

# Walking the Caucasus

## Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia



15 JUNE - 02 JULY, 2020



17 NIGHTS / 18 DAYS



STARTS / BAKU

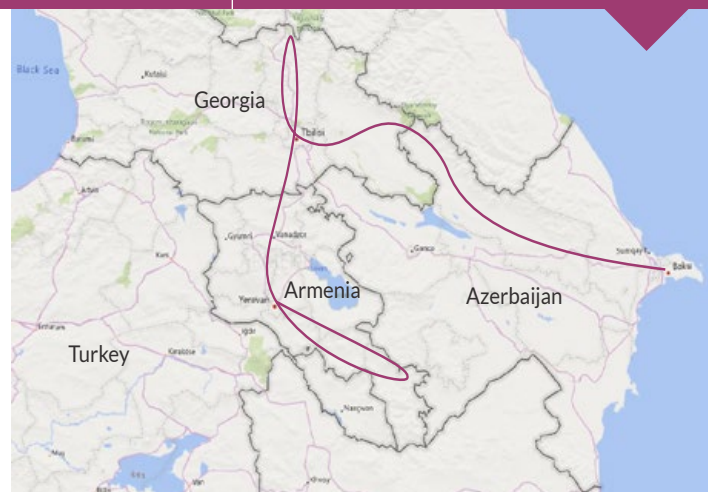
## EXPLORE THE BEAUTY OF THE CAUCASUS ON THIS GUIDED WALKING PROGRAM.

For many the Caucasus evoke mystery, intrigue, and betrayal. It is also a region of wonderful natural beauty best explored by foot, following ancient paths winding through valleys and over passes. Today, outside contemporary cities, the past still exists, which is what draws Peter Telford, our new walks' tour leader, to create a "three-country" moderate walk program which can be experienced in June, 2020.

Peter doesn't see himself as the risk-taking type, but more so an interested wanderer. "For me, the best part of travelling is not just the big blockbuster sights. It's the little unexpected things, such as a conversation about politics, education, and society, with the local shop keeper", Pete says.

Pete is keen to return to the Caucasus, a favourite region that includes Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia, for their truly spectacular scenery, history, historic sights, a wide variety of architecture, good food, and lovely people. Pete's walking style follows a successful pattern: great walking in the morning, alfresco lunch, then a relaxed wind-down at days' end at a local cafe.

A local guide accompanies our group, and you only need a small backpack while walking. Accommodation is generally three-star, with some local Inns used in rural areas, with all breakfasts and some other meals included. Walking is not competitive and you walk at your own pace.



### Caucasus Journey Highlights

- › Visit the otherworldly cave monasteries of Davit Gareja in Georgia
- › Explore Nagorno-Karabakh - the self-declared republic no country recognises
- › Learn much about religious customs and ancient cultures
- › Partake in tasty local cuisine and hospitality

## ON THIS TRIP



Relaxed walking focus



Daily sightseeing



Ancient towns and villages



Magnificent UNESCO sites



Interaction with local people



Expert local guides



Enjoy great local flavours

## IMPORTANT TRIP PRACTICALITIES

Our exploration of the Caucasus commences in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. You will be met on arrival at Baku International Airport and transferred into the heart of the city for a 2-night stay.

Our journey concludes in Yerevan and a group transfer to the airport on the final day is provided.

Guests may like to spend a few nights before or after this trip in Baku or Yerevan. Or arrange a stopover in Dubai, Doha or Abu Dhabi. Contact us if you would like assistance planning a pre or post journey 'city stay' or contemplating further exploration in surrounding countries.

Full joining instructions are provided in your final travel documentation. If you have questions before this time, please ask us.



## YOUR DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

### INTRODUCTION AND TRIP OVERVIEW

We spend four days in Azerbaijan, the "Land of Fire", with its contrasts and contradictions, offering traveller's insight into this unique and intriguing nation. Baku is a great combination of medieval, 19th century and cosmopolitan, futuristic buildings, which we explore on foot, especially the walled "old town". Leaving Baku, we venture to the plains that span between Baku and Sheki, arguably Azerbaijan's prettiest town. Over four days we experience Azerbaijan before crossing into Georgia.

In Georgia we explore the spectacular Caucasus Mountains near the Russian border, walking to cave monasteries and through valleys, and bathing in centuries old Hamman's found in Tbilisi.

