



# TURKEY & CAUCASUS EXPLORED, (TBT)

Istanbul to Baku 30 Days, departing 27th April 2021



## TRIP OVERVIEW

**Trip Style:** Overlanding

**Route:** Istanbul to Baku

**Duration:** 30 Days

**Transport:** Overland Expedition Vehicle, Private Bus

**Accommodation:** Comfortable Hotel 6 nights  
Multishare Hostel 5 nights  
Camping without facilities 4 nights  
Basic Hotel 4 nights  
Guesthouse 5 nights  
Wild Camp 3 nights  
Homestay 2 nights

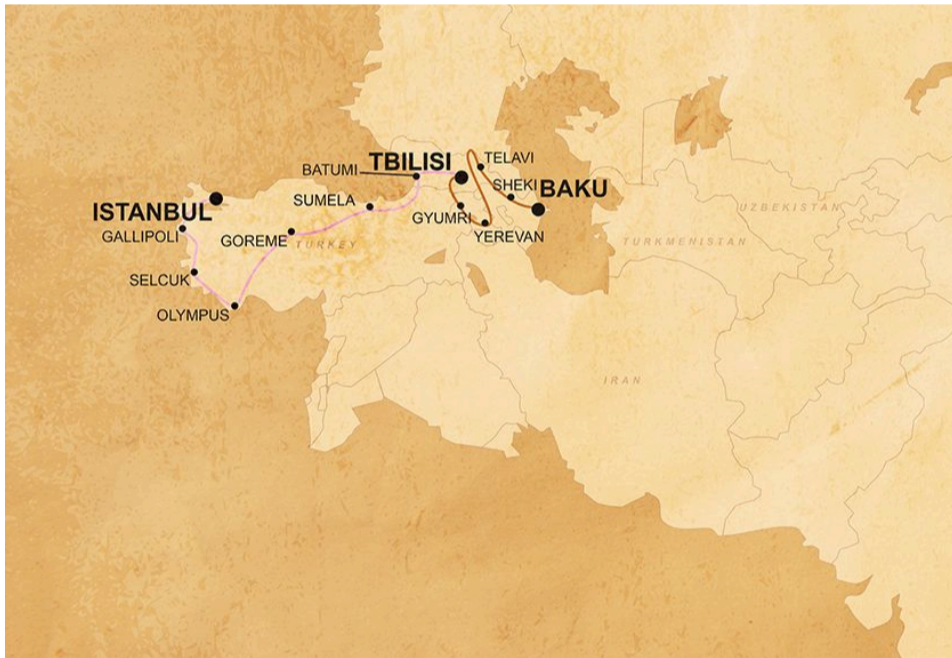
**Meals:** Breakfasts x 17, Lunches x 5, Dinners x 14

**Physical Challenge:** ● ● ○ ○ ○

Your itinerary may include easy-paced day walks, bike rides, and other activities that are not too strenuous.

**Lifestyle Challenge:** ● ● ○ ○ ○

You may be camping some of the time but the pace of the trip is fairly relaxed and the facilities and road conditions are generally of a high standard.



# DAILY ITINERARY

## Day 1 - Istanbul (27th April 2021)

**Border Information:** If joining in Istanbul, you will most likely enter Turkey at Istanbul Ataturk Airport (IATA code: IST).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 10.00am - on arrival please look out for a note from your leader with more information about this important meeting. If you are travelling beyond Tbilisi, your tour leader will need to carefully check your visa situation for your entire trip.

The afternoon will be free to explore the many sights of the incredible exotic city of Istanbul, including the Grand Bazaar, the Bosphorus River, Hagia Sophia and the phenomenal Blue Mosque!

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Istanbul before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales Team or your Sales agent if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Istanbul.

*\* Important note - do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details. \**

Accommodation: Golden Horn Istanbul Hotel

## Day 2 - Gallipoli (28th April 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning following breakfast we will depart Istanbul and begin our journey to the shores of Gallipoli.

After lunch we will get an insight into what happened between the ANZAC, Allied and Turkish forces during the first World War and have a guided tour of the Battlefields and Anzac Cove.

## Day 3 - Selcuk (29th April 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will cross the Dardenelles by ferry and head to Selcuk where we will do a short tour of the Troy Ruins.

