



# GEORGIA, ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN

2024 - Go Beyond Tour | 24 Days | Physical Level 4

BAKU - GABALA - SHEKI - TELAVI - TBILISI - DILIJAN - GORIS - YEREVAN -  
GYUMRI - AKHALTSIKHE - KUTAI SI - MESTIA - GUDAURI – TBILISI

This 3-country journey travels via the spectacular High Caucasus Mountains and the lowlands of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. Start on the Caspian Sea in the exciting Baku and travel through the wine fields in Georgia, see impressive church and monasteries, ancient cave towns, remote villages to meet fascinating locals. Follow in the footsteps of Silk Road merchants and medieval Crusader Knights on your adventure.

- Discover ancient caravanserais
- Sample Georgian Cuisine
- Learn about the 1st Christian nation
- Marvel at Mount Kazbegi
- Taste popular local wines & Explore an abandoned cave town Noravank

To book call **0800 936 3998** or visit your local travel agent

Visit [wendywutours.co.nz](http://wendywutours.co.nz)

**TOUR MAP:**

**GEORGIA, ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:**

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- Meals as Specified
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers) and Local Guides
- Visa fees for New Zealand passport holders
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides

*The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check-in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.*

**GO BEYOND TOURS:**

Venture off the beaten track to explore fascinating destinations away from the tourist trail. You will discover the local culture in depth and see sights rarely witnessed by other travellers. These tours take you away from the comforts of home but will reward you with the experiences of a lifetime. These tours include:

- Walking through classic sites
- Unique cultural experiences and encounters

- Off the beaten track destinations
- More evenings at leisure for independent exploration

The cost of your tour includes most meals, however on occasion you will have the opportunity for some free time around mealtimes to experience the local restaurants for yourself. At these times meals will be at your own expense. The meals which are included in your tour are clearly stated on each individual day of the itinerary below.

Our Central Asia tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of this continent on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. We are sure you will have a wonderful time - prepare to be immersed in the authentic charm of the countries you will visit.

#### PHYSICAL LEVEL 4:

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All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

The Eurasia Explorer: Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan tour is rated as a physical level 4 tour. A good level of fitness is required as you need to be comfortable walking for 2-3 hours and covering longer distances. This itinerary requires a high level of fitness involving hiking and travelling to remote areas where tourist facilities are less developed.

You'll be getting on and off coaches, walking around the sights on rugged terrain, and climbing steps. Travelling in Central Asia is both rewarding and challenging because of the lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads or a transportation system. This tour covers a vast distance and reaching the sites involves travelling through areas which are remote.

- There will be periods of walking whilst sightseeing, often on steep and uneven ground.
- There are days of driving on rough unsealed roads or tracks, and a few days which involve driving over 5 hours.

Of course, our local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary. If you require any more information about the pace of the tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

#### JOINING YOUR TOUR:

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The tour is 24 days in duration including overnight international flights in both directions as this is the most likely flight option from New Zealand. Due to flight schedules passengers may arrive/depart on Day 2.

Travellers booked on 'Land Only, the price includes visa fees and your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to reservations.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Baku and end the tour on Day 23 in Tbilisi. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 2 of the itinerary. If you miss this due to your arrival time, all information will be provided to you at breakfast the following morning.

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**ITINERARY CHANGES:**

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

**DETAILED ITINERARY****Days 1-2: Fly to Baku, Azerbaijan (via Dubai)**

Meals: D

Fly overnight to Baku, Azerbaijan (via Dubai). On arrival, transfer to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at your leisure to rest before dinner

**Destination Information**

**Baku** – Azerbaijan’s capital is the architectural love child of Paris and Dubai...albeit with plenty of Soviet genes floating half-hidden in the background. Few cities in the world are changing as quickly and nowhere else in Eurasia do East and West blend as seamlessly or as chaotically. At its heart, the Unesco-listed Old lies within an exotically crenelated arc of fortress wall. Around this are gracefully illuminated stone mansions and pedestrianised tree-lined streets filled with exclusive boutiques.

