

Istanbul to Georgia - 13 days

CT-07

**DEPARTURE DATES:**

This 13 day tour begins in the beguiling city of Istanbul. Many of its most important landmarks, such as Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque and the Topkapi Palace, are world-renowned. From there, we'll move inland to the fairy chimneys, underground cities, rock-hewn churches and spectacular valleys of Cappadocia. We'll travel to Ankara, to pay our respects to Ataturk and then fly up to Trabzon on the Black Sea coast. Crossing the border into Georgia, we'll tour the sights in and around Kutaisi, Uplistikhe, Gori and Mtskheta before fetching up in the country's charming capital Tbilisi, where this tour ends.

22.06.2024; 29.06.2024; 06.07.2024; 13.07.2024; 20.07.2024; 27.07.2024; 03.08.2024; 10.08.2024; 17.08.2024; 24.08.2024; 31.08.2024; 07.09.2024; 14.09.2024; 21.09.2024; 28.09.2024; 05.10.2024; 12.10.2024; 19.10.2024; 26.10.2024; 02.11.2024; 09.11.2024; 16.11.2024; 23.11.2024; 30.11.2024; 07.12.2024; 14.12.2024.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - Istanbul

Touch down in the beautiful city of Istanbul and begin the adventure which will transport you across Turkey to the Black Sea coast of neighbouring Georgia. Overnight in Istanbul.

Day 2 - Istanbul

Few cities in the world can claim to be as captivating as Istanbul. Located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, its food, history, culture and traditions make it a fascinating place to explore. Today, we'll concentrate on Istanbul's oldest neighbourhoods as we visit its historic treasures. Admire the bold calligraphy that adorns Hagia Sophia's interior, imagine what it would be like to be a member of the Sultan's harem in the Topkapi Palace and be dazzled by the blue Iznik tiles that line the walls of Sultan Ahmet Mosque. Stroll from an Egyptian obelisk in what was once the Hippodrome to a restored Roman column named, just as the city once was, in honour of Emperor Constantine. Round off the day with a tour of the Grand Bazaar, a labyrinthine covered market that's unrivalled in age (and probably scale) anywhere in the world.

Overnight in Istanbul. (Breakfast, lunch)

Day 3 - Istanbul

There's far more to Istanbul than its old town, but before we head up the Bosphorus on a leisurely cruise, let's call in at the Spice Bazaar. Officially known as the Egyptian Bazaar, it occupies a 17th century market building close to the Galata Bridge. Outside, across a paved square you'll see the Galata Bridge, where fishermen come in the hope of a bite; beside the bazaar are the domes and minarets of the New Mosque, known as Yeni Cami to the locals. After browsing the stalls of the bazaar, known for its spices but also other products such as Turkish Delight. Afterwards, put your feet up on deck as you cruise along the Bosphorus Strait, passing mansions and palaces such as Dolmabahçe Sarayı, once the Sultan's residence and now a museum. Overnight in Istanbul.

(Breakfast, lunch)

Day 4 - Istanbul - Cappadocia

Board an early morning flight to Kayseri, the gateway to Cappadocia. Once it formed part of the Ancient Silk Road and here and there you'll still see historic caravanserais where traders rested during their journey. Today, however, it's best known for its volcanic landscape; over the centuries, the soft rock was easily hollowed out as places of refuge from attackers. You'll also find dovecotes and churches. There are thought to be as many as two hundred subterranean settlements scattered about the countryside, and you'll visit one of the most impressive, which extends deep underground. Back on the surface, we'll also take you to admire the famous fairy chimneys - pillars of soft rock sculpted by wind and rain into phallic pinnacles with a cap of more resistant rock.

Overnight in Cappadocia. (Breakfast, lunch)

Day 5 - Cappadocia

The valleys which surround the tourist town of Goreme are tranquil places. Paths follow tumbling streams that wind their way past apricot trees and clusters of fairy chimneys. The soft colour palette is as soothing as it is picturesque. As you traipse through Pasabag, Red and Avclar valleys you'll appreciate this rural landscape more and more with every step. You'll also have the opportunity to visit Goreme's "Caves of God", churches carved

into the rock which form part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Take a closer look at some of these ancient places of worship before heading to a viewpoint to admire the natural fortress of Uchisar, whose ruins perch on a rocky outcrop. Overnight in Cappadocia. (Breakfast, lunch)

Day 6 - Cappadocia - Ankara

From Cappadocia, it's around a three hour drive to Turkey's capital Ankara, so we'll get on the road after breakfast for this transfer. Ankara's best known for its modern thoroughfares, governmental offices and shopping malls, but it also boasts an ancient citadel which dates back several millennia. We'll spend the afternoon showing you the city. The mausoleum where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is interred is sure to be a highlight. He is considered to be the founder of modern Turkey and is widely revered here.

