
GEEO ITINERARY

Z- ARMENIA and GEORGIA 6/20/2022- Summer

Day 1: Yerevan Arrive at any time.

Arrive at any time today, but we highly recommend coming in a day early as there is a lot to see in Yerevan. Our program will begin tonight in Yerevan, and we typically have a group meeting at the hotel around 6:00 p.m. Upon arrival at the hotel, please check the notice board for information about the group meeting. During the group meeting, the leader will outline the trip itinerary and answer questions.

Day 2: Yerevan (B) Drive to Echmiadzin and visit the cathedral. Later, enjoy a city tour of Yerevan, followed by a visit to the Genocide Memorial. Take some free time to explore the city of Yerevan.

Today we begin by driving to Echmiadzin, Armenia's ancient capital city. We will stop at its famous cathedral, one of the world's first Christian churches (built in 301 AD). Learn about the cathedral's history and change in architectural style after it was damaged in the late 400's. Afterward, we drive back toward Yerevan. We will visit the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum to better understand and reflect on the first genocide of the 20th century. Commemorating the massacre of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1922, the Museum explains the story of this horrific historical event. Over 1.5 million Armenians were systematically killed by the governing Ottoman Empire and then the Republic of Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Even today, a century later, Armenia has a population of only 3 million people. Then take a guided wander around the lively and colorful city of Yerevan. Visit sites including the City Park, Abovyan Street, and Republic Square. Enjoy a contemporary art-walk through the Cafesjian Center of Art, before taking in ancient Armenian treasures and manuscripts at The Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran). Approximate travel time: 1 hrs by private vehicle

Day 3: Yerevan/Khor Virap/Garni (B, L) Explore the Khor Virap Monastery, then enjoy an excursion to the Roman Temple of Garni. Visit Garni Gorge, enjoy lunch in a local home, and watch how lavash bread is made. Return to Yerevan with time to visit the main market or stroll the cafe-lined streets of the city.

In the morning we get back into our vehicle and pass through villages and vineyards before arriving at Khor Virap. Built in 1662 and once a pilgrimage destination, this monastery is still used for services today. The structure is built around a pit, used to imprison Saint Gregory the Illuminator who was confined for 14 years by his pagan King for preaching Christianity. Explore the grounds and enjoy the fantastic views of Mount Ararat. Next, we have an excursion to the Roman Temple of Garni, dedicated to the God of the sun, Mithra. The temple is one of the last standing pagan structures left in Armenia. The Temple grounds have other standing ruins such as a bathhouse, a church, and a cemetery. An earthquake destroyed the temple in 1679, but, under the guidance of the architectural historian Alexander Sahinian, the temple was rebuilt by 1974. Visit Garni Gorge to admire the formations of basalt columns known as the "Symphony of the Stones." We then sit down to a traditional Armenian lunch with the company of a local family. Watch as your hosts demonstrate "Lavash" bread baking and traditional barbecuing using an underground oven. Get your hands messy during a lesson on how to prepare an Armenian sweet before sitting down to a delicious lunch. End the experience with a sip of local apricot vodka or grappa in the cozy garden of this rural home. We then return to Yerevan and have the rest of the afternoon for free time exploring this amazing city. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 4: Yerevan/Haghpat (B, L) Drive to Lake Sevan and visit charming monasteries along the way. Continue to Haghpat via Molokan-minority villages stopping to enjoy a local lunch. Overnight in Haghpat surrounded by breathtaking views of the Debet canyon.

