

# GEORGIA AND ARMENIA



"From the towering high Caucasus mountains to the arid, semi-desert landscapes of Armenia, this trip is extra special. Birds such as Goldenstadt's Redstart, Radde's Accentor and White-throated Robin await us, in some of Europe's most staggering landscapes". Duncan Macdonald

Dates Mon 30 Apr - Fri 11 May 2018  
 Price £4,195  
 Deposit £800 Single Supp £400

Leaders Duncan Macdonald plus local guide  
 Flights Lufthansa, scheduled  
 Outbound: Overnight, Heathrow -Tbilisi (Via Munich)  
 Air France, scheduled  
 Inbound: Morning, Yerevan Zvartnots - Heathrow (Via Paris Charles de Gaulle)  
 Weather Varies from warm and sunny to cooler in the mountains (10°-20°C)  
 Walking There will be walks on tracks, from lakeside paths to rocky mountain terrain. Walking boots are essential.  
 Meals All included from breakfast on Day 2 to dinner on Day 11, with definite Turkish and Caucasian influences  
 Insects May be encountered around wetlands, so bring repellent.  
 Accom Twin and single rooms ensuite in good quality hotels  
 Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

Caucasian Snowcock	White-throated Robin
Caucasian Black Grouse	Rock Thrush
Lammergeier	Güldenstädt's Redstart
Steppe Eagle	Citrine Wagtail
Imperial Eagle	Finsch's Wheatear
Levant Sparrowhawk	Radde's Accentor
Long-legged Buzzard	Green Warbler
Armenian Gull	Caucasian Chiffchaff
Slender-billed Gull	Menetries's Warbler
Marbled Teal	Great Rosefinch
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	Common Rosefinch
Wallcreeper	Red-fronted Serin
Rose-coloured Starling	Crimson-winged Finch
	Grey-necked Bunting

A journey to the edge of Europe amongst the mighty Caucasus Mountains. Eastern specialities such as Radde's Accentor, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater and Upcher's Warbler.

- Spectacular mountains for Caucasian Snowcock and Caucasian Black Grouse
- Stunning wetlands with Pygmy Cormorant, Armenian Gull and Marbled Teal
- Raptors including Lammergeier, Imperial Eagle and Steppe Buzzard
- Astonishing historical sites that are great for birding
- Pied, Finsch's and Isabelline Wheatears, Rock Thrush and White-throated Robin
- Wallcreeper, Crimson-winged Finch, Radde's Accentor and Grey-necked Bunting
- Famous hospitality, cuisine and wine!

**1-4** After an overnight flight we arrive in Tbilisi and head to a nearby hotel for a few hours rest. Once refreshed, we travel towards the Caucasus Mountains, pausing at Zhinvali Dam for woodpeckers and migrating songbirds. Stunning views at Krestovy Pass make a wonderful backdrop, as we scan for Lammergeier, with Water Pipit, Alpine Chough, Snowfinch and even Wallcreeper possible. Arriving at Kazbegi, we'll spend two days exploring the amazing scenery of the High Caucasus, where Europe stops and Asia starts! We'll drive to Gergeti Trinity Church at 2200m, where we'll scan for Caucasian Black Grouse and listen for Caucasian Snowcock calling from cliff-top perches. Güldenstädt's Redstart and Great Rosefinch are possible, plus Alpine Accentor and Rock Thrush and delightful Red-fronted Serin - and we'll look for goat-like East Caucasian Tur.

The woodlands hold Green Warbler and Caucasian Chiffchaff from early May and may be teeming with migrants, while Black Kites, Steppe Buzzards and harrier passage can be spectacular.

**5-6** We'll spend the morning in bushes and marshes hopefully surrounded by migrants, then stop again at Krestovy Pass and forest near Ananuri, where good numbers of migrant raptors may include Long-legged Buzzard and Lesser-spotted Eagle. We shall arrive late afternoon in Tbilisi - the following day exploring the vast semi-arid steppes, rocky outcrops, shallow lakes and riverine forest to the east. Jandari Lake is a great stop-over for migratory waterbirds and anything can turn up. Imperial Eagle breeds, as do Pygmy Cormorants and we may see our first Armenian Gulls. We head east to the amazing rock monasteries of Davit Gareja.



