

SKI MOUNTAINEERING ARMENIA

Character:

For most Armenia is not a place associated with great skiing, we aim to uncover just that - its exceptional adventure skiing. On this tour we will explore Mount Aragats, an extinct volcano with four peaks and one of the biggest craters in the world and Mount Azhdahak soaring thousands of meters above stunning Lake Sevan bound in ice. Designed for the person who is an avid ski mountaineer already this trip includes every element of advanced ski mountaineering - big vertical gains, winter camping and a venture into the spectacular world of volcanic ski touring.

Duration:

9 days / 9 nights

Accommodation:

Tourist hotels, winter camp (2 nights), rooms at Cosmic Ray Institute (2 nights)

Meals:

9 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners

Mode of travel:

Comfortable 4WD vehicles/ski

Tour support:

AdvenTour trekking guide with winter training/driver

Included:

Hotel accommodation for 5 nights, winter camp 2 nights (tents, other common camping equipment), basic accommodation at Cosmic Ray Institute (2 nights)

Meals as specified in the itinerary

AdvenTour trekking guide with winter training/driver

All activities as per itinerary with all entry fees

All group ski-mountaineering equipment such as ropes and other technical equipment

All transfers in comfortable 4WD vehicles

Ski mountaineering in Armenia information kit

Excluded:

Optional activities

Personal gear (available for rent)

Itinerary

Day 1

Gorge of Flowers, Skiing

The tour starts in Yerevan with a meeting with your tour leader and other group participants. We will head for Tsakhadzor, a beautiful mountain resort with largest skiable area in Armenia to acclimatize and ski before heading off to the mountains. Short but picturesque drive (1.5 hours) to head deep into Tsakhunyats Mountains and arrive at Tsakhadzor, Gorge of Flowers. Check in at your hotel, time for rest and half day skiing - uncrowded slopes and lifts, fun downhill and off-piste skiing, comfortable rural hotel.

Overnight: *Hotel in Tsakhadzor*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 2

Gorge of Flowers, Skiing continued

Get ready, the fun begins! Full day of downhill and off piste skiing around the vast terrain of Tsakhakhunyats Mountains including an option to hike to the peak of Mount Alibek (2,821m). Evening is free to check out the quiet cafes, nightclubs and discos. In winter this small town hosts many fun events ranging from jazz festivals to an exhibition of unique miniature paintings on rice! Optional trip to Arzakan nearby to relax at volcanic hot springs!

Overnight: *Hotel in Tsakhadzor*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 3

Mount Azhdahak

Early morning (6.00) transfer to the village Sevaberd first by Russian 4WD car UAZ and later by horses for two days of exploring the classic snow covered volcanic terrain at Mount Azhdahak (3,579 m), the highest point of a spectacular plateau east of Yerevan. Dressed in flowers in summer, the mount is not least impressive in winter - vast lands of untouched snow with surrounding mountains serve as a scenic backdrop. At 8:00 we start a 14 km ski ascent by an easy slope of the Mount. We will set our camp at the slopes of Azhdahak. The remainder of the day is spent resting in preparation for our volcano climb tomorrow.

Overnight: *Winter camp*

Meal plan: *All meals*

Day 4

Climbing Mount Azhdahak

In the morning we start the ascent to the top of Mount Azhdahak rewarded by superb all-round views and a tangible sense of wilderness. We reach the summit on midday and have a chance to enjoy the unforgettable views of stunning volcanic landscape surrounding us. Ski down the opposite slope (35-40 degree) and ski touring about 5 km towards our high camp in the direction of mountain village Yeranos.

Overnight: *Winter camp*

Meal plan: *All meals*

Day 5

Farewell to Snow Wilderness

At 8:00 ski down to Yeranos (about 10 km) where our transfer awaits to take us to Yerevan. We check in at our hotel in Yerevan. Returning to civilisation will be something of a culture shock after our ski adventures in the mountains.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast*

Day 6

Mount Aragats, Acclimatisation

With a short transfer to Byurakan village early in the morning we get a head start on our ski adventure. The ascent from Byurakan to Kari Lake (3,200 m) spectacularly situated at a cirque beneath the towering spires of Aragats will be by tracked vehicles. We reach the Cosmic Ray Institute at the Lake, our base for 2 nights. Start our first acclimatization hikes in the area.

Overnight: *Rooms at Cosmic Ray Institute*

Meal plan: *All meals*

Day 7

Mount Aragats, Southern Peak

An early morning ski tour gets us to the saddle between the peaks, then downhill skiing in the crater (35 degree slope), then up to the opposite saddle. This day includes traversing, ski ascent and a journey through an incredibly picturesque terrain. Back to the Institute for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Rooms at Cosmic Ray Institute*

Meal plan: *All meals*

Day 8

Mount Aragats, Northern Peak

An early start in the morning and ascent of the highest peak of Aragats, Northern Peak (4,080 m) followed by skiing down the crater (40 degree slope). A 16 km ski descent (20-30 degree slope) leads us to Aragats village. Transfer back to Yerevan, check-in at hotel, rest.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan*

Meal plan: *Breakfast, lunch*

Day 9

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 browse Vernisage for last-minute souvenirs.

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. Skiing conditions

This trip is categorised as Ski Mountaineering, Grade B. It involves mountainous terrain and requires excellent physical condition and advanced skiing ability. Each day the leader will carefully assess the situation (weather, snow) and choose the route according to current conditions and those forecast, with the overriding priority being group safety. Our leaders are required not to proceed with any proposed route (including those mentioned in brochure or trip notes) if they believe the risk to be unacceptable.

Please note: the itinerary is to be used as an idea of how the trip will flow. Group dynamics, snow conditions and weather may alter our routes and objectives.

Please prepare well. This tour is very strenuous and not over until you are in the car!

Grading B (strenuous)

Designed for ski mountaineers with advanced skiing ability and excellent physical fitness. Involves mountainous terrain and

Weather

Aragats and Azhdahak mountains are located at almost 4,000m and at this height snow can lie from November to May, with fresh snowfalls at any time. Average daytime temperatures in winter range from 10-20°C, though they can fall as low as - 25°C. At all times of the winter we can hope for periods of clear bright weather and in February and March it can become surprisingly warm in the sun. Equally, at all times we need to be ready for the occasional stormy day.

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.

During this tour you will have overnights at winter camps at Azhdahak at spots protected from winds. We provide special tents (sample - Black Diamond Eldorado, 2+, 2kg, Gore-Tex) and other common camping equipment. Helping the guide with erecting and collecting tents as well as preparing simple meals will be necessary.

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. On this tour, you will be accompanied by a trekking guide with winter training (staff/tourist ratio: 3 to 1 or 6 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 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 trip 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.