

ARCHEOLOGY ARMENIA

Character:

An in-depth archeology journey led by experts - lost cities, prehistoric rock paintings, impressive ruins. Includes 5 days at active digs at ancient sites of Armenia.

Duration:

10 days / 10 nights

Accommodation:

Superior hotels and guesthouses

Meals:

10 breakfasts

Mode of travel:

Comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles/on foot

Tour support:

AdvenTour tour leader /driver, local guides

Included:

Accommodation for 10 nights

Meals as specified in the itinerary

AdvenTour tour leader/driver, local guides

All activities as per itinerary

All transfers in comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles

Ancient Armenia information kit

Excluded:

Optional activities

Itinerary

Day 1

Classical Armenia

In the morning meet your group participants and tour leader, trip briefing. We start our trip with the fascinating Museum of Armenian History, which gives a superb oversight of ancient cultures of Armenian Highland. From here our route continues to southwest, to the site of ancient Garni, the only standing monument of Hellenistic architecture in Caucasus. Built on a naturally fortified plateau and maintaining a commanding view of deep gorges, the elegant temple is a potent symbol of the power of Mitra, God of Sun. The next stop of our trip is the magnificent Monastery of Geghard cut in solid rocks with exquisite cross-stones hewn out of the cliff face, a splendid and challenging architectural construction to say the least. Time free to explore this vast complex on your own, back to Yerevan.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 2

Stone Age Settlements

Breakfast at hotel. We first visit the Royal City of Metsamor, a vast archaeological site, now a museum with a spectacular collection of over 22,000 artefacts, jewellery and weapons dating from Neolithic times. There is ample time to explore the museum and have a walk at the site with the remains of burial sites, and a fire temple built 28 centuries ago. Detailed on-site discussions and explanations of the archaeology finds and archaeology studies offered by the archaeologist/guide of the museum. Travel to the Vatican city of Armenia, Holy Echmiadzin. Experience a fascinating journey through time, descend to the ruins of the pagan sanctuary beneath the altar and pay tribute to the Treasury of Mother Cathedral with striking collection of biblical archaeological relics of Christianity. It is difficult not to get caught up in the spiritual atmosphere of this sacred site. Proceed to explore the impressive ruins of Zvartnots Temple, a magnificent cathedral dating back to the VII c. Consider the distinctive construction techniques and stunning bas relief carvings of this great structure. Back to Yerevan, evening free.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 3-7

Prehistoric Armenia with Experts

Five days spent in regions of Armenia. Through our cooperation with a pioneering archaeology project you can take part in excavations as a volunteer archaeology assistant in various sites in Armenia. Working with Dr. Boris Gasparyan (Institute of Archaeology, Yerevan) and his team as an archaeology assistant you will help find further evidence about functions of various sites and important aspects of fascinating ancient cultures that thrived here. You will spend mornings excavating and afternoons washing, sorting, and classifying archaeological finds, all under the supervision of Dr. Gasparyan and his assistants. You will be living with the archaeological team at village homes or guesthouses near sites. For many a highlight of the trip, this not-for-profit project helps contribute to research leading to informed decisions on conservation of archaeological sites and creation of new national parks, reserves and protected areas. Information on specific sites is currently being updated and will be provided shortly.

Overnight: Village homes/guesthouses

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 8

Ancient Capitals

The day is dedicated to the exploration of ancient capitals of Armenia. Visit one of the seven villages forming the territory of ancient Dvin. Occupied from early prehistory until Median times, Dvin boasts an early Mesopotamian trading colony from about 3000 B.C. Excavations last revealed nine major levels of occupation and rich temple offerings were found by the excavators. Explore what was once a forum, a market and an elaborately decorated royal palace. Visit field archaeological museum. Proceed to Khor Virap Monastery occupying a beautiful location with biblical Mount Ararat dominating the skyline. Proceed to the site of ancient Artashat, a city founded by ambitious King Artashes in the 2nd c AD. Financed by taxes on the caravans, which

passed this way between the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, Artashat was once a flourishing city. Back to Yerevan.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 9

Kingdom of Urartu

We continue the exploration of ancient civilizations of the Armenian Highland. Today we visit two sites related to the mighty Kingdom of Urartu, the contemporary of Babylon and Persia. We explore the ruins of Teyshébaini Fortress of VII c. BC and Erebuni, the birthplace of modern Yerevan. Here the history truly comes to life as you walk amidst the ruins of temples evoking onetime military and economic might and examine the amazingly well-preserved cuneiform inscriptions recording the achievements of kings of Urartu - Argishti and his son Rusa and the extent of their empires. Later a visit to the Museum of Archeology with a wealth of rare archeological finds providing a fascinating glimpse into the world of lost civilizations.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 10

