

The Caucasus: Vineyards and Monasteries of Armenia and Georgia

September 24 to October 7, 2014

Save the dates and come join us for a thirteen-night journey to the countries of Armenia and Georgia in the Caucasus region. We will travel independently to Yerevan with arrival on Wednesday, September 24. Departure will be from Tbilisi on Tuesday, October 7, or possibly the evening before. Travel in the two countries will be overland, and a range of new luxury boutique hotels have been chosen for their location and variety. In keeping with our spirit of adventure, we are reaching this region ahead of the crowds, and thus some adaptation and flexibility may be required.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW...

The southern slopes of the Great Caucasus range, stretching south to the headlands of the Tigris and Euphrates in the Eastern Anatolian Plateau, are the lands historically inhabited by Georgian and Armenian tribes. Herodotus and Xenophon described their cultures, and every great civilization has coveted their mountain rivers and lush valleys. Jason and the Argonauts, Urartu, Hittites, Alexander the Great, Pompeus, the Apostles, Parthians, Sassanid Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Tamerlane, Seljuk Turks, Saffavid, Qajar Persians, Ottoman Turks, Imperial Russians, and Bolsheviks; the list of conquerors of this unforgettable land reads like a list of the history of the ancient world.

Armenia and Georgia were among the first states to convert to Christianity (309 and 337 respectively). In the sixth and seventh centuries, their paths would split along theological differences, the Armenians choosing the non-Chalcedonian monophysite doctrine, while Georgians chose to remain allied with Byzantine Orthodox theology. Christianity became an extremely important factor in the identities of both nations as they struggled to survive against superior forces from constantly invading empires. Both Armenians and Georgians maintained active monasteries beyond their territories, such as in Greece, Antioch, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. Within their home territories, monasticism became an important expression of Christianity, with the monarchy and local aristocracy supporting the construction of fantastic



Administrative Map of Caucasus in USSR, 1952-1991; below: Tbilisi Old Town

cathedrals in the city centers and ornately carved monasteries in the remotest mountain valleys. Today, these fortified monastery complexes stand testament to the longevity of Christian cultural heritage in the region.



IS IT ASIA OR IS IT EUROPE?

The road to independence in the Post-Soviet era has been fraught with the seeds of tension sown decades ago. Armenia fought a war with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno Karabagh region. Georgia fought Ossetian and Abkhazian separatists supported by Russia over territorial disputes. To the north, the North Caucasus nations remain restless even while defacto truces surrounding the 2014 Winter Olympic games take place on the 150th anniversary of the annihilation of the Circassian and Adyghean tribes on the north coast of the Black Sea.

TRAVEL PROGRAM...

On this tour, we begin in Yerevan, the modern capital city of Armenia, with trips to see some of the many fantastic museums in the city. We begin our trip by traveling south through the Mount Ararat valley. We visit Echmiadzin, the spiritual center of Armenian Christianity, and visit a sampling of famous ninth century monastery complexes. Other highlights in Armenia include the Dilijan national park, its expansive forests protecting not only rare species of birds and wildlife, but also the medieval Goshavank and Haghartsin monasteries, tucked into inaccessible gorges. Traveling north, we cross into Georgia in what was known as the Samtskhe-Javakheti kingdom, separated from Georgia for many centuries as an Ottoman protectorate. This region has a diverse population of Georgians, Armenians, Kurds, Turks, Muslims and Christian, and is home to some of the most important 12th century monuments in Georgia including the Vardzia Cave Complex inaugurated by Georgia's most famous monarch, Queen Tamar. Traveling north through the Borjomi Gorge, we follow the path of Pompeus, and later the great Turkish army defeated by the Georgian king Davit the Restorer in the early twelfth century until we reach Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. From there we travel into East Georgia, the kingdom of Kakheti, where the first evidence of cultivated grape pips have been found, dating to 6000BC.



Church of the Cross (6th Century), Georgia



Khor Virap Monastery, Armenia

Viticulture is still visibly the culture of the land, as almost every local villager produces their own wine from their own varietals (more than 550 varietals exist in Georgia alone), in addition to the large-scale agricultural production of wine in the region. Returning to Tbilisi, we have a day to visit newly reopened museums with fantastic exhibits on the pre-Christian gold jewelry of Colchis, temporary exhibits, and a large exhibit dedicated to the Soviet occupation of Georgia.

—John A. Graham

ABOUT THE LEADERS

The idea for this tour came about through the interest of many of you. Stephen Harby made an exploratory trip several years ago to fill the time resulting from the previously planned Libya trip having been cancelled. He met and traveled with the Tbilisi based authority on Georgian Chant, John A. Graham, who has developed this itinerary specifically for us. John is completing his PhD degree at Princeton University and has led many specialist and scholarly trips in the region. The tour leader and local expert will be Jonathan Wurdeman, an authority on Georgian food and wine, wine producer, and recognized artist.

