

# Armenia & Georgia, Romantic Journey

12 Days / 11 Nights



★ Anglo Indiago Travels (P) Limited ★

## Day 1: Arrival

Arrival at Zvartnots International Airport. Meet and greet. Transfer to the hotel. Overnight at the hotel. (-/-/-)

## Day 2 Yerevan city tour - Local market

Start our exploration of the vibrant capital of Armenia, Yerevan, where the ancient culture is mixed with modern lifestyle and great traditions. Though the city has turned 2800 years' old, it keep up to the latest trends alive with hustle and bustle of contemporary life. We start our tour from the Republic Square, the masterpiece of the architect Alexander Tamanian. Continue to **Cascade Complex**, an open-air museum of modern art. The complex links the downtown with the residential area with massive stairways leading up to the **Victory Park** providing a fantastic overlook to the entire downtown from above. The monument to Mother Armenia is standing tall in the park carefully guarding the city. Next, we are in the Opera House, a remarkable sample of urban architecture and a lively hub of the city. Freedom Square is just behind it, surrounded by parks and outdoor cafes which are a favorite spot to spend breezy summer evenings. Our next visit is **Parliament Park** facing the splendid building of The National Assembly of Armenia. The park in newly opened to the public after velvet Revolution in Armenia, May 2018 and locals have loved this site so much that the park has become one of the main walking areas in the evenings. Lunch at local restaurant. Visit **Yerevan Food & Fruit Market** complete with alleys of Armenian flatbread "lavassh", fresh vegetables, dried fruits and local sweets, optional visit to chocolate store. Today you will may take the chance to have a fancy welcome dinner at the sky restaurant. Overnight at the hotel (B/L/-)

## Day 3: Yerevan-Garni-Symphony of Stones– Geghard - Lake Sevan - Yerevan

Many countries have unofficial but widely known names: Armenia is often referred to as "the country of stones". Stones from tiny to huge ones in the form of rocks and mountains are seen all over Armenia since the country is situated in a mountainous region. The vivid example is Geghard. We start our trip to the Cave Monastery, Geghard inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage list. **Geghard monastery** is the masterpiece of the 13th century Armenian architecture partly carved out of a huge rock. Continue to Garni village. Within jeep tour in the river valley around basalt hills, we reach the portion of the Garni Gorge typically referred to as the "**Symphony of Stones**", a unique and picturesque monument of the nature. Volcanic eruptions are followed by the cooling processes of the lava, resulting in the beautiful geometric forms and hanging columns resembling musical "organ pipes". Next to, is the **Garni Temple**, the only Pagan Temple in Armenia, which dates back to the 1st c. Here you will enjoy the charming melodies of Armenian "**duduk**" by a local performer. Duduk and its music is inscribed in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. After

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exploring the sight, we will have lunch at a local house in Garni where you will have opportunity to watch Armenian national bread "lavash" baking process in the underground stove called "tonir". Our next stop is **Lake Sevan**, the "Blue Pearl of Armenia". This huge mountain lake, which takes up to 5% of Armenia's surface area, is about 2,000 meters above sea level and is the second highest freshwater lake in the world. Drive back to Yerevan. Overnight at the hotel in Yerevan. (B/L/-)

### Day 4: Yerevan- Zvartnots - Echmiadzin - Voskevaz winery - Yerevan

After breakfast visit to the town of Echmiadzin, the center of the Armenian Church and the spiritual center of Armenian people. Here is the location of **Echmiadzin Cathedral**, which is the most ancient Christian temple of Armenia. The cathedral was built in 301-303 by Grigor the Enlightener, the first bishop of Armenians. On the way visit to the ruins of **Zvartnots Ruins** (7th century) which is listed as a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO. Long while ago, the earthquake ruined the temple and now even in ruins the temple impresses the visitors. Having explored major cultural and religious sights, you should have been introduced the symbolism of grape in Armenian architecture. And now we proceed to Aragatsotn region to discovery another philosophy of grape in Armenian life- ancient wine making traditions. Armenia is a proven cradle of old wine production with the evidence of 6100 years-old winery and vessels. We visit local winery with abundant history of wine making traditions in **Voskevaz** village. The winery uses exclusively local grape sorts and traditional vessels "karas" to age the wines. Degustation and lunch at the winery. Drive back to Yerevan. Keeping the theme of grape and wine, you can take an optional visit to an unusual spa – Wine and Grape Spa. This will be perfect relaxation therapy for the end of the day. Overnight at the hotel in Yerevan. (B/L/-)

