

## TURKEY-GEORGIA-AZERBAIJAN-UZBEKISTAN

The Best of the Caucasus & Central Asia

October 2012

*The Caucasus is known as the last less explored frontier of Europe, with expansive forested wildernesses and ancient culture. The fascinating mix of Eastern Europe, Mediterranean and Asian cultures in the area makes this one of the most culturally diverse regions of Europe. A Silk Road holiday combines the best of cultural holidays in Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Soak up the culture and history along this ancient trading route as you travel the Silk Road for yourself.*



### The Itinerary

Day 1: 13 Oct. Saturday. Arrival in Batumi (Georgia)

Day 2: 14 Oct. Sunday. Program in Georgia. Batumi & surroundings

Day 3: 15 Oct. Monday. Program in Georgia. Batumi-Mestia

Day 4: 16. Oct. Tuesday. Program in Georgia. Mestia & surroundings

Day 5: 17 Oct. Wednesday. Program in Georgia. Mestia-Kutaisi

Day 6: 18 Oct. Thursday. Program in Georgia. Kutaisi-Tbilisi

Day 7: 19 Oct. Friday. Program in Georgia. Tbilisi-Sighnaghi

Day 8: 20 Oct. Saturday. Program in Georgia. Sighnaghi to Tbilisi airport. Flight to Baku (Azerbaijan).

Day 9: 21 Oct. Sunday. Program in Azerbaijan. Baku & surroundings

Day 10: 22 Oct. Monday. Baku to Tashkent (Uzbekistan). Flight from Baku to Tashkent by HY760 at 16:55 (Thu). Arrival in Tashkent at 20:30.

Day 11: 23 Oct. Tuesday. Program in Uzbekistan. Tashkent-Samarkand

Day 12: 24 Oct. Wednesday. Program in Uzbekistan. Samarkand-Bukhara

Day 13: 25 Oct. Thursday. Program in Uzbekistan. Bukhara

Day 14: 26 Oct. Friday. Program in Uzbekistan. Bukhara–Tashkent

Day 15: 27 Oct. Saturday. Departure from Tashkent



## **The Program**

### *Georgia segment*

Day 1: 13 Oct. Saturday. Arrival in Batumi (Georgia). Check in hotel. Time for rest. Welcome dinner at city restaurant with traditional Georgian food.

Food in Georgia and Caucasus is one of the attractions. Each area has its unique cuisine with special flavor. The large list of local delicious dishes is providing wide choice for gourmands. We will taste special dishes in every region.

After dinner visit musical fountains, listen the best of classic music under open air.

Overnight at the hotel in Batumi

Day 2: 14 Oct. Sunday. Batumi & surroundings (2 hours driving)

Breakfast at the hotel

Sightseeing tour of Batumi including visits to the Virgin's cathedral and Batumi historical museum.

Lunch at local restaurant

After lunch visit agricultural market, Twisty streets and sea-side boulevard, general views of Batumi – modern architecture.

Dinner at the restaurant with West Georgian traditional dishes.

Overnight at the hotel in Batumi

Day 3: 15 Oct. Monday. Batumi-Mestia (4-5 hours driving)

Breakfast at the hotel

We continue journey to the land where the epic legend of the Argonauts was acted out and the Golden Fleece was kept, to one of the most attractive provinces of Georgia - Svaneti. In Zugdidi, changing transport to 4WD and drive up to Enguri Gorge where the first inhabitants, mainly gold prospectors, settled in ancient times. It was here that most of Colchis gold was obtained. For centuries the Svan ethnic group evolved there, cut off from the outside world by the high and inaccessible mountains, their culture preserved almost intact.

Lunch en route. Check in at the best available hotel in town of Mestia. Time for rest.

Dinner at Gabliani family, daughters of famous mountaineer Ilia Gabliani.

Overnight at the hotel in Mestia.

Day 4: 16. Oct. Tuesday. Mestia & surroundings (4 hours driving)

Breakfast at the hotel. One day trip by 4WD vehicles to village of Ushguli - middle age fortification, surrounded by the 5,000 m giants of the Caucasus mountain range. It is considered to be one of the highest populated places in the world (2,200m above sea level).



Visit The historical and ethnographic museum, which houses manuscripts from the 10th and 12th centuries, religious tracts from the 9th-11th century, icons, metal and other artifacts of the 14th - 16th century, gold coins of the antique and late antique periods and several Bronze Age treasures.