**Day 3: Baku City Tour**

Meals: B, L, D

The morning unfolds with a captivating half-day walking tour, through the storied passages of the Old City, fondly referred to as "Icheri Sheher." Here, a tapestry of history and architecture comes to life, revealing treasures like the elegant Shirvanshahs' Palace, the iconic Maiden Tower standing as the city's emblem, and caravanserais and mosques that whisper tales of the past.



A satisfying lunch awaits at a local restaurant, providing a taste of both cuisine and culture.

Returning to the hotel, you have the afternoon at leisure before dinner this evening. Sightseeing today will last approximately 4 hours.

**Destination Information**

**Shirvanshah's Palace** – A 15th-century palace built by the Shirvanshahs and described by UNESCO as "the pearl of Azerbaijan's architecture". The complex contains the Divanhane (main building of the palace), the burial-vaults, the shah's mosque with a minaret and Seyid Yahya Bakuvi's mausoleum.

**Maiden Tower** – The Maiden Tower is a 12th-century monument located in the Old City of Baku. It is one of Azerbaijan's most distinctive national emblems and is thus featured on Azeri currency notes and official letterheads. The Maiden Tower houses a museum and has great views of the minarets of the Old City.



**Day 4: Gobustan and Yanar Dag**

Meals: B, L, D

Embark on an enchanting journey to the Gobustan Aarchaeological Reserve, a historical gem nestled 60 kilometers to the south of Baku, this unique site is renowned for its exquisitely preserved rock paintings, or "petroglyphs,".

Continue 45 – 50 minutes/40 km to the famous mud volcanoes before enjoying lunch. Travel a further 50 minutes/20km to Yanar Dag, one of the most amazing natural sights – a burning mountain that cannot be extinguished.



Finish the day visiting Ateshgah, the Fire Worshippers Temple

**Destination Information**

**Gobustan** - rocky canvases not only bear witness to prehistoric epochs but also chronicle 15,000 years of regional history, spanning from the Upper Paleolithic Era to the Middle Ages

**Mud Volcanoes** - Of the 700-800 global mud volcanoes, nearly 300 grace Azerbaijan's landscapes, primarily concentrated on the Absheron Peninsula. Nearby, traces of ancient cave dwellers in the Gobustan historical district serve as a testament to humanity's early habitation.

**Yanar Dag** - This fiery spectacle on the Absheron Peninsula features an enduring mountain slope engulfed in flames, kindled by the release of natural gas from the soil's upper layers. For millennia, rain or sand has failed to douse these perpetual flames. The local populace and global pilgrims alike hold the mountain in reverence, drawn to its incandescent slopes for worship and meditation.

**Ateshgah Fire Temple** - Constructed by Hindu pilgrims in the 18th century, this temple held significant fire-cult importance until the late 19th century.

**Day 5: Travel to Gabala**

Meals: B, L, D

Travel 2 hours (123km) through the Caucasus Mountains in the northwest of Azerbaijan through a dry landscape that gives way to a densely forested mountain area.

Gabala is in the foothills of the Greater Caucasus, surrounded by one of the highest peaks – Bazarduzu, Bazaryurd, Tufanli, rising to an altitude of almost 4000 metres above sea level. Forests cover most of the area.

Visit the historical Juma Mosque and take part in yoghurt making master class in a local home in Shamakhi. The authentic name of local yogurt is “qatiq”. The journey takes 2hours (95km).



Arrive in the city of Gabala where you will enjoy lunch and spend the night.

### Destination Information

**Galaba** – Two-thousand-year old Galaba - the most ancient city of Azerbaijan, was for 600 years the capital of ancient Caucasian Albania and was mentioned in the works of 1<sup>st</sup> century historian.

**Day 6: Sheki**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast, your day unfolds with a 30-minute (25km) drive to visit the charming Nidj village, renowned as the epicentre of the largest Udi population globally.

The Udi people proudly trace their lineage back to one of the principal tribes that inhabited the ancient state of Caucasian Albania, spanning much of present-day Azerbaijan.



As you explore the village, you'll discover their rich cultural heritage and enjoy a delightful lunch prepared with local flavours.

Afterward, embark on a scenic journey of approximately 1.5 hours to the city of Sheki, where you'll have the privilege of touring the Summer Palace of the Sheki Khans. Your day concludes with a warm reception by a welcoming local family, who will graciously treat you to an assortment of oriental sweets and homemade jams, offering you a taste of their traditional hospitality. Sightseeing today lasts approximately 3 hours.

