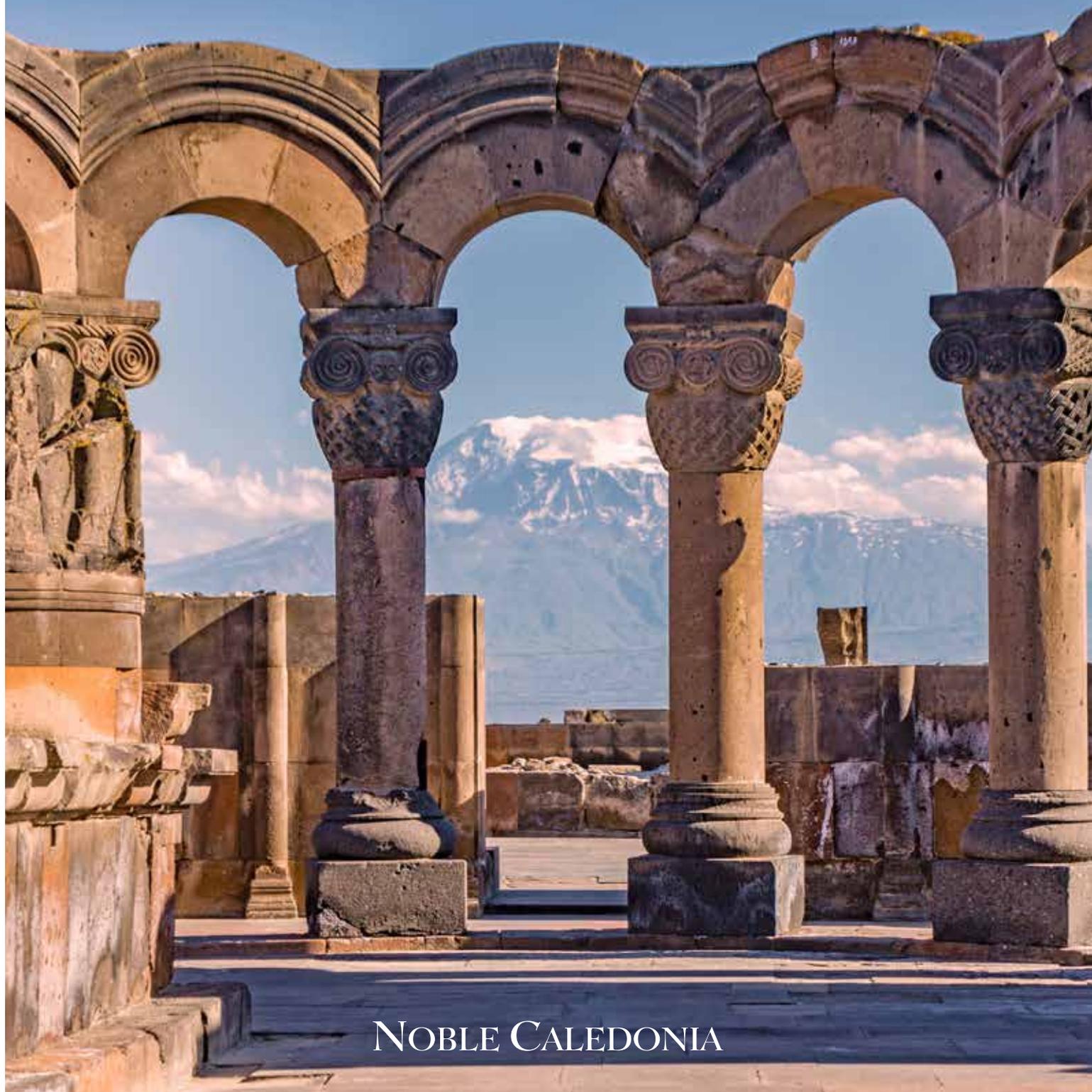


ANCIENT ARMENIA

An escorted tour discovering the cultural & scenic wonders of Armenia
19th to 30th June 2019



NOBLE CALEDONIA

Landlocked Armenia boasts beautiful scenery, a fascinating and diverse cultural history and some exquisite churches and monasteries. This comprehensive escorted tour will explore the many facets of this ancient land as well as include ample time at leisure to enjoy the lively café culture of the capital city, Yerevan, one of the world's oldest inhabited cities and home to numerous museums.