Yerevan

Free day to explore Yerevan at your own pace. You may wish to wander in the labyrinth of Vernisage arts and crafts market, the paradise for souvenir hunter, climb up to Mayr Hayastan monument to get a bird's eye view of the city or climax your day with a visit to Yerevan Brandy Company to explore the secrets of making the delicious, internationally acclaimed beverage, the favourite of Winston Churchill.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

IRAN EXTENSION (year round)

The ancient lands of Persia are steeped with history and culture. If you want to learn more about this fascinating country from the vibrant city of Tehran to Shiraz, the home of famous Poets, Persepolis where you will encounter an astounding example of the rule of the early Achaemenid Empire and Isfahan famous for its ancient bridges, mosques, minarets, and tree lined avenues, this is the tour for you.

Day 1

Tehran and Shiraz

Arrive Tehran, city tour of Tehran including: Golestan Palace, where the coronations of the former Shah and his father took place, particularly notable are the hall of mirrors and the garden hall, archaeological museums featuring 7000 years of Persian history, from the 5th millennium BC to the 19th century AD. PM flight to Shiraz, arrive to Shiraz, transfer to hotel, rest.

Overnight: Hotel in Shiraz

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 2

Shiraz and Isfahan

Excursion to magnificent Achaemenian city of Perspolis (57 km northeast of Shiraz). Beyond the gate lies the hall of 100 columns, the Apadana Palace with its spellbinding display of bas-reliefs, the Tachara, the unfinished palace of Artaxerxes III, the Palace of Xerxes and the Tripylon Palace. Rock tombs cut into the mountain are those of Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III. A few kilometers from Perspolis is Nash-e Rostam where four cliff tombs are located. Back to Shiraz visit: Bagh-e-Eram or Garden of Paradise, home to a pretty 19th century Qajar palace which looks enchanting in its flower setting beside a pool. Narenjistan-e-qavam or qavam Orangery, is an elegant 19th century house some fascinating tile work and orange trees in its garden. Transfer to airport for domestic flight to Isfahan, arrive to Isfahan transfer to hotel, rest.

Overnight: Hotel in Isfahan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 3

Isfahan

Full day city tour including: Chehel Sutun inside a garden with an area of 67,000 square meters that was built as an official court and a reception hall by Shah Abbas II, Imam Square with an area of more than eighty thousand square meters, twice as large as Moscow's Red Square. Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, a masterpiece of architecture and tile work, a beautiful religious building built by Shah Abbas in honor of the great Lebanese Sheikh Lotfollah. Visiting the Friday mosque as well as the mausoleum of Velayat Haroun with its exceptional portal and the minaret of Ali-Qapou (highest of Isfahan). Back to hotel.

Overnight: Hotel in Isfahan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 4

Tehran

Continue your tour of Isfahan, Armenian Cathedral of Vank (Saint Savior), begun in 1606, at the time of arrival of Armenian immigrants to Isfahan, it was completed between 1655 and 1664 under the supervision of Archbishop David, Imam Mosque (Masjid-e Jam'e Abbasi) is one of the finest and the most stunning building in the world, Visit Bazaar, night flight to Tehran.

Overnight: Hotel in Tehran

Meal plan: Breakfast

Included:

Accommodation for 4 nights

Meals as per itinerary

Services of local guide fluent in English

All activities & sightseeing with entrance fees

Airport-hotel-airport transfers

All transfers in comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles

Visa processing

Tour Notes

1. Special notes

The information in these Special Notes covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. In remote destinations unexpected conditions can prevail at any time, and all adventurous holidays can therefore be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

2. Travel health and insurance

No vaccination is required for traveling in Armenia. The country's climate is very pleasant, with no health risks. Water in Armenia is very clean and safe. However, travelers usually prefer bottled spring and mineral water, which can be found in shops and supermarkets.

There are registered pharmacies in all cities and towns with all basic medications. Travelers with special needs are advised to take a supply of those medications that they are likely to require. Medical facilities are numerous with many qualified doctors practicing in all specialties. Doctors and hospitals often expect cash payment for their services. Travelers are advised to consult their medical insurance company prior to traveling to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. Also please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or if you will be reimbursed later for expenses incurred. When selecting a travel insurance policy we require that it cover medical expenses including emergency repatriation and personal liability. We also strongly recommend that the policy cover loss of luggage and personal effects.