Explore the cafes of modern Yerevan before being charmed at Davit Gareja, a stone carved monastery boasting perfect acoustics, and the cliff top Tatev monastery. Discover at your own pace the vibrant cities of Yerevan and Tbilisi. Of course, we will visit wineries to sample Georgian wines.

The Armenian capital Yerevan is our next point before walking valleys dotted with idyllic Armenian villages, with the countryside spoilt only by decaying Soviet era infrastructure. World Heritage listed monasteries and rock hewn churches are to be visited.

As this is an exploratory tour, opportunities and experiences will unfold as we travel. We will enjoy comfortable walks almost every day and partake in tasty local cuisine and hospitality. Our interactions with friendly locals, enjoyment of wonderful meals, fantastic scenery and the congenial company of fellow guests will make this a memorable journey, with all the hallmarks of an 'Intentionally Different Travel' experience.

### DAY 1-2 - ARRIVE BAKU – AZERBAIJAN (MONDAY, 15 JUNE 2020)

Over two days we enjoy a comprehensive walking tour of the historical old town, wander past Little Venice, make our way up the funicular to the Flame Towers. We also learn about Baku's rich and complicated history, its historical building and noting its many and varied museums and galleries. We also enjoy an authentic Azeri dinner.

### DAY 3 - BAKU-SHEKI

An early start for Sheki passing oil production infrastructure and spectacular nothingness framed by jagged barren mountains. At Sheki, visit the ornate Xan Saray Palace with its ornate murals and brilliant stain glass windows. We include the lesser known, but equally pleasant Winter Palace, and caravanserai to enjoy afternoon tea in its garden café.

### DAY 4 - AZERBAIJAN TO GEORGIA

An early start to cross the border and make our way to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. Along the way, depending on time, we may visit a winery, or historical buildings.

### DAY 5 - TBILISI

A busy day exploring the old town, take the Cable Car to Narikala Fortress overlooking Tbilisi, and visit a number of the important cathedrals, and the ethnographic museum. The coffee shops are attractive we dine at a traditional Georgian restaurant.

### DAY 6-8 - TBILISI-KAZBEGI

We head north to the Russian border and over three days visit the small village of Stepantsminda located within the foothills of Mt Kazbegi. From here we walk



to the 14th century Tsminda Sameba Church (Gergeti) located in a stunning setting atop a hill framed by snow-capped mountains, making it a symbol of Georgian natural beauty. Our second walk takes us to the Truso Valley for a spectacular 6-hour walk. We see abandoned villages, peculiar travertine formations, and the ruins of Zakogori Fortress.

Before returning to Tbilisi we hike from the small village of Juta to the foot of Chaukhi Massive, a relatively flat and easy 3-hour wander through the valley surrounded by the snow-capped peaks of Chaukhi. Arrive Tbilisi for a relaxing Hamman treatment and Tbilisi's generous hospitality found near the Freedom Square precinct.

#### DAY 9-11 - TBILISI

You have the morning to yourself to relax or wander the flea market, picking over Soviet and WW2 memorabilia. This afternoon, we walk through Tbilisi old town learning the history of the many churches of Tbilisi and the Soviet legacy and history. Find out how the city transformed from a non-descript Soviet town into the history rich modern vibrant city it now is.

Over the next two days we make excursions out from Tbilisi to visit the Stalin Museum and birthplace and home of Stalin, the fascinating 6th century BC cave city at Uplistsikbe, and the ancient monastery complex of Davit Gareja overlooking the Azerbaijan flatlands and surrounded in early summer with rolling fields of wild flowers.

#### DAY 12 - TBILISI-YEREVAN

We travel to the Armenia capital Yerevan through the Debed Canyon, on the way visiting the World Heritage Listed Monastery of Haghbat from 976 AD, and the Monastery of Sanahin, 966 AD. The valley winds through idyllic Armenia villages, the countryside spoilt only by decaying Soviet era infrastructure.

#### DAY 13-15 - YEREVAN

Join our walking tour of the city followed by a group meal at a tradition Armenian restaurant. We visit the rock-hewn



churches of Geghard Monastery, and perhaps enjoy a private performance by a local choir in the acoustically perfect stone carved chamber. We travel to Garni Temple built in the 1st century AD, dedicated to the heathen Sun God. We spend time in the Armenian Genocide Museum and the highly rated Antiquities Museum of Yerevan.

