

Best of Georgia and Azerbaijan - 12 days

CT-03

Neighbours Georgia and Azerbaijan are very different but each is compelling in its own right. This 12 day tour begins in Georgia, where you'll be blown away by the wonderful hospitality of the Caucasus. You'll tour hilltop monasteries, imposing fortresses, fascinating museums and ancient cave cities, as well as learn how an 8000 year tradition of viticulture produces some very fine wine. Crossing the border, you'll discover the sights of the "fire country" Azerbaijan. From Baku's Flame Towers to the burning hillside of Yanar Dag, Azerbaijan wows visitors. But the secrets of an ancient nation are waiting to be uncovered, as you'll see in Sheki, Shamakhi and Gobustan.

DEPARTURE DATES: 04.07.2022; 11.07.2022; 18.07.2022; 25.07.2022; 01.08.2022; 08.08.2022; 15.08.2022; 22.08.2022; 29.08.2022; 05.09.2022; 12.09.2022; 19.09.2022; 26.09.2022; 03.10.2022; 10.10.2022; 17.10.2022; 24.10.2022; 31.10.2022; 07.11.2022; 14.11.2022.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Tbilisi

Welcome to Georgia! Our representative will be waiting for you at the airport for your transfer to your city centre hotel in the capital Tbilisi. Overnight in Tbilisi. (D)

Day 2 - Tbilisi

With its compact old town and friendly residents, getting to know Tbilisi is a cinch. Our guide will show you some of the historic highlights of the capital, beginning with the 13th century Methekhi church. Tbilisi has long been fortified and we shall ascend by cable car to the hilltop fortress of Narikala, from where it is a short stroll to the imposing Mother Georgia statue. Next up, we'll visit Antchiskhati Church (6th century), Sioni Cathedral (12th century) and an ancient synagogue. We'll round off your introduction to this fascinating city with a look around the Georgian National Museum and a stroll along Tbilisi's main thoroughfare, Rustaveli Avenue. Overnight in Tbilisi. (B, D).

Day 3 - Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Kutaisi

You'll depart Tbilisi this morning, but we won't travel far before our first stop of the day. Mtskheta was the capital city long before Tbilisi and it remains one of Georgia's most important religious centres to this day. You'll enjoy a guided tour of Djvari Church (6th century) and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th century), both of which feature on UNESCO's World Heritage list. Moving on, we'll head in the direction of the second largest city in the country, Kutaisi, making a slight detour to admire the stalactites and stalagmites of Prometheus Cave. Overnight near Kutaisi. (B,D).

Day 4 - Kutaisi - Gelati - Bagrati - Akhaltsikhe

The energy and passion invested in the sale of livestock throughout the Caucasus makes a trip to an animal bazaar a highlight of any trip. We'll look on as the farmers haggle to get the best price for what they've reared. Then it's time to move on, and we have another pair of UNESCO sites lined up. The Gelati Monastery and Academy Complex dates from the 12th century and was constructed on the edge of a steep gorge overlooking the Tskaltsitela River. Its many murals, mosaics and mediaeval works of art make this an extraordinary destination for anyone with an interest in Georgia's rich heritage. After a visit to Bagrati Cathedral we'll make our way to Akhaltsikhe where we will spend the next two nights. Overnight in Akhaltsikhe. (B,D).

Day 5 - Akhaltsikhe - Vardzia - Akhaltsikhe

One of the many delights of a visit to Georgia is to explore its vast subterranean cities. This underground world is best represented by the cave city of Vardzia, which was excavated from the slopes of Mount Erusheti on the bank of the River Kura. There, around 300 caves were once purposed for churches, refectories, wine cellars and private dwellings. After we've explored, we'll drive to Rabati Fortress. Inside we'll look around its fascinating Ethnographic Museum before returning to Akhaltsikhe. Overnight in Akhaltsikhe. (B,D).

Day 6 - Akhaltsikhe - Borjomi - Gori - Uplistikhe - Tbilisi

Some of Georgia's most interesting historical events took place in the last two hundred years. Driving via Borjomi

and its pretty park, the city of Gori is the star of today's itinerary. It's claim to fame is that it was the birthplace of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader known for taking a hard line on political matters. The museum devoted to his life offers an insight not only into key events but also into how the Georgians view their infamous compatriot. Near Gori lies one of the most interesting places on the ancient Silk Road - Uplistikhe. A guided tour has been arranged of this cave city, after which we'll drive back to Tbilisi. Tonight, a special performance of folk dancing and a traditional meal awaits. Overnight in Tbilisi. (B,D).

