

Armenia; The Highlands and Culture

Saturday 08 June to 21 June 2024

Ancient Armenia. Mountains, fabulous scenery, traditional villages, Christian churches and monasteries. Armenia has it all, topped off with great food and a super interesting culture. We will be touring the Armenian Highlands in the lovely, wooded mountains and valleys around Lake Sevan, stopping in guest houses and hotels, eating local food and imbibing the ancient Christian Armenian culture. Included are two days of hiking in the mountains, climbing to 2400m. Numbers of days cycling; 9. Numbers of days hiking; 2. Average riding distance; 55kms. Average ascent; 550m.

Itinerary

Saturday 08 June 2024; Yerevan.

Transfer from airport to hotel, overnight at Yerevan, time to prepare bikes.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Sunday 09 June 2024; Yerevan to Chaklova

Cycle on the main road towards Lake Sevan.

- Route distance: 40.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 450.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Monday 10 June 2024; Chaklova to Martuni

Martuni was formerly the capital of the Gegharkunik Province. It has the lovely Astvatsatsin church which is well worth a visit. There is also an Iron Age fort which was excavated in 1997 by an Armenian-Italian team

- Route distance: 55.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 360.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Tuesday 11 June 2024; Martuni to Tsapatagh

We stop at the Vanevan monastery, located along a gorge in the southern part of the village of Artsvanist. Vanevan monastery is an important piece of Armenian architecture dating back to the 10th century. The inscriptions on the southeastern part indicate that the church was built in 903.

- Route distance: 85.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 400.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Wednesday 12 June 2024; Tsapatagh to Gosh via Tsovaghyux

At Gosh we visit the Monastery of Goshavank with its numerous khachkars, (Armenian stone crosses). Some of them are unique and highly artistic. The khachkars created by the carver Poghos in Goshavank stand out from the rest. The best of them is a 1291 khachkar with the maker's name carved in the bottom left star.

- Route distance: 85.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 700.0 m
- Accommodation: Guest house
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Thursday 13 June 2024; Gosh to Dilijan

We spend the afternoon wandering around this lovely area and its tiny lake, Lake Parz. We spend three days hiking and exploring the area.

- Route distance: 25.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 350.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Friday 14 June 2024; Dilijan to Dilijan

Lastiver has a cave in one of the most picturesque places in Armenia. During the Mongol invasions in the 13-14th centuries, locals found their shelter in this cave. The cave is located on an almost-flat slope of the canyon. In order to reach the cave people constructed a ladder which reminded them of a raft. From then on, the location has been known as "Lastiver" which can be translated as "up the raft". Just below the cave at the lowest point of the gorge, you will see a stunning cascade of waterfalls. Finish the hike in the Apaga Resort. Relax here

or participate in the adventure activities laid on at the resort. Return to Dilijan for the overnight stay.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Saturday 15 June 2024; Dilijan to Dilijan

Mount Dimats is one of the highest points of the Ljevan mountain range. Once at the top, an amazing view there is a stunning view of the rocky walls of the Ljevan mountains. We climb from 1300m to 2400m.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Sunday 16 June 2024; Dilijan to Tsaghkadzor via Sevan

From here we cycle to Tsakhkadzor (the name means The Valley of Flowers) a spa town and a popular winter resort located in a lovely valley on the eastern slope of Mount Teghenis at 1845m. Here we visit the medieval Kecharis monastery. We can also take the Teghenis Mountain chairlift for stunning views of the Armenian mountains.

- Route distance: 65.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1250.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Monday 17 June 2024; Tsaghkadzor to Aghveran

Bjni is a village in Kotayk Province. It is situated in a valley sandwiched between steep canyon walls and a small river. We'll visit the 11th century Bjni fortress and church, both built by the Pahlavuni Princess.

- Route distance: 35.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 350.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Tuesday 18 June 2024; Aghveran to Garni

At Garni we will visit the site of a Hellenistic complex which includes the temple, a Roman bath with a partly preserved mosaic floor with a Greek inscription, a royal summer palace and other remains from the Greco-Roman world. It forms part of the larger Garni fortifications which are amongst the oldest in Armenia.

- Route distance: 55.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 480.0 m

- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Wednesday 19 June 2024; Garni to Khor Virap and Yerevan

The cycling part of the tour ends in Yerevan.