### Destination Information

**Nidj Village** - The Udi people, who follow the Christian faith, are direct descendants of a prominent tribe from the ancient state of Caucasian Albanian. This historical state once spanned a significant portion of modern-day Azerbaijan, from approximately 3 BC to 8 AD.

**Sheki** - An illustrious and ancient settlement that has left an indelible mark on Azerbaijan's history. Nestled 700 meters above sea level, the city is encircled by mountains, creating a natural amphitheater-like setting. Sheki's historical significance as a hub for silk trade along the Great Silk Road adds to its allure.

**Day 7: Welcome to Georgia**

Meals: B, L, D

Prepare for a long day of travelling as you journey across the border into Georgia, finding yourself in the captivating town of Lagodekhi. It will take approximately 2.5 hours (125km).

Visit the bustling local market, a lively center of activity, teeming with opportunities to savor fresh produce and locally crafted goods.



Continue your 1 hour 40-minute (100km) route towards Telavi, with your first stop leading to the welcoming abode of a local family in Gavazi, for a delectable homemade lunch.

Next you visit Khareba Winery, for 1 hour, nestled within a mountain-carved tunnel, creating a one-of-a-kind, atmospheric setting for wine tasting. Indulge in a diverse array of Georgian wines while gaining insights into the winemaking process and the rich history of Georgian viticulture. The Khareba Winery also treats you to breathtaking vistas of the surrounding vineyards, ensuring an unforgettable and immersive experience. Enjoy dinner in Telavi.

**Please have your passports ready for the border crossing.** You will be required to walk 500metres, crossing the border, taking your luggage with you.

### Destination Information

**Khareba's Winery** - Khareba's Winery unique wine cellar is located in a tunnel carved out of the rock. Originally built for military purposes, today the tunnel is used to store Kakheti's finest wines. Kakheti is the most important wine region in Georgia in quantitative, qualitative and even historic terms. Almost three-quarters of the country's wine grapes are grown here, on land that has been used for viticulture for thousands of years. Georgia is said to be the true birthplace of wine.

### Day 8: Visit Signaghi

Meals: B, L, D

Your tour continues with a visit to Signaghi, taking around 1.5 hours to reach. Enjoy an experience at a local family winery, tasting the traditional Qvevri wine while indulging on a delicious lunch.

Delve into the town's rich history as you explore its iconic landmarks, including the Signaghi Wall and the Bodbe Monastery. While wandering the charming, cobbled streets, you'll be treated to panoramic views that capture the essence of the region.



Drive a further 2.5 hours to arrive in Tbilisi in time for dinner. Sightseeing today will last approximately 3hours.

### Destination Information

**Signaghi** – Signaghi Royal Town, which is surrounded by defensive walls with 23 towers, was an important trading centre on the Great Silk Road.

**Tbilisi** – Tbilisi's eternal charms of a dramatic setting in the deep valley of the swift Mtkvari River, picturesque architecture, an ever-lively arts and cultural scene, and the welcoming Georgian lifestyle have been added a whole new 21st-century dimension of inviting cafes and restaurants.



**Day 9: Tbilisi to Dilijan**

Meals: B, L, D

Today's border crossing at Sadakhlo, marks your entry into Armenia.

Your journey of 45 minutes leads you to the remarkable Haghpat Monastery for a visit before lunch. From here you proceed to Vanadzor, where you visit Bogdan Hovhannisyanyan's workshop, for the unique opportunity to partake in a khachqar (Armenian cross-stone) carving masterclass.



Continue on your way to Dilijan, a town of profound significance and breathtaking beauty in the Tavush region. After a short city tour check in to your hotel and enjoy dinner at a local restaurant. A long day on the road as you cover over 220 km in 4 hours.

*Please note* - The border crossing will take approximately 30 minutes. You are required to take your luggage with you to cross the 1st checkpoint at Georgian border. You will meet your new guide and board the bus, in the neutral zone, before heading to the Armenia border checkpoint.

Dress code at Haghpat Monastery - Men are to take off their hats, women may not enter the church if wearing shorts or an open neckline.

