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8 Day Cultural Trip in Armenia & Georgia

Day 1

After arrival you will be transferred to your hotel in Yerevan and checked in. You will start your trip in the ancient 2795 year old capital of Armenia. Yerevan Birth Certificate is held in History Museum. It is cuneiform inscription of Urartian King Argishti which let scientists tell the exact time of city founding and prove Yerevan was built in 782 AD. Some decades ago Alexander Tamanyan, the general architect of Yerevan draw contemporary plan of the city which we can see today. The warm smiles of its inhabitants give unique charm to this eternal city ancient and so young at the same time. One of the stops included within the city tour is the "Matenadaran", which houses over 17,000 ancient and medieval manuscripts, making it the significant bearer of one of the largest collections in the world. You will enjoy Yerevan's vibrant nightlife with an abundance of outdoor cafés filled with eclectic people and the sounds of live music.

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan **Meals:** B

Day 2

This day begins with a visit to the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, the religious center of all Armenians around the world. The residence of Catholicos, Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church is in Echmiadzin. Here the first official Christian church was founded in the first half of the 4th century, later it was reconstructed and stands today with the whole charm Echmiadzin Cathedral. After lunch in the holy city, you will be back in Yerevan continue trip in the Genocide Memorial, a solemn reminder of the first genocide of the 20th century. This day you will have free evening in Yerevan. (65 km / 7 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan **Meals:** B

Day 3

After breakfast you will head to the south of Armenia, roughly 40 km south of Yerevan stands KhorVirap Monastery, a historic site located amidst the Ararat Valley. The monastery was built on the place of royal prison of Armenian city of Artashat. Here in royal prison Grigor Lusavorich was sentenced to death by King Trdat for preaching Christianity in Armenia in the 3rd century. Nowhere else the Biblical Ararat has such a magnificent view. You will continue through a narrow canyon to the valley of red rocks and Noravank amidst them. This region of Armenia has been made famous for its unique grape sort "Areni" hence where "Areni" wines are derived from. One cannot pass through without a stop at a local winery for a tasting of some locally produced, exquisite wines. In the evening we will be back to your hotel in Yerevan for rest and overnight. (260 km / 8 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan **Meals:** B

Day 4

After a relaxed breakfast at the hotel, the fourth day's tour involved a drive to the scenic canyon of the Azat River. The 7th century Geghard Cave Monastery is located deep at the bottom of the canyon and is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The towering cliffs of its surrounds are part of the monastery's complex which is both carved from the adjacent mountain as well as partially built from local basalt stones. Once inside the monastery, its fascinating labyrinth of chambers are illusive to one's orientation within the complex. Following on from the tour of the monastery, the tour is continued by bus to Garni village, where the Hellenistic-inspired "Garni" temple lies. Built in 66 AD, Garni was a temple dedicated to the Armenian God of the Sun "Mitra". Garni's complex also consists of a royal bath which exhibits a fascinating hypocaust along with a well preserved original mosaic tiling. You will be back to Yerevan and continue trip to The Armenian History Museum, which provides a fascinating journey through the rich history of country. (80 km / 7 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan* **Meals:** *B*

Day 5

This day you will head to Lake Sevan, the "Blue Pearl of Armenia" and one of the highest freshwater lakes in the world at about 2000 meters above sea level. The stunning hilltop view of the azure lake framed by the surrounding mountains makes you feel inspired yet powerless by the same token. Continue trip to Lori region, to one of the greenest regions of Armenia. You will visit to the "Haghpat" Monastery and "Sanahin" Medieval University, which are both listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. They are both outstanding masterpiece examples of Armenian medieval architecture. Marvel at the intricate reliefs showing biblical scenes and characters whilst relishing the captivating old auditorium of Sanahin University. Both monasteries were important centers for scholars and many famous manuscripts were written here in the Middle Ages. In addition to the many architectural attractions, the Lori region delivers beautiful landscapes of lush forests, the rocky deep canyon of Debed river and quaint little villages scattered along the canyon. Continue trip to Armenia Georgia border, after passing the border you will head to Tbilisi, bustling capital of Georgia, check in at hotel, have evening walk in Tbilisi and be prepared for the next day guided tour. (320 km / 10 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel in Tbilisi* **Meals:** *B*

Day 6

You will head this day to Mtskheta (UNESCO Heritage Site), an ancient capital of the Georgian Kingdom from the 3rd century BC to the 5th century AD. You will visit to Svetitskhoveli Cathedral of 11th century - magnificent, both inside and outside. The next stop is Jvari Church or the Holy Cross Church, standing where a sacred wooden cross was erected in the 4th century by St Nino before she converted Mtskheta to Christianity. Drive back to Tbilisi for city tour. Visit the Old Tbilisi Sulfur Baths, Georgian Orthodox and Armenian Gregorian churches, Jewish Synagogue and Turkish mosque side by side, reflecting city's acceptance and tolerance of different religions. Visit recently built Tbilisi Sameba Cathedral, the largest cathedral in the Caucasus, also glance at city from the 4th century Narikala fortress standing high over city's skyline. Imaginatively carved wooden balconies and pebbled narrow streets of Tbilisi make the city very colorful and comfortable. (80 / 8 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel in Tbilisi* **Meals:** *B*

Day 7

This day is a tour of stunning drive and amazing landscapes of bottomless canyons and high mountains. En route you will pass Ananuri Castle and Jinali reservoir of amazing beauty. Continue trip along the Tergi River will bring us to Kazbegi – the main town in the region. From Kazbegi Village you will change vehicle to 4wd drive car to Gergeti Trinity Church located at 2170m. Weather permitting you may catch a glimpse of one of the highest glaciers in the Caucasus – Mt Kazbegi (5047m). In the evening you will be back to Tbilisi, en route you will drive through Dariali Gorge. (330 km / 10 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Tbilisi Meals: B

Day 8

After breakfast head to Signagi, “city of love”, walk in the city and taste wine in the best know local wineries “Pheasants tears”. Later you will visit Bodbe monastery of St. Nino. According to Georgian tradition, St. Nino, played very important role in Georgian history and converted Georgian people to the Christian faith. Continue trip to David Gareji Desert where Monastery with the same name is located. The dozens of cave monasteries decorated with unique frescoes are the best examples of harmonious interaction of man-made structures with the dramatic landscape. They bear the traditional principles of sustainable living and are considered as the masterpieces of Georgian Medieval Art. In the evening you will be back to Tbilisi to enjoy of tour’s last evening in the city. (310 km / 9 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Tbilisi Meals B

Day 9

Transfer to the airport and departure.