

ITINERARY
Extension
Azerbaijan - Georgia - Armenia

WED. Day 1 Leave USA by LH

AZERBAIJAN

THU. Day 2 Arrive **BAKI (Baku)** Bina Airport 8:00 PM
HOTEL ATROPAT

BAKI (BAKU)

Baki, the capital of Azerbaijan, is the biggest metropolis in Transcaucasia with a quarter of Azerbaijan's population. This beautiful city is built around a perfect harbor. Baki Bay is a notch in the underside of the Apsheron Peninsula.

There has been one settlement or another since at least the 5th century. It was run by Arabs, Turks, Persians and finally by Russians. Oil has been scooped since the 10th century and large scale oil extraction since the 1870's. In 1935, the drilling began offshore. Hitler's drive to Strangel the flow of oil was stopped at Stalingrad (now Volgograd). The production has now fallen as oil deposits have been discovered in Siberia. But the city is still surrounded by pipelines and refineries.

Baki is a composition of actually three cities, old town, boomtown and Russian town with the old walled city to the west and the modern city to the East and North. The compact medieval fortress, whose original walls were built between the 12th and 16th century, was strong enough to withstand a long Mongol Tartar siege in the 13th century, has been recently restored.

FRI. Day 3
B,D

BAKU

9:00 AM – Baku Sightseeing with visit to Shakhiler Khibany Park with Panoramic view of Baku.

2:30 PM - Visit to the Azerbaijan History Museum

3:30 PM - Visit of the Old city by foot.

During this walk through Icheri Sheher, the historic center of Baku situated within the ancient city walls, you will see such architectural monuments as Maiden Tower and the Shirvanshakhs' Palace, Karavansarays ancient mosques, etc.

5:00 PM - Visit to the Azerbaijan Carpet Museum

7:00 PM - Return to the hotel for dinner

SAT. Day 4
B, D

BAKU

Morning Absheron Peninsula Tour

Drive to the suburb to see Mosque in Amiradjany.

Continue to the Fire Worshippers' Temple

The Ateshgah fire-worshippers' temple was restored in the 18th century by congregation from India. The original building was built on a spot where natural gas was coming out of the ground, causing "ever-burning flames" which used to inspire Zoroaster and his followers. The temple was destroyed in the 7th century. An explanation on the cult and the history of the place will be given. Thereafter visit the tower type Temple in Markadany Suburb.

2:00 PM - Afternoon excursion to Gobustan.

Excursion to the volcanic desert to southwest of Baku along the Caspian shore. Here you will see rock paintings made by ancient people who used to live there in caves more than ten thousand years ago.

SUN. Day 5
B,L,D

BAKU

Excursion to **NAKHICHEVAN**

Please bring your passport.

Transfer to airport.

Leave BAKU by air

8:00 AM

NAKHICHEVAN

Arrive **NAKHICHEVAN**

9:00 AM

The main city and capital of the **NAKHCHIVAN REPUBLIC**, also called Nakhchivan, was an ancient trading centre. Some historians consider that it was founded in the 16th century BC. According to a legend, the city was founded by Noah. The Greeks and Romans called it Nacksuana/Naxuana (from the Greek for sweet water). As early as the 2nd century BC it is mentioned by Ptolomy as a thriving city.

It is spread over the foothills of Zangezur chain, on the right bank of the Nakhchivan river at an altitude of almost 1000 m.

Invader after invader looted, destroyed and (in some cases) rebuilt the city. It was the capital of Atabek Eldegiz emirate in the 12th century and the Nakhchivan Khanate in the 18th Century.

The main sight in the city is the 12th Century **Momine Khatum Mausoleum**, also known as the 'Atabek Gumbezi'. Momine Khatum was the wife of Ildegizid Atabek Djakhan Pakhlevan, ruler of the Atabek

SUN. Day 5

Eldegiz emirate. The 10-sided monument is decorated with intricate Geometrical motives and Kufic script, it uses turquoise glazed bricks. It shares the neighbourhood with a statue of its architect – Abubaker Oglu Ajami – and bust of Heidar Aliyev.

Also from the 12 century and by the same architect, is the octagonal Yusuf Ibn Kusir tomb, knowns as “Atababa”, half abandoned near the main cemetery.

More recent (1993) is the white marble **Mausoleum of Hussein Javid**. The Azeri writer died in the Gulag under Stalin. Both the Mausoleum and his house museum are located east of the theatre. Although being a recent construction, Hussein Javid’s Mausoleum is a of great iconic importance, representing the ability of the exclave to live despite the Armenian embargo and becoming a symbol of Nakchivan itself.

The city also has an **historical museum**, a literary museum (both on Nizami street) and the house museum of Nakhchivansku (on Ataturk street). Have a look also at the baths and blue domed Imamzade, the Uzbek style tome of Abu Muzaffa Bahdur Khan. The city has a few interesting mosques, particularly the Juma mosque, with its large dome.

Leave **NAKHICHEVAN** and fly back to Baku.
(local agent will provide air ticket)

MON. Day 6
B,L,D

Transfer to the airport.

Leave BAKU by J2 #223 10:10 AM

GEORGIA

Arrive **TBILISI** 10:30 AM
You will be transferred to
HOTEL MARRIOTT

TBILISI (TIFLIS)

Tbilisi lies in a bowl surrounded by hills where the Kura river is flowing through it. The city existed sometimes before Vakhtang Gorgasali, moved the Iverian capital here from Mtskheta probably in 458. Since then it has nearly always been the most important city in what is now Georgia. Commanding the route between East and West Trans-caucasia. The city changed hands between Persians and Turks countless times. The Persians burnt it down one last time in 1795. Shortly before it became a Russian provincial capital. Today it is one of the chief industrial cities in the Caucasus area.