**Destination Information**

**Haghpat Monastery** - Dating back to the 10th century. This UNESCO Cultural Heritage site is a medieval marvel, mostly constructed in the 9th century. The grey stone structures crowned with terracotta roofs hold a captivating secret - the floor's perforations were ingeniously designed to keep wine pleasantly cool.

**Vanadzor** - Nestled in the embrace of the Bazum and Pambak mountains, at an elevation of 1350 meters above sea level, Vanadzor is affectionately known as the Green City of Armenia

**Dilijan** - A town of immense beauty within the Tavush region. Cradled by the Aghstev River and encircled by densely wooded mountains, Dilijan's charm has earned it the nickname "Armenian Switzerland."

**Day 10: Selim Caravanserai**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast you will visit Savanavank Monastery, an architectural treasure from the 19th century. Enjoy the mesmerizing panorama of Lake Sevan. Drive 45 minutes to visit Noratus, home to the world's largest collection of khachkars - ancient Armenian cross-stones.

Next you venture to a family farm renowned for crafting dairy products from their own livestock, grazing in alpine pastures, spending 1 hour here.



Continuing southward, pass through Selim Caravanserai—a historic stop along the Silk Road.

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Enjoy lunch near Shatin village before reaching Noravank Monastery after 2 hours driving. Travel a further 2 hours 15 minutes (140km) arriving in Goris, one of Armenia's oldest towns, where you will overnight.

Your coach will stop near to the steps of the Sevanavank Monastery. From here you will climb about 250 short stairs to reach the Monastery.

Dress code at Noravank Monastery - Men are to take off their hats, women may not enter the church if wearing shorts or an open neckline.

### Destination Information

**Lake Sevan** – Set 1900m above sea level, the great blue expanse of Lake Sevan is 80km long by 30km at its widest. The largest lake in the Caucasus, it's also one of the largest freshwater high-altitude lakes in the world. Its colours and shades change with the weather and by its own mysterious processes, from a dazzling azure to dark blue and a thousand shades in between.

**Noratus** - The site encompasses the oldest Armenian cemetery, spanning an impressive 7 hectares. Here, you'll encounter nearly 1,000 khachkars dating from the 13th to the 17th centuries.

**Noravank Monastery** - a captivating 13th-century Monastery. The view from the gorge, flanked by sculptural rock formations, is awe-inspiring. The rocks take on varying hues from gray to brown and orange, changing with the sun's angle, creating a dramatic interplay of colors. The narrow and deep gorge adds to the striking scenery.

### Day 11: Tatev Monastery

Meals: B, L, D

Travel 15 minutes (12km) to the village of Khndzoresk before continuing to Halidzor, 30km away, to embark on an adventure aboard the "Wings of Tatev," the world's longest aerial tramway, that will lead you to the revered Tatev Monastery, an architectural marvel from the 9th century perched on the edge of Vorotan River's deep gorge. Return to Halidzor by tramway.



After lunch you will drive for 4 hours (240km) to reach Yerevan.

Sightseeing at Khndzoresk – Your bus will stop on the main road and smaller buses will be used to get to Khndzoresk observatory, from where you can see the caves. To cross the hanging bridge, you shall descend 450 short steps. The bridge is a swinging bridge where the floor is net-like so that the gorge is visible. If you have acrophobia (fear of height) it is best to wait for the group upstairs.

The aerial tramway starts from Halidzor and takes 15 min one way to reach to Tatev Monastery. Maximum speed is 37km/h, maximum height is 320 m

Dress code at Tatev Monastery - Men are to take off their hats, women may not enter the church if wearing shorts or an open neckline and are required to wear a headscarf.

### Destination Information

**Khndzoresk** – Is a historic village located in the southeastern part of Armenia, near the town of Goris, Syunik Province. It is known for its unique cave village, which has a rich cultural and historical significance. It also boasts an ancient swinging bridge, suspended over a deep gorge, providing a thrilling experience.

**Tatev Monastery** - Tatev Monastery has held the esteemed position of the bishopric seat of Syunik and has played a pivotal role for centuries as a center of economy, politics, spirituality, and culture for the region.

**Yerevan** – Leave your preconceptions at home, because Yerevan will almost certainly confound them. This is a city full of contradictions – top-of-the-range Mercedes sedans share the roads with Ladas, old-fashioned teahouses sit next to chic European-style wine bars; and street fashions range from hipster to babushka.

