

CROSS-COUNTY SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING ARMENIA

Character:

A chance to come cross country skiing or try snowshoe walking in Armenia whatever your level of previous experience. On skis you will explore the frozen world of Lake Arpi National Park, snowshoe in the valleys and gorges of Southern Armenia, take in places of historic interest and enjoy the taste of real Armenian food and full-blooded wine.

Duration:

10 days / 10 nights

Accommodation:

Superior hotels and pension

Meals:

10 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 5 dinners

Mode of travel:

Comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles/on foot

Tour support:

AdvenTour hiking guide with winter training/driver

Included:

Accommodation for 10 nights

Meals as specified in the itinerary

AdvenTour escort/driver, local XC skiing guides

All activities as per itinerary, skis, snowshoes and poles provided

All transfers in comfortable 4WD vehicles

Luggage handling

XC ski and snowshoe Armenia information kit

Excluded:

Optional activities

Itinerary

Day 1

Cave Monastery

Our itinerary starts in Yerevan with a quick pre-tour orientation meeting with tour leader followed by a guided tour of Temple of the Sun at Garni. Transfer to Garni Gorge for a short walk at awesome gorge - vast peaks and ridges stretching as far as the eye can see and dark basalt pillars of surreal extravagance, a geologist's paradise. Our next stop is Geghard Cave Monastery, UNESCO World Heritage site. Transfer to Gyumri, a historic town at the north-western edge of Armenia. We have guided walking tour of the historic center of Gyumri, a favourite promenade for locals. Overnight at a comfortable local hotel.

Overnight: Hotel in Gyumri

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 2

Snowmobiling at Ashotsk

After breakfast we transfer to Mets Sepasar settlement in Lake Arpi National Park. On arrival we have time for safety briefing and instructions before we get ready for our first activity, snowmobiling. There will be two clients on each snowmobile following the instructor who will determine the best course over the terrain. We will explore the mountainous terrain, after approximately 1 hour we will reach Arpi Lake and make a stop to have some circular walks for about an hour to fully appreciate the mountain scenery and snow covered shores of the Lake. We are accompanied by a park ranger, who will show us how to read the various animal tracks and tell us about the wildlife at Lake Arpi. We head back on our snowmobiles to Ashotsk to settle into our accommodation. We have time to change and have a walk around the village before dinner. We will be based for 3 nights at Skymik Pension in Ashotsk village (twin rooms with shared shower and hot running water).

Overnight: Pension at Ashotsk

Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Days 3, 4, 5

Cross-Country Skiing at Lake Arpi National Park

Ashotsk is located at 3,196m above sea level and has six months of winter with 2 meters average snow cover. This beautiful area is unknown outside Armenia and offers many miles of cross-country skiing potential. The majority of the area falls within the protection of the National Park named after Lake Arpi (2,023m), the center of Javakheti-Shirak ecosystem recognized as a globally important area for birds, reptiles and plants of which several are listed as endangered in Red Book. Guided by Alla born in Siberia, Russia, the winner of 6 USSR Ski Racing Championships and Margarita, participant in XIX Olympic Games at Salt Lake City we will divide the group into 2 groups each day (including instruction for beginners). So you can make the most of the activities offered whatever your level of previous experience.

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

Routes begin from outside our pension, taking us into the National Park and alongside Akhurian River. We spend two and a half days exploring routes on this high plateau. 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).

In the morning of Day 5 we will have a little more practice and say goodbye to our local guides to transfer to Gyumri. Upon arrival we transfer to hotel to rest and refresh. In the evening we have a guided tour of Gyumri Brewery and time to change before dinner at famous trout restaurant.

