



EasternTurkeyTours

The Lands of Ararat and the Golden Fleece

Turkey, Georgia & Armenia



Exceed your expectations Email: info@easternturkeytour.org



Van Castle

Day 1

Arrive in Van. Orientation in the hotel with your Turkish team and an opportunity to get to know your fellow travellers. Lunch in hotel. After lunch we will travel by coach the short distance to Van Castle with its 3,000 year old Urartian citadel, graced by a massive inscription placed there by the Persian King Xerxes, Van Castle is a place of history, atmosphere and beauty. Sunset over Lake Van viewed from the citadel is a stunning way to close the first day of your exciting tour of Eastern Turkey, Georgia and Armenia. (L,D)



Akdamar Island on Lake Van

Day 2

After breakfast we will go to Akdamar Island to visit the 10th century Armenian Church of the Holy Cross, built during the reign of the Armenian King Gagik I.

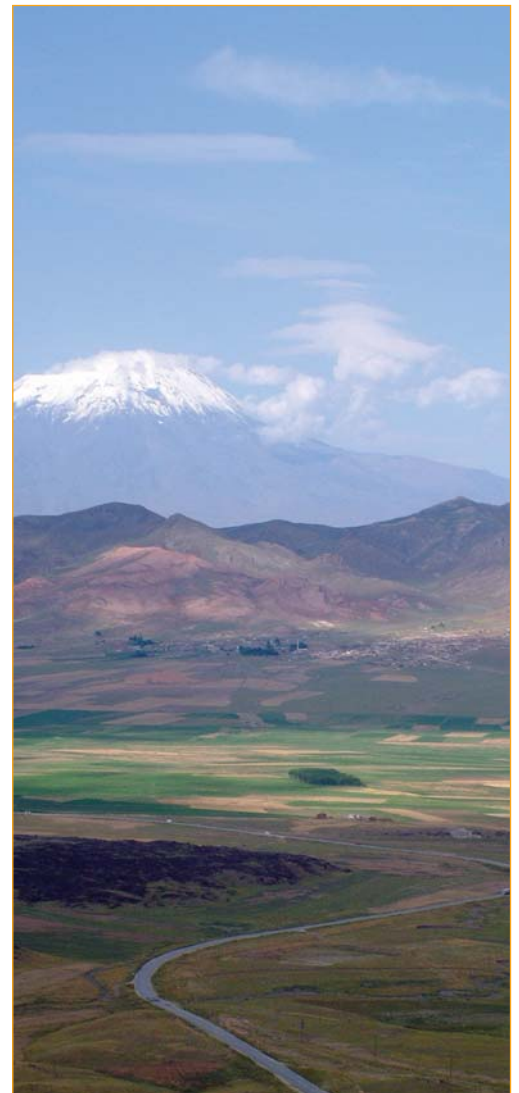
After lunch we will visit the Urartian ruins at Cavustepe and the dramatic Kurdish fortress at Hosap. (B,L,D)



Muradiye Falls

Day 3

Today we will visit Dogubeyazit via the falls at Muradiye. Dogubeyazit is a dusty frontier town with a thriving market and is the base for expeditions to Mt Ararat, which dominates the skyline. We will also visit Ishak Pasha's Palace overlooking the town. Ishak Pasha's Palace is one of the iconic sites of Eastern Turkey, built in an amalgamation of Seljuk, Georgian, Armenian and Ottoman styles which combine to produce a building of true delight. Overlooking the palace is the remains of an Urartian fortress. Overnight in Dogubeyazit. (B,L,D)



The road to Ararat



Church of the Redeemer with the city walls in the distance

Day 4

After breakfast depart for Kars and Ani. Skirting Mt Ararat and traversing the Igdir plain we will arrive in Ani in time for a picnic lunch and in the afternoon we will explore the extensive remains of this great Armenian medieval city. Surrounded by, on one side, a mighty row of double walls and on the other side by the gorge of the River Arpacay (Ahuryan), the city at its height was home to 100,000 people. There will be ample time to explore and take in the atmosphere of this evocative and magical place. Overnight in Kars. (B,L,D)

Day 5

After breakfast, depart for Erzurum. Our journey will take us via the World War I battlefield of Sarakimis, down the Arras Gorge and into the Arras River Valley, then onto Erzurum. In the afternoon we will see the sights of Erzurum including the Great Mosque, the Medrese and the silver bazaar. Overnight in Erzurum. (B,L,D)



Ani



The Monastery of the Virgin Mary at Sumela

Day 6

Depart Erzurum across a fertile agricultural plain up into the Black Sea Mountains, through the Zigana Pass and descend through the alpine valleys and gorges to Maçka and the Sumela Monastery. The Monastery of The Virgin Mary at Sumela is a breathtaking creation clinging to the edge of a cliff, surrounded by pine trees and mountains of the Altindere National Park. Overnight in Trabzon. (B,L,D)

Day 7

Depart Trabzon for Hopa, the border of Georgia and Batumi along the shores of the Black Sea.

Transfer at border to our Georgian team at Sarpi. Transfer to Batumi for sightseeing of the city. Overnight in Batumi (BLD)

The Black sea coast of Georgia is the legendary land of Colchis where the Golden Fleece was kept. The Golden Fleece, stolen by Jason and his Argonauts with the help of Media, is celebrated in this statue in Batumi.



Batumi: Media holding the Golden Fleece aloft.