Some thirty years before Rome was founded, Yerevan was an important stop along the caravan routes from Asia to Europe and over the years has been invaded by Assyrians, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongols, the Turks and later by the Soviet Red Army, making for a captivating history with the many invading influences evident in the architecture.

Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion and is scattered with Christian places of worship, many in stunning locations such as the Sevanavank Monastery located on the shore of Lake Sevan, the largest lake in the Caucasus, and the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, one of the oldest cathedrals in the world, both of which we will visit.

Aside from learning of the intricate cultural history of the land, we will visit the oldest cave winery and Ararat brandy factory (a reputed favourite tippie of Winston Churchill), enjoy both a culinary masterclass and a vocal concert and have the opportunity to interact with villagers.

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Kiev, Ukraine. Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this evening and transfer to Opera Hotel, Kiev for an overnight stay. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening.

Day 2 Kiev to Yerevan, Armenia. After breakfast in the hotel transfer to the airport for the scheduled flight to Yerevan, Armenia. Arrive this afternoon and check in to the Royal Tulip Grand Hotel, our base for the next five nights. Enjoy time to settle into your accommodation before dinner in the hotel this evening.

Day 3 Yerevan. Following a leisurely breakfast we will explore the Armenian capital, Yerevan. During our city tour see Republic Square, Abovyan Street and City Park and visit the Genocide Memorial and the museum dedicated to the victims of the Great Genocide that took place in 1915. Also visit the Cascade which houses the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts, dedicated to bringing contemporary art from all over the world to Armenia and presenting the best of Armenian culture to the world. After lunch spend some time at leisure to relax or explore independently. Enjoy a welcome dinner this evening in a local restaurant with authentic Armenian cuisine.

Day 4 Yerevan. Today we further explore Yerevan starting with a visit to Matenadaran, a Museum

and Scientific Institute of ancient manuscripts which holds one of the world's richest collections of Medieval manuscripts and books spanning a broad range of historical and cultural subjects. We continue to the Carpet Museum where specially trained weavers demonstrate traditional methods of Armenian carpet making. For lunch, a professional cook will demonstrate age old traditions of Armenian cooking and create a famous Armenian dish for us to enjoy. After lunch we will visit a Yerevan brandy factory. Brandy is a strong part of Armenian culture and heritage and has been for generations. Learn the local processes they use and special grape varieties chosen, finishing with a tasting of the famous Armenia brandy. Dinner will be at a local restaurant this evening.

Day 5 Etchmiadzin & Zvartnots. This morning following breakfast we will visit the Yerevan History Museum before making our way to the city of Etchmiadzin. The main Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is reputed to be one of the world's oldest cathedrals and is a special place of pilgrimage for all Armenians around the world. After a tour of the Cathedral enjoy a special authentic lunch hosted by an Armenian family. On our return journey to Yerevan we will stop en-route at Zvartnots Cathedral. Built in 7th century AD, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is today unfortunately in



Sevanavank Monastery and Lake Sevan



Hellenic temple at Garni

ruins, but even in ruins it reflects its unique architectural value and is still an impressive sight. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening.

Day 6 Khor Virap & Noravank. This morning we will drive to Khor Virap Monastery which dates back to the 4th century. From here admire the beauty of Mount Ararat in the distance and also see the closed border between Turkey and Armenia located just 20 kilometres away. We will visit the chapel which was constructed over the deep dungeon where Gregory the Illuminator, the patron saint and first official head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was imprisoned for 13 years. We then make our way towards Noravank, travelling through countryside that emerges into a scenic rocky mountainous gorge. The hot and dry climate makes this area renowned for wine making and is believed to be the location of the oldest winery, dating back 6000 years. We will visit the 13th century Monastery standing high in the valley surrounded by red cliffs before enjoying lunch in a local restaurant.