### Day 5: Yerevan - Khor Virap / Noravank -Areni cave- Yerevan

Breakfast at the hotel. Head for exploration of Ararat region. Visit **Khor-Virap monastery** 4- 17th cc. 45 km. from Yerevan. The monastery of Khor-Virap has a very rich history, both religious and secular. Khor Virap was built in Artashat during the reign of the Arshakids dynasty. At that time it was used as a pit- dungeon for convicts. It is situated in the Ararat valley against the biblical Ararat Mountain, were Noah's arch cast anchor. The importance of it is connected with Gregory the Illuminator, who introduced Christianity to Armenia and is considered to be the first Armenian catholicos. Continue tour to Vayots Dzor region, the agricultural center of the country. Visit **Noravank monastery** - a great religious and cultural center of 12th c. Noravank ("New Monastery") is 122 km away from Yerevan and is located in an inaccessible location throughout the stunning nature. Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit **Areni Cave**, where the oldest show was found during the excavations. Drive back to Yerevan. Overnight at the hotel in Yerevan. (B/L/-)

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### Day 6: Matenadaran- Brandy Factory - Leisure time

Breakfast at the hotel. Today our first stop is the institute of Ancient Manuscripts, **Matenadaran** (closed on Monday), named after the creator of Armenian alphabet Mesrop Mashtots. Holding one of the world's richest depositories of medieval manuscripts and books, it contains 17,000 manuscripts and 30,000 documents. Then we visit **Brandy factory** to taste "The Aged Brandies" of different years. The legendary Ararat brandy is considered the pride of many generations and a global symbol of Armenia. For many years, Stalin provided Armenian brandy to Winston Churchill. Free afternoon at leisure. For this time of the day, you can choose to enjoy the splendid view over the city and surroundings at bird's eye height on private helicopter (optional activity). The day ends with dinner in traditional Armenian restaurant with live folkloric music providing deep insight into traditional Armenian music stretching centuries back. Overnight at the hotel in Yerevan. (B/L/-)

### Day 7: Yerevan – Byurakan – Letter Park – Haghpat – Sadakhlo – Tbilisi

After breakfast and checkout extension to Byurakan village to participate in an interactive "**Folk Theatre Tonatsuyts**". The main goal is the presentation of ancient Armenian songs, dances, games, puppets, legends and instrumental music, involving the participants in the show for fun. Next we visit the Armenian **Alphabet Park**, a huge stones representing each of Armenian letter, the favorite place for the photography lovers. Continue tour to **Haghpat Monastery** (976 AD) which is among the outstanding works of medieval Armenian architecture and are inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage list. Drive to Armenia-Georgia Sadakhlo border. After all the border formalities, enter Georgia. Change transportation and guide. Drive to Tbilisi. Hotel accommodation and overnight. (B/-/-)

### Day 8: Tbilisi City Tour

After breakfast start a few unforgettable hours of familiarization with the capital. All the places of interest are very close to each other, within a few minutes' walk. Start our excursion from Metekhi (13th century) plateau, before reaching **Narikala Fortress** (4th century) which dominates the skyline of the Old Town. Continue to explore brick-domed underground sulphur baths (17th century) – the district of naturally hot mineral waters, cafe street Shardeni, Synagogue, Sioni Cathedral and the most ancient Basilica in Tbilisi **Anchiskhati** (6th century). Walk across the Bridge of Peace which is a stunning design as well as convenient crossing between the newly constructed Rike Park and the Old Town. It also provides superb views over the city. Then visit **National museum of Georgia** that preserves and exhibits a unique collection gold and silver artefacts and jewellery from the pre-Christian period from various regions of the country. Dinner at the traditional Georgian restaurant followed with folk show. Hotel accommodation and overnight in Tbilisi. (B/-/D)



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### Day 9: Tbilisi – Alaverdi – Telavi – Vardisubani – Akhalsopeli – Gremi – Tbilisi