Lunch at famous family of Charkviani, whose ancestors settled here 8 centuries ago as described in historical annals.

Evening in Mestia. Dinner at the beautiful veranda of the hotel.

Overnight at the hotel in Mestia.

Day 5: 17 Oct. Wednesday. Mestia-Kutaisi (4-5 hours driving)

Breakfast at the hotel

In the morning visit unique collection of gold items, crosses and manuscripts at the museum of Mestia. At noon drive to Kutaisi, historical city of Georgia.

Check in hotel. Time for rest.

Dinner at the guesthouse whose owner is a great cook. Tasting of Imeretian wines and special dishes cooked by our host.

Overnight at the hotel in Kutaisi.

Day 6: 18 Oct. Thursday. Kutaisi-Tbilisi

Breakfast at the hotel

Walking tour in old part of Kutaisi, then visit Gelati Monastery Complex (UNESCO site) founded by King David the IV in the 12th century. Gelati was the significant center of culture, religion and philosophy. The main thing that makes this place unique is the biggest and best-preserved mosaic mural painting.

Drive to Tbilisi. Lunch en route.

Before approaching the capital – Tbilisi, 1 hour stop in town of Mtskheta, the historical capital of Georgia. Georgia's conversion to Christianity occurred in Mtskheta in 337 AD and it is considered to be one of Georgia's most important religious centers. Visit Svetitskhoveli Cathedral of 11th century.

Dinner at the restaurant.

Check in hotel.

Overnight at the hotel in Tbilisi.

Day 7: 19 Oct. Friday. Program in Georgia. Tbilisi-Sighnaghi

Breakfast at the hotel.



AM sightseeing tour of Tbilisi, the city which was founded in 5<sup>th</sup> century, where east meets west, mixture of traditions and modern life is evident almost at every corner.

Visit to National museum, old part of the city and Sulphur baths area.

Lunch at the restaurant.

After lunch continue journey to Kakheti – the main wine producing region of Georgia. Here the lifestyle and traditions are related with wine. The area has a long tradition of wine-making and vine culture. Georgians were originally sun worshippers and believed that the sun has its chosen creatures on earth. The vine was thought to be brimming with solar energy, its growth reflecting the power of the sun. The vine represented the feminine spirit, and the sun, the masculine. This is why wine has strength, reflecting the power given to it by the sun. Georgians even call the vine the sun's daughter...

Check in hotel. Time for rest.

Before dinner short sightseeing tour of Signaghi – beloved city of artists, painters, composers and poets, the crossroad of ancient trade routes, historical battles and love stories.

Visit Pheasants Tears' wine cellar, taste varieties of natural wines. Later dinner will be served at Pheasants Tears wine restaurant and hosted by our guide and artist John Wurdeman. Dinner will be accompanied with folklore show, fiery dances and folk songs.

Overnight at the hotel in Signaghi.

Day 8: 20 Oct. Saturday. Program in Georgia. Signaghi to Tbilisi airport. Flight to Baku (Azerbaijan).

Breakfast at the hotel

Morning free for visiting carpet shop and picture gallery.

Afternoon transfer to Tbilisi airport, flight Tbilisi to Baku. After 1 hour 30 minutes arrival to Baku. Transfer to hotel. Check in hotel.

Dinner independent (Hotel restaurant)

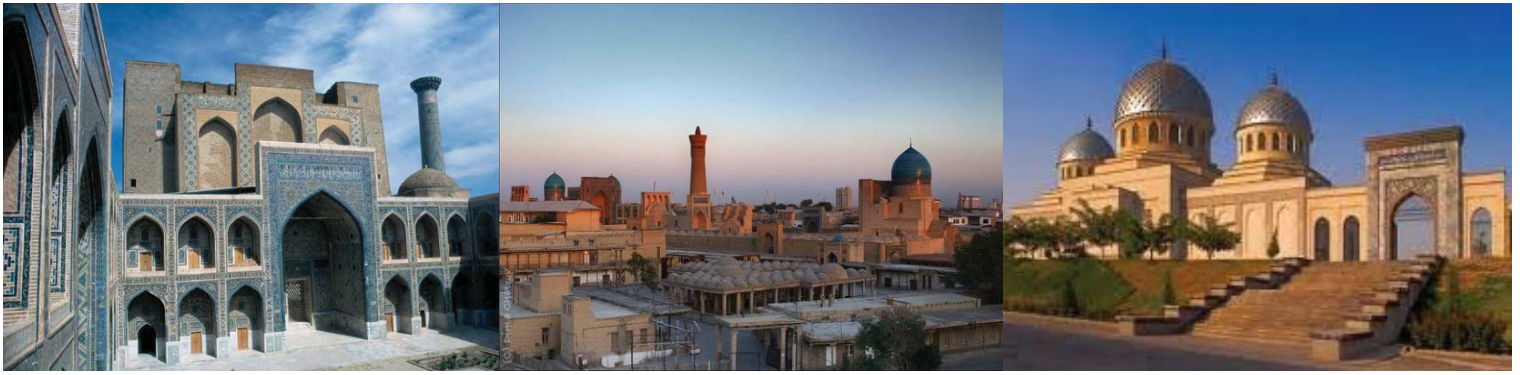
Overnight at the hotel in Baku.

