

GREAT CAUCASUS TREK

Character:

Georgia and Armenia in one exciting trekking tour. A week in Georgia takes in historic Tusheti and Khevsureti where we walk from village to village through fields of wildflowers, forests and summer grazing land. In Armenia we trek at Mount Aragats, the highest peak of Lesser Caucasus and enjoy fantastic walking at Azhdahak plateau - volcanic lakes, dragon stones and camps of nomadic people.

Duration:

14 days / 14 nights

Accommodation:

Superior hotels, guesthouses, private homes, camping (7 nights)

Meals:

14 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 9 dinners

Mode of travel:

4WD vehicles/on foot

Tour support:

AdvenTour tour leader /driver, local mountain guides

Included:

Accommodation for 14 nights

Meals as specified in the itinerary

AdvenTour tour leader/driver, local mountain guides

All activities as per itinerary

All transfers in 4WD vehicles

Travel permits in protected areas

Trekking in Caucasus information kit

Excluded:

Optional activities

Itinerary

Day 1

Exploring Tbilisi

Morning meeting with group participants and tour leader at our hotel in Tbilisi for pre-tour briefing. We have time to visit the Old Town, with its churches, monuments, famous sulfur baths and wooden houses with carved balconies. We visit the 4th century Narikala Fortress with excellent panoramic views of the city, Metekhi Temple and Sioni Cathedral. Final gear check and we leave Tbilisi after lunch. We board our 4WD vehicles for a journey to the historical province of Khevsureti, a land of valleys in Georgian. Arrival at Shatili village located in the deep Arghuni gorge at approximate 1,400 meters. The village is a unique complex of fortresses and fortified dwellings guarding the northeastern outskirts of the country. Dinner with delicious Tushetian food and wine, overnight at private homes (depending on group size we may stay in different houses but they are close and we will have dinner together).

Overnight: Private homes in Shatili

Meal plan: Breakfast, dinner

Day 2

Shatili Fortress

Today we will start early. We will walk around Shatili and leave for our first hike. Walking along Andaki Gorge we will visit the abandoned village of Mutso located on a rocky mountain on the bank of Andakistskali river. The village is home to approximately 30 medieval fortified dwellings on vertical terraces above Mutso-Ardoti gorge. Difficult to access, the village retains original architecture and is a popular destination for mountain trekkers. We will set up camp on the way to Atsunta Pass (ascent + 1,300 m).

Overnight: Camp at Atsunta Pass

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 3

Atsunta Pass

A day dedicated to the steepest and most demanding trek of this tour. The trail contours through beautiful alpine meadows, then climbs onto treeless, grassy slopes and finally reaches the highest point of Atsunta Pass. After crossing the Pass (3,431 m above sea level) we will reach our next campsite in Tusheti at 2,800 m (ascent +730 m, descent -630 m). Tusheti, a land of sheep-herders and Gouda cheese is one of the most unspoiled regions in the Caucasus. This is a protected area of 121.950 ha located 1,500-4,500 m above sea level and is one of the biggest and high altitude parks in Europe.

Overnight: Camp at Tebulo

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 4

Trail to Girevi

Today's hike will take us deeper into the remote mountains of the Caucasus. Walking along the Pirikiti Alazani river we will follow the trail to Girevi village, a small settlement of just a few families and the last inhabited point of the gorge (descent -700 m). A wonderful day of trekking as we continue our exploration of this enchanting area, once again the views of the mountains are magnificent! We set up our camp not far from Girevi.

Overnight: Camp at Girevi

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 5

Tush Watchtowers at Dartlo

Off to Parsma village, where we explore the mysterious Tush watchtowers used to alert villagers to attacks with the larger towers accommodating whole villages when under siege. Later we continue to Dartlo (1,666 m), one of the most attractive villages of Tusheti. We will walk accompanied by views surpassing the wildest imagination. The hike is quite long but not difficult and we will reach Dartlo in the late afternoon. Dartlo lies by the Alazani river in the Pirikiti valley and is a classic Tushetian village. Overnight camp in Dartlo where the ancient towers create a magnificent view (descent -340 m).

