

**Byroads**  
*Inspiring Escorted Journeys*

# SOUTH CAUCASUS

Discover the highlights of Azerbaijan, Georgia & Armenia

16 DAYS - STARTING BAKU 13 MAY 2019





## SOUTH CAUCASUS

### Trip Outline

The Caucasus Mountains form the physical divide between Europe and Asia and the region of the South Caucasus, nestled between rugged mountains and the Black and Caspian Seas are home to the compact countries of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia. In true Byroads style, we take the time to explore these lesser known countries, experiencing and contrasting the local religions, cultures, peoples and cuisines while discovering the wonderful historical and natural sights that abound.

Our trip starts in Azerbaijan - the 'land of fire'. In the capital of Baku, once an important trading post on the Silk Road, we explore the ancient citadel containing the Maidens Tower, historic mosques and caravanserais and the Shirvan Shah's palace. We then discover 'New' Baku with its impressive modern towers and the stunning architecture of the Heydar Aliyev Centre. At the Gobustan N.P. we view Stone Age petroglyphs and walk amongst bubbling mud volcanoes, whilst in Ateshgah we admire the ancient Zoroastrian flame temple. In the old capital of Sheki we stay in a restored caravanserai and visit the colourful palace of the Sheki Khans.

Christian Georgia is home to soaring alpine mountains and lush green valleys dotted with historic churches, fortresses and wineries. We explore historic homes of ancient Georgian royalty in Tsinandali and walk atop ancient walls at Signagh town. In Tbilisi we wander through the historic centre visiting the soaring Holy Trinity cathedral and enjoy great views from the Narikala Fortress. North of Tbilisi we journey into the Caucasus by 4WD for stunning alpine views across to the Russian border. At Gori we contemplate a more recent history at the Joseph Stalin museum and visit the ancient capital at Mtskheta where Kings were crowned and buried.

Armenia is an ancient country whose more recent tragic history has demonstrated the resilience of its people. It is a region of old legends, Biblical stories, centuries old monasteries and cathedrals set in a stark landscape. Historic Yerevan dates from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BC and is watched over by imposing Mount Ararat. We explore the city, learn of the Armenian Genocide and visit stunning monasteries and forts at nearby Garni, Geghard and Noravank. We also take the time to join a cooking class and have hands on experience at the pottery wheel.

### Tour Host – Steve Mortimer

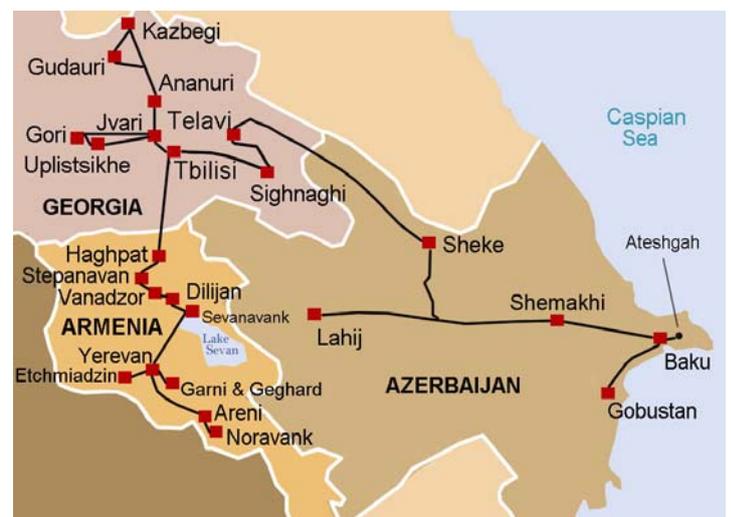


Steve Mortimer heads up Byroads Travel and will be your host on this tour. Steve has nearly 30 years in the travel industry and has travelled to well over 100 countries. He has worked with a number of well-known Australian adventure travel companies including 13 years as a Product Manager and Operations Director for Peregrine Adventures.

Over the years he has been involved in researching and developing holidays in many different regions of the world, including Latin America and the Middle East where he has spent time living and working in the tourism sector. In 2017 Steve travelled to the South Caucasus to research this new and exciting tour for Byroads.

Steve likes nothing better than getting out and about with like-minded travellers, sharing his knowledge and introducing them to some of the world's most interesting places.