Day 7 - Tbilisi - Alaverdi - Napareuli - Gremi - Signagi

Georgia boasts an 8000 year tradition of viticulture and the techniques used are quite different to those favoured in France, Germany or Italy. Today you'll explore the region of the country most associated with wine growing, Kakheti. There are visits to Alaverdi Monastery and the royal citadel and the Church of the Archangels which form the Gremi complex. A wine tasting has been arranged at the Twins Wine Cellar in Napareuli. This afternoon, we'll continue on to the picturesque town of Signaghi. Its cobbled streets, fortified walls and views across lush valleys make it one of the prettiest towns in the country. Overnight in Signaghi. (B,D).

Day 8 - Signagi - Bodbe - Azerbaijan border - Sheki

Today's the day we cross the border into Azerbaijan. But we can't leave without seeing Bodbe Monastery, just a couple of kilometres down the road from Signaghi. It's dedicated to St Nino, who preached Christianity here in the 4th century. At Lagodekhi you'll cross the border and meet your Azeri guide. Taking the road to Sheki, you'll stop at the village of Kish. The main monument is an Albanian church whose history can be traced back to at least the 6th century, perhaps even as early as the 1st century. Under glass, you can see the bones of people buried here many centuries ago. These people would have looked very different to those who live in the Caucasus today, with blonde hair and a tall physique, giving rise to the village's nickname "land of Atlantis". Overnight in Sheki. (B,D).

Day 9 - Sheki - Shamakhi - Baku

Sheki is the oldest city in Azerbaijan and was founded as a Silk Road city. It's worth looking around the history museum to learn a little about how the place has developed and altered over the years. You'll also pay a visit to the Khan's summer palace. With floral motifs on its elaborate façade and beautiful frescoes adorning the interiors, this is an insight into the lavish world of the rich and powerful. No expense was spared to create mirrored balconies, decorations of Venetian glass and paintings of hunting scenes. A casualty of time is the garden, however, as only two trees remain. Our second stop is at Shamakhi. Once the capital of the Shirvan Empire, it's now more famous as a centre for wine-making. You'll visit the Yeddi Gumbaz mausoleum and also the Diri Baba tomb. From there we'll drive to Baku. Overnight in Baku. (B,D).

Day 10 - Baku

The capital of Azerbaijan has changed dramatically in recent years, its booming economy and 21st century architecture built on the profits from oil. From a lofty vantage point, you'll take in the views over the city and Baku Bay. You'll easily spot the capital's best known trio: the recognisable shapes of the Flame Towers. We've arranged a guided tour of Baku's old town, the Icheri sheher, bounded on three sides by thick walls and on the fourth by the Caspian Sea. This city within a city is crammed full of historic monuments and noteworthy buildings, including the Shirvanshah Palace, home of the Shahs and the Maiden Tower, which predates the palace. Silk route trade from Russia to Iran brought great wealth and with it the construction of mosques, caravanserais and bathhouses, many of which remain to this day. Overnight in Baku. (B,D).

Day 11 - Baku - Gobustan - Yanar Dag - Baku

Today's sightseeing takes us to Gobustan where you'll see petroglyphs and other ancient sites. Over 6000 rock carvings depict primitive people, animals, battles, ritual dances, camel caravans and even bullfights, dating back 5,000 to 20,000 years. The area is also home to many mud volcanoes. You'll also visit Yanar Dag, continuously burning thanks to the gases which escape from the rocks. No wonder Azerbaijan is often called "the fire country". Overnight in Baku. (B, D).

Day 12 - Baku

Sadly, your Caucasus adventure draws to a close today. A driver will have you at the airport in good time for your flight home. (B)

TOUR INCLUSIONS AND OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Included

International flights

[Accommodation](#)

[Guided tours & cultural programme](#)

[English - speaking guides](#)

[Half board meals](#)

[Evening entertainment](#)

[Ground transportation](#)

[Airport transfers](#)

[Azerbaijan e-visa](#)

Not included

[Personal travel insurance](#)

[Optional excursions](#)

Practical information

[About Best of Caucasus company](#)

[Book with confidence - covid FAQs](#)

[Contact our travel consultants](#)