Overnight: Camp at Dartlo

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 6**Traditional village of Omalo**

After visiting Dartlo, we are going to reach Omalo in the afternoon (ascent +300 m). Omalo is the principal village of Tusheti province. It lies between the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range and Pirikita Range. Due to Omalo's high mountain location on the northern slopes of the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range and the absence of well-maintained roads, it is largely isolated from the rest of Georgia for most of the year. We trek up to the restored fortress of Keselo. Descending from the fortress leads to our guesthouse where a well-deserved dinner awaits us.

Overnight: Guesthouse in Omalo

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 7**Abano Pass**

Transfer from Omalo to Telavi crossing the Main Caucasus Range over Abano Pass around 3,000 m. This a long but spectacular drive and with clear weather we will see Mount Kazbek in the distance. En route we will visit Alaverdi Cathedral, the main spiritual centre of Kakheti, Georgia's wine growing region. Arrival Tbilisi, rest and overnight.

Overnight: Hotel in Tbilisi

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 8**Off to Armenia**

Free morning in Tbilisi with time for some last minute shopping or sightseeing. Transfer to Armenian border, continue to Lake Sevan, one of the highest freshwater lakes in the world. Check-in at our chalet-style hotel at the beach, rest. Evening walk up to Sevanavank monastery at the peninsula or take an optional boat trip to Stone Garden at Noraduz.

Overnight: Hotel at Lake Sevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 9**Azhdahak Trek (start)**

After leisurely breakfast we leave the lake and branch off the main road for transfer to Tsakhashen village to start our trek to Lake Akna at the foot of Mount Azhdahak (1,100 m, short transfer by truck). This is an area more akin to high altitude desert and contrasts markedly with the fertile scenery we left behind. The remainder of the day is spent resting in preparation for the ascent of the following day at our trekking camp near the lake.

Overnight: Camp at Azhdahak

Meal plan: Breakfast, dinner

Day 10**Azhdahak Trek**

Early breakfast and start the trek of Mount Azhdahak rewarded by superb all-round views and a tangible sense of wilderness (3,597 m, trekking distance 12 km). The gradual ascent enables us to build the slow, steady rhythm required when walking at high altitude. We reach the summit on midday in time for lunch and have a chance to enjoy the unforgettable views of alpine meadows of rare beauty. Back to camp to warm up by crackling fire and enjoy the dinner after the adventures of the day.

Overnight: Camp at Azhdahak

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 11**Garni Canyon**

Today we begin the return journey by descending to Sevaberd Fortress, a black castle perched on the edge of rocks (walking distance 12 km). From here we take our bus to reach Garni Gorge. The walking trail contours through pleasant picnic areas, then a narrow dirt road descends into the wonderful rocky gorge. The view is awesome with superb panoramas of surrounding mountains. Later we reach Garni Temple standing in perfect harmony with the surrounding nature and unique rock carved Geghard Monastery. Transfer to Yerevan for rest and overnight.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 12**Mount Aragats**

After breakfast we transfer to the base of Mount Aragats. A virtually uninhabited road leads us to the intersection of two mountain streams where we have an opportunity to admire the wild

landscape as we hike to Amberd Fortress (2,300 m, walking distance 15 km). Transfer to Kari Lake where we set our trekking camp at a cirque beneath the towering spires of Mount Aragats. The rest of the day is yours to relax, visit the lush village of Byurakan, the summer residence of the Catholicos of all Armenians, an area famous for its beautiful orchards.

