

PHOTOGRAPHY ARMENIA

Character:

An exclusive photography tour of Armenia that emphasises a travel photography appreciating people, nature and culture. Zoom in the best of Armenia, bring lots of film or memory cards and capture something new and exotic at every corner.

Duration:

7 days / 7 nights

Accommodation:

Superior hotels and guesthouses, mountain camp

Meals:

7 breakfasts, 1 dinner

Mode of travel:

Comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles/on foot

Tour support:

Professional photography guide/driver

Included:

Accommodation for 7 nights

Meals as specified in the itinerary

Professional photography guide/driver

All transfers in comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles

Full facilities on camping day

Travel permits in protected areas

Photography Armenia information kit

Excluded:

Optional activities

Itinerary

Day 1

Portrait of Yerevan

After a pre-tour meeting and welcome drink with expert photography guide and group participants we start our tour with the heart of Yerevan, Republic Square, continue to Cascade with the imposing statue of Mother Armenia and a splendid view of Yerevan with Mount Ararat in the background, perhaps the best-known symbol of Armenia. We will continue to city center, visit Freedom square with magnificent Opera House, and continue via Mashtots Avenue to reach Matenadaran. Proceed by Sayat-Nova Avenue, the business center to reach Abovyan street, the oldest and most favorite promenade of Yerevanians. Free time to explore downtown Yerevan immersing ourselves in the life of the city, a curious blend of the new and old: 7th century chapel hidden behind an imposing Soviet-era building, old people playing chess alongside ultra modern youngsters at outdoor terraces, dressed-up ladies with surprisingly high heels and old granny's selling fruits at street-corner stalls. Above all we enjoy the interaction with friendly and outgoing locals for whom the smile is never far away. Our guide will be on hand to give us tips on best spots and help refine our skills. It is hard to capture the spirit of Yerevan and we will keep coming back for more of its charming scenes.

Photographic themes: urban architecture, street life, people

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 2

World Heritage Site

Breakfast at hotel. Drive east to the magnificent Temple of the Sun at Garni and the legendary Monastery of Spear, World Heritage Sites. With its serene temple and superb views of misty mountains, Garni is a gem for any photographer to visit. A guided walking tour to Geghard acquaints us with Armenia's fascinating history, then there's free time to wander around the vast site, visit hermits' cells and pick up tips from our guide on how to get the best perspective of the monastic complex and exquisite carved stones in the face of sheer rock. A walk in the small market nearby and a lesson on portraiture. Evening back to Yerevan, transfer to hotel, rest.

Photographic themes: pagan temple, cave monastery, people and landscapes

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Days 3

Mount Aragats and Yezidi Shepherds

Early start for Mount Aragats, the highest peak of Lesser Caucasus welcoming us with breathtaking views of rock spires, snow covered peaks, jewel colored lakes and sun scorched grasslands dressed in wildflowers. Birdlife abound here and we enjoy a full day on foot actively experiencing nature. Later in the day we reach high-mountain camps of friendly Yezidi tribes who tend their sheep under the towering peaks of Aragats. Discover the traditional way of life of these "people of the mountains", visit their homes, try fresh cheese and yogurt and learn the art of permission-based travel portraiture. *Photographic themes:* wild flowers, birds, ethnic minority camp, people, mountain landscapes

Overnights: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 4

Nestled in the Mountains

Today we depart from Yerevan. Guided by the remote majesty of Mount Ararat we take photos of idyllic rural scenes at Ararat Valley: farmers working in fields, women selling mouth-watering fruits at gardens and kids rushing to school. We proceed to Khor Virap royal prison at the border with Turkey before heading to our day's destination, mountains of Southern Armenia. Traveling off piste through some of Armenia's wildest terrain in a 4WD (with plenty of stops for photography) we reach our mountain camp at 1,700 m above sea level (full facilities - fresh water supply, shower, toilets, sleeping and dining tents, camping stools and tables provided). The location is ideal for morning shots of the surrounding mountain ranges. A fitting finale for a day full of impressions is a well-deserved dinner at Goat Cheese Farm in Mosrov where villagers adhere to their traditional ways of life. We fall asleep surrounded by rocks towering above us.