With Byroads you can be confident that the itineraries we design include visits to all the 'must see' attractions – and much more, however there are some days when you'll have time to wander and make some of your own discoveries. Throughout the tour local guides are employed to provide a wealth of background information and share their extensive local knowledge. On this tour you will be joined by guides from each of the countries visited ensuring you get the advice and knowledge of a true local.



# 2019 ITINERARY - STARTS IN BAKU

**MON 13 MAY: BAKU** – Upon arrival at Baku airport in Azerbaijan you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Today is simply an arrival day and we will plan to meet up in the evening.

**TUE 14 MAY: BAKU** – Today we explore the narrow streets of the walled historical centre of the capital. Built on a site inhabited since the Palaeolithic period we will stop at the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Maiden Tower, ancient caravansaries and the beautiful Palace of Shirvan Shah. In the afternoon we visit the National History Museum, located in the mansion of a former Azerbaijani oil magnate. (B)

**WED 15 MAY: BAKU** – This morning we visit the remarkable Heydar Aliev Centre. Designed by Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid it is noted for its distinctive architecture and flowing, curved style. The centre houses a gallery, a museum and hosts numerous exhibitions. We have free time then until late afternoon when we drive to Highland Park for panoramic views over the city and to visit the memorial flame and watch the lights come on at the unique 'Flame Towers'. (B)

**THU 16 MAY: BAKU-GOBUSTAN-ATESHGHAH-BAKU** – The Gobustan National Park lies to the south of Baku and is famous for its ancient petroglyphs, excellent museum and its mud volcanoes. We then continue to Ateshgah to the 'Fire Temple', an ancient site used by Hindu, Sikh and Zoroastrians in their worship of fire. Our final visit is to the flaming mountain before returning to our hotel. (B)

**FRI 17 MAY: BAKU-SHAMAKHA-LAHIJ-SHEKI** – Heading west we stop at Shamakha to visit the Juma Mosque and to see the ancient family graveyard of the Shirvan Shahs. We then drive through stunning mountain scenery to the ancient village of Lahij where we have time to wander its narrow streets before continuing to Sheki to be guided through the palace of the Sheki Khans. (B)

**SAT 18 MAY: SHEKI-GEORGIAN BORDER-TELAVI** – This morning we cross into Georgia where we enjoy lunch with a local Georgian Family. Next stop is the beautiful Khareba Winery where we sample fine Georgian wines before continuing to the Gremi architectural complex, the 16<sup>th</sup> century royal residence and capital of the Kakheti Kingdom. We overnight in nearby Telavi. (BL)

**SUN 19 MAY: TELAVI-SIGNAGHI-TBILISI** – We continue exploring the Kakheti region visiting Tsinandali, the Bodbe Monastery and the Royal Town of Signaghi before arriving in Tbilisi. (B)

**MON 20 MAY & TUE 21 MAY: TBILISI** – Our walking tour of Tbilisi includes the Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Metekhi Church and Narikala Fortress. We visit the sulphur bath houses, the Sioni Cathedral, the Rezo Gabriadze theatre and there's time to enjoy the lovely coffee houses. The following morning we tour the wonderful ethnography open air museum displaying the examples of folk architecture, houses and craftwork from various regions of Georgia. Our afternoon is then free to make our own discoveries and a dinner and show will be included tonight. (BD)

**WED 22 MAY: TBILISI-JVARI-MTSKHETA-KAZBEGI-GUDAURI** – We drive north through stunning mountain scenery. First stop is the 6<sup>th</sup> century Jvari Church before visiting Mtskheta, one of the country's oldest villages. At Kazbegi we change to 4WD and arrive at Gergeti with breath taking views of Mt Kazbegi on the Russian border. We overnight in a chalet in the town of Gudauri. (B)

**THU 23 MAY: GUDAURI-ANANURI-GORI-UPLISTSIKHE-MTSKHETA** – We stop at the Ananuri Castle before visiting the Stalin Museum in Gori, a stark reminder of a bygone era. The ancient rock-hewn town of Uplistsikhe is next. This cave town has been a centre for pagans, Arabs and Christian kings as well as an important trade centre. Our final stop before reaching Mtskheta is at Tserovania Village where we join a local exiled South Osetian family for an early dinner. (BD)