Overnight: Camp at Aragats

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 13

Highest Peak of Lesser Caucasus

This morning we rise early to start the trek of the highest mount of Lesser Caucasus, Mount Aragats (4,090m). The barren alpine scenery with only small clusters of scrubs is in stark contrast with the snowy peaks and deep blue skies. We start the trek of Southern and Western peaks of the Mount. The walking is a series of ups and downs but the impressive views are worth the effort (3,878 m, trekking distance 16 km, time app. 6 h). Evening back to Yerevan.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch

Day 14

Exploring Yerevan

Yerevan is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world and deserves a tour. We will do this with a local guide and historian who will show us the main highlights leaving late afternoon free to enjoy the city at your own pace! Explore the oldest part of the city or just relax in shady parks or busy outdoor cafes, enjoying the young and lively atmosphere of this ancient city, the contemporary of Babylon and Rome.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

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. Trekking grade

This is not an all-inclusive organized trip, this is a guided trekking. The program may change depending on weather and road conditions or other safety reasons.

Grade B - strenuous

Physically challenging, suitable for hill walkers with good physical fitness, used to extended days. These treks can involve difficult and sometimes glaciated terrain, as well as lengthy periods at high altitude. The elevation varies from 3,000 to 4,000 meters.

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.

Please note that accommodation in Tusheti and Khevsureti (Georgia part) is at private homes. This means that on some nights the rooms used will accommodate 3 – 4 people. Depending on the group size this may mean that you will have to share with more than one person. Also in these regions as well as Azhdahak and Aragats in Armenia wild camping is provided; you should expect rough conditions and occasionally help staff in erecting/dismantling tents.

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 request a single room option, at a little extra cost (where available).

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 these tours we use 4WD vehicles 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. On this tour, you will be accompanied by a trekking guide (staff/tourist ratio: 4 to 1 or 8 to 2). 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 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

We provide all communal mountaineering equipment during the tours. You will need to provide your own personal clothing and equipment. 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. In addition to your “normal” daily clothes, you will need the following: 2/3 seasons jacket, light waterproof jacket, sunhat, water bottle, lightweight boots and a day sack.

Recommended: Tracksuit, gaiters, thermal underwear, trekking poles.

13. Safety

Armenia and Georgia are safe countries. 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.

| | | |
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| | AdvenTour Booking Form | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|

| Title / First Name / Surname | Nationality | Passport No. | Issue Date | Exp. Date | Date of Birth |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| Lead contact name | | | | | |
| Group members | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | |

| Address | Emergency Contact Details |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Lead contact | Name Relationship Tel. No. (home) E-mail |
| Tel. No. (home): | |
| Tel. No. (work): | |
| E-mail: | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|---------------|--|---------------------|
| Travel Insurance: | On all of our tours it is compulsory that you have travel insurance. Please fill in your policy details below. | | | | |
| | Policy Issuer | | Policy Number | | Emergency Phone No: |

| TOUR CODE | TOUR NAME | Start Date |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | |
| Room Type | Double ---- | Twin ----- |
| | | Single ----- |
| | | Triple ----- |
| Extra nights/transfers/rentals, etc. (if required) | | |
| Special Requests (diet, food allergies, etc.) | | |
| Inbound Flight No. | Arrival Date | Arrival Time |
| | | |
| Outbound Flight No. | Departure Date | Departure Time |
| | | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Tour Cost per person | € |
| Single supplement (if applicable) | + € |
| Extra nights/transfers/rentals, etc. (if required) | + € |
| Total Cost per person | € |
| Number in Group | X |
| Total Group cost | = € |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| How did you hear about us? (internet, magazine, friend etc) – please specify | |
| Do you wish to receive periodic news and product information via your e-mail? Yes No | |
| Declaration: I have read, understood, and accept the booking conditions provided on AdvenTour or associated website, on behalf of all members of my party, by whom I am authorised to make this agreement. I enclose the deposit (as detailed above), which is non-refundable in the event of my cancellation. | |
| ----- Signature | ----- Date |

Deposit: €200 per person. Balance due now, payment by Visa, Master or Amex (please add 0.5% for Amex). Full amount is payable if your departure is in less than 45 days.

Final Balance: Balance due 45 days prior to departure. Final balance is payable by bank transfer. We will send you the invoice and our bank details.