After breakfast start to explore Kakheti region – Georgia’s premier wine-producing area as well as home to hundreds of historical and architectural monuments. Visit **Alaverdi Monastery**. It was built in 11th century and was one of the tallest structures of the time. The surrounding courtyard is home to vineyards from which local monks make their own wine. Then drive to the little town of Telavi – which was the capital of the Kakheti kingdom in the 10-11th century and later in 17-18th centuries. Now it is a small and cosy town, we have photo stop at city centre and visit local market. Proceed to Vardisubani village and attend **Qvevri making process**. Meet the local craftsman who is a fourth generation Qvevri maker, and his son continues the tradition. The visitors can observe the whole process of making a traditional Qvevri (egg-shaped earthenware vessel in which wine is fermented and stored in villages and towns throughout Georgia. UNESCO Intangible Heritage since 2013). Afterwards visit local family in Akhalsopeli village and enjoy delicious lunch together with wine degustation. Then head to Gremi monastery complex, the Capital of Kakheti Kingdom (1466–1616 years). It had booming cultural life, but because of internal strife and the invasion of Shah Abbas, the town was destroyed. Drive back to Tbilisi for Night stay. (B/L/-)

### Day 10: Tbilisi – Mtskheta – Kazbegi – Gudauri

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to **Mtskheta** – an ancient capital of Georgia, important religious centre and city-museum which is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Along the way, we will stop to visit Jvari Monastery (6th century). This well-known monastery is located on the top of the mountain, at the confluence of the Mtkvari and Aragvi rivers. Then head to Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th century) which is known as a place where Christ’s robe was buried. Walk along the narrow streets of Mtskheta with souvenir shopping possibility. Later start our very scenic drive up through the High Caucasus Mountains along the Georgian Military Highway towards Kazbegi. On the way we will drive across the Cross Pass (2 395m.) and along the Tergi River that brings us to Kazbegi – located in the middle of glorious & breath-taking beauty of the Caucasus, at the bottom of Mount Kazbegi (5 047m.), it is a main town in this region. From the centre of Kazbegi start an adventurous hiking through beautiful valleys and woodland that leads us to **Gergeti Holy Trinity church** (14th century), stunningly located on a hilltop (2170 m.) both overlooking the surrounding snowy peaks of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. Here we will enjoy unique nature with beautiful panoramic views of Caucasus, including mount Kazbegi (5047m.). Afterwards visit art house where you will have an opportunity to see how traditional Georgian felt is crafted by the local craftsmen. Overnight at the hotel in Gudauri. (B/-/-)

**Day 11: Gudauri – Ananuri – Gori – Uplistsikhe – Tbilisi**

After breakfast at the hotel drive to visit **Ananuri architectural complex** (17th century) overlooking a reservoir on the Aragvi River. Then proceed to Gori – a little town situated along the famous Silk Road is also famous as the birthplace of the Soviet Leader Joseph Stalin. Photo stop at the museum of Stalin which consists of memorial house, where Stalin was born, exposition building with tower and Stalin’s personal coach with interior and after proceed to the **cave town Uplistsikhe** (1st millennium BC) – one of the first cities in Georgia carved into the rock. The caves were the site of pagan rituals, before Georgia became a Christian country. Hotel accommodation and overnight in Tbilisi. (B/-/-)

**Day 12: Departure**

In time, transfer to Tbilisi International Airport and departure. (-/-/-)

End of the services...

**NOTE.** This tour can be modified as per your requirements.

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:**



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### Optional activities:

#### Sky Dinner:

Dinner at the skyline of the city will provide an extraordinary experience of high-class dinner overlooking the panorama of the evening Yerevan. You will share the delicious food at flying table with 20 other people.



#### Wine and Grape Spa

The spa is a unique site to enjoy the medical benefits of grape and grape seeds. You can choose among a wide range of relaxation procedures from classic massage with grape oil to wine baths and body peelings, special masks for hands and face. The treatment of a glass of wine will complete the effect. Depending on procedure you take, the duration may vary from 30 min up to 1 hour and more.



#### Helicopter ride

The helicopter ride is a new and prestigious service in Yerevan enabling locals and foreigners to have an exceptional experience of sightseeing in and outside the capital. The view from above will disclose the charm of the sights from completely new point so one should not miss the chance to take a photo or video shoot. Different jets are ready to make your trip a greatly memorable one.



Recommended rout for 30 minutes: Yerevan – Garni – Geghard – Azat River Gorge Yerevan