

CROSS-COUNTY SKIING ARMENIA

Character:

A stimulating winter activity holiday offering you a chance to try an exciting variety of winter activities, from cross-country skiing and snowmobiling through forests and frozen lakes to wild rides across the snow wilderness by 4 Wheel Drive Vehicles and snowshoeing in stunning locations whatever your level of previous experience. On skis you will explore the frozen world of Mount Aragats, snowmobile or walk in the valleys and gorges of Lake Arpi National Park, take in places of historic interest and enjoy the taste of Armenian food and full-blooded wine.

Duration:

10 days / 10 nights

Accommodation:

Tourist hotels, guesthouse (3 nights)

Meals:

10 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners

Mode of travel:

Comfortable 4 WD vehicles/on foot

Tour support:

AdvenTour tour leader guide / driver, local skiing and mountain guides with winter training

Included:

Accommodation for 10 nights

Meals as specified in the itinerary

AdvenTour tour leader/driver, local skiing and mountain guides with winter training

All activities as per itinerary with all entry fees

Skis and poles, snowmobiling at Lake Arpi NP

All transfers in comfortable 4WD vehicles

Luggage handling

Travel permits in protected areas

Ski Armenia information kit

Excluded:

Optional activities

Itinerary

Day 1

Snow Wilderness

Pre-tour orientation meeting with your tour leader and transfer to Ashotsk, the northernmost point of Armenia. Located at 3,196 m above sea level Ashotsk has six months of winter with 2 meters average snow cover and offers many miles of cross-country skiing potential. Check in and lunch in your comfortable family-run guesthouse in this remote region. After lunch we have time for safety briefing and instructions to get ready for our first activity, cross-country skiing. Your instructor, Alla born in Siberia, Russia, the winner of 6 USSR Ski Racing Championships, is here to help familiarize yourself with equipment and snow conditions. After skiing at surrounding tracks, get back to the crackling fire and hot dinner. We will be based for 3 nights at Guesthouse in Ashotsk (twin rooms with shared shower and hot running water).

Grade 1 Beginners: Our guides will demonstrate and teach you essential techniques and together you will explore flat terrain. All skiing is on prepared tracks.

Grade 2 Intermediates: Skiing is in areas with a mix of flat and mountainous terrain and routes are chosen for people who want to improve their skills. Most of the skiing is on prepared tracks but there may be some off-track skiing.

Overnight: Guesthouse in Ashotsk

Meal plan: All meals

Days 2-3

Cross-Country Skiing at Lake Arpi National Park

The fire is warm and the coffee is hot. No need to rush your breakfast, the 2-meter snow cover that blankets the landscape is obviously not going anywhere on this quiet winter morning, leaving you plenty of time to warm up before heading out for skiing. Routes begin from outside our guesthouse, taking us alongside Akhurian River. We spend two days exploring routes on this high mountain plateau both on skis and snowmobiles. We will travel through a network of cross country trails and walking tracks through the valleys, linking small villages or taking us to beautiful spots such as Ttu Jur (Mineral Springs). There will be two clients on each snowmobile following the instructor who will determine the best course over the terrain. We head back to guesthouse in Ashotsk every evening.

Note: We prefer not to specify in advance where we will ski each day. This is to enhance the flexibility and adapt to weather, snow conditions and group members' skills. When choosing routes, the leaders' priority will be to take in a variety of scenery and ensure that participants become more confident skiers.

Overnight: Guesthouse in Ashotsk

Meal plan: All meals

Day 4

On to Mount Aragats

After leisurely breakfast we drive to our next cross-country skiing destination, Mount Aragats, the highest peak of the Lesser Caucasus (4,090 m). We have an easier day ahead, with a change of pace and scenery. Today we combine our winter adventures with the opportunity to set foot in a monastery and fortress established centuries ago. We take a scenic walk to Saghmosavank (Monastery of Psalms) perched on the edge of picturesque Kasakh gorge. Here we are captivated by stunning views around every corner providing superb photo opportunities. Acclimatizing gradually as we ascend the beautiful countryside, we reach Amberd Fortress on the southern slopes of Aragats. Breathtaking vistas of the fortress and surrounding mountains covered by snow blanket will provide an unforgettable experience this evening. Drive to Byurakan and check in at hotel. Star observations and excellent indoor swimming pool (optional) will be a good finale for the day full of impressions.