**FRI 24 MAY: MTSKHETA-ARMENIAN BORDER-VANADZOR-DILIJAN** – Heading south we cross the Armenian border, visiting the Haghpats monastery and Stepanavan to Vanadzor. Here we enjoy a wonderful, entertaining and insightful time with a local artist. We will learn about the stone 'Khachkar' and gain a great insight into Armenian arts and culture. We then drive on to Dilijan. (B)

**SAT 25 MAY: DILIJAN-LAKE SEVAN-YEREVAN**

We visit the ruins of Sevanavank Monastery on the edge of Lake Sevan before continuing to Yerevan. Later we enjoy a tour of the Megeryan carpet factory and join a cooking workshop with a top Armenian chef and then visit the Armenian Genocide Memorial. (B)

**SUN 26 MAY: YEREVAN-GARNI-GEGHARD-ETCHMIADZIN-VAGHARSHAPAT-YEREVAN** – Today we visit the Garni fortress and the Geghard Monastery complex. Our next stop is Etchmiadzin the headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In the town of Vagharshapat we visit a pottery workshop where you can try your own hand on the potter's wheel before returning to Yerevan. (B)

**MON 27 MAY: YEREVAN-KHOR VIRAP-NORAVANK-ARENI-YEREVAN** – Our destination today is Khor Virap Monastery, close to Mt Ararat on the Turkish border followed by the 13<sup>th</sup> century monastery of Noravank in the Amaghu Valley. Returning to Yerevan and we make a stop at Areni, to sample some of the regions wines made from such fruits as pomegranate and apricot. (B)

**TUE 28 MAY: YEREVAN** – Our journey through the South Caucasus ends after breakfast. (B)



## Prices & Inclusions

### 16 Days – South Caucasus

**Price: USD \$4075 (per person twin-share)**

**Single Supplement: USD \$1120**

**Price includes:** Steve Mortimer as Tour Escort, local driver and tour guide throughout, all transfers and transportation, 15 nights accommodation, meals as indicated, entrance fees, 3 wine tasting sessions.

**Not Included:** Visa fees, travel insurance (compulsory), flights, additional meals, drinks, optional tours, spending of a personal nature, laundry, tips and departure transfer.

**Transportation:** We travel in a comfortable air-conditioned mini-coach on this tour. 1 day in 4WD to Kazbegi.

**Accommodation:** On this tour we offer an interesting selection of hotels ranging from the traditional to the modern. Boutique hotels with sufficient rooms for a small group are hard to find but we are sure you will not be disappointed. In Baku our hotel is located in the heart of the old walled city and offers wonderful Azerbaijani elegance. In Sheki we stay in an 18<sup>th</sup> Century caravanserai. It's basic with private facilities and it's wonderful. Our hotel in Tbilisi is modern and comfortable and well located. In the mountains in Gudauri we overnight in a mountain chalet and in Yerevan we stay in a wonderful hotel in the heart of the city.



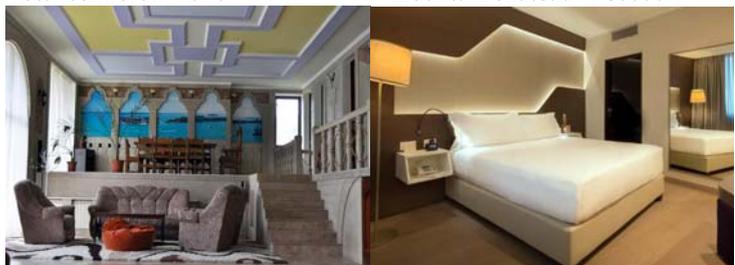
Traditional style in historic Baku

2 Star Caravansari in Sheki



4 Star comfort in Tbilisi

Mountain Chateau in Gudauri



Mountain Boutique in Dilijan

Super modern in Yerevan

**Food and drink:** Breakfast is provided each day, along with 1 lunch and 2 dinners. Beer, wine & spirits are available at selected locations in Azerbaijan and throughout Georgia and Armenia. Soft drinks, and bottled water are readily available.

**Group size:** Maximum 16 guests

**Additional Expenses:** There is a great variety of food to be enjoyed in the South Caucasus with strong influences from Europe, Turkey and Iran. Expect to pay around US\$10 for lunches and US\$15-\$20 for dinners. In addition you should budget for any personal shopping you may wish to do. Please also allow extra funds to tip your local tour leader, driver, local guides and porters (full details will be provided in the pre-trip Field Guide).