### Day 12: Yerevan City Tour

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will explore the city, taking in Republic Square, where a stone carpet conceals 3000 years of history beneath it.

You will also visit Ejmiatsin, the former capital, housing the UNESCO-listed Ejmiatsin Cathedral, the world's oldest cathedral dating back to the early 4th century.

Enjoy an unforgettable culinary experience at the Machanents House, participating in a cooking class of the national Armenian dish "tolma."



Continue further to explore Zvartnots Cathedral before returning to Yerevan. The sightseeing will last 7 hours, covering 90km.

Dress code at Ejmiatsin Cathedral - Men are to take off their hats, women may not enter the church if wearing shorts or an open neckline.

### Destination Information

**Ejmiatsin** - "Ejmiatsin" translates to 'The Descent of the Only Begotten Son,' a name rooted in the legend that Jesus Christ marked the location for its construction during his descent from heaven. Today, this site serves as the heart of the Armenian church and the residence of the Catholicos of All Armenians

**Zvartnots Cathedral** - A 7th-century marvel whose ruins grace the UNESCO Heritage List. Intriguing sculptural remnants encircle the main structure, and the museum showcases excavated artifacts. Informative panels shed light on medieval Armenian architecture.

**Day 13: Geghard Monastery**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast you get to explore the treasure trove of Armenian manuscripts—the Matenadaran. The tour then visits Geghard Monastery, 40km away, this is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of Armenia's most remarkable spiritual sanctuaries.



Next arrive at the Garni Pagan Temple, a remarkable relic from the 1st century AD. Enjoy a lavash-making class before encountering the Symphony of Stones, on the way back to Yerevan.

SUV vehicles will be used to get your near Symphony of Stones, and you will be required to walk about 600 metres.

**Destination Information**

**Matenadaran** - Established in 1959 and situated in Yerevan, Matenadaran stands as a repository of ancient manuscripts and boasts one of Armenia's largest collections. The museum complex, originally a single exhibition hall, has since expanded to encompass fifteen halls brimming with a diverse array of exhibits. Visitors have the privilege of encountering manuscripts, individual miniatures, historical documents, and antique printed books during the exhibitions.

**Geghard Monastery** - Often referred to as Ayrivank, meaning "church carved out from the rock," Geghard Monastery holds a myth of a healing source within its walls—a sip of its water is believed to possess curative powers. The monastery's acoustic properties make it a superb place for spiritual songs.

**Garni Pagan Temple** - This Hellenistic temple, uniquely preserved in the Caucasus, exhibits a Parthenon-style structure with 24 pillars symbolizing the hours of the day.

**Day 14: Gyumri**

Meals: B, L, D

Today sees you visiting Saghmosavank Monastery, perched on a breathtaking gorge. Your next destination is 100km away, Gyumri, Armenia's second-largest city.

Following a delicious lunch, embark on a city tour of Gyumri that encompasses the Old Town and the charming Kumayri district, renowned for its antique architectural style, wooden balconies, and vibrant facades.



This district stands as a testament to authentic urban Armenian architecture, preserving over 1,000 buildings that narrate the city's captivating history.

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**Destination Information**

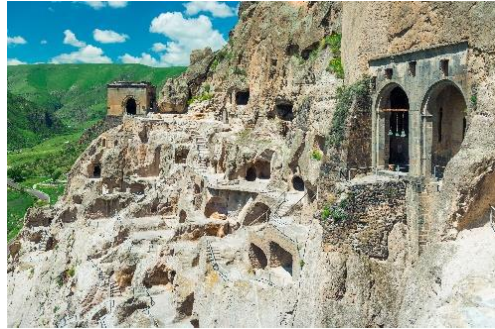
**Saghmosavank Monastery** - Erected in 1215 by the Vachutyans princely family, the monastery holds a rich historical legacy.

**Gyumri** - with a 3000-year history and the country's cultural hub, Once known as Alexandropol in the late 19th century, it rivaled Yerevan in population.

**Day 15: Back into Georgia**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning you're heading back into Georgia. Proceed 1 hour to the Bavra border, where upon crossing your journey takes you a further 90km to Vardzia—a remarkable rock-hewn complex situated along the banks of the river Mtkvari. Following this, enjoy lunch at Valodia's cottage.