The Legendary Towers of Svaneti

Day 8

Visit to Svaneti Province, which covers the territory of ancient Colchis, with stops to enjoy the stunning mountain scenery en route. Overnight in Mestia the provincial capital.

Day 9

In the morning we will visit the village of Ushguli, located at the foot of the spectacular Mt. Shkhara which, at 5200m, is the highest peak in Georgia. This village is a UNESCO world heritage site and is famous for its mediaeval watch towers and spectacular scenery. We will have ample time to explore the village before returning to Mestia where we will visit the Mestia museum and a typical Svanetian house. Overnight in Mestia. (BLD)



Day 10

Trip to Bakuriani resort which is located in the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. En route we will visit the Gelati Monastery near Kutaisi (UNESCO World Heritage Site). Overnight in Bakuriani. (BLD)



Uplistsikhe Cave City

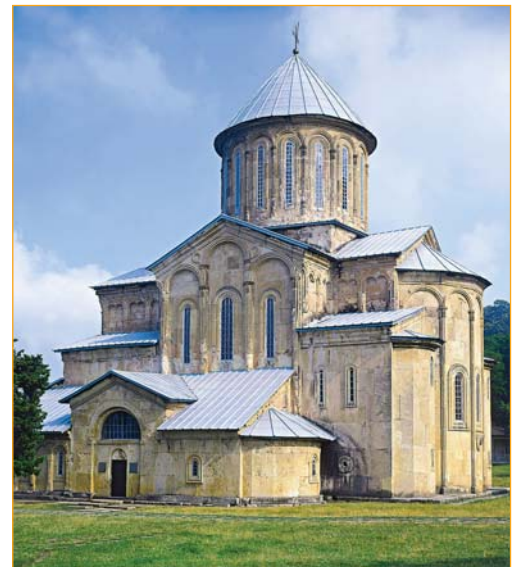
Day 11

Trip from Bakuriani to Tbilisi with an optional visit to Gori, the birthplace of Stalin (optional), or to the Cave City of Uplistsikhe which dates back to the 7th century BC.

Before arriving at Tbilisi, Georgia's modern capital, we will visit Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia. Overnight in Tbilisi (BLD)

Day 12

Full day tour experiencing the sights, sounds and tastes of Tbilisi. We will visit the Metekhi Temple, the Narikarla fortress and explore the streets and squares of the old town. In the afternoon we will visit the Sioni Cathedral and the Anchiskhati museum. And if time permits a trip on the funicular railway for panoramic views of the city.



Gelati Monastery



Tbilisi



Sanahin Monastery

Day 13

Drive to the Armenian border at Sadakhlo. After joining our Armenian team we make the short drive to Alaverdy. Visit the beautiful monastic communities at Haghpat and Sanahin.

We will visit a private restaurant in Alaverdy for lunch. After lunch we depart for Lake Sevan with a scenic drive through the beautiful countryside and extensive pine forests of Dilijan. We will break our journey for coffee and refreshments in the Old Town in Dilijan before continuing to Lake Sevan which is one of the highest lakes in the Eurasian region and one of Armenia's National Parks. Overnight at Lake Sevan and a fabulous meal of locally caught trout. (BLD)



Khor Virap monastery and Mt. Ararat

Day 14

After breakfast we depart for Martuni and on to the Selim Pass, on the Silk Road where we will, like countless travellers from the past, stop to visit an ancient Caravanserai. Lunch at the Selim Pass and then a visit to the church of St. Astvatsatsin and then on to Noravank and Yerevan via one of Armenia's wine producing regions with the opportunity to visit a winery and taste some of the local wines. Just before we reach Yerevan we will stop to visit the spectacular monastery complex of Khor Virap. From this point you will now have seen the awesome and fabulous mountain of Ararat from both the south and now the north; these are the lands of the legendary Mt. Ararat:

Overnight in Yerevan. (BLD)



The Matenadaran Documents

Day 15

Yerevan city tour. We will spend the day exploring Yerevan starting with the fortress of Erebuni Khalda and the palace complex of King Argishti. Continue to the Armenia History museum which houses some pieces from the Erebuni.

After lunch we will visit the Matenadaran which houses over 10,000 manuscripts and records dating back to the 5th century BC. Continue to the Parajanov museum and then dinner. Overnight in Yerevan. (BLD).



Pagan Temple at Garni: 1st century AD

Day 16

After breakfast at the hotel we will proceed to Garni to visit the 1st century Pagan Temple with an associated bath complex and mosaics from the Roman period. The Temple was built by the Armenian King Tiridates with money he received after visiting the Emperor Nero in Rome.

From the temple we will have time for a walk to enjoy the countryside and views and to visit a private house in Garni to see the making of Lavash, traditional Armenian bread. Lunch will be in an outdoor restaurant. We will then visit the UNESCO site of Geghard- the "monastery of the spear and lance". Return to Yerevan for leisure time. Overnight Yerevan. (BL)





Day 17

Breakfast in the hotel and depart for Echmiadzin to visit what is, in religious terms, one of the highlights of the tour, the Holy See. We will also visit the 7th century BC Zvartnots Temple. The afternoon you will be free to roam the historic Abovian district and enjoy the tree lined streets, pavement cafes, Art Nouveau buildings and the 12th century Mariam Astvatsatsin. We will all enjoy a farewell dinner this evening. Overnight Yerevan. (BD)

Day 18

Breakfast and depart to Yerevan airport for your memory filled journey home.

Farewell from the Lands of Ararat and the Golden Fleece!



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