

European Routes of Jewish heritage - Azerbaijan

Program

1st day Baku city tour



Arrival at Heydar Aliyev International Airport

Transfer to the hotel, Free time

Full sightseeing tour in Baku

Visiting to the medieval part of the Old City (11-19th cc) (Fortifications, Shirvanshakhs Palace (14-15th cc.), Caravanserai complex (14-15th cc.), old mosques (11-19th cc.), old bath, narrow small streets, art shops and bench of Handicraft, "The Maiden Tower" – the oldest construction of Baku under UNESCO protection

Synagogue of mountain Jews

The building belonged to the mountain Jews has been operated in Baku since 1945. During the Soviet Power, after the end of the II World War an old building in the city centre was allocated for the mountain Jews to meet their religious needs. The building was in miserable condition, which caused suffering to worshipers. This situation continued until Azerbaijan gained its independence. During the independence, the temple has undergone to reconstruction works, the second floor of the synagogue has been built and decent condition created for visiting worshipers.

Reconstruction and thorough repair works carried out in Baku city in 2010 necessitated building a new synagogue for the mountain Jews and with the initiate and care of Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan this work was launched. An inaugural opening ceremony of a new religious place built for the mountain Jews was held on April 5, 2011 at the address 72, Ali Mardan Topchubashov Street of the Nasimi district. High level officials, heads of religious confessions operating in Azerbaijan, Jewish community members, as well as guests from Israel, Russia and other countries attended the opening ceremony of a synagogue, which is distinguished with its size and architectural design not only in Azerbaijan, but in the whole region.

Synagogue of European and Georgian Jews

Synagogue of the European and Georgian Jews situated on 171, Dilara Aliyeva street of Baku city was opened on March 9, 2003. The temple was built in the Jerusalem architectural style on architecture Alexander Garben's design. This building is considered the first synagogue constructed in the Middle East over the last 60-80 years. The building, which is one of the largest synagogues in Europe, was built in the place of the old temple. After the end of the Second World War the Soviet Government allocated a one-storeyed building formerly used as the military warehouse to the European and Georgian Jews in order to meet the religious need. Here, men had to get down to the cold and humid basement for worship, while women prayed at the room upstairs. Balcony of the building was also at the disposal of women.



Currently, comfortable condition has been created for clerics at a new three-storeyed synagogue built of white stones. People from different religious and sections have been participated in the construction of the synagogue. Names of each person and organization with the distinguished contribution to the project have been embedded on the board at the entrance of the temple. In addition to Jewish organizations operating abroad, the Department for Caucasus Muslims and Baku and Azerbaijan Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church were also closely engaged in the financing of the construction. This is a vivid example of the strong tolerance among different religious confessions in Azerbaijan.



Sightseeing walking tour around Baku

Azadlig Square, Heydar Aliyev Center, Modern Art Museum, The Maiden Tower, Philharmonic Park, Flame Towers, Highland Park, State Flag Square, Ferris Wheel, Puppet Theatre, Museum Centre
Nizami street /shopping/, "Fountain Square", monument of Nizami Ganjavi, Rasul-zade Street, leading to the Seaside Park- Boulevard
At favorable windless weather – 0,5 hour boat cruise through the Baku bay. Walking along Baku sea-side boulevard.

Overnight in Baku

2nd day

Baku – Guba – Red Settlement – Baku



Guba - Its location is one of the closest to the capital regions of Azerbaijan. Due to its good location (168 km from Baku) and rich infrastructure, the Guba region is one of the favorite tourist destinations. Visitors have long chosen Gechresh place where you can relax in the shady woods, Tangaalti gorge where the river carries Velvelichai stormy waters, the famous waterfall Afurdzhi that is listed in Monuments of Azerbaijani Nature List. The district has a unique mountain village Khinalig, located at an altitude of 2500 m. above sea level. The population of the village is a separate ethnographic group, with its own language. In Guba, there is also a famous village of Krasnaya Sloboda, which is home to one of the largest communities of Mountain Jews in the world. Guba is also famous for its apples, which became its symbol.

Furthermore, Guba is a recognized carpet weaving center. There are many architectural monuments preserved in the vicinity of Guba. At one time, Guba was visited by the famous French writer Alexander Dumas, the writer Bestujev-Marly, the famous Norwegian scientist and explorer Thor Heyerdahl. And today Guba is welcoming guests from all around the world.

Red Settlement "Gilaki" synagogue

The "Gilaki" synagogue situated in Red Settlement of Guba regions was built by expatriates migrated from Gilan region of Southern Azerbaijan. Architect of the temple was Gilel ben Khaimd. His name was embedded on the brick facade of the synagogue. According to the writing on the foundation stone, the temple was built in 1896. But, there is another slab, indicating different date – 1857. That slab might have been brought by Gilan Jewish migrants from the older temple and placed above the entrance door of the synagogue. Narrow, six-pointed dome built on fourth-column roof gives special beauty to the Gilaki temple. There 12 windows at the building of synagogue referring to the number of Israel branch. Historical sources suggest the existence of a spring used to pass by the synagogue. According to assumptions, a mosque built in Guba in the first half of the XIX century was a prototype for the Gilan temple.



Because, the six-pointed dome was made of glass and illuminated the prayer room. The analogical roof cover exists in the Guba mosque. There were no separate rooms for women at the Gilaki synagogue, like at other temples of the mountain Jews in the past. Women only used to come here on holidays and sat in the court of the synagogue. Currently, women are allowed to the temple on holidays as well.



