**Grand Tour to Armenia & Georgia**

**12 days/11 nights**

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| 1st day ARRIVAL IN ARMENIA |
| Arrival in Yerevan  Meet&Greet at the airport  Transfer to hotel |
| 2nd day CITY TOUR + GARNI + GEGHARD + SYMPHONY OF STONES + DINNER WITH FOLKLORE |
| Breakfast at the hotel  **City tour of Yerevan** with Victory Park, in which stands the large statue to Mother Armenia and from which there is the best view of the city. We continue to Cascade Complex and stroll through the city center from the Armenian Opera House Square to Republic Square. Then departure to the Kotayk region. Not far from Yerevan you can visit an extremely picturesque sight - the **Charents Arch**, giving an incredible view of Mount Ararat.  You have a **lunch** at a family-owned restaurant in Garni village and are welcome to have your first contact with delicious Armenian cuisine by participating in a culinary master class for preparation of Lavash, Armenia's traditional bread.  Visit to the **Temple of Garni**, the only standing Greco-Roman colonnaded building in Armenia. The temple dedicated to the sun god Mihr is the best-known symbol of pre-Christian Armenia.  We continue to the **Geghard Rocky Monastery** (UNESCO World Heritage Site) being partially carved out of the adjacent mountain. The monastery was originally named Ayrivank ("the Monastery of the Cave"). The name Geghard, or more fully Geghardavank, meaning "the Monastery of the Spear", originates from the spear which had wounded Jesus at the Crucifixion, allegedly brought to Armenia and stored at the monastery for a long time. This masterpiece of Armenian medieval architecture is set into a landscape of great natural beauty, surrounded by towering cliffs at the entrance to the Azat Valley.  Short descent and you see a deep canyon with walls covered in basalt rock formations shaped like organ pipes. This place has earned the name "**Symphony of Stones**."  Return back to the hotel.  **Dinner** at a city restaurant with **folklore** |
| 3nd day YEREVAN CATHEDRAL + ZVATNOTS + ECHMIADZIN + MELEK TAWUS |
| Breakfast at the hotel  Though Armenia is a small country, it is characterized by great cultural and religious diversity. During our tour you see the **Blue Mosque**, an 18th-century Persian Shia mosque. We continue to the Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, also known as the **Yerevan Cathedral**, the largest cathedral of the Armenian Apostolic Church.  Visit to **Zvartnots**, a magnificent and majestic temple built in the 7th century, which is one of the masterpieces of Armenian architecture, registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Zvartnots means "Celestial Angels". Departure to **Echmiadzin**, the city nicknamed the "Armenian Vatican" because it is the seat of the "Catholicos," the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church.  Visit to the **Museum "Treasures of Echmiadzin"** housing unique holy relics and religious art. Among the many treasures there are: the Holy Lance (Geghard), which pierced the side of Christ; the relics of Noah's Ark and other valuable pieces of art.  Lunch in the Echmiadzin monastery  Visit to the **St. Gayane Church** and the **St. Hripsime Church**, ancient 7th-century Armenian churches.  Depart for Aknalich, the site of the world's largest **Yazidi temple** outside the area of origin of this Kurdish minority originally from Iraqi Sinjar. The temple is dedicated to Melek Tawus, the peacock angel worshipped by the Yazidis.  Return back to the hotel.  Free time in the city. |
| 4th day KHOR VIRAP + THE ARENI CAVE I + VILLAGE OF ARENI + MASTER CLASS + NORAVANK |
| Breakfast at the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  Depart for the **Ararat valley** with a visit to **Khor Virap monastery**.  Khor Virap Monastery is located in a high position on the left bank of the Araks River on the Turkish border with a splendid view of Mount Ararat.  Continue to the Vajots Dzor region along the beautiful Gnishik River Gorge.  You will visit **Areni Cave 1 (Bird Cave).** The oldest shoe in the world was found right here during archaeological excavations.  **The village of Areni** is located in the Vayots Dzor region. This sunny village is famous for its best wine assortments. Due to its specific flavor and delicate taste, "Areni" wine has its respected place among the best Armenian wines.  Lunch in a village restaurant with a master class on barbecue cooking in a tandoor and wine tasting.  **Noravank.**Passing a narrow road surrounded by rocks from hundreds of caves, one discovers a scene of harmony of architecture with nature. The monastery complex with refined architectural solutions and luxurious embellishments is one of the most brilliant examples of 13th-century Armenian architecture. Noravank includes **churches of St. Karapet, St. Gregory the Illuminator and St. Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God).**  Return to the city of Yerevan  Free time in the city. |
| 5th day HAGHARTSIN + GOSHAVANK + DILIJAN + MOLOCANI VILLAGE |
| Breakfast at the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  Transfer to **Haghartsin**. (150 km, 2 hours)  The **Haghartsin Monastery** (10th - 13th centuries), located in the forests of the Tavush region, inside majestic forests, surrounded by the Ijevan Range. The monastery complex was built in the 11th century and is a beautiful example of ancient Armenian architecture. You will also see a legendary walnut tree, which is more than 1000 years old.  Visit to the village of Gosh and the monastery of the same name: it preserves some of the most beautiful and ancient Khachkars in all of Armenia. The monastery complex was built in 1188 by Mkhitar Gosh (and named after him), a great ancient Armenian philosopher and historian who created the first Armenian judicial book (a code of laws). In ancient times, **Goshavank** was famous for its seminary and university, where prominent Armenian historians, philosophers and cultural figures studied. In this beautiful architectural complex you will have a good opportunity to make a tour of ancient buildings, walk in the fresh air and take beautiful photos.  Lunch at a city restaurant in Dilijan  **Dilijan**. Dilijan is one of the most favorite resort cities in Armenia surrounded by amazing forests and clean air that’s why it is often nicknamed “the Armenian Switzerland”. Dilijan is also rich in interesting architectural attractions, e.g. the Sharamberyan Street, the historic part of Dilijan, with typical stone houses with wooden balconies.  Stop at a **Molocani village** where you immerse yourself in an atmosphere where time seems to stand still. These people, of Russian origin, practice a unique form of Orthodox Christian religion, which was declared heresy in the late 19th century and for this reason the Molokans were sent into exile to the borders of the empire. Many of them settled in Armenia and still live their lives in the same way more than a century ago. We stop by one of the families to connect with this small community and taste homemade sweets and jams.  Return to Yerevan. Free evening. |
