

# Pilgrimage to Armenia



17 September – 1 October 2018

Led by Canon Peter Sills

Arranged through Undiscovered Destinations, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion in AD 301. The Armenian Apostolic Church is a distinct denomination; it separated from the rest of the Church in the fifth century after the Council of Chalcedon. Armenia has had a turbulent history, suffering persecution, notably in the Armenian Genocide of 1915/18. This pilgrimage provides an introduction to the Armenian Church and its spirituality, to the people and their culture, and an opportunity to enjoy the natural beauty of the land.

## ITINERARY

**Monday 17 September *Journey Out*** – Late evening Georgian Airways flight from Gatwick to Tbilisi.

**Tuesday 18 September *Tbilisi*** – Arrive Tbilisi and transfer to hotel for rest. Late morning & afternoon: tour of the old town of Tbilisi including the C12th Metekhi Temple, the 'Abanotubani' baths area, Narikala, the main fortress of Tbilisi, the Catholic Church and the Sioni Cathedral (C11th). We visit also the Georgian National Museum, and take the funicular for panoramic views of the city. Overnight at hotel in the old town. (BD)

**Wednesday 19 September *Into Armenia - Akhtala - Odzun*** – Depart Tbilisi and travel into Armenia and visit Akhtala monastery (C10th), famous for its well preserved frescoes. Visit Odzoun village and monastery dating from the C5th. In the village enjoy tea and honey tasting with the local people. Optional walk to Kobayr Monastic Complex. Continue to Haghpat; overnight at Qefo Hotel. (BD)

**Thursday 20 September *Haghpat - Gyumri - Harichavank - Yerevan*** – Visit Haghpat monastery, including a celebration of the Eucharist, then to Gyumri, Armenia's second city for a walking tour, and visit the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Continue to Yerevan visiting en route the Harichavank complex, one of the most famous monasteries in Armenia, noted especially for its school and scriptorium. Five nights at the Imperial Palace Hotel, or similar. (BD)

**Friday 21 September *Armenian Independence Day Geghard - Garni*** – Visit Geghard Cave Monastery (C4-12th; *UNESCO World Heritage Site*) with optional walk along the River Azat. Continue to Garni pagan temple (C1st; *UNESCO WHS*) noted for its Roman mosaics and panoramic views. The visit includes a duduk performance (the national musical instrument). Return to Yerevan for the Independence Day celebrations. (BD)

**Saturday 22 September *Yerevan*** – City tour of Yerevan including the Cascade, the Gafesjian Arts Centre, the Matenadaran Institute with the world's largest collection of ancient manuscripts, and the History Museum. The day will include free time, and an optional visit to the Brandy factory. (BD)

**Sunday 23 September** *Echmiadzin - Zvartnots* – Drive to Echmiadzin, the centre of the Armenian Church, visiting en route St. Hripsime church, one of the pearls of Armenian architecture of the C7th. At Echmiadzin visit the mother Cathedral (C4th), for the cathedral Eucharist (it is hoped to arrange a meeting with one of the priests). On the return to Yerevan visit the ruins of the huge Zvartnots cathedral. Free time in Yerevan. (BD)

**Monday 24 September** *Yerevan* – Morning visit to the Genocide Memorial & Museum. Afternoon free: there are many options and other museums, including the Parajanov Museum, dedicated to the artist and film director of the same name, and described as a ‘must see’ for anyone interested in C20th culture. (BD)

**Tuesday 25 September** *Khor Virap - Noravank - Goris* – Leaving Yerevan we visit the impressive Khor Virap monastery (C4th), set against the panorama of Mount Ararat. Continue to Areni village, famous for its cave winery said to be 6000 years old! After lunch visit C13th Noravank Monastery, spectacularly surrounded by red cliffs. Then to Goris for two nights: Mina Hotel or similar. (BD)

**Wednesday 26 September** *Tatev Complex - Goris* – Today we visit the Tatev complex, taking the cable car to the elevated monastery and village of Halidzor with breathtaking views of the River Vorotan and canyon. We also visit Shinuhayr village noted for its carpet weaving. Return to Goris where we visit the church. Free time. (BD)

**Thursday 27 September** *Khndzoresk - Karahunj - Jermuk* – Leaving Goris drive to Khndzoresk cave village and its gorge. After lunch continue to Jermuk, famed for its spectacular water falls, visiting enroute the ancient observatory of Karahunj. Free time and overnight in Jermuk: good hotel/guesthouse. (BD)

**Friday 28 September** *Noraduz - Selim Pass - Lake Savan - Dilijan* – Drive over the Selim Pass to Lake Savan, at 1900m the highest in Armenia, visiting en route Noraduz cemetery with its large assembly of khachkars, distinctive memorial stones. Continue to Lake Savan and the Savanavank monastery (C9th), where we meet the community. Then to Dilijan for three nights: Best Western Paradise. (BD)

**Saturday 29 September** *Hagharstin - Goshvanank - Molokan Villages* – Today we visit the monasteries of Hagharstin and Goshavank (both C13th), and the villages of the Molokan minorities who settled in Armenia following exile from Russia, where we enjoy tea with the local people. (BD)

**Sunday 30 September** *Dilijan - Aghavnavank* – After the morning celebration of the Eucharist the rest of the day is free to relax. Optional walk to Aghavnavank Monastery (C13th) through the Dilijan Park Nature Reserve. (BD)

**Monday 1 October** *Vanadzor - Tbilisi* – Leaving Dilijan drive to Vanadzor, Armenia’s third city where we visit a wood carver’s studio. After lunch continue to Tbilisi for the return flight. (BL)

*NB: There may be some minor changes to this itinerary depending on local conditions.*

## FLIGHTS & TRAVEL

Georgian Airways have changed their schedule since the pilgrimage was planned, and there are now no direct flights from the UK to Tbilisi on the dates of departure and return. Because group fares are much higher than individual bookings, pilgrims are asked to make their own flight arrangements, but **please contact me for the recommended options before you book your flights**. Flights are available from Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham and other UK airports. Travel within Georgia and Armenia is by air- conditioned coach.

## ACCOMMODATION & COST

Accommodation will be in good class hotels as indicated in the itinerary. The cost is £1095 per person and the single room supplement is £315. The price includes accommodation and meals as shown in the itinerary, coaching, local guides, entrance fees, and water on the coach. It does not include air fares, drinks, optional tours, portorage, travel insurance and visa fees (none for UK citizens; non-UK citizens should check visa requirements).

## BOOKING

Participation in this pilgrimage is by personal invitation. If you would like to join the pilgrimage please confirm your acceptance and room preference (shared/single) by email (or call or text me on 00 44 79 51 38 66 11) **AND** send a deposit of **£350** per person, preferably by internet transfer, to: Dr Peter M Sills / sort code: 07-02-46 / a/c no: 17182989 / Ref: *Name + AR18*, or by cheque to the address below. **Receipt of the deposit confirms your place**. The balance of the cost is payable by xx July, and an invoice will be sent in early June. Bookings are subject to the general conditions of *Undiscovered Destinations* which can be accessed on the Information section of their website: [www.undiscovered-destinations.com](http://www.undiscovered-destinations.com). It is a condition of participation that you arrange your own travel insurance.

**Canon Peter Sills | The Coach House, Keymer Road, Hassocks, BN6 8JR**

**01273 842760 | 07951 386611 | [sills824@btinternet.com](mailto:sills824@btinternet.com) | [www.peter-sills.co.uk](http://www.peter-sills.co.uk)**