COMFORT - 3* PACKAGE

Dates	Excl. flights	Incl. flights*	Single suppl.
04/07/2022 - 15/07/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
11/07/2022 - 22/07/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
18/07/2022 - 29/07/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
25/07/2022 - 05/08/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
01/08/2022 - 12/08/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
08/08/2022 - 19/08/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
15/08/2022 - 26/08/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
22/08/2022 - 02/09/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
29/08/2022 - 09/09/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
05/09/2022 - 16/09/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
12/09/2022 - 23/09/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
19/09/2022 - 30/09/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
26/09/2022 - 07/10/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
03/10/2022 - 14/10/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
10/10/2022 - 21/10/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
17/10/2022 - 28/10/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
24/10/2022 - 04/11/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
31/10/2022 - 11/11/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
07/11/2022 - 18/11/2022	£2045	£2445	£275
14/11/2022 - 25/11/2022	£2045	£2445	£275

PREMIUM - 4* PACKAGE

Dates	Excl. flights	Incl. flights*	Single suppl.
04/07/2022 - 15/07/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
11/07/2022 - 22/07/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
18/07/2022 - 29/07/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
25/07/2022 - 05/08/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
01/08/2022 - 12/08/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
08/08/2022 - 19/08/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
15/08/2022 - 26/08/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
22/08/2022 - 02/09/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
29/08/2022 - 09/09/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
05/09/2022 - 16/09/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
12/09/2022 - 23/09/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
19/09/2022 - 30/09/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
26/09/2022 - 07/10/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
03/10/2022 - 14/10/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
10/10/2022 - 21/10/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
17/10/2022 - 28/10/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
24/10/2022 - 04/11/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
31/10/2022 - 11/11/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
07/11/2022 - 18/11/2022	£2145	£2545	£395
14/11/2022 - 25/11/2022	£2145	£2545	£395

ALTERNATIVE TOURS AND TAILOR-MADE ARRANGEMENTS

In addition to organized group tours, we also offer individual trips. This could be an entirely separate holiday arrangement or an extension to a regular "Best of Caucasus" trip. Whether you would like to travel independently, or just with the group of your friends or colleagues, we can help to realise your holiday plans. Depending on your preference for either comfort or budget, we can help you to design the ideal itinerary and provide the optimal value-for-money quote. Please [contact us for a quote](#).

Based on your chosen tour we believe you might be interested in alternative trips listed below:

- > [Discover Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan - 16 days \(CT-02\)](#), Price from £2,745, 16 days
- > [Highlights of Iran and Armenia - 15 days \(CT-04\)](#), Price from £2,595, 15 days
- > [Georgia Wine Tour - 8 days \(GE-04\)](#), Price from £1,195, 8 days

HOW TO BOOK

Step 1 - Choose Your Holiday & Departure Dates

It is important that you choose a trip that is well suited to your interests, capabilities and experience. All our staff has first hand experience of a range of Best of Caucasus holidays and will be happy to talk to you about your chosen trip, enabling you to assess its suitability. We also recommend that you read the descriptions of the relevant region, general information about our services, booking conditions, and trip dossiers carefully. Once you know what tour is right for you, as well as your departure dates, you can start your booking.

Step 2 - Complete the Booking Form

Online: log on to www.best-of-caucasus.co.uk and open the tour you wish to book and click "Book now". To provide you with a more personalised and relevant experience in all your contact with Best of Caucasus, when you book online we ask you to register on our system. Once registered you can retrieve your bookings, update newsletter subscriptions, passenger and emergency contact details, submit special dietary requests, view invoices and receipts, download trip documents.

Email: alternatively, you can book your tour per email - info@best-of-caucasus.co.uk, or

Phone: call us on **+44 (0)20 30 51 76 40**

When booking by email or over the phone please confirm your personal details (full name and address), chosen tour, departure date, package type (hotel category), and available upgrades.

Step 3 - Confirmation of your booking

On receipt of your booking form, we will make any necessary reservations for you and send you confirmation invoice, including the flight details, and additional information about your destination: advice on visas, vaccinations and what to take. The invoice will also show you the exact due date of the payment.

Step 4 - Payment

Please note, if your departure date is more than 56 days you will need to pay the deposit, which should cover the full cost of the flight (if applicable), plus 10% of the land-only arrangements (minimum £100) per person towards your tour. The outstanding payment must be made 56 days prior to departure. If you book less than 56 days before departure, full payment must be made at the time of your booking. You can make your payment by bank transfer, debit or credit card, cheque, bankers draft or postal order. You will find all relevant payment details in your invoice.

YOUR NOTES

On request we can organise an additional programme for you, please inquire about the price and availability of the optional excursions.

Please find below some space to write down your queries or comments regarding this trip.

A large rectangular area with horizontal dotted lines, intended for writing notes or queries.