Cont.
MON. Day 6

Afternoon city tour

Walk around the Old Town and sense a rare blend of European and Asian cultures. Oriental markets, sulfur, bathhouses, countless churches, wooden houses with intricately carved balconies make Tbilisi a wonderful attraction. During the brief periods of relative calm and economic prosperity Georgia was a real Paradise for merchants. Numerous caravans from all over the world headed from Georgia, which was a crossroads of trade routes. Tbilisi was the country's biggest wine market. By the end of the 18th century, the city enacted the plan by Georgian geographer Vakhushti and planted many gardens in and around the city.

Visit: Narikala Fortress - Main fortress of the city, dated from 4th century; Anchiskhati basilica - oldest ecclesiastical building, dates 6th century. The church received its name from the Anchiicon; Sion - the main cathedral church of Tbilisi. The cross of St. Nino is kept here; Old Caravansary - merchants oriental style building; Metekhi church - VI - VII century, cross copal church, part of the Royal residential complex - Metekhi. XII - XIX cc. The prison was located here; Mtatsminda Pantheon - the most important and well known people of Georgia and Russia are buried here; Rustaveli Avenue, main and the most beautiful street of Tbilisi, the favorite place for leisure and free time for the guests and natives of Tbilisi. Visits to Georgia art and State museums, exhibition of gold work dated to the 3rd century BC and medieval art from the 9th to the 14th century. Visit of Open area Museum where you can find the traditional types of houses of different provinces of Georgia.

TUE. Day 7
B,L

TBILISI

Morning tour to Mtskheta

20 kms (12 ½ miles) North of Tbilisi at the confluence of the Kura and Aragvi rivers was the capital of Iveria before Tbilisi from the third century B.C. to the 5th century A.D. King Mirian accepted here Christianity from St. Nino in the 4th century. Mtskheta remained the headquarters of the Georgian church until the 12th century and has still several fine old churches. The first to be visited is Sveti Tskhoveli

Cathedral, the most important church of old Georgia. Its name means life-giving pillar. The first stone cathedral here, began by Bagrat III in the 11th century, was destroyed by Timur. Several important Iverian rulers tombs are in front of the cathedral. Next, we will visit the still working Samtavro, convent dated from the 11th century. Continue to the Dzhoari (cross) Cathedral, which stands on a hilltop overlooking the city. It was built in 506 to 604, replacing a big wooden cross put there in the 4th century. We will also visit Bebristsikhe Fort at the North end of town, which was an outlying defense for medieval Tbilisi. Afternoon free.

WED. Day 8

TBILISI

B,L

Excursion to Gori, birthplace of Georgia's most infamous son, Josef Stalin. Visit to the Museum, housing the life of Stalin. Continue to Sioni of Ateni near Gori and view the Jvari Church. Continue to Uplisteikhe (Fortress of God) to view the ancient rock-cut town, dating back to the 1st half of the 1st Millennium B.C. This is a complex of rock-cut halls, caves, altars, passages and streets and included the most ancient theatre in Georgia.

THU. Day 9
B,D

Leave **TBLISI** at 9:30 AM and drive to Sadakhlo border city and enter

ARMENIA

Leave **SADAKHLO** and drive to Hakhpataz to view the Monastery, one of the outstanding samples of the medieval Armenian architecture. Continue to the Sanain Monastery (10th Century). Drive via Odzun to see the old church, before arriving in Yerevan. HOTEL MARRIOTT

YEREVAN (EREVAN)

The capital of Armenia lies on the sides of the Ararat valley at an altitude of 900 to 1300 meters (approximately 2000 to 3000 ft) above sea level. Yerevan dates back to 732 B.C. when Argistis, King of Urartu, began to build the fortress and the town of Erebuni, which now forms the center of the modern city. The city has been dominated by the Romans, Parthians, Arabs, Tartars, Turks, Persians, and Georgians. It became Russian in the early 19th century. It has grown from a pre world war I population of 30,000 to a thriving modern metropolis and a major center of Industry and culture with a population exceeding one million.

FRI. Day 10
B, D

YEREVAN

Morning city tour

The central plaza is designed as a unit in the Armenian national style. The fountains in front of the museum are enhanced by a colored light show at night. On the East side is the government house, which is the seat of the Armenian government. In 1968, 2750 fountains were installed for Yerevan's 2750th anniversary. The extensive partially restored excavations of the Erebuni fortress includes the ruins of a palace and a double defensive wall, which also includes a museum. The History and Art Museum located in the same building. The History Museum has artifacts and models of old Urartu and Armenia as well as two carts preserved in the mud of Lake Sevan since the 14th or 13th century B.C. The Art Gallery of Armenia has a good section of Armenian Art from the 7th century A.D. The Matenadaran or ancient manuscripts library houses over 12,000 Armenian manuscripts from the 6th century on, which

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Cont.
FRI. Day 10

are collected from all over the world. The illuminated manuscripts and the cultured history is impressive

Afternoon tour covering the Genocide Memorial to the victims of the 1915 Genocide, on the hills, overlooking the city centre. It consists of a skyward pointing needle (symbolizing revival), a circle of basalt pillars leaning ground an eternal flame, and a wall with relief scenes. The memorial is separated from the city centre by the ravine of the Razdan River. We will continue to the Erebuni Fortress, to see the ruins Palace.

SAT. Day 11
B

Leave **YEREVAN** by BD # 932

8:00 AM

Arrive **LONDON (LHR)**

9:35 AM

Leave **LONDON (LHR)** by BD#6105

11:40 AM

Arrive **HOUSTON**

3:50 PM

Itinerary
The Caucasus Region
2012

Visiting

Azerbaijan

Georgia

Armenia

Travel Arrangements by:
UNIVERSAL TRAVEL SYSTEM
800/255-4338