



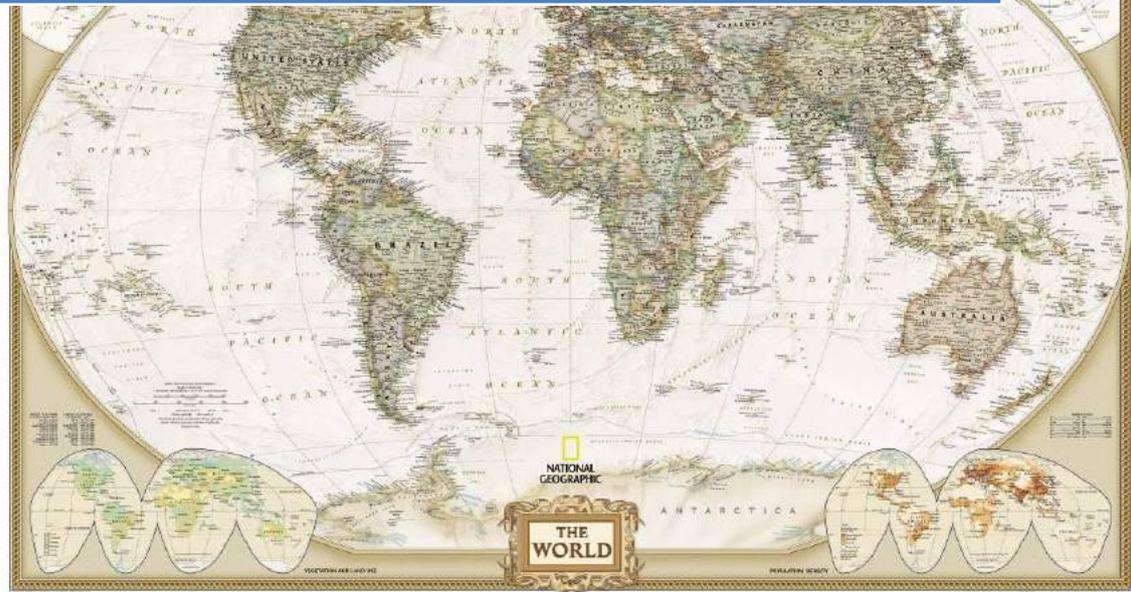
*1<sup>st</sup> trip*

*May*

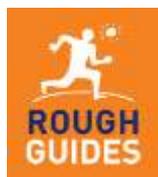
**2017**

*Around the World in 80 trips*

*#80. Caucasus region*



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## CAUCASUS REGION (10+ days, 201€+)

Azerbaijan/Dagestan 2-6, Georgia 4-10, Armenia 4-6



### Top Highlights

The ancient, proud and traditional **Caucasus region** combines breathtaking natural beauty, remarkable religious monuments, and charming cosmopolitan cities.

- ✓ *Baku Old City*
- ✓ *Caucasus peaks*
- ✓ *Remote monasteries*

### Themes



Mountain



Shoestring



Religious



Adventure



Small cultural difference or physical strain (common exotic travels)



Spring

## INTRODUCTION

The Caucasus region is a patchwork of valleys and high peaks, where several ancient kingdoms flourished, some of the first in the world to adopt Christianity. Slowly emerging from their Soviet past and recent bitter warfare, the people of the three (or maybe four, with Nagorno-Karabagh) republics are building their future based on their cultural values of tradition, pride, and hospitality. Here you will find snow-capped peaks offering excellent hiking opportunities, beautiful architecture both medieval and modern, amazing rock-hewn churches and monasteries, plus an often underestimated cuisine, that combines Turkish, Persian, Russian and unique local elements with sweet brandy, vodka and wine. The region is rich in UNESCO monuments, with 9 total listings, including several Armenian and Georgian religious sites, the remote valleys of Upper Svaneti, the stone age petroglyphs of Gobustan, the remarkable architecture of Baku old city, and the massive Fortress of Derbent in Dagestan.

### TOP HIGHLIGHTS

**Baku old city:** The cobblestoned streets of the old city are well deserving their UNESCO listing, with a medieval feeling combining Persian carpets with Turkish architecture.

**Caucasus peaks:** The Caucasus range is nothing if not its snow-capped mountain peaks and picturesque alpine meadows and valleys, proud as the people living in their shadows.

**Remote monasteries:** Some of the first countries to adopt Christianity, the religious tradition is evident in rock-hewn remote monasteries and the precious relics they are guarding.

ULTIMATE SOUVENIR: **Georgian wine**

## IN A NUTSHELL

MAIN DESTINATION: **Georgia** (4-10 days)

EXTENSIONS: **Azerbaijan/Dagestan** (2-6 days), **Armenia** (4-6 days)

FULL LENGTH: **22 days** (full programme)

INDICATIVE COST: **494€** (full programme, +320€ international flights)

THEMES: **Mountain, Shoestring, Religious, Adventure**

DIFFICULTY: **2**

IDEAL SEASON: **Spring** (15/03-15/06), **Summer** (15/6-15/9)

### TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Wander the alleyways of **Baku Old City** and visit the palaces of the Shirvanshahs
- Discover **Stone Age petroglyphs**, unique mud volcanoes, Zoroastrian fire temples
- Search for traces of the mysterious ancient **Albanian Kingdom** and its churches
- Spend a day exploring **Tbilisi** museums, churches, old and modern architecture
- Visit the iconic **Mount Kazbek**, where Prometheus was chained for stealing fire
- Enjoy pristine mountain air at **Upper Svaneti** and take a hike among the high peaks
- Taste Georgian **wine** and Armenian **brandy**, in the land where the vine originated
- Spot the differences between remote Armenian and Georgian rock-hewn **monasteries**
- Stroll Kentron, the beautiful centre of **Yerevan**, which earned the nick name of Pink City
- Pay your respects at UNESCO listed Armenian **churches** holding precious Christian relics
- Witness the daily rhythm of life in the unrecognised **Nagorno-Karabagh** Republic