Your next destination is Rabati Castle where you get to explore the castle's intricate architecture, which includes mosques, churches, and much more. Sightseeing today is approx 2.5 – 3 hours.

When crossing the border, you will be required to carry your own luggage. After crossing the Armenia border, you will walk 200 meters to cross the Georgian border, where your coach and guide will meet you.

Vardzia terrain is rocky and slippery when wet. Please ensure you wear sports shoes and if you are not confident in your physical ability, please do not enter the caves, and rather explore them from the outside

**Destination Information**

**Vardzia** - Established during the 12th-13th centuries under the reign of Giorgi III and Queen Tamar, Vardzia originally intended as a fortified town, transformed into a fortified monastery. This complex played a vital role in the nation's political, cultural, educational, and spiritual development.

**Rabati Castle** - Initially constructed in the 13th century as a Muslim fortress, this castle has witnessed the influences of various rulers, from Georgians and Persians to Ottomans and Russians. Today, meticulously restored, Rabati Castle thrives as a cultural and educational hub, housing museums, galleries, and exhibitions that celebrate the region's rich history and culture.

**Day 16:           Kutaisi**

Meals: B, L, D

Before continuing to Kutaisi, enjoy 40 minutes leisure time in Borjomi, located 1 hour (50km) from Akhaltsikhe, wandering through the park tasting mineral water from natural springs.



On arrival in Kutaisi, a city tour awaits where you will discover landmarks such as the White Bridge and the captivating Colchis Fountain. Your exploring will also include visiting Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery. You will spend approx. 1.5 hours on your feet today exploring.

**Destination Information**

**Kutaisi** - Once the capital of the Kingdom of Colchis and later a significant hub in medieval Georgia, Kutaisi's diverse history is reflected in its blend of architectural styles.

**Gelati Monastery** – A pivotal center of education and science, once housed a vast library of ancient manuscripts. Its architecture is a marvel, adorned with intricate stone carvings, frescoes, and mosaics that pay homage to Georgia's artistic excellence during its Golden Age.

**Day 17:           Mestia**

Meals: B, L, D

Depart for Mestia 250km away, with a 30-minute stop enroute at the captivating Enguri Dam offering an enchanting view of the Greater Caucasus.



Mestia's landscape, shaped by its enduring isolation, showcases a remarkable blend of mountain vistas and medieval villages adorned with iconic tower houses. These distinctive towers, dating back to the 9th century, stand as a testament to the Svan people's unique language and culture, designed to protect against invading forces. The entire region is now acknowledged as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The road from Enguri to Mestia has lots of twists and turns.

As this is a mountainous region that gets cold in the evenings, please remember to bring warm clothing.

**Destination Information**

**Mestia** - Located in northwest Georgia, this remote town sits at 1,500 metres above sea level, within the Caucasus Mountains. Surrounded by picturesque landscapes and stunning peaks, it offers breathtaking views.

**Day 18: Ushguli**

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast set off to explore Ushguli, a cluster of five villages reached via 4x4 vehicles due to its rugged terrain. It will take 2 hours to reach here.

Your visit includes the Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography, shedding light on the region's rich cultural heritage.

Lunch will be prepared as you participate in a Kubdari masterclass, a traditional Svan dish, at a local family's home. After spending 3 hours here, you will return to Mestia for dinner.

Please remember to take a jacket with you in case it gets cold.

**Destination Information**

**Ushguli** - Perched at an impressive altitude of 2200 meters above sea level, Ushguli stands as one of Europe's two highest continuously inhabited settlements. In contrast to the more developed Mestia, Ushguli's relative isolation has preserved its medieval essence.

**Day 19: Sisa Tura and Zugididi**

Meals: B, L, D

Your journey today takes you 8.5 hours back to Kutaisi, seizing the opportunity to make a few captivating stops along the way.

The first stop is the Sisa Tura Ethno Village, spanning over 3 hectares. Here, you'll encounter authentic Megrelian dwellings and engage in the preparation of local dishes like elarji, gebjalia, and khachapuri.



You'll also witness age-old corn processing techniques passed down through generations.