Overnight in Ankara. (Breakfast, lunch)

Day 7 - Ankara

We'll kick off your second day in Ankara with a visit to the Anatolian Civilizations Museum. Located close to the old citadel, you'll find an extensive collection of artefacts which will help you understand the many different groups of people who have influenced Turkish culture and traditions. There'll be plenty of free time this morning to spend as you please. Perhaps this might be the ideal opportunity for you to visit an authentic Turkish hammam. Several of the city's historic baths have been renovated; the 15th century Karacabey Hammam, for instance, caters for both men and women. Overnight in Ankara. (Breakfast, lunch)

Day 8 - Ankara - Trabzon - Batumi

This morning we will make our way to the airport for our flight to Trabzon, a city on Turkey's Black Sea coast. Just outside the city in Altindere National Park is Sumela Monastery, thought to date from the 4th century. Perched high on a ledge on a sheer cliff face, it's as remarkable for its engineering as it is for its religious significance. There'll be time to tour Trabzon too, calling in at the 13th century St Sophia church to see its remarkable Byzantine frescoes. Afterwards, it's time to cross the border into Georgia where we'll aim to arrive in Batumi in time for dinner. Overnight in Batumi. (Breakfast, dinner)

Day 9 - Batumi

Batumi has in recent years seen extraordinary growth, making this the second largest city in Georgia after the capital Tbilisi. It's still best known as a seaside resort and if you have the opportunity to ascend the 130 metre high Alphabetic Tower, covered with Georgian script, you'll enjoy stellar views over the waterfront. The city's old town is also a gem, with many restored mansions. We'll take you on a city tour which gives you the opportunity to visit the Cathedral of the Mother of God, originally a Catholic church; the city's Italianate Piazza and the Kissing Monument of Ali and Nino. Each day, the twin figures which comprise this sculpture, nicknamed the Statue of Love, slide together into an embrace. Later we'll drive out to the Gonio Fortress for a visit - it dates from Roman times - before heading back to Batumi. Overnight in Batumi. (Breakfast, dinner)

Day 10 - Batumi - Kutaisi

This Georgian city is the third largest in the country. Some of the area's biggest tourist attractions are actually found outside Kutaisi. One of them is the Gelati Monastery. You'll be wowed by the detail in the frescoes that survive in this UNESCO-listed 12th century complex. Also lying beyond the city limits is Prometheus Cave. Six of the 22 chambers of this sprawling karst cavern are open to visitors, so we can take a look at its stalactites and stalagmites. In the centre of the city is Bagrati Cathedral. It's an important historical landmark and worth seeing despite concerns from UNESCO that unsympathetic and extensive renovations have destroyed much of its authenticity.

Overnight in Kutaisi. (Breakfast, dinner)

Note: it is possible to extend your trip at this point to give you the opportunity to visit Akhaltsikhe and the cave town in Vardzia. Please contact us for prices and options.

Day 11 - Kutaisi - Uplistikhe - Gori - Mtskheta - Tbilisi

Let's get today off to a good start with a visit to Kutaisi's farmers' market. Browsing what's for sale at markets and joining locals as they shop is always interesting and a way of learning more about a country's food and culture. Next, we'll hit the road bound for Uplistikhe, which is a sprawling, centuries-old cave town. We'll learn more about how it was constructed and what happened here before driving into nearby Gori. It's best known as the birthplace of Stalin; the infamous Soviet leader was in fact a Georgian. There's a museum dedicated to his early life which makes for compelling viewing. Afterwards, we'll move on to Mtskheta, the old capital of Georgia where the UNESCO-listed Jvari Church and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral await closer inspection. From there, it's a short drive into Tbilisi, where we'll check in to our hotel. (Breakfast, dinner)

