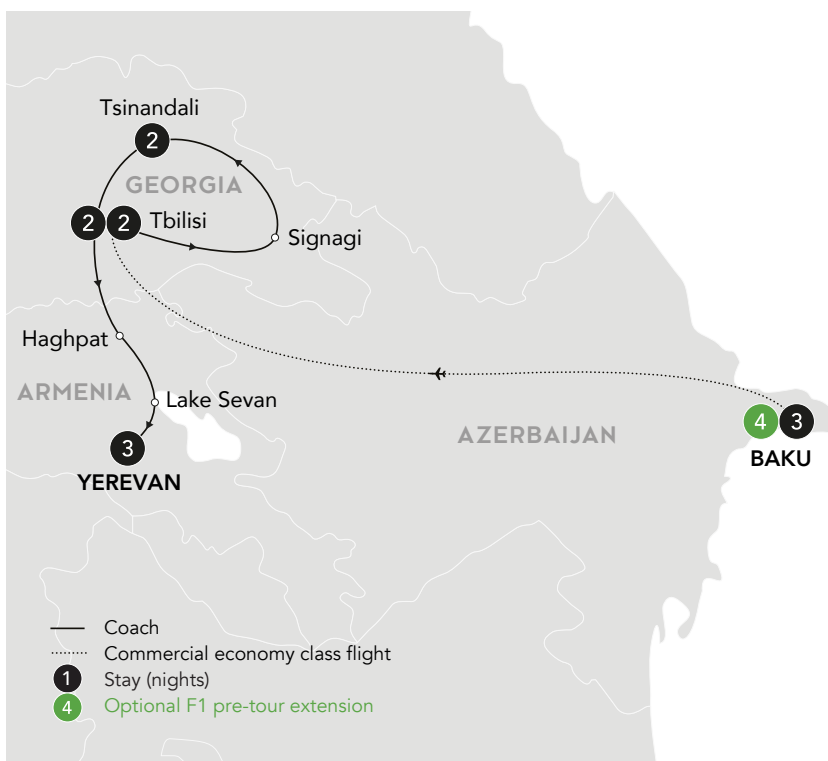


# CROSSROADS OF THE CAUCASUS – AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA & ARMENIA

Embark upon a discovery of the South Caucasus. The seldom-visited triumvirate of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia enchant with their rich histories and vibrant cultures. Escorted by a Tour Manager and Tour Doctor, we travel in a small group of just 24 guests, with expert local guides revealing their regional insights. Choose to begin your journey with an additional four nights in Baku and attend the Azerbaijan Formula 1 Grand Prix.



## A JOURNEY OVERVIEW

Baku - Tbilisi - Tsinandali - Yerevan

13 Days Land Exploration  
 Departing 2 May 2027

### **Day 1 Baku (Azerbaijan)**

We begin our journey in Baku, on the edge of the Caspian Sea. Dine at the Four Seasons Hotel Baku, where we stay for the next three nights.

### **Day 2 Baku**

This morning, explore the city of Baku, whose three distinctive 'Flame Towers' symbolise the fire which has emerged from the region's extensive natural gas vents over many centuries. Along the hillside Martyrs' Alley, we stand before a memorial honouring the civilians fired upon during a Soviet attack, known as Black January, in 1990. In the Old Town, we pass mosques, madrassahs and merchant houses, while in the distance, we spy the soaring 'Flame Towers', which stand in stark contrast to the ancient city walls. The 15th-century Palace of the Shirvanshahs is an architectural highlight and was once the home of the former kingdom's royals. Another striking structure is the Maiden Tower, whose summit provides panoramic views of the city and the Bay of Baku. Our day of discovery then brings us to Ateshgah Fire Temple, once a place of worship for Hindus, Sikhs, and Zoroastrians.

This evening's Welcome Dinner takes place at Villa Petrolea Nobel Brothers Museum. Sample some genuine Caspian Sea caviar while hearing illuminating stories of the industrious siblings.

### **Day 3 Baku**

Along the coast, beyond Baku's outskirts, we arrive in Gobustan, an extraordinary assemblage of open-air rock carvings. Attesting to the daily life of ancient peoples, these petroglyphs depict evidence of hunting, culture and trade. Continue to the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Centre, whose sleek and mesmerising design invites us inside to admire its equally captivating interiors and curated artwork. Afterwards, we are guests during a private performance of Mugham Music and National Folk Dance. This fusion of Persian and Turkic traditions is a largely improvised artform, featuring expressive singing accompanied by stringed and percussive instruments. At the Mugham Club, savour a range of traditional Azeri dishes, served within the setting of an authentic caravanserai.

### **Day 4 Tbilisi (Georgia)**

This morning, an economy class flight takes us across the border into Georgia. Arriving in the capital, Tbilisi, we meet our local guide before checking into the Marriott Tbilisi. A relaxing day culminates with dinner at Keto & Kote, a charming venue specialising in traditional Georgian cuisine.

### **Day 5 Tbilisi**

Our exploration of Tbilisi's Old Town takes us past a succession of red-roofed houses that wind their way along the Mtkvari River. Wander along Rustaveli Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare, populated by museums, as well as Tbilisi's Parliament building. It's here that we also find the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts. One of the oldest universities within the Caucasus region, the academy features a hall of exquisitely designed mirrors crafted by artists of Iran's Qajar dynasty. Nearby, the Georgian National Museum reveals archaeological and artistic treasures, from fifth-century gold jewellery to the skulls of Homo erectus dating back 1.8 million years.

