

Armenia ~ Walking through History

<http://www.kudutravel.com/tours/armenia-walking-tour>

17 – 30 September 2020

Armenia, an ancient civilisation whose territory once stretched from the Black Sea to the Caspian, was the first nation in the world to adopt Christianity officially, in 301 AD. Their heritage of early stone-carved churches is unsurpassed.

We spend four days based in Yerevan, Armenia's vibrant capital with architecture from ancient to Soviet times and statues spread across its historic streets, taking in the History Museum at Erebuni Fortress, the Matenadaran manuscript collection, the Genocide Memorial and the Echmiadzin Cathedral.

Travelling through the mountainous terrain of the Lesser Caucasus resembles traversing an open-air museum. We access remote monasteries, ancient standing stones and early forts on foot and observe the traditional way of life in rural communities.

HIGHLIGHTS of our Armenia walking tour include:

- Visits to Armenia's most important early stone-carved churches, remote fortified monasteries and the well-restored 14th century Orbelian caravanserai
- The Matenadaran Museum with its outstanding Armenian manuscript collection
- Moderate walks on 8 days of the tour (1 – 3.5 hrs) amongst the splendid scenery of the Lesser Caucasus and by Lake Sevan
- Driving through dramatic landscape, crossing mountain passes, including the 2,401 metre Selim Pass on the Silk Route

Guests' comments on this trip:

'An enjoyable introduction to a culture and scenery unlike anything I have experienced before; enhanced by the enthusiasm and knowledge of the local guides. It was an advantage to benefit from the extensive research conducted by Kudu. I appreciate the many hours you obviously spent on all aspects of the tour. Food, simple but delicious; scenery, breath-taking; company, good as always with Kudu.'

'An excellent programme with good choice of walks, an appropriate mix of architecture, sites and landscapes, and all extremely well guided.'

'An amazing trip, which exceeded all expectations.'

Itinerary

DAY 1

D included

After meeting at Yerevan airport in the evening, we have a 30-minute transfer to our 4-star hotel in the centre. We have a light supper, perhaps followed by a nightcap of the celebrated Armenian brandy (Churchill's favourite).

DAY 2

B, L, D included

Archaeological evidence suggests that Yerevan, Armenia's capital, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in history. We begin our explorations at the Erebuni Fortress, dating from 782 BC, with its museum displaying items found during excavations of this Urartian military outpost. We walk through the city centre and up the strikingly modern Cascades for views of Biblical Mount Ararat, lost to Turkey in 1921.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

We start at the moving Genocide Memorial and Museum, then drive out of the city to Echmiadzin, the home of the earliest (more than 1,700 years old) and most important cathedral in Armenia. Returning to central Yerevan, there are opportunities to visit the National Gallery and the Historical Museum; to inspect top-quality Armenian carpets or simply people-watch from a café in the Green Belt or the famous Republic Square, renowned for its grand architecture and musical fountains.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

An hour's drive brings us to the start of our 2-hour walk through a gorge, with outcrops of basalt columns, up to the Parthenon-like Garni Temple, a first century Graeco-Roman pagan temple probably devoted to the Zoroastrian God Mithra. We may hear Armenian visitors give an impromptu choral concert. Nearby is the legendary Monastery of the Spear at Geghard. This UNESCO World Heritage site was carved into the rock to house one of the most cherished relics of Christianity, the Spear which pierced Jesus on the Cross.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

Heading south, our first stop is Khor Virap, a monastery set photogenically below Mount Ararat and the site of the Royal prison where St. Gregory the Illuminator was held for thirteen years before converting Armenia to Christianity in 301, by curing King Trdat I. We continue across a mountain pass and through the vineyards of the Areni valley to the 12th century red rock monastery of Noravank. We investigate the marvellous carvings of the churches, before a short walk through a dramatic red rock gorge. Eagles and long-legged buzzards soar above us as we stroll round the standing stones at Karahunj, an ancient astronomical observatory, rather like Stonehenge, but smaller and possibly older. Arriving in Goris, in the far southeast of Armenia, we settle in our next resting place, a typical provincial Armenian hotel.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

We explore the nearby historic cave village of Khndzoresk on a 2-hour walk. Inhabited until the 1950s, the multi-story dwellings, carved out of volcanic rock, were complemented by churches, schools and workshops. Back in Goris, we walk through the town centre, along tree-lined streets with 19th century stone houses before returning to our hotel.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

Following a short drive, we board a cable car across a deep river gorge to access the fortified 9th century Tatev monastery, once a renowned centre of study with more than 600 monks in residence. Our 2.5 hr walk takes us gradually up to a viewpoint on a grassy ridge

and round the other side of a mountain. In the afternoon, we drive for 3 hours to our overnight stop in the mountains of the Vayots Dzor province in a comfortable rural lodge.

DAY 8

B, L, D included

We stop to walk through the village of Yeghegis to see the 14th century Zorats church, where horses and arms were consecrated before battle, and the oldest known Jewish cemetery in the world. Our route now follows the Silk Road and crosses the Selim Pass at 2,401 m, where we stop to admire the remarkably well restored 14th century Orbelian's caravanserai. On the shores of the high-altitude Lake Sevan, we pause at Hayravank monastery and see a number of *khachkars* (mediaeval carved crosses) before proceeding north, on the Tbilisi road, to our next 4-star hotel, an imposing stone building set in a river gorge, with an indoor pool and a spa.

