

## Azerbaijan & Georgia experience

Depart Cairns 10 May at 10.10AM arrive Sydney 1.05PM – Jetstar  
Depart Sydney 10 May at 9.15PM arrive Doha 11<sup>th</sup> May at 5.40AM – Qatar  
Depart Doha 11 May at 7.30AM arrive Baku 11.20AM – Qatar

Commence the following tour with Intrepid in Baku on the 11 May and ending in Tbilisi on the 30<sup>th</sup> May

### Day 1: Baku

Welcome to Azerbaijan! Your adventure begins with a welcome meeting at 6pm this evening. Please look for a note in the hotel lobby or ask reception where it will take place. If you're going to be late, please inform the hotel reception. We'll be collecting your insurance details and next of kin information at this meeting, so please ensure you have all these details to provide to your leader.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

There are no meals included on this day.

### Day 2: Baku

Get to know Baku with a tour of the city, taking in a visit to the Old City, including the Shemakha gate, Shirvanshakhs` Palace, Maiden Tower, and the Old Market Square. Don't forget your camera as you'll also see panoramic views of Baku's skyline.

After lunch head out on a tour of the Absheron Peninsula, visiting the Ateshgah fire temple, Mardakan medieval fortress and Yanardagh Fire Mountain (literally on fire!). Return to Baku in the evening.

We suggest checking out ,Nizami Street (Targoviy Street) this evening, there are many local restaurants to choose from and at night this busy boulevard comes to life; ask your leader where to find the best "Lavangi" - walnuts, dried fruit and onions are stuffed inside either chicken and roasted to create a tantalising fusion of flavours.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Baku - Maiden's Tower
- Baku - Shirvan Shah Palace
- Baku - Carpet Museum
- Baku - Caravanserai
- Baku - Absheron Peninsula Tour

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

### Day 3: Gobustan - Baku

Drive to Qobustan and visit the open-air rock paintings museum, a UNESCO heritage site with its own archaeological museum.

Return to Baku and head to Baku Boulevard to the architectural masterpiece that is the Carpet Museum. Carpet weaving in Azerbaijan dates back more than 3000 years and plays a huge part in the local identity. Later maybe stroll back to your hotel along the 3.5 kilometre boulevard checking at the Caspian Sea

**Accommodation**

- Hotel (1 night)

**Included Activities**

- Qobustan - Petroglyphs

**Meals Included**

- Breakfast

[Day 4: Caucasus Mountains / Lahij](#)

Have breakfast at the hotel before leaving Baku today. Drive to the Caucasus Mountains in the northwest of Azerbaijan through a dry landscape that gives way to a densely forested mountain area. Take part in yoghurt-making in a local home in Shamakhi. Afterwards, head to Lahij where you'll visit a copper workshop and get to know some locals over a cup of tea. Tonight, enjoy dinner with your group and stay overnight at a guesthouse or homestay in Lahij.

**Accommodation**

- Guesthouse/Homestay (1 night)

**Included Activities**

- Shamakhi - Yoghurt making
- Lahic - Copper workshop visit

**Meals Included**

- Breakfast
- Dinner

**Special Information**

Please note that in case of foggy or wet weather driving conditions in the mountains can be treacherous. If the drive to Lahic is deemed unsafe due to the weather then we will instead stay in the city of Qebele (Gabala).

[Day 5: Nidj / Sheki](#)

After breakfast, head to Nidj village, the village is home to the native Udi people, the direct descendants of ancient Caucasian Albanians, we take a stroll through the local bazaar and stop of tea and perhaps a chat with the locals before visiting the Albanian church that belongs to the Udi people, there are perhaps only a few thousand Udi people in the world today and the majority, approx 4.000 live in this area and village in Azerbaijan.

Continue on to Sheki and visit Sheki Khans Palace. The facade of the palace is richly painted with drawings displaying scenes of hunting and war, in the center is a huge stained-glass window made from multi-colored glass mosaics, walk across rainbow-coloured floors created by the frescoes and stained glass and discover the history behind the Palace.