Overnight: Hotel in Byurakan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Days 5 - 6

Cross Country Skiing at Slopes of Aragats

On two days at Aragats we combine all elements for wonderful and varied winter holiday. Enjoy the tranquil location, direct access to the cross-country skiing and winter walking trails, the

attentive service by your skiing instructor and the delicious cuisine. After breakfast we will ski to the volcanic plateau beneath the towering spires of Aragats. At the altitude of over 2300 meters we have commanding views over surrounding villages with chimneys boiling gray smoke into the blue sky and ski in an incredibly picturesque terrain. On a clear day we may even be treated to an extraordinary view of Mount Ararat in the distance. We shall aim to explore as much of the dramatic plateau as possible during two days of cross-country skiing on mountainous but fully adapted terrain. Evening back to hotel for dinner and overnight.

Overnight: *Hotel in Byurakan*

Meal plan: *Breakfasts*

Day 7

South to Jermuk

After breakfast we pack up and make our way to Southern Armenia via some of Armenia's most famous sites including Khor Virap, once the site of a royal prison. Here we have the most spectacular view of biblical Mount Ararat, covered by everlasting snow. Driving to the south we gaze in wonder at vertical red rocks perched on the side of the gorge. Noravank, the masterpiece of medieval architect Momik, situated above an awesome gorge is our next stop. The final descent to the monastery through the narrow ravine is a chance to take some of your most stunning photos to enrich your archive. We are in the agricultural heart of Armenia and do not miss the chance to visit *maran* (cellars) of a small winery for a glimpse of rural life and a hot lunch. Arrival in Jermuk, check in at hotel to rest and overnight.

Overnight: *Hotel in Jermuk*

Meal Plan: *Breakfast, lunch*

Day 8 - 9

Downhill Skiing in Jermuk

Jermuk is Armenia's prettiest mountain resort. Set against the backdrop of Vardenis and Syunik mountains, among thick forests, the town rolls out a white carpet for you. Up to 20 weeks of snow, virgin forests and a newly constructed ropeway make this an ideal place for winter activity enthusiasts. In the morning we will take a 4WD trip to a dazzling gorge with frozen Tsopk waterfall at the bottom. The astounding geology of the gorge is like an open book on earth history! Then up to the ropeway station, where we take our skis and head for downhill skiing through open meadows and forest-lined trails (up to 35 degrees at slopes). Two full days for you to enjoy skiing with the support of your instructor to develop your skills. Snowmobiling and off-piste skiing are also available. Evenings free for picturesque walks in fresh air, visiting mineral water gallery or for those who wish, taking a dip in sauna (optional).

Overnight: *Hotel in Jermuk*

Meal Plan: *Breakfasts*

Day 10

Transfer to Yerevan

Today we travel to Lake Sevan, the world's second largest freshwater lake at the altitude of 1900 meters above sea level. The endless white space of the Lake, frosty air and silhouettes of Geghama Mountains in the background are a perfect setting to round off your Winter Armenia experience. Visit to Stone Garden at Noraduz and climb up to romantic Hayrivank with heroic stories attached to its history. Later in the afternoon we catch our last view of the lake and head to Yerevan.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yervan*

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. Cross Country Skiing/Snowshoeing/Winter Walking conditions

This trip is categorised as Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing and Winter Walking, Grade A. It involves mountainous terrain. All steep and dangerous terrain will be avoided in the choice of routes. Each day the leader will carefully assess the situation 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.

Grade A (moderate)

Involves some longer walks and skiing generally at low altitudes (with the exception of Ashotsk at 3,196m).

Weather

Skiing in the north: Ashotsk is located at 3,196m above sea level and has six months of winter with 2 meters average snow cover and fresh snowfalls at any time. Average daytime temperatures in winter are around -10°C, though they can fall as low as -20°C. At all times of the winter you can hope for periods of clear bright weather but have to be prepared for occasional stormy days.

Snowshoeing/winter walking in the south: In winter months and beginning of spring (March) snow covers the slopes of the mountains of Southern Armenia providing an attractive backdrop and extended periods of fine, settled weather. Average monthly temperatures for Southern Armenia:

Dec: -8 to 0

Jan: -11 to -1

Feb: -7 to 2

Mar: -3 to 7.

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. On this tour, you will be accompanied by local cross country skiing and walking guides (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.

Luggage handling

All your gear is carried for you on this tour; you carry only a daypack.

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.