#### DAY 16 - YEREVAN-GORIS

We leave the watchful eye of Mt Ararat behind us on our picturesque drive to Goris. Take the world's longest cable car to the fortified 9th century AD Tatev Monastery. Walkers are rewarded by wandering the surrounding hills discovering ancient pyramid stones and cave churches as well as grazing cattle and inquisitive children.

#### DAY 17 - GORIS-STEPANAKERT-GORIS

We cross the border into Nagorno-Karabakh and into a different world. Largely unknown to the travelling public this self-proclaimed Republic oozes "different". It has its share of historical monuments and churches, grand buildings and cafes but it's the atmosphere that enchants you. We wander Shushi, once the centre of Armenian art and culture, and a strategic city with views over the republic. We then go "down the hill" to Stepanakert to explore and enjoy all it has to offer.

#### DAY 18 - YEREVAN DEPARTURE (THURSDAY 02 JULY, 2020)

All good things do end, and we leave Goris to return to Yerevan for your flight home. End of program on arrival at Yerevan airport. Extra nights can be arranged.

#### ABOUT THE WALKING - FITNESS

Peter is your walking guide on this small-group walking journey exploring a diversity of areas of interest. Walks are over made trails with varying steepness with an average of four hours per day. Not all days are walking, and one day can be more strenuous than another. Thus, in general terms a medium level of fitness is required. Suitable walking shoes are a requirement. Ensure they are well worn in prior to travel. Some guests like to use Nordic-style trekking poles.

**ABOUT OUR ITINERARY:** The information provided here is given in good faith and has been compiled with all reasonable care. However, some information may have changed after publication. Please check with us if you are unsure about anything. The document was correct at time of publication. If you have any queries, please contact our office.





## YOUR CAUCASUS EXPERIENCE INCLUDES:

- ✓ Group size is from eight to 15 guests
- ✓ All accommodation in comfortable hotels with western bathrooms and daily breakfasts on a twin share basis
- ✓ Transfers from the airport to Baku accommodation on Day 1 and on departure in Yerevan
- ✓ Services of Peter Telford as Tour Host
- ✓ Services of well-qualified English-speaking local guides
- ✓ All entrance fees as per the itinerary
- ✓ All sightseeing and visits
- ✓ Comprehensive information kits
- ✓ Prices are in Australian dollars

*The programme does not include:*

- › *International airfares to Azerbaijan including airport and government taxes*
- › *Visa and passport expenses*
- › *Travel insurance - (mandatory on ID Travel programmes)*
- › *Health costs (ie Doctor visits)*
- › *Personal expenditure, communication expenses and shopping*
- › *Single rooms available at a reduced supplement*
- › *Tips and gratuities (Allow \$10-15 per day)*
- › *Meals not mentioned*
- › *Transfers outside our schedule*

**WALKING THE CAUCASUS - PRICING**  
**18-DAYS | 15 JUNE - 02 JULY 2020**  
**\$AUD6453 PER PERSON, TWIN-SHARE**  
**JOINING IN BAKU**



For me, the best part of travelling is not always the big blockbuster sights. It's the small and unexpected things - conversation with a vendor in the shadows of the separation wall in Bethlehem, a truly delightful meal in a small village in Georgia, the night in a Muslim bar in Essaouira, Morocco and, of course, the wonderful, kind and helpful people you meet along the way.

Travel seems to be in my blood, having been lucky enough to visit over 70 countries. My job as a fire fighter in Canberra, Australia, has provided me opportunities to travel, and I've jumped at every one of them. I love to walk and cycle the endless tracks and trails, then at the end of a stimulating day to relax and enjoy a nice meal and a drink and chat about the days' highlights while thoughts wander to tomorrow's adventure.

Join me to discover one of my favourite areas - Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia. Truly surprising destinations with spectacular scenery, dramatic history and sights, a wide variety of architecture, good food, lovely people, comfortable walking followed by a local cafe at day's end.

I invite you to travel with me in June as we discover this magnificent, yet little visited region.

*Peter*

# WHAT WE PROVIDE – IMPORTANT INFORMATION

## YOUR HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

With all our programs our accommodation selection criteria include central location, charm, cleanliness, cultural integrity, uniqueness, and standard of service. All rooms have private western-style bathrooms and comfortable beds. Some have pools while others have pleasant gardens. Where choice is limited, we select the most appropriate accommodation for our guests. A single room is available for a supplement. Contact us to discuss pricing.