He is a practicing painter who started off studying at the Maryland Institute, College of Art, in Baltimore, MD, and

transferred to the Surikov Institute of Art in Moscow where he finished his MFA in 1998. He first came to Georgia in 1995 in search of singers that practiced the ancient art of Georgian polyphony. In 1996 Jonathan purchased a house in Signaghi, Georgia, a town famous for the arts with beautiful views and in the center of the wine region and in 1998 he moved there to live full time, dividing his time between his two passions - wine and art - and finds the two go quite well together. Jonathan has been deeply involved in preserving and developing ancient wine making methods and culinary traditions in Georgia and sharing these rare wines and culinary arts with visitors to Georgia.



Khachkar Cross-stone, Goshavank Monastery



Greek Temple of Garni (left) and Saghmosavank Monastery (right), Armenia

Itinerary

Day 1, Wednesday, September 24, 2014
Yerevan Arrival

Guests will be met and brought to Tufenkian Heritage Hotel, our home for the next three nights.

Day 2, Thursday, September 25, Yerevan
Visit to the reconstructed Greek temple of Garni (1st c.), and the rock-hewn church of Geghard (9th c.). Visit to the house museum of Sergei Parajanov, avant-garde film-maker and artist.

Day 3, Friday, September 26, Yerevan
Visit to Echmiadzin, the center of the Armenian Church, then to Khor Virap, before returning to the Northwest

after lunch to see the Saghmosavank Monastery and Hovhannavank Church.

Day 4, Saturday, September 27, Dilijan

Traveling north, visits to Lake Sevan and the Dilijan National Forest area, with stops at the Sevanavank and Haghartsin monasteries.

Day 5, Sunday, September 28, Akhaltsikhe, Georgia

Crossing the border into Georgia, we'll check into the hotel in Akhaltsikhe and offer an optional tour to visit a nearby monastery.

Day 6, Monday, September 29, Akhaltsikhe, Georgia

After a morning visit to the recently renovated citadel and museum that once dominated this capital city of southern Georgia, the highlight of the day will be exploring the twelfth century cave city of Vardzia at the headwaters of the Mtkvari river. Feast with local wine-makers.

Day 7, Tuesday, September 30, Telavi

Traveling for the entire day along the historic Mtkvari (Kura) river, we visit Borjomi, the Stalin Museum in Gori, the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (center of the Georgian Church), and then continue into the viticulture regions of Eastern Georgia.

Day 8, Wednesday, October 1, Telavi

After a morning of visits to the Alaverdi Cathedral (11th c.), medieval academy of Iqalto (10th c.), and the Shuamta convent (16th c.), we visit the garden estate and summer palace of the local Chavchavadze noble family for a bit of local wine-tasting.

Day 9, Thursday, October 2, Signaghi

Visits to the Gremi fortress and museum (16th c.), the Nekresi Monastery complex (4th-11th c.), the Signaghi museum and



Yerevan, Armenia

the Bodbe convent (9th c.) before a feast with local wines at the Pheasant's Tears natural wines showroom.

Day 10, Friday, October 3, Tbilisi

A hike to see the frescoed caves of the Davit Gareji monastery (9th-16th c.) before returning to the capital city of Tbilisi.

Day 11, Saturday, October 4, Tbilisi

A day to explore the historic fortress, synagogues, churches, and mosques of Old Town Tbilisi, as well as the excellent exhibits in the National Museum, Treasury Museum, and the recently rehabilitated 19th century architectural section of town.

Day 12, Sunday, October 5, Kazbegi

Departing Tbilisi, we stop at the ancient capital of Georgia to visit the Jvari Church (6th c.) and the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th-12th c.). Traveling up the Russian Military highway, we stop at the Ananuri fortress (16th c.), and visit the Monastery of the Archangels in the Daryal Gorge (21st c.). Spectacular views of Mount Kazbegi, a 15,500-foot cone volcano.



One of the ubiquitous vineyards in Georgia

Day 13, Monday, October 6, Tbilisi

Morning walk, horseback trip, or drive to the Gergeti Sameba Monastery (13th c.), then return to Tbilisi for our final banquet.

Day 14, , October 7, Departure

Transfer to the airport. Most flights to intercontinental gateways (Istanbul, Rome, Vienna, Frankfurt, etc.) depart in the morning.



Kazbegi Mountain (above), Ananuri Fortress, Georgia (below)



REGISTRATION FORM

The Caucasus: Vineyards and Monasteries of Armenia and Georgia, September 24 to October 7, 2014(dates in region)

Yes, I would like to attend this journey! Tour price is estimated at \$5,700 per person double occupancy, or \$6,900 single occupancy based on a group of at least 10 participants.