**Bookings:** Travel on Q (Sydney) is the sole booking agent for this tour. Please register your interest ASAP in order to secure your place and note there are a limited number of single rooms available. A non-refundable deposit of AUD 750 per person is required, to secure your place, with final payment due 60 days prior to tour commencement.

**Travel on Q** (Carole Grassby and Tina Briggs)

Tel: (02) 9357 6800

Email: [travel@travelonq.com.au](mailto:travel@travelonq.com.au)

**Currency:** Due to the volatility of global currencies the tour price has been quoted in United States Dollars (USD) however you will pay for your tour in Australian dollars based on the buying rate set by Westpac Banking Corporation on the due date of your final balance.

**Flights and Transfers:** Qatar Airways flies from Australia to Doha and into Baku and out of Yerevan. Emirates Airlines flies from Australia to Dubai and FlyDubai fly into Baku and out of Yerevan back to Dubai. All arrival flights will be met, however the final departure transfer is not included and can be booked separately.

**Extra nights in Baku & Yerevan:** Extra nights can be booked pre and post tour however you must advise Travel on Q well in advance to ensure availability.

**Visas for Australian & New Zealanders:**

Azerbaijan – Required and arranged by Byroads.

Georgia – Not Required

Armenia – Required. Arranged on-line.

**Documentation:** Upon receipt of your final payment, a comprehensive field guide will be mailed to you and you will be sent the relevant tour and accommodation vouchers prior to departure.

**What next?** Contact Travel on Q to discuss your travel plans and to make your booking. Further information is also available at [www.byroads.com.au](http://www.byroads.com.au).

**Byroads**

[WWW.BYROADS.COM.AU](http://WWW.BYROADS.COM.AU)

**Travel on Q**  
Independent travel specialists



# BOOKING FORM

Byroads Travel is the operator of your tour. Byroads Travel (henceforth referred to as Byroads) is a registered trading name of Byroads Pty Ltd (ABN 88 615 738 746).

Travel on Q (Bonard Pty Ltd, ABN 40 059 566 184) acts as the sole booking agent for Byroads.

## RESERVATION AND DEPOSIT

A deposit is payable on all tours. The amount payable is stated in the Byroads brochure. This deposit must be paid to Travel on Q and accompanied by a signed booking form. When paying a deposit for your tour and signing the Booking Form you accept these conditions.

Your Byroads tour will only be confirmed once the deposit and signed booking form have been received. This Booking Form forms the basis of your contract between you and Byroads.

Travel on Q is an agent of Byroads.

## PAYMENT

Payments may be made to Travel on Q by direct deposit or by credit card. If paying by credit card the following surcharges will be applied to the cost of your tour arrangements: 1.65% for Visa and MasterCard, 2.26% for American Express, and 3.85 % for Diners Club.

## FINAL BALANCE

The balance of your tour payment is due 60 days prior to the start of your tour. If, for any reason, the balance payment is not received by the due date, Byroads reserves the right to treat such failure to pay the balance as a cancellation and to apply the appropriate cancellation charges.

## CANCELLATION BY YOU

If, for any reason, you cancel your tour booking, Byroads shall apply the following cancellation penalties. Charges are per person:

- \*Cancellation up to 60 days prior to departure, forfeiture of the total deposit
- \*from 59 to 45 days prior to departure, 30% of the tour price shall be retained
- \* from 44 to 15 days prior to departure, 50% of the tour price shall be retained
- \*within 14 days prior to departure, no refund will be made.

In addition to the above charges, cancellation fees may also apply to any domestic airfare component of your tour. No refund will be made after your tour has commenced or in respect of lost or unused tickets, hotel coupons, meals or any other services not utilised.

## AMENDMENTS

Up to 60 days prior to the departure of your tour, any amendment to a confirmed reservation will incur a fee of \$50 per change per file, in addition to any change fees levied by Travel on Q, airlines, or any other service provider. From 59 to 30 days prior to departure, any amendment to confirmed travel arrangements will incur a fee, of \$100 per change per file. Once documents have been dispatched,

any amendment will incur a fee of \$150 per change per file.

## TOUR PRICES

Byroads tour prices and provisional tour prices are based on tariffs and prevailing rates of exchange when tours were costed. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. In the event of fluctuations in currency exchange rates, service providers' tariffs, fuel prices or any other cost that affects the price of your tour, Byroads reserves the right to adjust tour prices at any time up to the day of departure.

