soviet-era grandeur interpreted through Armenian architectural tradition, its arches and bas-reliefs echoing

10th-13th century spiritual monuments. The National History Museum chronicles Armenian civilization from prehistoric times through modern independence, while pink tuff stone quarried from nearby mountains gives Soviet utilitarian buildings unexpected warmth and beauty.

This afternoon is yours for independent exploration of the galleries, cafes and markets that make Yerevan one of the world's most liveable capitals.

This evening, we gather for farewell dinner at a traditional Armenian restaurant where live music celebrates the resilient culture that survived millennia of challenges while maintaining its unique identity, language and traditions.

Overnight in Yerevan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Departure

Departure from Yerevan.

BON VOYAGE!!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast