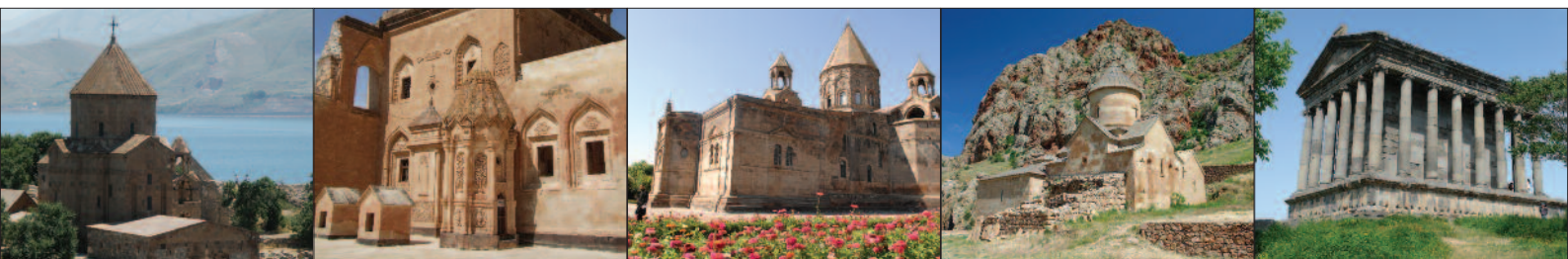




EasternTurkeyTours

## Between Ararat & The Caucasus



Exceed your expectations Email: [info@easternturkeytour.org](mailto:info@easternturkeytour.org)





Van castle

## Day 1 VAN

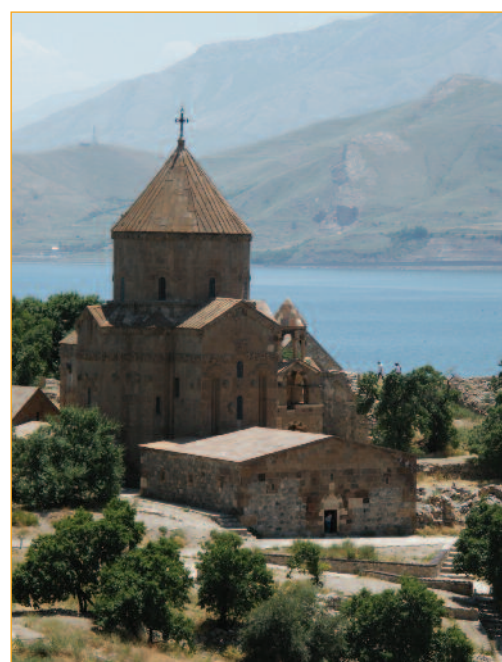
Arrive in Van and after checking into your hotel we will proceed to Akdamar Island where we visit the beautifully restored 10th C Armenian Church of the Holy Cross, or Sourp Khach, built as a part of a palace and religious complex between 915 and 921 by the Armenian King Gagik Ardzruni. The Church of the Holy Cross was a Catholicosate until 1916 and in this role embodies a central place in Armenian religious history. One of only a few Catholicosates, the Community at Akdamar and Sourp Khach had the authority to create new bishops, elect church leaders and bless the holy oil essential to important rites and sacraments such as marriage, baptism, funerals and the consecration of bishops. The reliefs on the exterior of the church are of particular note and are unique in Armenian Church architecture and while naive in style, demonstrate great artistry and skill in both their conception and execution. From Akdamar we return to the city of Van, where we will spend the night.



Hosap castle

## Day 2 VAN

From Van we travel south along one of the legs of the Silk Road (Ipek Yol) in Turkey. We visit Hosap Castle. The main castle structure of Hosap was built straddling the Silk Road and served as both a means of protecting the road and as a point for charging tolls on travellers. From Hosap we return to Van for lunch, before ending the day with a visit to the Citadel of Van at sunset. On a large rock outcrop the 3000 year old Urartian castle, once the centre of Tushpa, the Urartian capital, commands wonderful panoramic views of the city of Van, Lake Van and Mt Suphan to the north- west and Mt Nemrut Crater to the west. Overnight Van



10th century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross (Sourp Khach).





Mount Ararat "The mountain of pain"

### Day 3 VAN – DOGUBEYAZIT – ISHAK PASHA PALACE - KARS

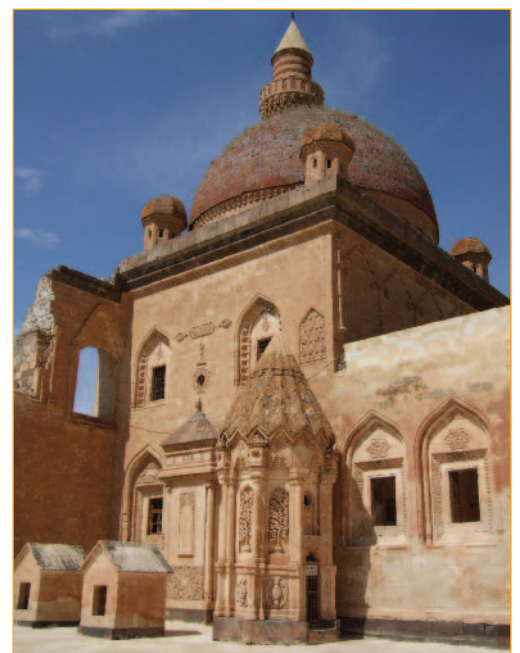
After breakfast, we leave for Dogubeyazit via Muradiye and the pretty Bendimaahi Falls. On our approach to Dogubeyazit we will get our first view of Ararat, a mountain which dominates this entire region not just physically but also historically and culturally. In Dogubeyazit we visit the spectacular Ishak Pasha Palace 1685 – 1784 with unique fusion of architecture from Seljuk, Ottoman, Georgian, and Armenian – Persian styles. We continue our journey south skirting around the western edge of Mt Ararat

Mt. Ararat is known in Turkish as "the Mountain of Pain" and in Kurdish as the "Mountain of Fire". Armenians know it as Masis. Armenian mythology says that the mountain was named for the Armenian King Amasya, the great-grandson of the Armenian patriarch Hayk. The name Ararat derives from the Bible (Jeremiah 51:27) and is a transliteration of "Urartu" the name foreigners gave to the inhabitants of this region in Biblical times, although they called themselves Biainili. In Biblical and Koranic tradition Ararat is the resting place of Noah's Ark and it was from here the world was repopulated after the flood (Sura 11 & 21 and Genesis Chapters 6-9), Ararat is also featured in the pre-biblical Sumerian flood story the "Epic of Gilgamesh" as Mt. Nisir. From Ararat we proceed north past Igdir and on to the city of Kars.

Overnight Kars.



The Muradiye Falls



Ishak Pasha Saray





Mount Aragats through the walls of Ani

## Day 4 KARS – ANI

After breakfast we will drive from Kars to Ani to spend the morning at the former capital of the great medieval Bagratid Armenian kingdom. The remains of the ruined city include numerous churches, shops, streets as well as the shell of the Cathedral of Ani (also known as Surp Asdvadzadzin or the church of the Holy Mother of God), the citadel and a mosque along with an extensive and well preserved defensive wall. There are also some exciting remains of frescoes in the Church of St Gregory (Tigran Honentz) despite exposure to the elements for many centuries.

Overnight Kars

## Day 5 KARS (via Georgia) TO GYUMRI

Today we cross over into Georgia and on into Armenia to the city of Gyumri. Gyumri is located in the north-western part of Armenia, in the middle of the Shirak valley, 126 km far from Yerevan. The city has an ancient pedigree stretching back to Urartian times although there is one theory that it was founded by Cimmerian invaders in the 8th century BC. Once part of the Persian Empire's Khanate of Erevan Gyumri became a part of the Russian Empire after the war of 1804-13 between Russia and Persia. Under the provisions of the Treaty of Torkmenchai in 1829 the rest of the Khanate became part of Russia and the region now known as Armenia was renamed the Armenskaya Oblast. After a visit from the Tsar in 1837 the city was renamed Alexandropol after the Tsarina. In Soviet times the city was, once again, renamed as Leninakan. Overnight in Gyumri



The Church of the Redeemer (Surb Prkich).



The fortress at Kars





Echmiadzin

## Day 6 GYUMRI - ECHMIADZIN - ZVARTNOTS TEMPLE to YEREVAN CITY

From Gyumri we drive to Echmiadzin. Located 30 minutes outside of the city of Yerevan and considered one of the holiest cities in Armenia. This former capital is now home to the Supreme Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church. On the way back to Yerevan we will visit ruins of Zvartnots Temple which is included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. Yerevan has been capital of Armenia since 1918 and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world with a history going back 8000 years. It derives its name from the city's Urartian name Erebuni when the city was an Urartian military outpost; the Urartian fortress of Erebuni was built in 782 BC by the Urartian King Argishti I and is contemporary with the fortress in Van. Yerevan commands spectacular views of Ararat to the south.

Overnight in Yerevan.



Yerevan



Khor Virap

## Day 7 Yerevan – Khor Virap – Noravank – Brandy Distillery – Yerevan

From Yerevan we will drive to Khor Virap Monastery a place of pilgrimage for Armenians all over the world. Khor Virap lies in the shadow of Mount Ararat on the opposite side of the mountain from Dogubeyazit; at this point you will have virtually circumnavigated the mountain of Noah. From Khor Virap the view of Mt Ararat is one of the iconic images of Armenia. After Khor Virap we will proceed to the Vayots Dzor region and visit the Monastery of Noravank; a superb example of medieval Armenian ecclesiastical architecture,



Zvartnots





Noravank

Noravank is situated in a location of outstanding natural beauty. On the way back to Yerevan we will stop off at a Brandy distillery; Armenia is a renowned producer of quality brandy; this is our chance to see, and taste, why.

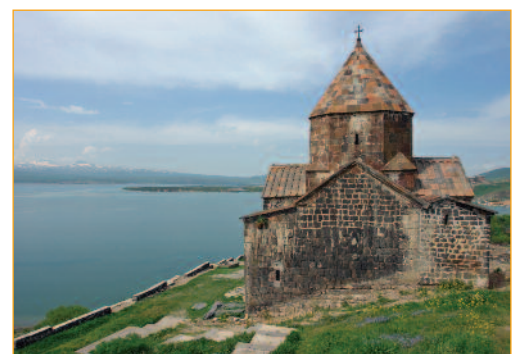
Overnight Yerevan.

## **Day 8 GARNI– GEGHARD –SEVAN –BAGRATASHEN BORDER (GEORGIA)**

Today, we visit Garni Temple, a 1st century building from the Roman period and in the Roman style, probably built to honour the Emperor Nero. Soon after Armenia adopted Christianity, the temple became the summer residence of Armenian royalty. Next stop is Geghard cave Monastery; tradition tells us that the lance used by a Roman soldier to pierce the side of Christ on the cross was preserved here making the site a place of huge importance in the early to medieval Christian world. From Geghard we continue to Lake Sevan. This part of the tour connects two of the Eurasian region's highest lakes; Lake Van in Eastern Turkey (1550m) and Lake Sevan in Eastern Armenia (1900m). Not only is there a geographical connection but there is also a cultural connection as well. The name Sevan literally means "Black Van", referring to a kinship with Lake Van in Turkey. It is said that many years ago Armenians came from the region of Van to Lake Sevan and found that the lake was such a dark a blue that it was almost black and yet it reminded them of Van....So they called it Sevan. Along Lake Sevan we will visit the churches of the peninsula (St. Astvatsatsin and St. Arakelots). Proceed to Bagratashen border point and we cross over to the Sadakho check point on the Georgian side. Transfer to Tbilisi.



Brandy distillery, Armenia



Sevan





Garni

## Day 9 MTSKHETA

We start our Georgian tour with a visit to Mtskheta. Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia is situated 20km from Tbilisi. The town has a history that goes back to the 2nd millennium B.C. Mtskheta was the capital of the Georgian Kingdom of Iberia during the period between 500BC - 500AD and it was here that, in the year 330, Georgians accepted the Christian faith after the mission of St. Nino of Cappadocia. The town and its architectural monuments are included in UNESCO's World's Cultural Heritage List. We will visit Jvari Monastery (6th c.), Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th c.) and Samtavro Monastery. Drive to Tbilisi.

Overnight in Tbilisi.

## Day 10 TBILISI CITY TOUR

We start the city tour of Tbilisi with visits to the Old Town: Metekhi Temple (12th c.), the Abanotubani bath houses whose thermal healing sulphur baths have attracted poets, writers, musicians, kings down through the centuries; from Narikala - the main fortress of Tbilisi (4th c.), there are excellent views over the city and the river Mtkvari (Kura). Tbilisi is the modern capital of an ancient culture with an ancient tradition that goes back into unrecorded history; the tradition of wine. Walking through some narrow streets, amongst carpet and souvenir shops, you will have the opportunity to sample this great tradition.

Georgian wine is unique in that unlike wine produced in the rest of the world using wooden barrels, Georgian wine is fermented in huge clay vats called "kvevris" which are stored in the earth. Coupled



Tbilisi



Metekhi temple (12th Century)





Narikala - the main fortress of Tbilisi (4th c.)

with the fact that Georgia can boast more than 500 varieties of grape, Georgia is able to produce numerous different wines with many flavours, textures and colours. The clay vats were once found in other parts of this region, including Cappadocia, but now they are only found in Georgia. Wine has always been a vital part of Georgian culture but took on a special significance with the advent of Christianity; it was said that St Nino carried with him on his mission of conversion a cross made of Vinewood. We will close out the day with a visit Sioni Cathedral (11th c.) and Anchiskhati church (6th c.).

## Day 11 TBILISI – RETURN Flight to ISTANBUL



"kvevris" clay vats fermenting Georgian wine



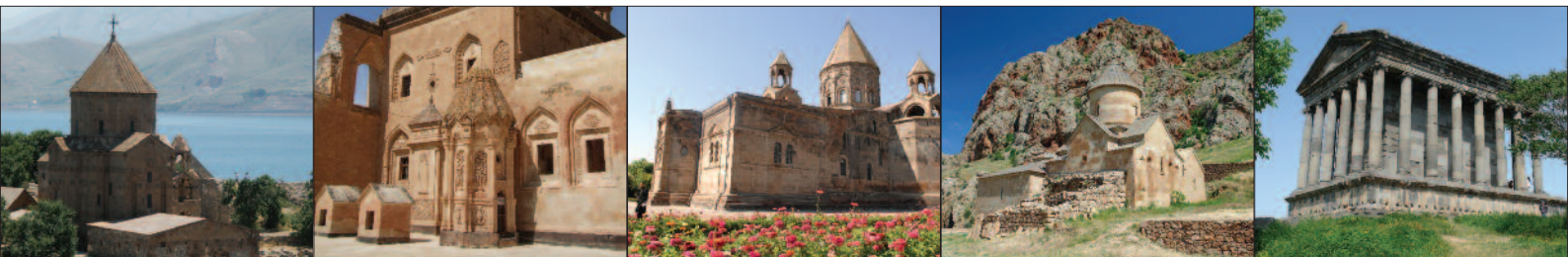
"kvevris" clay vats





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