We will then continue onto Selcuk where we will be staying for two nights. In the evening we will have free time to explore the area or simply relax in one of the many cafes or tea bars which are great for people watching.

## Day 4 - Selcuk (30th April 2021)

Today we will have a full day to be able to explore the Ephesus Ruins and Terraced Houses.

## Day 5 - Pamukkale (1st May 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Following breakfast we will drive inland towards the small village of Pamukkale.

After lunch we will have free time to visit the thermal hot springs and traverse through the travertine pools and terraces.

## Day 6 - Olympos (2nd May 2021)

**Meals:** Dinner

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Today we continue our drive south and aim to reach the popular beach town of Olympos by lunchtime.

This evening we will walk up to the Chimera Fire Mountain and toast some marshmallows

## Day 7 - Olympos (3rd May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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Today we will have time to explore and participate in any optional activities if you wish or simply take a dip in the cool turquoise waters on one of the many beaches.

## Day 8 - Egirdir (4th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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After breakfast we will leave the beachside town of Olympos and make our way north.

We will have an included visit of Termessos on the way before continuing our journey towards Egirdir where we will find a good spot to bush camp for the night. Depending on the time of year we may also stay in a local guesthouse.

### Day 9 - Goreme (5th May 2021)

We have an early start this morning to reach the small enchanting town of Goreme in the heart of the Cappadocia mountains.

In Goreme we will stay in a well-equipped hostel - please note that dorm beds are generally used here.

### Day 10 - Goreme (6th May 2021)

Today will be a full day to explore Goreme, including a guided tour of the enchanted valley of Cappadocia. There will also be an opportunity for a magical optional balloon ride over the valley during your time here.. Weather permitting.

### Day 11 - Zara (7th May 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today we continue our journey east with a full day's drive towards the Sumela monastery.

We will break the journey with a wild camp near Zara or the village of Alucra.

### Day 12 - Sumela (8th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Today we will reach the Sumela Monastery near the town of Macka, which we will visit in the afternoon if it is open.

We will camp overnight in a campsite near Sumela if conditions allow. Or we may opt to stay in a local hotel in Macka or Trabzon.

### Day 13 - Batumi (9th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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**Border Information:** Exit Turkey at Sarp, enter Georgia at Sarpi.

This morning we will continue to the border and cross into Georgia, reaching the port town of Batumi.

### Day 14 - Kutaisi (10th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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After a relaxing morning, we leave the port town of Batumi behind us and make our way to the ancient town of Kutaisi. This afternoon we will visit the medieval Bagrati Cathedral and the Gelati monastery.

### Day 15 - Tbilisi (11th May 2021)

**Border Information:** if joining in Tbilisi, you will most likely enter Georgia at Tbilisi International Airport (IATA code: TBS).

There will be a pre-departure meeting at 6.00pm - please meet at the joining hotel reception at this time. Please do not be alarmed if there is no note from your leader on arrival, as this is often a travelling day for the crew and they will not arrive until about 4.00pm.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Tbilisi before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales Team or your Sales Agent if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Tbilisi.

*\*Important note - Please do not bring any medicines containing tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine or opiates to Central Asia. These are illegal in all circumstances in most of Central Asia and you will risk arrest. If in doubt about a particular medicine, please do not bring it. See the notes at the bottom for more details.\**

## Day 16 - Tbilisi (12th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Today we will visit the beautiful old town of Tbilisi and visit sites including the National Museum, Sioni Cathedral and the Metekhi Temple.

## Day 17 - Lake Sevan (13th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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This morning we will have a short drive to the border and cross into the country of Armenia. Once the formalities are over we will continue on through the beautiful Dilijan National Park stopping for a truck lunch along the way.

Tonight we will either stay in the National Park or continue on to Lake Sevan where we will camp for the night

## Day 18 - Yerevan (14th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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After breakfast we will leave the sparkling waters of Lake Sevan behind and make our way towards the city of Yerevan. On the way we will visit the World Heritage - listed Geghard Monastery which has been carved out of the rock face of the Azat River Gorge. We will also spend some time exploring the Garni Temple before finally arriving at our destination.

## Day 19 - Yerevan (15th May 2021)

We have a free day today to explore the stunning city of Yerevan. Simply spend the time relaxing and soaking up the city atmosphere or perhaps do a walking tour of the city admiring the soviet architecture.