Please provide upgraded hotel accommodations (from standard to junior suite or comparable) for \$1,000 pp add'l.

Costs have fluctuated unpredictably this past year due to changes in fuel costs and exchange rates. The above costs are based on market conditions as of March, 2014. They are subject to increase should market conditions change.

To register please complete this registration form and send it with a deposit of \$2,000 (per person) by check to Stephen Harby, 718 Cedar Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405-3810. Only written registrations, including appropriate payment will be accepted.

Final payment of balance will be due by July 1, 2014.

Also, please send a photocopy of the picture page of your passport.

Name

Name

Address

City

State

Zip/Postal Code

Home phone

Alt. phone

Email

Please select one of the following:

- double occupancy with 2 beds
 double occupancy with one bed
 single occupancy

I would like to have assistance booking my flights

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

WHAT IS INCLUDED

Hotels as indicated on the itinerary based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available at an additional supplement. We reserve the right to substitute other hotels of a similar quality.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner as mentioned in the itinerary (all meals are included).

Admission to all sites as described in the itinerary.

The handling of no more than two medium size suitcases per person

Private Coach transportation throughout.

Use of personal headset to facilitate hearing of on-site lectures and commentary.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

International air transportation to Yerevan and from Tbilisi. Incidental expenses such as for telephone calls, fax communications, a la carte orders or items not on the set menus, alcoholic drinks over and above table wine provided at evening meals, laundry, and any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

TRIP INSURANCE

In the event participants cancel their trip, all non-refundable payments will be forfeited. Trip cancellation insurance is recommended for this purpose.

REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

A passport with validity for at least six months beyond end of stay, along with any visas required by host countries.

TOUR COSTS

Costs have been calculated on the basis of charges and exchange rates as of March, 2014. Should these change, Stephen Harby reserves the right to make appropriate adjustments to the tour cost.

ALTERATIONS TO ITINERARY

Stephen Harby reserves the right to alter, modify or withdraw the itinerary if air schedules and/or events beyond his control deem it necessary. Itinerary changes made by local travel providers are beyond the control of Stephen Harby and should such changes be made the participant will be bound accordingly.

ITINERARY DEVIATIONS

Stephen Harby assumes no liability or responsibility for any participant deviating from the group tour. Participants arriving and departing independently are responsible for their own transfers.

CANCELLATION

Should cancellation occur prior to 90 days before departure, full refund will be granted less a \$200 service charge; within the following days prior to departure, the specified percentage of tour costs is non-refundable: 60-89 days - 20%; 45-59 days - 30%; 30-44 days - 50%; 29 days or fewer - 100 % Forfeiture of entire tour cost). Cancellations must be submitted in writing; trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. There will be no refund for any tour accommodation, service, or feature not taken, or if participant cancels for any reason while tour is in progress. Any additional costs due to leaving the tour are the responsibility of the departing passenger. In these times of uncertainty in the international realm, we also have to add that should cancellation or alteration of the program occur due to civil disturbances, acts of terrorism, war, natural disaster, and other events of force majeure or acts of God (including threat or fear of same), refunds will be made only to the extent that they are recoverable by Stephen Harby, and that such cancellation or alteration may result in the total loss of funds paid by participants. Many destinations may pose a normal risk of political instability, civil unrest, etc. It is assumed each participant has reviewed same with respect to their own comfort level of risk and personal safety, A decision to withdraw from the trip for these reasons or any others will be bound by the same terms of cancellation.

RESPONSIBILITY

Stephen Harby and /or agents assume no responsibility or liability in connection with the service of any train, carriage, aircraft, motor coach, or other conveyance or hotel which may be used wholly or in part, in the performance of the tour. Neither will they be responsible or liable for any injury, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may be occasioned by reason of any defect in any vehicle or through neglect or default of any company or person engaged in conveying or accommodating the passengers; nor for any delays, injuries, damages or losses resulting directly or indirectly from any acts of God, acts of governments, de jure or de facto, wars whether declared or not, hostilities, civil disturbances, terrorist activities, riots, thefts, pilferage, epidemics, quarantines, medical or customs regulations, or from any causes beyond the control of Stephen Harby, and /or agents. In the event it becomes necessary for the comfort or well being of the passengers to alter or modify the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the tour operator and are not grounds for cancellation with refund. Additional expenses, if any, shall be borne by the passenger. The sole responsibility of the airline used is limited to that set out in the passenger contract evidenced by the tickets. This agreement becomes effective upon acceptance into the tour by Stephen Harby. These Terms and Conditions shall be governed by the State of California.

Your signature below confirms that you have read the Terms and Conditions and accompanying itinerary and agree to abide by its contents.

Date

Signature