Your next stop is Zugdidi, where you visit the Dadiani Palace Museum, host to an impressive array of art and historical artifacts, including the renowned death mask of Napoleon Bonaparte. Sightseeing is approx. 2 hours today.

**Destination Information**

**Sisa Tura Ethno Village** – Set amongst 3 hectares of land, it offers 3 different areas: ethnography - featuring authentic Megrelian dwellings, recreational with beautiful lakes and scenery, and lastly agriculture, showcasing domestic animals.

**Day 20: Kutaisi to Gori**

Meals: B, L, D

This morning you depart for Gori, 150km away, visiting the Joseph Stalin Museum, where homage is paid to the former Soviet leader. It hosts a collection of artifacts and exhibits chronicling his life and political journey.

Proceed to Uplistsikhe—an ancient cave city that once served as residences, shops, and temples.



Leaving Uplistsikhe behind, journey 3 hours to Gudauri, stopping enroute for breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Enjoy lunch in Gori.

Uplistsikhe terrain is rocky and slippery when wet. Please ensure you wear sports shoes and if you are not confident in your physical ability, please do not enter the caves, and rather explore them from the outside.

**Destination Information**

**Gori** – Hometown of the notorious dictator Joseph Stalin, its name comes from the Georgian word ‘gora’, meaning “hill” or “mountain”. Beyond its historical ties, Gori offers a blend of architectural charm, including ancient churches, fortresses, and traditional Georgian structures.

**Uplistsikhe** – Offering a glimpse into the region's early history, with its remarkable cave complexes, this remarkable archaeological site is one of the oldest urban settlements in Georgia.

**Day 21: Kazbegi**

Meals: B, L, D

Today journey to Kazbegi where you visit the Gergeti Trinity Church, a magnificent 14th-century Orthodox church situated atop a hill (located at an altitude of 2,170 metres) This church provides awe-inspiring vistas of the encompassing mountains and valleys, making it a sought-after spot for photographers and nature enthusiasts.

Lunch will be enjoyed at a local guesthouse in Kazbegi, where your hosts will treat you to a khinkali master class before you return to Gudauri. Sightseeing is 1 hour today.



Gudauri to Kazbegi is a 1 hour drive on a windy road. You will switch to “delica” (4x4) type vehicles and drive 15 minutes to Gergeti Trinity Church. It is a 500-metre walk from the car park to reach the church.



**Destination Information**

**Kazbegi** – In the midst of the Caucasus mountains, north of Tbilisi, sitting beneath the famous Mount Kazbegi is home to unparalleled views of the third highest peak in Georgia. Kazbegi is also home to the oldest crossroads between Europe and Asia.

**Day 22: Mtskheta and Tbilisi**

Meals: B, L, D

Your day begins with a 140km drive to visit Mtskheta, to explore the renowned Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, Old Town, world-famous Sulfur baths, Georgian-Armenian churches, Shiite Mosque, and Synagogues. This will take approx. 3 hours. A lift takes you to the historic Narikala fortress before lunch.



You then visit Anchiskhati and Sioni churches, along with the bustling Meidan Square, reaching the striking Metekhi cliff before exploring the renowned Shardeni Street, adorned with charming café-bars and art galleries.

Your day concludes with a drive down Rustaveli Avenue, where iconic landmarks like the Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, Parliament, Rustaveli Theatre, and renowned art galleries await, ensuring a day filled with unforgettable experiences showcasing Tbilisi's enchantment. Sightseeing today will last approx. 5 hours.

Dinner at a local restaurant is accompanied by 1 hour captivating folk show, adding an artistic touch to your memorable day.

**Destination Information**

**Meskheta & Svetskhoveli Cathedral** - Mtskheta has been Georgia's spiritual heart since Christianity was established here in about 327 and holds a near-mystical significance in Georgian culture. With an alluring setting where the Mtkvari and Aragvi Rivers meet, the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral is still the setting for important ceremonies of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

**Days 23-24: Depart Tbilisi**

Meals: B

Today your journey comes to an end as you are transferred to the airport for your return overnight flight home via Dubai.