## Day 20 - Armenian Highlands (16th May 2021)

**Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

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Today we leave the city of Yerevan. We will start off with a visit to the Khor Virap Monastery before we begin to make our way north through the beautiful Armenian Highland.

Tonight we will wild camp in the Northern Armenian Highlands.

## Day 21 - Borjomi-Kharagauli NP (17th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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After packing up camp we continue north and head towards the Georgian border. We aim to arrive after lunch and if time permits have an included visit to the Vardzia Caves. If we arrive too late we will be able to explore the caves tomorrow morning also.

Tonight we will find a wild camp in the valley close to the caves.

## Day 22 - Mtskheta (18th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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After breakfast we will make our way to Borjome National Park where we will have time to do a small hike through the ancient forest and an optional cable ride up the mountain.

We will then continue on to Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia. Whilst here we will explore the 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral.

## Day 23 - Stepantsminda (19th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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Today our journey begins with a beautiful drive to the spectacularly located town of Stepantsminda (formerly known as Kazbegi).

Either this afternoon or tomorrow morning, we will take a trek up to the Tsminda Sameba Church (the church of the Holy Trinity), a beautiful small church nestled in the mountains.

## Day 24 - Telavi (20th May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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This morning we will drive to the Alazani valley and on to Telavi, where we will base ourselves for 2 days to explore the area.

### Day 25 - Telavi (21st May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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The area of Telavi is well known for its vineyards and wineries - there are hundreds of different grapes grown here, and every village has its own particular variety. We will visit some of the local vineyards today, where we can hopefully see some of the local traditions including grape harvesting and wine making, and enjoy some famous Georgian hospitality.

### Day 26 - Lagodekhi (22nd May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

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Today we leave the wine region behind us as we make our way towards the Azerbaijan border. We will visit the Gremi citadel en route.

We will wild camp tonight, most likely in the Lagodekhi National Park close to the Azeri border.

### Day 27 - Sheki (23rd May 2021)

**Meals:** Breakfast

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Border information: Exit Georgia at Lagodekhi, enter Azerbaijan at Balakan.

Today we cross the border to Azerbaijan and continue to the old town of Sheki, where we can visit the exquisite Khan's Palace.

### Day 28 - Lahij Village (24th May 2021)

This morning we will continue on to Lahic Village. An old coppersmiths village, nestled in the mountains.

### Day 29 - Baku (25th May 2021)

We will continue our journey this morning to Gobustan, near the coast of the Caspian Sea where we will have a visit to the ancient petroglyphs and the mud volcanoes that this area is famous for.

This afternoon we will continue on to the Old City of Baku where we will have free time on arrival to explore.

### Day 30 - Baku (26th May 2021)

Border Information: If finishing in Baku, you will most likely exit Azerbaijan at Baku Heydar Aliyev International Airport (IATA code: GYD).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Baku. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight - please contact your sales agent if you are interested in booking extra nights of accommodation in order to fully explore and take part in some of the optional activities listed below.

Accommodation:

## ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

The routes, activities and places visited described in these notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed and it sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons; climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. Changes to the itinerary may occur with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to your trip.

### Drive Times

Drive times are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. These are the approximate number of hours that the vehicle will be in motion, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors.

### **Accommodation and Meals Included**

The type of accommodation and included meals are listed for each day of the itinerary. These listings show our intention and on most departures the listings will be accurate. However due to the flexible nature of overland itineraries, climatic, bureaucratic or road conditions may demand changes to our listed intentions or groups may simply decide to amend the plans from time to time.

### **Optional Activities**

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Certain activities may not be available on your particular visit and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. It is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there. Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. The prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator, and therefore any prices listed are a guide only and cannot be guaranteed. If you partake in any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities. For more information around activity safety and insurance, please see the Essential Information document.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

In the event of a real emergency once you have left your home country, please contact us on our out of office hours number. If you cannot get through on the phone, please leave a message with your name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you. Please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours, depending on the issue.

If your flight is delayed, please inform us as soon as you can and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in the Joining Point section of these notes.

**Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564**

## **A FEW RULES**

We expect all group members to act respectfully towards our staff and other group members. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, or carrying weapons may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

## **ISSUES ON THE TRIP**

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on [customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk](mailto:customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk).