## MEALS AND DINING

Dining during our programs is an enjoyable experience and we explore regional delicacies and patronise some of the great restaurants and local cafes. Daily breakfast is included but we don't include all meals, as we prefer our guests to have as wide a choice as possible to cater for budget, taste and style.

## ROAD TRAVEL

We use comfortable air-con vehicles and endeavor to provide more seats than guests. Road conditions are generally good but do vary. Some are excellent while others may be winding. Wonderful scenery along the way is assured.

## INTERNATIONAL AIR TRAVEL

Any of the Gulf-based airlines (Emirates, Qatar or Etihad) will be the obvious choice for flights into the Caucasus region. Intentionally Different Travel has excellent fares so please contact us for details or discuss other airlines and routing.

## ADDITIONAL TRAVEL

Extra nights can be reserved, either pre or post-tour but you MUST advise us well in advance. If you would like to continue to Europe or other destinations please let us know, so we can develop an individual travel program for you.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

You must have comprehensive travel insurance to join this programme. We can recommend a policy designed to cover participants on this trip and travel in the Caucasus region. Or you can source your own travel insurance. Your policy must provide coverage for your medical costs in case of hospitalisation, emergency travel and repatriation.

Please check the terms of your policy carefully, particularly with regard to limits of cover. Also ensure you are familiar with the procedure for making claims. Once you have paid your deposit or full payment, certain fees will apply if you have to cancel your holiday. For this reason, you should take out travel insurance at the time of paying your deposit. You will be required to send us your travel insurance policy details prior to departure.

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Australian passport holders will require a visa to enter Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan e-visas can be obtained online for a cost of \$US23pp (as of FEB 2020). You do not require visas for Georgia or Armenia. If you are travelling on another passport, please check with consular authorities for all three countries. Your passport should have at least six-months validity from the time of your departure for home.

## OUR STYLE

We aim to excel when it comes to personal attention and relevant information. This includes information on where to dine, where to purchase souvenirs and other crafts, explanations on local customs and practices along with answers to the myriad of other questions our guests pose.

Apart from good and relevant information, and excellent hands-on experiences, we include attractive accommodation, good sightseeing opportunities, plenty of 'getting-to-meet-the-locals' encounters and of course, great dining opportunities from exquisite restaurants to quaint local cafes. We don't hold your hand all the way so there are 'free time' periods to allow you to rest, explore on your own, or simply visit a café for a coffee. Past guests have found our 'style' very much to their liking and we trust you will also.

## SHOULD YOU JOIN THIS PROGRAM?

You will greatly enjoy this trip if you like to discover new destinations, intriguing cultures, interesting regional cuisines and of course walking for 3-4 hours on average every day. This trip is a blend of walking, and 'outdoor/adventure' with a large helping of culture, wonderful scenery and historic sites. Your Tour Host, Peter Telford has spent considerable time exploring the Caucasus region and together with our local guides, you will be in capable and well-informed hands throughout the journey.

## RESERVATIONS

Email to: [robert@intenttravel.com.au](mailto:robert@intenttravel.com.au) with any questions you may have. We can also connect you to Tour Host, Peter Telford to discuss any specifics about the trip and destinations visited.

To secure your place, please email your intention to join to her program. You will then receive a reservation form to complete. Your option is held for seven days secured by receipt of a non-refundable deposit of \$750 per person. Deposit is refunded if minimum numbers are not reached.

## 'THE PAPERWORK'

Your deposit will be acknowledged. We keep you informed as to the status of bookings and advise you when minimum numbers are reached. Then, we send you a confirmation kit and invoice. Final payment is due 60-days prior departure. When our group is complete and after final payment, air tickets and travel documents will be sent out. Then it is only a short time before your wonderful Caucasus travel experience begins!

### Direct enquiries to:

✉ [robert@intenttravel.com.au](mailto:robert@intenttravel.com.au)

✉ [christine@intenttravel.com.au](mailto:christine@intenttravel.com.au)

📞 Robert: +61 (0)417 269 540

📞 Christine: +61 (0)409 323 566

[www.intenttravel.com.au](http://www.intenttravel.com.au)

ACN: 22 606 421 701

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