## TOUR OPERATION

Although Byroads will endeavour to ensure that tours are operated as advertised, an express condition of making a reservation is the acceptance by you that the tour itineraries, schedules, advertised accommodation, sightseeing and mode of transportation as outlined in the Byroads brochure and/or supplied in the pre-departure information are subject to change without prior notice. If for any reason Byroads is forced to cancel a tour before it commences, all monies paid in respect of the tour will be refunded in full less any credit card fees collected.

Unforeseeable circumstances such as force majeure, adverse weather conditions such as floods or earthquakes, airline flight rescheduling, technical faults with transportation and road conditions may also have a consequential effect on the content of your tour after it has commenced. Any decision made in respect of tour services provided by Byroads to reroute or amend the itinerary due to the above or similar circumstances shall be at the sole discretion of Byroads. Byroads and Travel on Q shall not be liable for any claim whatsoever arising from such events that affect the schedule and content of your tour

## HEALTH AND FITNESS

Byroads operates soft adventure tours. All participants are required to be fit and healthy. Some of the hotels used by Byroads may not have lifts or porters so you must be prepared at times to carry your own suitcase. Before travelling with Byroads, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with any health requirements applicable to areas through which you will be travelling.

## ACCEPTANCE OF RISK

You acknowledge that the nature of the trip is adventurous and participation involves a degree of personal risk. You will be visiting places where the political, cultural and geographical attributes present dangers and physical challenges greater than those present in our daily lives. We use information from government foreign departments and reports from our own contacts in assessing whether the itinerary should operate. However it is also your own responsibility to acquaint yourself with all relevant travel information and the nature of your itinerary. You acknowledge that your decision to travel is made in light of consideration of this information and you accept that you are aware of the personal risks attendant upon such travel.

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Australian passport holders must have at least 6 months validity on their passport after the date of return to Australia. Visas are

required for a number of our tours and it is your responsibility to obtain them. Travel on Q can assist with this process. Non Australian passport holders are asked to check passport and visa requirements at the time of booking.

## ITEMS NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR COST

The cost of your Byroads tour includes hotel accommodation, transportation, transfers as specified, sightseeing and meals as indicated in the tour brochure. It does not include international airfares, airport departure taxes, unspecified meals, optional sightseeing, additional transfers, gratuities for hotel staff, guides and tour leaders, items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls etc. or any other incidental expenses.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is an express condition of travelling with Byroads that you have comprehensive travel insurance including full cover for repatriation. It is highly recommended that you take out travel insurance at the time you pay the deposit to guard against any unforeseen circumstances. If on the first day of your tour you cannot provide evidence that you have purchased comprehensive travel insurance you will be required to purchase a policy before proceeding with your tour.

## LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

We contract with a network of companies, government agencies and individuals to assist in the running of our trips as agent for these third parties. We are not responsible for the acts and omissions of these third parties. To the fullest extent permitted by law:

- (i) any liability for any loss, death, injury or damage which you may suffer (directly or indirectly) in connection with or arising out of your participation in a trip, or any breach of the Booking Conditions, is excluded;
- (ii) Travel on Q acts only as agent for Byroads and accepts no responsibility for the acts and omissions of Byroads or any of its associated service providers for any inaccuracies in information provided, negligence, loss, damage, omission, accident, detention, diversion or theft in regard to luggage or any personal belongings whatsoever.
- (iii) you release Byroads and its officers, employees, agents and representatives from any liability and expressly waive any claims you may have against us arising out of or in connection with your participation in a trip; and
- (iv) any condition or warranty which would otherwise be implied by law into these Booking Conditions (Implied Warranty), is excluded

To the extent an Implied Warranty cannot be excluded, our liability in respect of the Implied Warranty is limited to (in our absolute discretion): (a) the provision of a similar trip to an equivalent value; or (b) a refund of the total amount received by us from you in connection with your booking.

Any claim by you is excluded to the extent that it is for indirect or consequential loss, loss of profits or economic loss, however it arises, or for indirect, special, punitive or exemplary damages.

## APPLICABLE LAW

The laws of Victoria, Australia govern these Booking Conditions to the fullest extent allowable. Any disputes in connection with a trip or these Booking Conditions must be initiated in the courts Victoria, Australia.