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

## **IMPORTANT NOTES**

### **OVERLANDING LIFESTYLE**

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off-the-beaten-track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity.

On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc. Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out! For more details of how an overland trip works, please see the Essential Information document.

## SAFETY STANDARDS

We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards. For more information, please see the Essential Information document

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN REMOTE AREAS

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available, and communications may be sparse. We do not carry satellite phones on our regular trips. Therefore, if you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

## VISAS, HEALTH, INSURANCE & MONEY

Before you travel there are vital things to consider such as:

- Any visas needed for your trip
- Any vaccinations needed (please consult your GP or travel clinic)
- Organising your local payment (the kitty)
- Buying travel insurance (insurance is compulsory to be allowed to join our trips)

For more information on these topics, please see the Essential Information Document.

## EXPLORATORY TRIP WARNING - THIS IS A NEW TRIP FOR US!

Please note that all or part of this trip is a brand new itinerary, and is going through completely new areas for Dragoman. This is what we call an Exploratory trip, and it means that all the passengers on this trip will be the route's pioneers for the first season!

While we have thoroughly researched all aspects of this new route and put the itinerary together with the best of intentions, please note that your crew will be finding a lot of information out for us on the ground and will be playing a lot of things by ear. The itinerary may be altered in places where it becomes necessary and the drive times may differ significantly from the published estimates.

Most Exploratory trips will have slight or significant changes made to them after this first season, and frankly we would be very surprised if an Exploratory trip was to run perfectly to the published itinerary. Usually we find that this is rarely a problem but rather an exciting feature and that there are much more pleasant surprises in store than unpleasant ones. You will be immersing in to the camaraderie with your crew and fellow travellers and give you the fantastic opportunity to shape the trip as a group.

However, the warning is sincere and this trip must be viewed as Exploratory - if this concerns you or you would rather stick to a tried-and-tested itinerary, then we recommend that you wait a year or two until we have this itinerary perfected following operating it many times, or of course to consider one of the more established trips in our extensive portfolio.

There will be numerous challenges on this trip including border delays, visa and paperwork delays, potential re-routing at short notice, lack of western facilities, road closures and other obstacles and unforeseen issues.

There is a risk of cancellation if the FCDO advise changes (as of now the route is safe to travel all the way through).

West and Central Africa will test everyone's patience due to potential issues with obtaining visas. This is likely to lead to long delays in places where there may not be much to do. It may also be necessary to fly over some places which would be at your own expense.

This trip will have a higher level of participation compared to our other Dragoman trips and you will be required to help out with setting up camps, cooking etc. The campsites are also likely to be basic for much of the trip along with a high number of bush camps.

This will be a challenging trip and you must be fit in order to participate. If you have a pre-existing medical condition or any medical concerns you should check with your doctor prior to travel that this would be a suitable trip for you. You should also be aware that in the event of accident or illness, access to medical centres will be limited.

On the flip side, we'll be visiting regions and areas very rarely seen by Western travellers. Meeting people who have perhaps never seen foreigners. Enjoying the chaotic and buzzing cultures of West and Central Africa. And of course, the immense satisfaction of completing a classic adventure that only a handful of people ever get the chance to complete.

# VERY IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MEDICATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Please note that as of 2014 all medications containing **tramadol, codeine, temazepam, morphine, opiates or any containing similar constituent components** have been made illegal in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This includes many over-the-counter medicines that are commonly available elsewhere, such as Nurofen! Please see here for more information - <http://sambuh.com/procedure-psychootropic-substances.html>

It is very important that you do not bring any such medications as the customs officials will treat this as though you were trying to bring illegal narcotics into the country. The rules are strict; it does not matter if you are only transiting through, and it makes no difference if you have a prescription or a doctor's note. Please do not bring these medications to Central Asia under any circumstance. The consequences could be huge, not only for yourself but for the tour leaders, for Dragoman's future operation in the region and especially for our local agents and guides.

Please note that we cannot allow you to travel on a Central Asia trip if you refuse to dispose of such medicines or refuse to cooperate with the tour leaders if they need to inspect any personal medicines. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

If you have any prescription medications that do not come under the above list, please bring the prescription along and declare the medicines on any customs declaration forms throughout your trip.

## TURKEY NOTES

## GEORGIA NOTES

## AZERBAIJAN NOTES

## ARMENIA NOTES

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 26th January 2021**