| 6th day SAGHMOSAVANK + HAGHPAT + AKHTALA + TBILISI |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out from the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  Travel to **Saghmosavank Monastery** (in Armenian: the Monastery of Psalms), located on the edge of the Kasagh River gorge.  Lunch at a local restaurant in the town of Haghpat.  Visit to the fortified monastic complex of **Haghpat** and the nearby located monastery **Sanahin** built between the 10th and 13th century. Described as a "masterpiece of religious architecture and a major center of learning in the Middle Ages", Haghpat monastery, together with Sanahin Monastery, was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.  Transfer to the Armenian-Georgian border at Bagratashen and, after customs formalities, change of transport and on to Tbilisi. Meeting with local guide.  Arrival in **Tbilisi**, capital of Georgia.  Check-in at hotel. Dinner at a restaurant near the hotel. |
| 7th day CITY TOUR + MTSKHETA + DZALISI |
| Breakfast at the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  **City tour of Tbilisi**. Visit to the **Metekhi Church**, located on a promontory overlooking the Kura River. A modern cable car will then depart to the **Naricala Fortress**, built in the 4th century on the hill overlooking the city. Walk down to the **Abanotubani Quarter**, characterized by the typical brick domes of the thermal baths and a mosque in which Shiites and Sunnis pray together, and a synagogue. Visit to the **Sioni Cathedral**, inside which the relic of the cross of St. Nino, the evangelizing nun of Georgia, is kept.  Departure for **Mtskheta.** Excursion to the ancient capital of Georgia, Mtskheta, a museum city declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit to the ancient temple-monastery of **Jvari** (6th century). At the top of the mountain where the temple is located, there is a fantastic view of the confluence of two rivers, Kura and Aragvi. There is a beautiful view of the ancient capital of Georgia - Mtskheta. Visit to the **Svetitskhoveli Cathedral** (1010-1029). Known as the burial site of the Robe of Christ, Svetitskhoveli has long been one of the principal Georgian Orthodox churches and is among the most venerated places of worship in the region. Throughout the centuries, the cathedral served as the burial place for Georgian kings.  Lunch in a local restaurant  Visit to the historic village of **Dzalisi** where archaeological excavations revealed Roman-era buildings and streets.  Dzalisi Fortress is located 20 km northwest of Mtskheta. Dzalisi is mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy (90 -168) as one of the main cities of the ancient Iberian kingdom. During archaeological excavations in 1972-1974, the remains of four palaces, streets paved with rectangular ceramic slabs, hypocaustic baths, a sewer and a water supply system using ceramic pipes, an acropolis, a swimming pool, an administrative part, barracks for soldiers, and a cemetery were discovered.  Return to the city of Tbilisi  **Dinner** at a traditional restaurant with folkloric program |
| 8th day ANANURI FORTRESS + ZHINVALI RESERVOIR + GEORGIAN MILITARY ROAD + CROSS PASS + STEPANTSMINDA + GERGETI |
| Breakfast at the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  We departure from Tbilisi towards Stepantsminda resort area. On the way we will visit the picturesque **Ananuri fortress** (XVI century), located above the Aragvi River, as well as the stunning **Zhinvali Reservoir**.  We will travel near the ski resort of **Gudauri** (2200 m), make a stunning drive along the historic **Georgian Military Road** and cross the Main Caucasus Range through the **Cross Pass** at an altitude of 2379 m. The road will lead us to the village of Stepantsminda.  **Tour of Stepantsminda: Church of the Holy Trinity in Gergeti** (2170 m above sea level). We will go up by jeeps to the **valley glacier Gergeti**. In clear weather, Gergeti offers a stunning, phantasmagoric view of one of the most majestic peaks of Georgia - **Mount Kazbek** (5147 m).  **Lunch at the mountaineers** - we will taste the famous “khinkali” (Georgian dumplings).  Return to Tbilisi. Overnight stay at the hotel. |
| 9th day ST. NINO MONASTERY IN BODBE + MANAVI FORTRESS AND CHURCH + CHATEAU FORT DE MANAVI + WINE AND CHACHA TASTING + MASTER CLASS |
| Breakfast at the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  Today we head to Signagi, a town in Georgia's easternmost region of Kakheti, Georgia's wine-growing region with picturesque landscapes.  On the way we visit the village of **Bodbe** with the **Monastery of St. Nino**, the 4th-century female evangelist of Georgians, whose relics are shrined there.  Excursion to **Signagi,** the "city of eternal love", which is located on the top of a mountain ridge overlooking the Alazani Valley. Then we will get acquainted with the history of **Manavi fortress** (11th century) and **Manavi church** (18th century). In 17th century there were vineyards and a manor house of the king of Georgia.  We will stop at the pearl of Kakheti - private estate **"Château Fort de Manavi".** The program includes **tasting of wine and chacha** (grape vodka) produced according to traditional ancient Georgian technology directly at Château Fort de Manavi, a traditional Kakhetian wine cellar (marani), from grapes grown on the estate's own vineyards. The highlight of the wine tasting would be "Manavi Green" - a wine made from a special type of grapes that grows only in the area of Manavi village in Georgia.  **Master class** on baking Georgian bread - dedas puri - and making churchkhela (a traditional Georgian candle-shaped candy).  **Lunch** with Georgian cuisine made of ecological products grown in the farm "Château Fort de Manavi".  Return to Tbilisi.  Overnight stay at the hotel. |
| 10th day PARAVANI LAKES + GLASS BRIDGE OVER DASHBASHI CANYON + CAVE MONASTERY OF VARDZIA |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out of the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  We depart to the "Georgian Switzerland" - the area of high-mountainous **Paravani Lakes**. You will be able to visit and walk along the unique creation of human engineering thought - **glass bridge over Dashbashi canyon**.  Lunch in a village restaurant in Dashbashi.  Then we go to the **cave monastery of Vardzia**. Vardzia is a monument of the Golden Age of Georgia (XII-XIII centuries). The cave town has 19 tiers. On the length of 900 meters along the left bank of the Kura River there are about 600 rooms carved in the steep wall of the mountain - churches, chapels, residential cells, storerooms, baths, treasuries, and libraries. Some secret passages, remnants of water supply and irrigation system are still preserved. More than a thousand monks lived in the monastery, and in case of enemy attack up to 20 thousand people could hide in it.  Dinner in a city restaurant.  Overnight stay at the hotel in Vardzia |
| 11th day AKHALTSIKHE + BORJOMI + GORI + TBILISI |
| Breakfast and check-out of the at the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  Arrival in the city of **Akhaltsikhe.** Tour of the town of **Akhaltsikhe**, where the father of the famous singer Charles Aznavour was born. We will visit the recently restored **fortress of Akhaltsikhe**. Throughout its long history Akhaltsikhe has been known as a place of **ethnic and religious diversity**. Akhaltsikhe is one of the centers of Catholicism in Georgia. In the same neighborhood as St. Marina Orthodox Church, you can see a mosque, a Catholic church, a Benedictine convent, a synagogue and an Armenian church.  Then we go to the resort town of **Borjomi,** where we will taste the world-famous mineral water of Borjomi from the spring.  Lunch in a city restaurant in **Gori**, the home-town of Stalin.  Return to Tbilisi.  Check-in at the hotel.  Free evening. |
| 12th day RETURN HOME |
| Breakfast at the hotel  Check-out of the hotel  Transfer to airport |