Spend the night at a hotel in Sheki.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Sheki - Khan's Palace
- Nidj - Udin village visit

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

### [Day 6: Kish / Sheki](#)

Visit nearby Kish village and its old pointy spired Christian church this morning one of the oldest churches in the Caucasus.

Return to Sheki and check out a workshop, where famous 'Shebeke', intricate handmade vitrages, are produced.

The afternoon is free to discover Sheki, it is the kind of town where you can just wander around the strange mixture of architecture, stop of tea and enjoy some famous Sheki halva and fill your instagram account with local scenes. There is also silk production here in Sheki, ask you Leader to organise a visit to a local workshop if you like, these guys are masters.

Dont forget to ask your Leader where to get the best Sheki Piti - stew made of lamb, sheep fat, chickpeas, onions, chestnuts, saffron and spices that is cooked in a claypot and eaten in a particular way.

### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Kis - Church
- Kis - Village Visit
- Sheki - Shebeke workshop visit

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

### [Day 7: Border Crossing / Sighnaghi](#)

After breakfast at the hotel, drive take a walk with your Leader through the Sheki market, perhaps grab some halva, nuts and dried fruit for the journey to Lagodekhi on the Azerbaijan-Georgia border. Time to farewell Azerbaijan and meet your Georgia Leader. From Lagodekhi, travel to the Kakheti region, famous for its wine making and welcoming hospitality. From here, both the snowy Caucasus Mountains and bountiful green valleys are visible.

Visit a local family, explore the gardens and vineyards and then enjoy a lunch of delicious homemade food, wine and Georgian 'Chacha'. Later, visit a 300-year-old Georgian wine cellar and taste Georgian wine produced using Qvevri, large earthenware pots. This method of wine making is protected on UNESCO's heritage list and Georgian farmers have used this method for centuries. Continue to the beautiful 18th-century town of

Sighnaghi, known for its quaint stone walls, small houses with terracotta roofs and decorated balconies. Admire the picturesque views of the Alazani Valley and Great Caucasus mountains. Stay overnight at a hotel in Sighnaghi.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Sighnaghi - Georgian Wine Tasting & Home Cooked Lunch

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch

#### [Day 8: David Gareja Caves / Tbilisi](#)

In the morning drive to the David Gareja caves, a rock-hewn monastery carved into the stark semi-desert landscape in the sixth century. After seeing the Lavra Monastery, walk for about 50 minutes up a steep hill to the Udabno Monastery. This monastery features wonderful painted caves and dramatic views across to Azerbaijan.

Spend a free afternoon in Tbilisi.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- David Gareja - Monastery Complex & Hike
- David Gareja - Udabno Monastery

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### Special Information

Good physical condition is required to walk up to Udabno monastery as the walking time is around 2.5 hours (round trip). We recommend long trousers as there can be snakes in the area on occasion as well as sturdy shoes appropriate for trekking.

The exact line of the Georgia–Azerbaijan border up here has not yet been finally demarcated, and you may find Azerbaijan border guards patrolling here; they are not normally any hindrance to visiting the caves unless there is a flare-up of border tensions. In the case of border tensions we will not visit this site.

#### [Day 9: Tbilisi](#)

Today, explore the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. Wander the old districts of the city, which are structured like terraces, and walk through the narrow streets to appreciate the colourful houses, patterned balconies and revamped modern architecture. Start the tour from the 13th-century Metekhi church, with its magnificent views over old Tbilisi. A stroll along winding little streets takes us to the main sights of the city. Afterwards enjoy the panoramic views of the whole town and climb the battlements at the ancient Narikala fortress. Later explore the historical domed sulphur bath area and learn how this precinct is connected to the name of the

city.

Take the afternoon to continue exploring, perhaps visit the Museum of History and see the treasury as an optional extra, or why not try a spa for yourself.

Spend the night at a hotel in Tbilisi.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Tbilisi - Old Town Walking Tour
- Tbilisi - Narikala Fortress
- Tbilisi - Metekhi Church

#### Optional Activities

- Tbilisi - National History Museum - USD5

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### Day 10: Tbilisi

Today is yours to explore more before a group meeting tonight to begin the second part of this combination trip.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### Special Information

This is a combination trip and your group composition may change. On certain departures it may be necessary to change hotels in Tbilisi. Your group Leader can assist you with this if required.