3. Physical preparation

There will be no extreme fitness requirements and rough traveling. Some of the natural and historical sites we visit will require fair amount of walking with options for more keen travelers and nature explorers. A normal level of fitness will be expected and will certainly help enhance the opportunities to enjoy the trip.

4. Money

You will need to allow enough money for meals as well as optional activities. An average meal in a restaurant should cost between EUR8-10. Tipping is customized and not compulsory. You should be aware that Armenia is still a cash-only economy and credit cards are not accepted in the majority of shops and restaurants. There are

several ATM machines in Yerevan and other cities where you can obtain cash. 10 000 Armenian Drams (approximately EUR 26) is charged as a departure tax on exiting Armenia by air.

Please note: we do not charge sightseeing fees in advance allowing you to choose whether or not you visit sites, depending upon your interests.

5. Communication during the tour

If you need to be contacted while traveling we recommend that you set up an email address that can be accessed on the road. Email cafes are common and are the preferred way for our leaders and travelers to stay in touch.

If someone wishes to contact you in an emergency while you are on an AdvenTour trip we recommend that they contact our operator by phone + 374 91 42 67 45 or E-mail: adventour@netsys.am.

6. Accommodation

We choose facilities that combine high level of comfort and service with unique design and appreciation of the natural beauty of a region. The emphasis is on location, practicality and reasonable degree of comfort.

Hotel/Guesthouse

Accommodation is generally in same sex twin rooms. If you are sharing with another single no supplement is necessary. Our costs are generally based on 3 star properties. If you want higher-class accommodation you can request an upgrade at the time of booking.

Single Supplement

Should you want more privacy during your trip, you can upgrade by the requesting your own room, often at a little extra cost.

Pre / Post-Tour Accommodation

If you require additional accommodation either before or after the trip, we can book this for you provided you notify us at the time of booking. Please contact AdvenTour for current prices. Payment for this must be made to AdvenTour. Please note that AMD 5,000 booking fee is added to the cost.

7. Transport and private transfers

The mode of transport we use is chosen to suit the environmental aspects and local infrastructure. During tours we use comfortable, air-conditioned cars, minibuses and buses as

well as some local transport that is well-maintained and supplied with a first-aid kit. In fact, we often use more than one type of transport per trip. And just in case you are wondering – we also travel by foot.

Airport transfers are not included in the cost of the trip. Please, let us know at the time of booking if you would like us to arrange a private transfer for you.

8. Staff and support

While on AdvenTour trips, you will be accompanied by a tour leader/driver. The tour leader is in charge of general organization of your trip making sure that you have a most enjoyable time. He/she has broad general knowledge of the places visited, including historical, cultural, religious and social aspects. The tour leader is able to provide suggestions on what to do and see and can recommend great local eating venues. Local guides are an important part of AdvenTour team, they are trained by us and support our groups in sites and locations where their special knowledge of the trails, particular activities or communities will add to the enjoyment of the tour.

9. Meals

The tour cost includes bed and breakfast in the hotels and guesthouses. Meals, when included, will feature local cuisine. For other meals, you are left to choose what and where to eat, though your tour leader will be on hand to suggest venues and arrange where necessary. This can be one of the great joys of this trip as the food in Armenia is superb. Vegetarians should have no problems on this tour.

10. Laundry

Facilities are offered by all hotels for a charge.

11. Visas

To obtain a tourist visa for traveling to Armenia, you should apply to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in your country or online at

<http://www.armeniaforeignministry.com/eVisa/>.

Another option is to obtain your visa upon arrival at Zvartnots International Airport. Visa regulations can and do change without notice. Please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

12. What to take

Pack small and light. From early May to late October the weather is generally warm and

pleasant with some hot days in July - August. Sometimes it can get cool in the mountains so we recommend taking a couple of warm sweaters. You should also have a day pack to carry your personal accessories during the day.

13. Safety

Armenia is a very safe country. Anyway we always recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while traveling, for the safe keeping of your passport, air tickets, cash and other valuable items. All the hotels we use have safety deposit boxes, which can be used to store your valuables.

14. Responsible tourism

Tourism can be a real help to local communities providing income, positive cultural exchanges and the financial incentive to protect the natural environment. Our trips are designed to use family-based guesthouses in the regions, buy local food, hire local guides, drivers and rent trucks to ensure that as much money as possible is retained within the local economies.

15. Feedback

After your travel, we would like to hear from you. Within two weeks after your departure we will send you a feedback form to complete.

Information in this document has been compiled with care and is provided in good faith. However it is subject to change and does not form part of the contract between the client and AdvenTour.