We leave Yerevan and drive to the largest lake in the Caucasus region, Lake Sevan, and visit charming monasteries along the way. The first is Sevanavank Monastery founded in 874 by King Ashot I, picturesquely standing on a peninsula, this site was used both for the purposes of pilgrimage and as a place of exile for disgraced Armenian noblemen. Continue your drive and stop in the forested town of Dilijan where you can take in the fresh air on a short walk around this quaint town. Then travel to the heart of the forest to discover the impressive, fairytale-like Haghartsin Monastery, or "Monastery of the Playing Eagle". The Molokan is a minority population in Armenia derived from settlers exiled from Russia for not obeying the rules of the Church. Their name derives from "Milk" due to the great amount of milk they would consume, especially during the fasting period determined by the Orthodox Clergy. Stop in a Molokan village en route to Haghpat to get a glimpse into daily life, and enjoy a traditional meal. We will overnight in Haghpat surrounded by breathtaking views of the Debet canyon. Approximate travel time: 4.5 hrs by private vehicle

Day 5: Haghpat/Telavi (B) Visit Haghpat Monastery and UNESCO-listed monastic complex of Sanahin. Cross into Georgia to be welcomed and greeted by your Georgian tour leader before transferring to Telavi.

We start the day with a visit to the Haghpat Monastery. Built in the 10th through 13th centuries the Haghpat Monastery was once one of the largest centers of science in the region with a rich collection of manuscripts. Next, we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Sanahin Monastery that dates back to the Byzantine era. The monastery is made up of several buildings including the main church the Cathedral of the Redeemer. Admire this beautiful example of medieval Armenian architecture and the view of the surrounding hills. We then cross into Georgia (This takes 1-2 hours) to be welcomed and greeted by your Georgian tour leader before transferring to Telavi, located on the foothills of the Tsiv-Gombori Range. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 6: Telavi/Kakheti Province/Tbilisi (B, L) Experience a full day in the Kakheti Province, dotted with churches and vineyards. Stop for lunch at a local village house to for lunch and local wine. Head to Tbilisi and enjoy a guided tour of the city.

Today, we experience a full day in the Kakheti Province, which is dotted with churches and vineyards. Enjoy breathtaking views of the Kizikhi area and Signaghi. A trip to the wine region of Georgia wouldn't be complete without a taste of the local vine. Join a local family for a cooking demonstration and a local wine tasting. Look on as your hosts demonstrate how to prepare famous dishes from the area including Georgian bread, "mtsvadi" or pork barbecue and "churchkhela", a traditional Georgian sweet. We then drive to Tbilisi, Georgia's capital. Its mazelike, cobblestoned old town reflects a long, complicated history, with periods under Persian and Russian rule. Its diverse architecture encompasses Eastern Orthodox churches, art nouveau buildings with ornate balconies, and Soviet Modernist structures. Looming over it all are Narikala Fortress, a reconstructed 4th-century citadel, and Kartlis Deda, an iconic statue of Mother Georgia. Enjoy a city tour with included visits to the Old Town, Metekhi Temple, the Abanotubani 'bath district' and the Narikala, the main fortress in Tbilisi. Approximate travel time: 2 hrs by private vehicle

Day 7: Tbilisi/Gudauri (B) Drive the famous Georgian Military Road to Mtskheta. Visit the Jvari Monastery and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. Continue to Uplistsikhe cave town and through the dramatic Aragvi River Valley. Return to Tbilisi for the evening.

Today, we drive the famous Georgian Military Road to Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here we will visit the Jvari Monastery and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, both of which showcase examples of medieval architecture on ancient trade routes. Then we drive to Uplistsikhe, an ancient cave town dating back to the 7th century BC. The name translates into 'the lord's fortress' and the town continued to be a religious and political stronghold until the 14th century before being attacked by the Mongols. While many travelers have never heard of this ancient city before visiting, after a few hours of climbing around the rocks and caves Uplistsikhe quickly becomes a highlight of any trip to

Georgia. Afterward, we drive back to Tbilisi for another evening in this amazing city. Approximate travel time: 2 hrs by private vehicle

Day 8: Tbilisi (B) Depart Tbilisi at any time.

Depart Tbilisi at any time. We highly recommend staying at least one extra day and we would be happy to book you an extra night at the hotel we use for this trip. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip, but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator, we can offer still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!