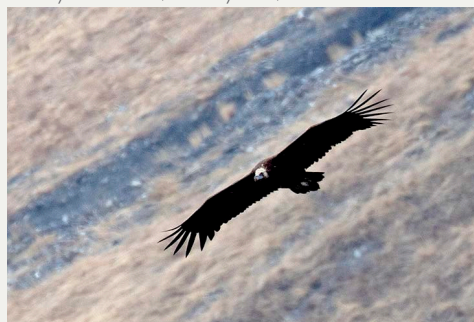
"Georgia and Armenia have some spectacular birds, but it doesn't end there. Carpets of wildflowers, great butterflies and the cuisine of both countries will have us drooling for more."  
Duncan Macdonald



where rock-hewn monastic cells were built in the 6th century. The steppes hold Tawny Pipit, Calandra and Short-toed Larks and around the monasteries Western Rock Nuthatch, Blue Rock Thrush and Pied Wheatear are possible.

**7-9** Leaving Georgia we cross the border into Armenia, then a long but interesting drive lies ahead. We pass through the impressive Debed canyon, where nearly every village along the river has a church, chapel and old fort. We'll look out for Griffon and Egyptian Vulture, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Long-legged Buzzard, arriving at our hotel in Yerevan, late afternoon.

From our base in Yerevan we'll explore the local area, starting with the arid cliffs and hills of Vedi. This magnificent area provides our chance for seeing Grey-necked Bunting, Finsch's Wheatear, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Trumpeter Finch, Black-headed Bunting and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and, with luck, nomadic Mongolian Finch. Our eyes will also be keen to look up as raptors use the valleys to pass northwards. Species may include Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Honey Buzzard and Short-toed Eagle. Armash fish ponds are one of Armenia's richest ornithological hot spots. Nestled in the foothills of Mount Ararat, the extensive wetlands are an oasis in the arid lands of south-western Armenia. The pools, natural salt marshes and extensive reedbeds, provide refuge and breeding habitat for grebes, egrets, herons, ducks, waders and terns. White-headed Duck, Marbled Teal and White-tailed Lapwing breed here, plus Pygmy Cormorant, Ferruginous Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Glossy Ibis, Collared Pratincole,



Gull-billed Tern, Bearded Tit, Moustached and Paddyfield Warbler. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater should be flying above us, while we look for Lesser Short-toed Lark, Black-headed Wagtail, Penduline Tit and Menetries's Warbler. May is perfect timing for thousands of migrants, which should include White-winged and Whiskered Terns, with maybe Black-winged Pratincole as a treat!

**10** The 12th century monastery of Noravank and the gorge within which it sits, is one of the most spectacular sites in Armenia. The complex of buildings is surrounded by beautifully coloured cliffs, above which Golden Eagles soar. Black-eared Wheatear and Eastern Rock Nuthatch can be seen from the grounds, while Nightingale sing from the bushes. The surrounding area is a rich site for birds, with Red-fronted Serin, Upcher's Warbler and Lammergeier all possible.

**11** Mt Aragats is the highest mountain in Armenia. Driving up to 3200m (if snow allows), we pass small pockets of trees, where Semi-collared Flycatcher breed. The road ends at a small lake, where raptors may include Booted, Short-toed and Lesser Spotted Eagles. Fantastic birding here may produce Radde's Accentor, White-throated Robin, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, magna Bluethroat (no central spot), Rock Thrush, Common Rosefinch, Rock and Ortolan Bunting, Shorelark and Crimson-winged Finch. We shall also stop at the scenic and remarkable Amberd Fortress, built in the 11th century.

**12** In the morning we fly out from Yerevan back to the UK.



### Outline Itinerary

**Days 1-4** We arrive in Tbilisi early on day two after an overnight flight. After a few hours rest we travel to Kazbegi. The following two days are spent exploring the Gergeti Trinity Church area of the High Caucasus  
3 nights Rooms Hotel, Kazbegi

**Days 5-6** We travel to Tbilisi, stopping to bird at the spectacular Krestovy Pass. The following day is spent exploring Jandari Lake and the rock monasteries of Davit Gareja.  
2 nights Hotel Kalasi, Tbilisi

**Days 7-11** We cross the border into Armenia and travel to our base in Yerevan. We visit Mount Aragats, Noravank and Arpi Valley, Armash Fish Ponds, Mount Ararat and surrounding areas.  
5 nights Hotel Royal Plaza, Yerevan

**Day 12** Fly out from Yerevan back to UK

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**Steve Batt:** Guldenstädt's Redstart, Black Vulture  
**Attila Steiner:** Amash Fish Ponds and Mount Ararat, Greater Rosefinch, Noravank  
**Duncan Macdonald:** White-throated Robin