### ESTIMATED COMBO PRICES\*

- **Azerbaijan/Dagestan** 6 days **138€** (extension, +320€ international flights ATH-GYD/EVB-ATH)
  - ✓ Baku 2 days/52€ (car rental 1 day, AirBnB 1 night, overnight train Baku-Tbilisi 34€/flight 51€)
  - ✓ Sheki/Lahic add-on +2 days/37€ (car rental 2 days, guesthouse/AirBnB 2 nights)
  - ✓ Khinalug/Derbent add-on +2 days/49€ (car rental 2 days, 3\* hotel/AirBnB 2 nights)
- **Georgia** 10 days **210€** (main programme, +180€ international flights ATH-TBS/TBS-ATH)
  - ✓ Tbilisi 4 days/52€ (car rental 2 days, AirBnB 3 nights)
  - ✓ Western Georgia extension +4 days/107€ (car rental 3 days, 3\* hotel/AirBnB 4 nights)
  - ✓ Upper Svaneti add-on +2 days/51€ (car rental 2 days, guesthouse 2 nights)
- **Armenia/Nagorno-Karabagh** 6 days **146€** (extension, +320€ international flights ATH-GYD/EVB-ATH)
- Yerevan 4 days/97€ (overnight train Tbilisi-Yerevan 29€/flight 85€, car rental 3 days, AirBnB 3 nights)
- Southern Armenia/Nagorno-Karabagh add-on +2 days/49€ (car rental 2 days, 3\* hotel/AirBnB 2 nights)

\*per person, assuming double/twin rooms, 4 people per rental car, exchange rate 1€=1.08\$

These trips are not fixed group departures, but suggested itineraries which can run at any time, for any number of people. Travellers are free to join only on specific destinations or parts of the trip instead of the whole duration. Every component is flexible and customisable, therefore additional cheaper or more expensive alternatives may also be available. The exact programme details, such as dates, length, accommodation, transportation, activities and final cost, will be discussed and decided with the travellers involved, and any such information listed here is for reference purpose only. All prices are rounded average estimates, per person, inclusive of all respective taxes or fees, based on past experience, and subject to availability and currency fluctuations. Indie Horizons is not a travel agency or tour operator, and is limited to the creation of a suggested itinerary and the provision of information about the destination. Please contact us for trip arrangements or for additional details.



***Baku old city, Azerbaijan***



***Tbilisi Peace Bridge, Georgia***



***Mestia, Georgia***



***Lake Sevan, Armenia***

## SUGGESTED ITINERARY

- **AZERBAIJAN/DAGESTAN (2-6 days)**

- **Baku** Wander the cobblestone streets of the Old City but also marvel at Flame Towers and enjoy the seafront promenade
- **Gobustan** See Stone Age petroglyphs, explore unique mud volcanoes, discover ancient Zoroastrian flame worship sites
- optional: **Khinalug** Considered as the highest village in Europe, as eerie beautiful as it is remote
- optional: **Derbent** Visit the massive historical fortress that guarded the traditional gate to the Caucasus
- optional: **Lahic** Brave the treacherous road to reach the isolated cobblestone village, renowned for its coppersmiths
- optional: **Sheki** Explore mysterious Albanian churches, lavish mountain palaces, taste traditional tea and halva

- **GEORGIA (4-10 days)**

- **Tbilisi, old city** Stretch your legs after the long train journey in the alleys and relax at the famous sulphur baths
- **Tbilisi, new city** Marvel at the architecture on the wide avenues and visit some of the many museums of the city
- optional: **Khaketi** Visit the remote Davit Gareja monastery and afterwards taste the sweet Georgian wine
- optional: **Kazbegi** See the iconic Gergeti church and take a peek at the mountain where Prometheus was chained
- **Mtskheta/Gori** Visit the ancient capital of the Iberian kingdom and enter a place where Stalin is still worshipped
- **Kutaisi** See the legendary home of the Golden Fleece, the sacred Bagrati Cathedral and the beautiful Prometheus caves
- optional: **Upper Svaneti** Explore UNESCO listed remote valleys of unique beauty, full of hiking opportunities
- optional: **Batumi** Relax in the Black Sea resort town, and enjoy a stroll by the long waterfront promenade
- optional: **Akhaltsikhe** Visit the rock-hewn Vardzia monastery and the restored medieval Rabati Castle
- optional: **Borjomi** Visit the source of the mineral water and the ski resort of Bakuriani, before returning to Tbilisi

- **ARMENIA/NAGORNO KARABAGH (2-6 days)**

- **Yerevan** Marvel at the Soviet and Modern architecture of Kentron, which earned for Yerevan the label of Pink City
- optional: **Yerevan** Stay an extra day to visit the Genocide Memorial, Brandy Factory, and Vernissage flea market
- **Echmiadzin/Khor Virap/Gargherd** Visit UNESCO-listed iconic monasteries guarding the Holy Lance
- optional: **Northern Armenia** Relax on Lake Sevan and visit the UNESCO monasteries of Sanahin and Haghpat
- optional: **Southern Armenia** Taste unique Areni wine and visit Tatev monastey by the world's longest ropeway
- optional: **Nagorno-Karabagh** Step into the unrecognised republic and see how people are rebuilding their lives

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