Accompanied by an architect, we then take in the Sololaki district, which encompasses traditional Georgian architecture, as well as Art Nouveau and Neoclassical styles. Proceed to the historic Anchiskhati Basilica, which has stood since the sixth century. A short stroll brings us to the Bridge of Peace, which offers a striking contrast courtesy of its remarkable parametric design. Then an aerial overview of our surrounds is absorbed while ascending to Narikala Fortress by cable car. The heritage of Georgia's people is presented at the National Trust of Georgia during an ethnology lecture, before we conclude our day at our choice of dining venue.

#### **Day 6 Signagi, Qedeli, Tsinandali**

We check out and take a drive through the wine region of Kakheti, stopping in the town of Signagi for a tour of Pheasant's Tears winery. Our exclusive visit includes a meeting with one of the business' co-owners and lunch at the winery's restaurant. Afterwards, take in the exhibits at the Georgian National Museum before heading to the Bodbe Nunnery, whose basilica presents fine frescoes. This evening, sample some Georgian beer in the village of Qedeli before relaxing at the Tsinandali Estate Hotel.

#### **Day 7 Tsinandali**

Our day begins at Nekresi Monastery, nestled along a lush hillside. Close by, Nekresi Estate hosts us for lunch and a wine tasting. Within the village of Vardisubani, we meet an artisan who produces *qvevris*, the large earthenware vessels used for the storing and aging of wine. Further east, the town of Telavi is home to the well-preserved Palace Museum of King Erekle II. Telavi is also the centre of the Kakheti wine region. While here, we also browse the wares available at the local market. Our travels then bring us to the Alexander Chavchavadze Museum, which honours the renowned poet who once lived here. Invited into the home of Chef Sopo Gorgadze, we then sit down to a delightful dinner.

#### **Day 8 Tbilisi**

We make our return to Tbilisi today. At the Dry Bridge Market, stall holders present their exhaustive collections of antiques and vintage goods. From here, we stroll David Agmashenebeli Avenue, named for the former Georgian ruler and architect of the country's 'Golden Age'. The avenue is lined with the facades of rococo, art nouveau and baroque buildings, leading to a succession of cafes and restaurants. Enjoy your choice of dining this evening at one of the city's renowned restaurants.

#### **Day 9 Uplistsikhe, Mtskheta, Tbilisi**

A northerly drive takes us up to Uplistsikhe Cave Town, a fascinating fortress occupying a rocky massif. The boutique winery, Wine Artisans, further acquaints us with the flavours of the region during lunch and a tasting. On our way back to Tbilisi, we look upon the skilfully constructed churches of Mtskheta, some having been built during the period following the country's conversion to Christianity in 337 AD. While here, we visit two of its most striking – the Jvari Monastery of the Holy Cross and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. Following dinner, we enjoy the sounds of Kalakuri, a style of traditional Georgian folk music.

### **Day 10 Haghpat (Armenia), Lake Sevan, Yerevan**

Farewell Georgia this morning, as we begin our drive to Armenia. Shortly after crossing the border, we arrive at Haghpat Monastery. With its construction having begun in the 10th century, the stone compound retains a wealth of historical value. Stone churches, bell towers, and carved stone crosses dot the secluded hillside setting, imbuing it with a sense of mystique. Our southerly drive continues to Lake Sevan. Its shimmering blue-green waters comprise the landlocked country's largest body of water, at around one-sixth of its total territory. Along a peninsula, overlooking the lake, Sevanavank Monastery comprises two adjacent churches, once a pilgrimage destination for Armenian Christians during the Middle Ages. On arrival in the capital, Yerevan, we dine at a local restaurant before retiring to the opulent Alexander Hotel.

### **Day 11 Yerevan**

Our explorations of Yerevan begin in Republic Square, the figurative and literal centre of the city. The buildings lining the square were constructed from volcanic rock, known as tuff, whose pink hue is a common sight throughout Yerevan. Abovyan Street runs between the square and a statue honouring the acclaimed Armenian writer with whom the street shares its name. Also known for being Armenia's first planned street, it is lined with many boutiques, cafes and restaurants. Branching off onto Northern Avenue, we enjoy a stroll along the vibrant pedestrian precinct, past specialty stores, modern apartment buildings, and the occasional busker. In the northern part of the city, we arrive at Cascade Complex, whose travertine terraces look upon a series of sculptures, gardens and fountains below.

This afternoon, we enjoy a private tour of the prestigious Armenian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. Housed within the circular edifice, the two performance halls boast awe-inspiring acoustics and elegant interiors. Our day concludes at the Ararat Brandy Factory. Winston Churchill was said to have been so taken by Armenian brandy, having been introduced to it by Stalin, that he received 400 bottles of it from the Soviet leader every year thereafter. Savour a tasting of premium brandies and browse the exhibits of the onsite museum.

### **Day 12 Yerevan**

Overlooking the Azat River Valley, Garni Temple stands proud. Originally constructed in the first century by King Trdat I, the structure was rebuilt 300 years after its destruction by an earthquake. This breathtaking setting is celebrated during a private a cappella concert. Fashioned directly from the rock that surrounds it, Geghard Monastery is one of the country's most revered monuments. Hewn crosses adorn the stones of its facade, as well as the church's interior. A place of pilgrimage for Christians over many centuries, it still functions as a church for baptisms and other special events.

A hunger is aroused as we watch a local baker prepare and cook lavash, the time-honoured Armenian flatbread. Our day concludes with a visit to the studio of Karen Hakobyan, master craftsman of the duduk, a traditional Armenian reed instrument. Celebrate our rare journey during a Farewell Dinner this evening.

### **Day 13 Yerevan**

Farewell your Tour Host Team and fellow travellers this morning, as we transfer to the airport.