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: Pension at Ashotsk, Hotel in Gyumri **Meal plan:** 2 Breakfast, 2 lunches, 3 dinners

Day 6

Walking at Lake Sevan

Today's walk is a special one - we travel to Lake Sevan, the world's second largest freshwater lake. The endless white space of the Lake, frosty air and silhouettes of Geghama Mountains in the background will make this day a magical experience. Reaching the Lake and with a GPS for guidance we use snowshoes to walk through deep unbroken snow at Lichk area. Walking here we admire the fantastic ice formations which develop on the frozen surface. If the weather and snow conditions are on our side we may try our hand at ice fishing with the help of a local fisherman. Alternatively we enjoy the winter bird life of the lake with our expert local birding guide. Visit to Stone Garden and romantic Hayrivank nearby. Later in the day we cross scenic Selim Pass, catch our last view of the lake and descend to the sleepy town of Vayk. Overnight at Hunters' Inn, located in a rocky ravine at the bank of Arpa river. This comfortable inn is notable for its rustic architecture, wonderful food not to mention the awesome views (our base for 3 nights)

Overnight: Hunters' Inn

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 7

Snowshoeing at Noravank

Time for leisurely breakfast and we start our exploration of Southern Armenia. A short transfer gets us to the head of Noravank Gorge with astounding red rock formations. After half an hour's gentle walk you can see Noravank Monastery in the distance - a sudden and dramatic sight amid surreal red rocks. In Noravank take a tour of the monastery guided by the local attendant, examine the exquisite carvings and precious cross-stones. After rest and a cup of tea in a cafe housed in a vast cavern (Noravank Gorge) fit your snowshoes and start walking to a rocky viewpoint with fantastic views of the monastery. A different experience as we travel by Russian off-road car UAZ into the mountains to reach the village of Mosrov for an evening dedicated to Armenian cuisine in an authentic home setting. Hands-on cooking demonstration at the kitchen of the farmhouse by the hostess who teaches us traditional family recipes passed down through generations (English translation by your guide). Dinner with local wine at farmhouse, the head of the family will act as your toastmaster governing the event according to age-old rules of Caucasian hospitality. Back to hotel.

Overnight: Hunters' Inn

Meal plan: Breakfast, dinner

Day 8

Sun and Snow at Gndevank

Early morning drive to Jermuk mountain resort for a walk at Gndevank Route ideal for snowshoeing during winter months. Surrounded by extensive farmland, deep gorges and thermal springs this beautiful area will be our base for today's exploration. Due to altitude we have reliable snowfall while some mystic combination of natural factors guarantees sunshine. Sun and snow, a perfect combination for a wonderful winter walk. Even those who do not regularly snowshoe will enjoy today's leisurely journey through the rocky landscape dusted by the snow. We are accompanied by a local guide who will show us how to read the various animal tracks on the snow including those of wolves that still roam wild. Discover enigmatic Gndevank Monastery, a highly scenic spot and a subject of local legends. Back to hotel where we can enjoy the great experience of a Russian steam sauna known as *banya*, very popular during the cold season in Armenia, rest up and enjoy ...

Overnight: Hunters' Inn

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 9**Back to Yerevan**

After breakfast we pack up and leave the mountains returning to the capital. On the way we visit Khor Virap, the site of Royal Prison where St. Gregory the Illuminator was kept for 13 years. Back to Yerevan, transfer to hotel, evening free for independent exploration of the city.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan

Meal plan: Breakfast

Day 10**Yerevan**

We have a full day to see the sights of Yerevan. The city offers a great variety of sights most of them very close to each other within a few minutes' walk. We will start our exploration by Republic Square, spend time at Vernisage where we can browse over 200 wooden stalls filled with handicrafts as well as indulge in the tasty treats of gata - traditional bread stuffed with fruits and nuts, ramble in the central part of the city. We will also visit Yerevan Brandy Factory to learn age-old secrets of brandy-making and sample the finished product. Tonight we have the opportunity to experience Yerevan nightlife.

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. 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).

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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 comfortable 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Laundry

Facilities are offered by all hotels for a charge.

12. 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.

13. What to take

Pack small and light. In addition to your "normal" daily clothes you will need: 3-4 season waterproof walking boots with semirigid soles and good ankle support. Good quality waterproof jacket; waterproof trousers and gaiters; warm fleece; warm hat and gloves. Occasionally in Southern Armenia we experience unusually warm days, where t-shirts, lightweight trousers and light fleeces are necessary.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

	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.