#### Day 11: Tbilisi

After breakfast take part in a sightseeing tour of Tbilisi. The locals like to call their capital the "Balcony of Europe", placing it on par with many of Europe's graceful old cities. All the sights in the Old Town are very close to each other and within a few minutes' walk. We start our visit to Old Tbilisi from Metekhi Church, and then walk to the Synagogue, Sioni Cathedral and Anchiskhati Basilica. From here, visit Narikala Fortress and the Sulphur Baths. Afterwards, you'll have free time to further explore the capital. The evening is also free for you to enjoy. Perhaps indulge in Tbilisi's lively theater scene and witness some of the energetic and acrobatic dance that Georgia is known for.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Tbilisi - City tour

### Optional Activities

- Tbilisi - Museum of Georgia - USD5
- Tbilisi - Museum of Fine Arts - USD2
- Tbilisi - Sulphur Baths Entry - USD35
- Tbilisi - Aerial Cable Car - USD1
- Wine Tour – Kakheti Region (8-9 hours) - USD155
- Tbilisi - Funicular - USD2

### Meals Included

- Breakfast

### Special Information

As you will have already been in Tbilisi for some time and seen many of the sights you are free to join the tour today or do your own optional activities.

#### [Day 12: Mtskheta - Kutaisi](#)

Today, drive approximately 1 hour to Georgia's ancient capital and religious centre – the town of Mtskheta, which is over 3000 years old. Visit Mtskheta's top historical sights: Jvari church (6th century) and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th century), where the Robe of Christ is said to be buried. Both Jvari and Svetitskhoveli are UNESCO World Heritage sites. Afterwards, continue to the pretty city of Kutaisi, the second largest in the country (approximately 3 hours). Kutaisi is more than 3000 years old, connected to the legend of Jason and the Argonauts, along with his mythical (or is it?) Golden Fleece. Here we visit another significant historical site, the Gelati Cathedral. There may also be time to explore the cobbled streets of the town as you make your way up to the ruins of Bagrati palace and citadel.

### Accommodation

- Guesthouse/Hotel (1 night)

### Included Activities

- Mtskheta - Jvari Church
- Mtskheta - Svetitskhoveli Cathedral

### Optional Activities

- Kutaisi - Bagrati Cathedral & Gelati Monastery - Free
- Iago's Winery Tastings - USD5

### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Dinner

#### [Day 13: Mestia](#)

After a restful night, visit a local farmers market and a natural grotto filled with stalagmites and stalactites. After lunch get ready for the next part of the tour: a journey to the remote Svaneti region. Svaneti is the highest inhabited area in the Caucasus and is divided in two parts: Upper Svaneti and Lower Svaneti. Arrive

into Mestia (approximately 5 hours), the centre of Upper Svaneti. Mestia is surrounded by mountains, medieval-type villages and distinctive tower-houses. The famous tower-houses were built to accommodate villagers at times of invasion and violence during the 9th -13th centuries. Around 175 towers still stand today, although many are uninhabited. The area is home to the Svans, a proud people with a long history of survival in this isolated part of Europe, who speak their own language. Spend the night in a local guesthouse with shared facilities.

#### Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Kutaisi - Farmers Market

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Dinner

#### Day 14: Mestia

Drive to Lakhiri village (approximately 20 minutes) and start our walk (approx walking time 4-5 hours) in the direction of Mestia. After little uphill walking we descend to the beautiful valley full with blooming flowers and enjoy an amazing view of Chalati Glacier (2300m) and of Mestia Valley with its watchtowers. The paths can be steep and the ground uneven so you will need good fitness and appropriate footwear for this walk. Those not wishing to hike can stay in the village or in Mestia. Today we also witness the making of Georgian cheese. Cheese is found in many Georgian dishes and is a key ingredient in the famous khachapuri, a traditional Georgian dish of cheese-filled bread which you will no doubt eat plenty of during your time here! Participate in the preparation of another traditional meal called kubdari, a filled bread dish filled with pork and beef that originates from this region.

#### Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Mestia - Cooking class
- Mestia - Lakhiri Village Hike
- Mestia - Georgian cheese making

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

#### Special Information

Walking Information: Elevation Range = +320m / -500m; total duration between 4 and 5 hours.

Accommodation: Guesthouse with shared facilities and possibly temperamental hot water, please be patient.

Please note that the lunch included for the next 3 days will be lunch boxes prepared by our guesthouse which will mainly consist of simple sandwiches with cheese, egg, tomato and cucumber, fruit and bottled water.

### Day 15: Ushguli

Today, visit the World Heritage-listed village of Ushguli, a town around 50 kilometres southeast of Mestia (approx 3 hours drive). The village is located at 2,200 metres above sea level, and is one of the highest inhabited villages in Europe. Ushguli is most famous for its abundance of watchtowers – this is where you'll see the famous view of the towers set to the highest mountain in Georgia, the snow capped Mt Shkhara (5,068 metres). Visit the 12th-century Lamaria Church and walk to Queen Tamar's tower. Total walking time is 2-3 hours depending on fitness and trail conditions. Those not wishing to walk may stay and explore Ushguli, where there are a few small ethnographic museums in the watchtowers. In the evening you can walk around the village and become familiar with the daily life of the local people. Spend the night in a family-owned guesthouse with shared facilities.

#### Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Ushguli - Village hike
- Ushguli - Lamaria Church
- Ushguli - Queen Tamar's Tower

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

#### Special Information

Walking Information: Elevation Range = +250m / -250m; total duration between 2 and 2.5 hours.

Accommodation: Guesthouse with shared facilities and possibly temperamental hot water, please be patient.

### Day 16: Mestia

Today's walk starts from the guesthouse. The route takes us along the river to the base of Mt Shkhara. Fingers crossed for great weather! We will have a picnic lunch today. The walking trail ends at the Shkhara glacier, where the Enguri river originates below. In the afternoon, return to Mestia and stay overnight in the guesthouse. Approximate walking time is 5-6 hours. If you do not wish to walk, please discuss options with your leader in advance.

#### Accommodation

- Guesthouse (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Ushguli - Shkhara Glacier hike & picnic

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

### Special Information

Walking Information: Elevation Range = +320m / -320m; total duration 5 hours.

Accommodation: Guesthouse with shared facilities and possibly temperamental hot water, please be patient.

#### [Day 17: Batumi](#)

From the mountains to the sea today with a long drive to Batumi (approximately 7-8 hours) on the Black Sea coast. While past its Soviet heyday where it was one of the premiere seaside resorts, it is still popular with holiday makers from all over the region for its waterfront parks and beaches. Stay in a hotel tonight.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### [Day 18: Batumi](#)

In the morning take part in a short tour around the city. Then drive to the nearby Makhuntseti waterfall. Return to Batumi for an afternoon of free time. Batumi has a relaxed atmosphere, great restaurants and nightlife. Stroll the boulevard, cool off in the musical fountains on the square or see the touching Ali & Nino statue lit up at night. There's also art and ethnographic museums or a cable car to panoramic views over the city.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Included Activities

- Batumi - Makhuntseti Waterfall
- Batumi - City Tour

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### [Day 19: Tbilisi](#)

Depart from Batumi and transfer back to Tbilisi (approximately 5-6 hours) by private vehicle. Stop at local winery on the way for tasting and toast our time in Georgia together. Enjoy our final night in the nation's capital, perhaps with one last group dinner and night out together.

#### Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

#### Meals Included

- Breakfast

#### [Day 20: Tbilisi](#)

Your trip comes to an end today and you are free to depart at any time.

## Meals Included

- Breakfast

Depart Tbilisi 30 May at 12.40PM arrive Doha 2.45PM – Qatar

Depart Doha 30 May at 8.35PM arrive Sydney 31 May at 5.55PM – Qatar

Accommodation: Novotel Sydney International Airport IN: 31 May OUT: 01 June

Depart Sydney 01 June at 9.30AM arrive Cairns 12.40PM – Qantas

Cost per person \$6,666\*pp and includes the following:

- Airfares
- Airport taxes
- 20-day tour including breakfast daily, 4 lunches, 6 dinners and sightseeing as per itinerary
- 1 nights accommodation in Sydney