## GEORGIA, ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN TRAVEL INFORMATION

### VISAS:

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Entry visas are required by all visitors to Azerbaijan and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. We will supply you with all paperwork if applicable and submit the visa application on your behalf. Travel to Georgia and Armenia currently are visa free for New Zealand passport holders. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa. Currently a visa is required for New Zealand Passport holders. Your travel consultant will inform you if any changes are applicable prior to your departure.

### GEORGIA, ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN NATIONAL ESCORT:

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As this is a multi-country trip, you will have an Azerbaijan Wendy Wu National Escort meet you at the Baku airport and guide you through Azerbaijan before meeting the Georgian Wendy Wu National Escort at the Georgian border. The Georgian Wendy Wu National Escort will guide you through Georgia before meeting the Armenian Wendy Wu National Escort at the Armenian border. The Armenian Wendy Wu National Escort will check you in at the Yerevan airport, Armenia and bid you farewell.

### INSURANCE:

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We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

### EATING IN GEORGIA, ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN:

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The South Caucasus is a land of breathtaking views, ancient culture, temperamental people and colorful national cuisines. The countries of this region have much in common: their histories and fates intertwined throughout the centuries. Still, each country and cuisine is unique in its own right.

Caucasians are noted for a creative and masterful cuisine that cooks evolved over the years by using fragrant herbs and spices and tart flavors such as lemons and sour plums. With healthful yet delectable ingredients like pomegranates, saffron, rose water, honey, olive oil, yogurt, onions, garlic, fresh and dried fruits, and a variety of nuts.

They love their meats dishes, stews, cheese bread and all that hearty red wine. This 24-day adventure is very much a food and wine experience through some of the most fascinating countries in the region.

### ACCOMMODATION:

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Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs. Please note that double bed requests can be made at time of booking but can't be guaranteed.

### LUGGAGE:

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All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

### GROUP SIZE:

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The group size on our Go Beyond Tours is on average 10-15 passengers, with a maximum group size of 18. You may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling. On our group tours we operate a seat-and-a-half policy, allowing you to travel in greater comfort.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

### TRANSPORT:

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**Coaches:** Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just 1-2 kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only. There may be sections of road where the surface is comparatively bumpy, but our drivers will do their utmost to lessen the impact.

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### **EATING IN GEORGIA, ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN:**

The South Caucasus region sits right in the heart of the emerging Eurasian supercontinent — a massive market that makes up 70% of the population, 80% of energy resources and 45% of the GDP in the world. China is to the east, Turkey and Europe are to the west, Russia is to the north, and Iran, the Middle East, and India are to the south. The new BTK Railway through this region was the missing trade link of the much-heralded middle corridor of the New Silk Road, which is a multimodal trade route that goes from China to Europe via Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

Though parts of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia match the west in modernity and technological advances, it is important to remember that these countries are still a developing and as such, many aspects of tourism in these countries do not have the solid infrastructure and safety standards as seen here in the west.

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### **TIPPING POLICY:**

Local tipping isn't customary in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. However, this can often lead to awkwardness in knowing when it is appropriate to tip and how much, as well as ensuring you have a suitable amount of change available at the time. For your convenience, with years of experiences in providing the best customer service, Wendy Wu Tours operates a kitty system on our Group Tours so your National Escort will look after this aspect of your trip for you. It also ensures that the amounts paid are reasonable for you but still fair for the local people.

The amount stated on each Group Tour page will be advised again on your final documentation. Tipping is approximately 5 USD per person, per day on the tour, and will be collected (in USD\$) by your National Escort in Azerbaijan on the first day and distributed throughout the tour on your behalf. Any additional tipping on any of our tours is welcomed at your discretion. Further guidance for tipping contributions will be outlined in your final documentation.

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### **EXCHANGING CASH:**

It is highly recommended that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money when travelling to cities outside of the main cities in Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan. US Dollars and Euros are easily exchanged throughout Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan but other currencies such as New Zealand Dollars normally cannot be exchanged in hotels, exchange bureaus and airports. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

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### **PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURING:**

Personal Expenses - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost.



These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### **SIGHTSEEING:**

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Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defense against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

### **VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:**

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We recommend that you contact either your Doctor or Health centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safetravel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

### **BEFORE YOU LEAVE:**

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We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz) as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

### **AFTER YOUR BOOKING:**

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Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Last updated: May 2024