***Program sequence is subject to change due to organizational reasons!***

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| **The price includes** | **The price doesn’t include** |
| - Transfers airport – hotel and hotel - airport;  - Accommodation in 4\* hotels in Yerevan, Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe;  - 1 pax free in a SGL room;  - Guide for the entire period (available languages: English, German, French, Italian. Chinese – per request);  - Accommodation for 5 nights in Yerevan;  - Accommodation for 5 nights in Tbilisi;  - Accommodation for 1 night in Vardzia;  - 5 breakfasts + 5 lunches in Armenia;  - 1 dinner with folklore in Yerevan;  - 6 breakfasts + 5 lunches in Georgia;  - 1 dinner with folklore in Tbilisi;  - 1 wine tasting (in Armenia) and 1 wine & chacha tasting in Georgia;  - 1 master class on Armenian baking;  - 1 master class on baking Georgian bread and making churchkhela;  - Radio equipment;  - 1 bottle of water per day per person during the tour;  - Transportation services;  - All entrance fees to historical and cultural sites mentioned in the program | o Airline tickets;  o Drinks and gratuities;  o Dinners (except 2nd and 7th day): optional dinner: 22 EUR/pers  o Any services not mentioned in the section “The price includes” |

***Price depends on dates and number of people***

***Send inquiries via e-mail booking@art-travel.am or WhatsApp***