Day 12 - Tbilisi

Let's round off what's hopefully been a wonderful trip by exploring our final destination: Tbilisi. This morning we'll

tour the city, beginning in the atmospheric old town where we can enjoy one of the best views in the city from the 13th century Metekhi Church. High on the hill, you'll see the 4th century church and, crossing the river, the cable car that many tourists take to get up there. We'll take a closer look, and marvel at how tall the statue of Mother Georgia when you look upwards from her feet. We'll continue exploring Tbilisi, visiting some of its ancient places of worship including the 12th century cathedral. Later, we'll head along Rustaveli Avenue into Georgia's modern commercial district and visit the treasury of the Georgian National Museum. Tonight's dinner in a traditional restaurant will be accompanied by folk dancing or singing. Overnight in Tbilisi. (Breakfast, dinner)

Day 13 - Tbilisi

This is the end point of the tour. However, we'd be delighted to help you extend your stay. You might, for instance, head into the Kazbegi region to hike amidst some of the country's most dramatic mountain scenery. Another option is to tour the Kakheti wine-growing region, staying in the picture postcard walled town of Signagi. Crossing international borders, a foray into Azerbaijan or Armenia is also easily arranged. When you're ready, say farewell to Georgia as our driver transfers you safely to the airport for your flight home. (Breakfast)

TOUR INCLUSIONS AND OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Included

[International flights](#)
[Accommodation](#)
[Guided tours & cultural programme](#)
[English - speaking guides](#)
[Half board meals](#)
[Ground transportation](#)
[Airport transfers](#)

Not included

[Personal travel insurance](#)
[Optional excursions](#)

Practical information

[About Best of Caucasus company](#)
[Book with confidence - covid FAQs](#)
[How our tours are run](#)
[Contact our travel consultants](#)

AVAILABLE PACKAGES

COMFORT - 3* PACKAGE

Dates	Excl. flights	Incl. flights*	Single suppl.
22/06/2024 - 04/07/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
29/06/2024 - 11/07/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
06/07/2024 - 18/07/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
13/07/2024 - 25/07/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
20/07/2024 - 01/08/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
27/07/2024 - 08/08/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
03/08/2024 - 15/08/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
10/08/2024 - 22/08/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
17/08/2024 - 29/08/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
24/08/2024 - 05/09/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
31/08/2024 - 12/09/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
07/09/2024 - 19/09/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
14/09/2024 - 26/09/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
21/09/2024 - 03/10/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
28/09/2024 - 10/10/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
05/10/2024 - 17/10/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
12/10/2024 - 24/10/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
19/10/2024 - 31/10/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
26/10/2024 - 07/11/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
02/11/2024 - 14/11/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
09/11/2024 - 21/11/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
16/11/2024 - 28/11/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
23/11/2024 - 05/12/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
30/11/2024 - 12/12/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
07/12/2024 - 19/12/2024	£2945	£3345	£555
14/12/2024 - 26/12/2024	£2945	£3345	£555

PREMIUM - 4* PACKAGE

Dates	Excl. flights	Incl. flights*	Single suppl.
22/06/2024 - 04/07/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
29/06/2024 - 11/07/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
06/07/2024 - 18/07/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
13/07/2024 - 25/07/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
20/07/2024 - 01/08/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
27/07/2024 - 08/08/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
03/08/2024 - 15/08/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
10/08/2024 - 22/08/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
17/08/2024 - 29/08/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
24/08/2024 - 05/09/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
31/08/2024 - 12/09/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
07/09/2024 - 19/09/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
14/09/2024 - 26/09/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
21/09/2024 - 03/10/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
28/09/2024 - 10/10/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
05/10/2024 - 17/10/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
12/10/2024 - 24/10/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
19/10/2024 - 31/10/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
26/10/2024 - 07/11/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
02/11/2024 - 14/11/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
09/11/2024 - 21/11/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
16/11/2024 - 28/11/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
23/11/2024 - 05/12/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
30/11/2024 - 12/12/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
07/12/2024 - 19/12/2024	£3195	£3595	£755
14/12/2024 - 26/12/2024	£3195	£3595	£755

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:

- > [Classical Turkey Tour: Istanbul, Cappadocia, Ephesus, Pamukkale, Izmir - 8 days \(TR-03\)](#), Price from £1,495, 8 days
- > [Best of Turkey Tour - 13 days \(TR-05\)](#), Price from £3,495, 13 days
- > [Discover Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan - 16 days \(CT-02\)](#), Price from £2,895, 16 days
- > [Best of Georgia and Azerbaijan - 12 days \(CT-03\)](#), Price from £2,195, 12 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.