- Route distance: 70.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 650.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Thursday 20 June 2024; Yerevan

Free evening to explore Yerevan.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Friday 21 June 2024; Yerevan to home

- No cycling
- Meals: (B)

Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £2150.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £200 per person is required as soon as possible once the Tour Manager has processed your Booking Form (see below), with the final balance of £1950 per person to be paid no later than ten weeks prior to departure, by 30th March 2024.

Price includes:

- 12 nights accommodation half board basis
- Lunch on 11 days
- 1 night bed and breakfast
- transfer to and from airport at Yerevan
- Luggage transfer and vehicle support on cycling days
- Transfers to and from Yerevan
- Transfers on hiking days

- English speaking Armenian guide
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from airport at Yerevan
- Drinks with evening meals
- Refreshments during the day other than those listed above
- Any entry fees
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel insurance
- Single supplement, £200 if available

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge: Tour

- Before 30 March 2024: £200 tour Deposit
- After 30 March 2024: £2150 tour cost

Holiday Information

Area covered by the holiday

- Once the centre of an empire, this former Soviet republic span the line between Europe and Asia. Armenia has a rich, ancient history, and it is most famously known for being the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as the state religion. It straddles the crossroads between east and west bordering Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran, just south of the main Caucasus mountains. Ancient Armenia was one of the world's oldest centres of civilization. At its height it stretched from the Black Sea coast to the Caspian Sea, and from the Mediterranean to Lake Urmia in Iran. Ancient Armenia was subjected to constant foreign incursions, finally losing independence in the 14th century CE. The centuries-long rule of the Ottoman Turks and the Persians imperilled the very existence of the people

The capitol city is Yerevan, and the country is mountainous though characterised by a great variety of scenery. The average height of the terrain is 1800m ASL. Since the collapse of the USSR Armenia has modernised and opened up, increasing its tourist infrastructure.

Travel

- Travel to the start and from the finish is not included in this holiday. Thus, it is very important that you note that neither your Tour Manager nor Bikexplore are responsible

for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements, you should ensure that the tour is definitely going ahead. Should there be insufficient bookings or pandemic travel restrictions are re-imposed, we reserve the right to cancel the tour at any time. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead. In the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred outside what you pay us.

Accommodation

- Accommodation is usually in hotels, some guest houses are used in the smaller villages.

Rooms

- Sharing

Luggage transfer

- Yes

Rest Day

- There are two rest days at Dilijan in the Armenian Alps, both days have hikes.

Roads used

- We will be riding round the beautiful Lake Sevan situated at approximately 2000m ASL. The lake is surrounded by ancient monuments, churches and monasteries. Highlights include the largest khachkar cemetery in the world. (Medieval carved stone crosses), the beaches near Sevanavank Monastery, and the countless fish and crayfish restaurants along the lake shores. We visit Dilijan, centre of the 'Armenian Switzerland', a high and mountainous area covered with ancient forest and lush 'alpine' pasture. We ride through the Kotayk area with its mountain resorts and ancient settlements. Yerevan is an up-and-coming capital city which is becoming increasingly popular amongst tourists. We have time to explore its monuments and sites. It has a modern yet ancient heart with soviet style modernist buildings alongside bright lights and vibrant restaurants.

Weather and Clothing

- The weather is usually hot in Armenia in June. However, we will be riding in the mountains so you will need to bring appropriate clothing for adverse conditions. I do not expect bad weather as even in the mountains the weather should be warm and dry.

Cycles / Equipment

- We recommend a good audax/ gravel type bike. Be aware that some of the roads are very small and can be rough, however, there are no gravel roads. I recommend larger tyres than usual to avoid any problems. You should ensure your cycle is well

maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. Road bikes should also be OK as there is luggage transfer.

Maps & GPS

- Although you will be provided with route notes and there will be a support vehicle as well as the local guide and the Tour Manager. If you wish to buy a map, the only one I could find is from Stanfords, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Bradt guide to Armenia is good.

Fitness and Health

- It is your responsibility to be suitably fit and able to ride this tour.

Travel Insurance

- At present Britain does not have a reciprocal health agreement with Armenia. Appropriate travel insurance is therefore essential; please check with your provider to ensure that they cover Armenia. Although most travel insurance policies do not cover cancellation due to pandemic restrictions, the money you pay to us for the holiday is fully protected until we depart.

Tour Leader Details

- I am a keen cyclist, trained cycle instructor, ride leader and mechanic, able to support members of the group who require it. I have led a number of tours for CTC Cycling Holidays and Tours and Bikexplore, and I have toured extensively in Europe and further afield.

Tour Leader Contact Details

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