Photographic themes: Mount Ararat, farm-life, people, wild mountain landscapes

Overnight: *Mountain camp*

Meal plan: *Breakfast, dinner*

Day 5

Monastery of Warriors

After breakfast load up your cameras for another perfect photography day. We will pass through flower-filled meadows and visit unique Zorats Monastery one of the walls of which was removed to allow warriors to attend the Holy Mess before heading to the battle. Set amidst a field of red poppies this is an amazingly photogenic setting. A short hike in the mountains (1 h.) will bring us to the castle of King Smbat with impressive fortifications erected by nature. Back to the village of Yeghegis situated in a narrow gorge, walk down to village centre and, if time permits, visit one of the village granny's to take pictures of her garden full of apple trees and her sons working there. Fascinating legends attached to the foundation of this ancient village are lovingly preserved and passed through generations here. Proceed to Lake Sevan through rugged Selim Pass. We arrive at the Lake in time to take photos of postcard-perfect sunset.

Photographic themes: monasteries and castles, flowers, people, farm-life and landscapes

Overnight: *Hotel at Lake Sevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 6

Armenia's Photographic Gem

Lake Sevan, paradise for photographers and nature lovers. Its ever-changing waters, bald peaks of Geghama mountains, unspoiled beaches, all this inspired its name, the Pearl of Armenia. Early morning start with a one hour walk to the top of Akhtamar Trail for the best photographic views of the Lake and romantic Sevanavank Monastery. Return to the hotel for breakfast before heading to the surrounding area for more photography. Afternoon spent in Shorja, famous fishers' village, Stone Garden with unique collection of exquisite khachkars, Armenian cross-stones and Gulls' Island. In between capturing the remarkable scenery, you are free to take a dip in the emerald waters of the Lake.

Photographic themes: birds, lake and landscape, people, fishers' village

Overnight: *Hotel at Lake Sevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 7

Yerevan Revisited

After breakfast a final day in Yerevan to complete your collection of photos with a couple of action shots at Vernisage, the bustling arts and crafts market open only on weekends. This is without a doubt the photography highlight of Yerevan. Later be guided by your senses through the tantalising spice and fruit market and dine al fresco at a food stall on Barbeque street. Meet the local characters and capture your last shots of Yerevan.

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 the Caucasus. The region's climate is very pleasant, with no health risks. Water 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. 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 and tour grade

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 EUR 8-10. Tipping is customized and not compulsory. You should be aware that Caucasus 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 major cities where you can obtain cash.

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 10 48 22 71 or E-mail: adventour@netsys.am.

6. Accommodation

We choose hotels/guesthouses that combine comfort and great service with unique ambiance and appreciation of the natural beauty of a region. The emphasis is on location and practicality.

Our tours are based on 3 star properties. In capital cities and other places where higher-class accommodation is available you can upgrade if you wish. Your tour leader will help arrange this and the extra cost will be paid by you. In areas where hotels are not available, particularly in small towns in the regions, the group will stay at a local guesthouse (often with shared facilities). Some campsites we stay in are equipped with showers, toilets, electricity and a common eating area. Where no campsites are available we go wild camping (no facilities). These are limited to once or twice a tour and are in areas where you can enjoy the scenery. All other nights will be in campsites/hotels as described above.

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. Please contact AdvenTour for current prices.

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 most hotels for a charge.

11. Visas

Citizens of EU, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other countries can obtain Armenian visa upon arrival at the airport or land border. All other nationals are advised to consult Armenian Embassy in their country of residence. Georgian visa is not required for EU, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand citizens. All other national are advised to consult the Georgian Embassy in their country of residence. Turkish visa is obtained upon arrival at the airport or land border. Iranian visa support is provided by AdvenTour through local partners in Iran. 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. Travel luggage

Because of limited luggage space on transfer vehicles, we limit each passenger to ONE main suitcase or frameless backpack (the size not more than 75cm x 45cm x 25cm, the weight no more than 20 kg) and one day bag. The daypack is practical for keeping general items (e.g. camera, books, wallets etc.) at hand when your main pack is out of reach. Please note many hotels in the regions do not have porters and you will need to carry your own luggage.

Travel tip 1: On some tours, if you wish, it is possible to leave surplus clothes and other personal equipment in hotels where you will return after your circular trip. Please bring a small bag to pack excess items in and leave the bag at the hotel. Mark your luggage with your name and arrival date. Please ask your tour leader to advise where this may be possible / advisable.

Travel tip 2: You might be tempted to buy a few souvenirs here and there, so leave a little room for those extra purchases!

13. Safety

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.

