

# welcome to Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan



## A Feast for the Eyes

Few travellers are prepared for this region's beauty. The Great Caucasus strides from the Black Sea to the Caspian in a sequence of dramatic icy peaks, green river valleys and quaint, remote villages. Further south the Lesser Caucasus and the Armenian Plateau are geographically complex areas of rugged mountains, lush valleys, rocky gorges and arid semideserts. Beautiful architecture is often perched in the most picturesque locations throughout.

## Hosts Supreme

This region, smaller than the UK, takes in three distinct countries (two Christian, one Islamic); three breakaway territories;

at least 16 local languages; and a melange of Russian, Persian, Turkish and other influences. But common to them all are deep-rooted traditions of hospitality. Travellers are warmly received everywhere, and the enjoyment of tasty, fresh local food and wine with your local hosts is something you won't quickly forget.

## The Great Outdoors

In the Great Caucasus, Georgia's Svaneti, Kazbegi and Tusheti regions and Azerbaijan's Quba hinterland are strung with spectacular walking and riding routes, good for day trips and (in Georgia) village-to-village treks. There's excellent walking in Caucasus foothill areas and the Lesser



MARK DAVEY/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES ©

*With breathtaking natural beauty, wonderfully hospitable people, quaintly charming architecture and cosmopolitan capitals, the three small South Caucasus nations are just waiting to be explored.*

(left) Tsminda Sameba Church (p88), Kazbegi, Georgia  
(below) Azeri babushka dolls



STEPHANE VICTOR/LOVELY PLANET IMAGES ©

Caucasus in Armenia and southern Georgia. Thousands of pilgrims ascend Azerbaijan's 'holy mountain', Babadağ, every year, while around 5000 mountaineers reach the top of Kazbek, one of Georgia's handful of over-5000m peaks. You can set your adrenaline pumping by rafting on several of Georgia's rivers, paragliding in its skies, or delving underground in Armenia's many caves.

## Food for the Mind

Forts, monasteries, mosques, churches and excavations pepper the region; history buffs will love disentangling their Bagratids from their Bolsheviks. The cities boast well-presented museums and classy concerts,

dance and theatre; smaller regional museums show local culture and notables.

## Cultural Crossroads

South Caucasus travel weaves you between cosmopolitan, modernising capitals and slow-paced countryside where most families live off their land. Social attitudes remain traditional, with family networks supreme and most women marrying early. This is a cultural crossroads where Europe meets Asia and tomorrow mingles with yesterday, where tourism infrastructure is improving but travel still presents a few challenges. It is perfect for those who like to explore beyond the beaten path and enjoy a warm local welcome at the end of a day's journey.

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'