### *Azerbaijan segment*

Day 9: 21 Oct. Sunday. Baku & Absheron Peninsula

Breakfast at the hotel

Baku Sightseeing tour including visits to Memory Alley – “Shehidler Khiyabany”, panoramic view of Baku city from the Martyrs Lane. Trip to medieval fortress of Old Baku - “Ichari Shaha” 15 - 17 c.c. “Maiden Tower “ – 9 c., The Complex of “Shirvan Shahs” Palace - 15 c., Medieval CaravanSaray - 15c., Medieval Markets square, handmade carpet’s workshop art studio. The Old Town, called



Ichari Shahr in Azerbaijani, extends from the curve of the Baku Bay through the hills behind it, and much of the area is closed to vehicular traffic. The Old Town is a warren of narrow alleys and winding passages neatly hemmed in by high fortress walls. The low, stone walls of the Palace of the Shirvan-Shahs, built in the 15th and 16th centuries, belie the grandeur of the masonry and inscriptions on the royal chambers, mosques, and mausoleums within the compound.

Lunch at Karvansaray Restaurant.

After Lunch Tour of the Ateshgyakh Fire-Worshippers' Temple (18<sup>th</sup> c), which is located within Greater Baku in the village of Surakhany (9 miles from Baku). The historical roots of the monument go back to the days when Azerbaijan statehood was only taking shape and establishing itself, and Zoroastrianism, the central part in whose ritual is played by fire, was the dominant religion in the country. Dinner at OLD CITY Restaurant

Overnight at the hotel in Baku

Day 10: 22 Oct. Monday. Baku to Tashkent (Uzbekistan).

Breakfast at the hotel

Morning spend in Baku. Lunch at the restaurant. After lunch transfer to airport.

Flight from Baku to Tashkent by HY760 at 16:55 (Thu). Arrival in Tashkent at 20:30. Border formalities. Transfer to hotel.

Overnight at the hotel in Tashkent.

Uzbekistan segment

Day 11: 23 Oct. Tuesday. Tashkent-Samarkand

Breakfast at the hotel

Drive to Samarkand (takes around 4-5 hours total). Arrive in Samarkand. Lunch. Enjoy an afternoon tour of the city, visiting the evening Registan Complex. Wine tasting at winery named after Khovrenko. Dinner at the restaurant.

Overnight at the hotel in Samarkand.

Day 12: 24 Oct. Wednesday. Samarkand-Bukhara

Breakfast at the hotel

Continue to sightseeing: Gur-Emir Mausoleum, Rukhabad Necropolis and the bazaar. Lunch. Transfer to Bukhara for overnight. Show at Nodir Devan Begi.

Dinner.

Overnight at the hotel in Bukhara.

Day 13: 25 Oct. Thursday. Bukhara

Breakfast at the hotel

Sightseeing tour in Bukhara. Explore the city: Magoki Attari; Ulug Beg, Abdul Aziz Madrassahs, Ulugbek Madrassah; Lyabi-Hauz complex; Lunch. Bolo Khauz mosque and the Ark Citadel as per your choice.

Dinner

Overnight at the hotel in Bukhara.

Day 14: 26 Oct. Friday. Bukhara–Tashkent

Breakfast at the hotel

Samanids Mausoleum; Chor-Minor; Chashma Ayub Mazar; Poli-Kalon complex, including Minaret and Mosque. Lunch. Visit to Jewellery Master Alisher Khaidarov and Visit to Gold embroidery shop.

Flight to Tashkent.

Dinner.

Overnight at the hotel in Tashkent.

Day 15: 27 Oct. Saturday. Departure from Tashkent

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to airport, flights back home.

End of services