Day 7 Sevan Lake & Dilijan. Today we make our way to Dilijan, commonly known as the small Switzerland of Armenia, the town is surrounded by densely covered forest with surprisingly rich vegetation, and offers a cool and refreshing climate to the arid surrounds. En-route visit Sevanavank Monastery, originally made from three churches the monastery was built on an island on Sevan Lake. The island Monastery



Republic Square, Yerevan



Interior of Etchmiadzin Cathedral



Symphony of Stones basalt columns and the Azat River Gorge



Geghard Cave Monastery in the mountains of Armenia

was, according to historians of the time, used both for worship and pilgrimage and as a place of exile for Armenian noblemen who had fallen into disgrace. The receding waters in the 20th century created the current peninsula we see today. Enjoy a scenic panoramic view of the lake before continuing to Dilijan where we will visit a local artist's home to admire works of art and enjoy a private lunch. We continue to the Haghartsin Monastery, beautifully nestled in the heart of the forest. Later check in to the Best Western Paradise Hotel for a two night stay. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening.

Day 8 Dilijan & Molokan Village. Following a leisurely breakfast embark on a short walking tour of the quaint town of Dilijan before driving to see the 13th century Goshavank monastic complex that is named after Mkhitar Gosh, a prominent writer, lawyer and author of the Code of Law. We will have a late lunch in a Molokan village at one of the local houses where we can learn of the lifestyle of the village people. Dinner will be at a local restaurant this evening.

Day 9 Ashtarak & Yerevan. After breakfast drive to Ashtarak, passing through Vanadzor, the 3rd largest city in Armenia, where you can still see traces of the Soviet Union times. In Ashtarak visit the 13th century Saghmosavank Monastery that received its name from the religious ecclesiastical songs performed in the monastery.

Following a local lunch we will continue to Yerevan and check in to the Royal Tulip Grand Hotel for a three night stay. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening.

Day 10 Geghard & Garni. After breakfast we drive to Geghard Cave Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is partially carved out of the adjacent mountain, assuring the great acoustics of this sacred place. We will enjoy a vocal concert of Medieval Armenian songs inside the cave. A short transfer takes us to Garni and the Merojakh Restaurant, where during lunch we will have a demonstration of Armenian Bread 'Lavash' baking in an underground traditional oven, called a Tonir. Enjoy a traditional Armenian barbeque of local produce and learn about traditional preparation techniques from the locals. After lunch we will visit the Garni pagan temple, built in 1st century AD and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Sited on a hillside high above the Azat River, Garni is the only pagan temple that remains in Armenia after the adoption of Christianity. Inside we will enjoy a special Duduk performance, the national musical instrument made of apricot tree. Enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening.

Day 11 Aragatsotn Wine Region & Yerevan. This morning visit a local food market before driving to the region of Aragatsotn to visit a winery. The volcanic soil in the region is rich in minerals and properties that, along with the ample sunshine, makes the perfect climate for growing grapes.

Visit the picturesque wine estate set against the backdrop of the inspiring Mount Ararat, Ara and Aragats and enjoy a wine tasting of different varieties and lunch. Return to Yerevan for some time at leisure. This evening our farewell dinner will be held at a local restaurant with a live music performance.

Day 12 Yerevan to London. After breakfast transfer to the airport for our return scheduled indirect flight to London.