DAY 9

B, L, D included

13th century frescoes reward us for a steep 15-minute climb up to the semi-ruined church at Kobayr, and lammergeyers, griffon vultures and golden eagles may be seen on the cliffs above. We explore the UNESCO World Heritage listed, 10th century Haghpat monastery and walk down into the valley (1 hr). In complete contrast, we see a MiG-21 fighter plane in Sanahin, the birthplace of its designer, then ascend a high plateau to the country home of the Armenian poet, Hovhannes Tumanian.

DAY 10

B, L, D included

We drive to the Dilijan National Park, characterised by forests of oak, beech and hornbeam. After a 2-hour walk linking little-visited mediaeval monasteries, we head for the attractive town of Dilijan for lunch and a visit to the Art Gallery, with a representative collection of Armenian paintings of the 19th and 20th centuries. We stop at the Goshavank monastery, founded in the 13th century and once famous for its library, before continuing to our next 4-star hotel on the eastern shore of Lake Sevan.

DAY 11

B, L, D included

A morning walk (3.5 hrs) takes us through the nearby village, with its horses and walnut and apricot trees, before entering a picturesque river valley. The rest of the afternoon is free for relaxing in the hotel swimming pool or outdoor hot tub, reading or enjoying the views of the lake. The hotel has an excellent, stylish restaurant featuring traditional Armenian dishes such as marinated aubergine salad with walnuts and beef roll with plums and red wine sauce.

DAY 12

B, L, D included

High on Mt. Aragats, an extinct 4,000 m volcano just north of Yerevan, we have a simple picnic at 2,300 m by the ruined Amberd Fortress, destroyed by the Mongols in 1236. Our optional and weather permitting 3-hour walk follows the Amberd river valley. Clear weather brings marvellous views of Mt. Ararat and we may encounter Yazidi shepherds and their flocks. Returning to Yerevan, we check in at our original 4-star hotel.

DAY 13

B, L, D included

We have a leisurely day in Yerevan taking in the important collection of Armenian

manuscripts in the Matenadaran and the covered market with its piles of fresh and dried fruits, walnuts and herbs. We enjoy a farewell candlelit dinner in one of Yerevan's excellent restaurants.

Day 14

B included

A morning transfer to the airport concludes our holiday.

Activity Level

Standard

8 walking days, 1 to 3.5 hours daily. Lightweight hiking boots which offer good ankle support are essential as the terrain is generally rough underfoot.

Temperatures

September temperatures range between 13° and 28°C during the day, with cooler evenings. It is normally dry and clear at this time of year.

Accommodation

- 6 nights (first 4 and the last 2 nights) in a 4-star hotel in the centre of Yerevan
- 2 nights in a small friendly hotel in Goris
- 1 night in a comfortable rural lodge in the mountains of the Vayots Dzor province
- 2 nights in a 4-star heritage hotel, an imposing stone building set in a river gorge in northeast Armenia, with an indoor pool and a spa
- 2 nights in a 4-star heritage hotel on Lake Sevan

Trip Price, per person sharing:

£2,673.25 until 16th December 2019 **£2,745.50** until 16th March 2020

£2,817.75 until 16th June 2020 **£2,890** after 16th June 2020

<https://www.kudutavel.com/faq#discounts>

£280 single supplement

£400 deposit per person

Please note that the single room supplement is imposed by the hotels and not by Kudu Travel. If you are willing to share, but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable. We endeavour to obtain double rooms for single occupancy, whenever possible.

Price Includes

- Accommodation for 13 nights, on a twin shared basis
- Meals with wine/beer at dinners and restaurant lunches, as listed in the daily notation
- Land transportation in a private vehicle as described, except during free periods
- Entrance and sightseeing fees as described, except during free periods
- Services of an English-speaking local guide, plus your Kudu Travel tour leader
- Gratuities for the driver and hotel and restaurant staff (appreciation for your Kudu tour leaders is discretionary)

Price does not Include

- Flights to and from Yerevan
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- Passport, visa and health documentation

- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides wine/beer with group lunches and dinners, free time activities, etc.)
- Transport and transfer of excess baggage
- Armenian departure tax, if any

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday.

We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Visa and Health Requirements

Visitors from the UK and EU currently require a valid passport for entry to Armenia but not a visa. For most other nationalities, a visa is issued on arrival at Yerevan airport (approximately £30, payable in Armenian drams purchasable on the spot). If you are a national of another country, please check visa regulations with your nearest Embassy of Armenia.

At present, there are no specific and compulsory health requirements for entry to Armenia, but you may wish to **consult your doctor (at least 6 weeks before you travel)** about updating your immunisation against Hepatitis A, polio, tetanus and typhoid, or anything else they consider advisable. You may also wish to check the advice given to travellers by the Department of Health (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/healthcare-when-travelling-abroad/>) and the FCO (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book a trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please ask our office.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.