PRICES PER PERSON

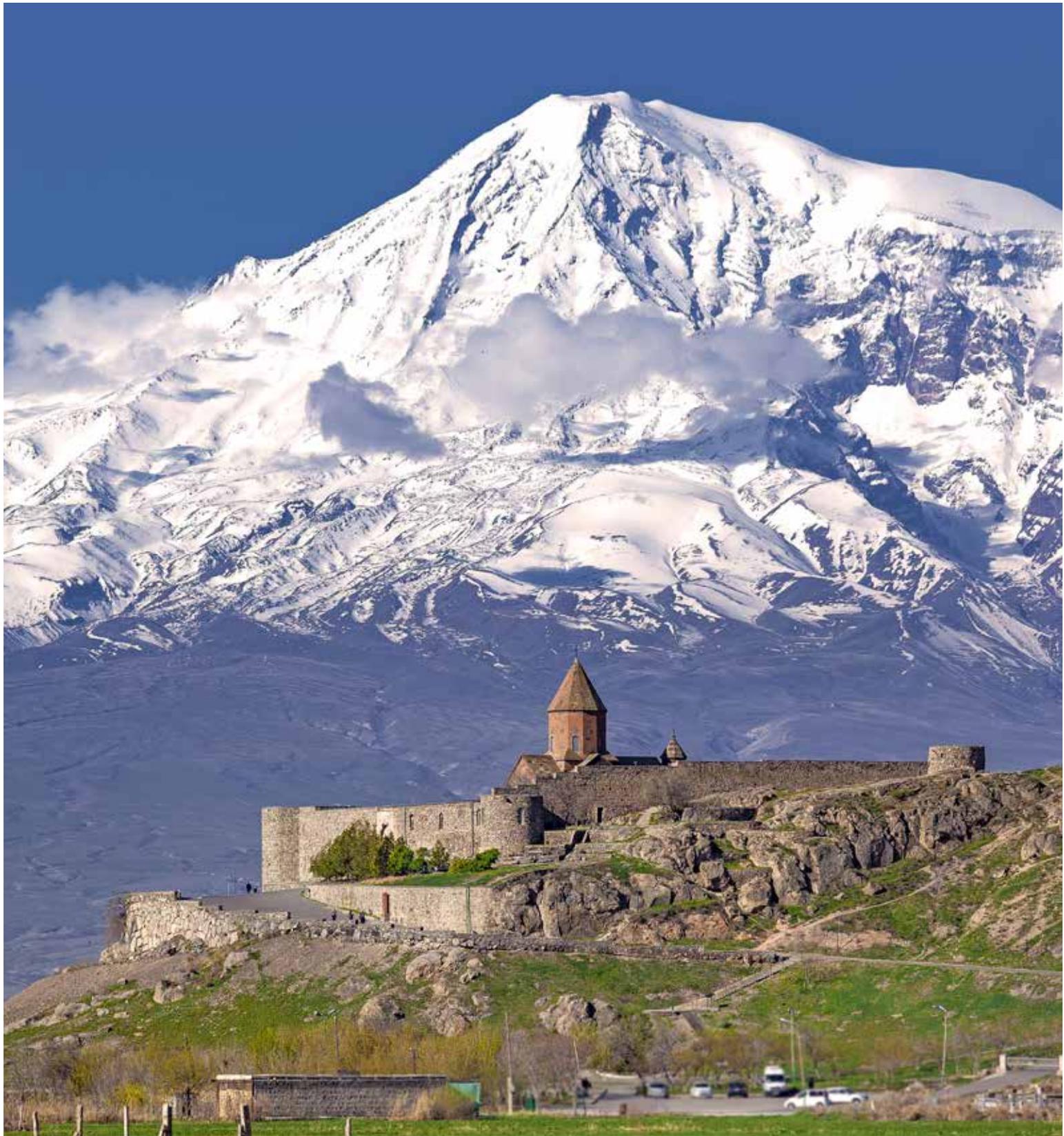
Based on double occupancy

Twin: **£2795** Single: **£3295**

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just twenty participants

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • 11 nights hotel accommodation as described • All meals (except lunch on day 2) • Excursions as described • Entrance fees • Transfers • English speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities.
Not Included: Travel insurance, visas, lunch on day 2.

NB. We have planned the itinerary to be less strenuous than most to the region, however it must be noted that the tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and some long drives. Many of the sites are reached by uneven steps without handrails. To best enjoy your experiences in Armenia, you should be in good physical condition.



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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover images: Front - Ruins of Zvartnots Cathedral; Back - Khor Virap Monastery and Mount Ararat