Red Settlement “Six-dome” synagogue

A synagogue situated at Isaak Khanukov street of Guba region was built in 1888; its architecture was Gilel ben Khaim. The six-dome (synagogue is also six-pointed) is the token of the move of population in Gilgat quarter of Galaduz village that they had made within 6 days with the permission of Guba’s Khan of Huseyngulu khan. The temple has 14 main windows.

The synagogue with a large prayer room is an ancient architectural monument built in the Eastern style. The inner part overlooking at the prayer wall is called aron-kadus. It’s the unique idol in its height in Europe, overlooking at Jerusalem. It is 7 meters in height. The holy book is preserved in the closed of that wall.

Windows are made of oak in the form of six-pointed star. The reconstruction of the synagogue was started in 1995 and completed in October of 2000. There is 60-person prayer hall and a kitchen for the arrangement of religious rites in the basement of the temple currently at the disposal of clerics.

Overnight in Baku

3th day

Baku – Lahij – Gabala

Lahij mountain settlement of national handcraft.

The Alpine settlement Lahij located in Ismayilli region of Azerbaijan is an original monument of antique urban and architectural art. This medieval town with cobbled streets and squares is one of the most famous craft and trading centers in the Caucasus and beyond. It is believed that the legendary Manomakh’s cap, worn by Russian tsars for many centuries, was made here. Lahij became especially famous for manufacturing knives and copper utensils, decorated with engraved designs. Even today a dozen workshops operate here, demonstrating hereditary blacksmiths who make various household items in front of the astonished tourists.



The very first residential block in Lahij was founded in III-IV centuries. It is astonishing that the water supply and sewage system, operating in the city, is about one and half thousand years old! The two km long tri-level sewer is paved under the main street, to a depth of 1 m. The upper two levels of the pipes are for the drinking water and water for industrial purposes. The lower part of the sewer is a rectangular trough lined with river stone. It is designed for wastes that come through the holes provided in the yard of every home. None of the residents know where the drainage begins and where it ends, and the principle of how it works, yet the collector has been functioning for many centuries. Now Lahij is a historical and architectural memorial protected by the state and the appearance of the settlement is preserved in its original form.



Passage to the route Gabala

It is the beautiful part of Azerbaijan with a rich and ancient history. Sometime in the past this city (Kabbalah) was the capital of Caucasian Albania for 600 years. Up to this present time there are the ruins of the ancient city and the main gate of Caucasian Albania. There is a great number of historical and cultural monuments of different eras in this region. Beautiful nature and well developed infrastructure attract thousands of tourists to Gabala. Here are a few five star complexes, small family hotels, recreation areas and tourist camps. Among the local attractions there are the so called Russian forest, river valleys, the famous Chestnut forest, and numerous picturesque villages.

There is Nij village inhabited by Udi, direct descendants of the ancient Caucasian Albanians. The abundance of game in the woods in the season attracts many hunters. In Gabala at the area of 16 hectares is located the largest open air amusement park in Azerbaijan – Gabaland. The town also hosts an annual International Music Festival of classical music, jazz and mugham, which is attended by bands and artists from all around the world. Not surprisingly that exactly in Gabala is located a factory on piano manufacturing under the famous Dutch brand Beltman.

visiting to the small step falls 7 Gozel (“7 beauties”), panoramic view of Nohur mountain lake in Nohurgishlag Nich settlement (Medieval Christian temple of Caucasian Albania -Chotari church after reconstruction VII-XIV cc.)

Overnight in Gabala

4th day

Gabala – Oghuz – Baku



“Upper quarter” synagogue

The Upper Quarter synagogue situated on Arzu Aliyeva street of Oghuz town was built in 1897 with the assistance and under guidance of Ravine Barukh. During the Soviet Empire that synagogue, like other religious sites were closed down and then used as a warehouse.

In 2004, the repair of the synagogue was stated by local Jews living in Oghuz and completed in 2006. The synagogue is currently used as a temple. Jews freely come here to pray on Fridays and Saturdays.

“Lower Quarter” synagogue

Visiting Gobustan National Historical - Artist Preserve

Sixty km south of Baku, on an area of 537 hectares, there is one of the world's largest ancient petroglyphs collections counting more than 4,000 petroglyphs. In the Gobustan National Historical-Artistic Reserve one can see the settlements of the ancient people, the remains of the large prehistoric Stone Circle and other evidences of the Stone Age and later inhabitants of the region. Gobustan petroglyphs were repeatedly investigated by the famous Norwegian explorer and adventurer Thor Heyerdahl, who recognized local boats petroglyphs as the oldest known images of pirogue in the world. These vessels, similar to the old Scandinavian ships, prompted him to make sensational hypothesis statement about the connection between Norwegians and Azerbaijanis. Thor Heyerdahl concluded that the ancestors of the Scandinavians were the migrants from Azerbaijan region. Of special interest of the tourists is also a stone slab with a Latin inscription dated by the first century. The stone lab was left here by XII Roman legion of the Emperor Domitian, which indicates that legion had stayed here. Cultural Landscape of Gobustan petroglyphs is listed in UNESCO World Heritage List.



Overnight in Baku

5th day

Historical places



Ateshgah Fire -Worshippers' Temple

The temple of fire worshippers Ateshgah is located at the Absheron peninsula at the outskirts of Surakhani village in 30 km from the centre of Baku and was revered in different times by Zoroastrians, Hindus and Sikhs. Current constructions of the temple are dated by XVII century. As a result of excavations far more ancient artifacts were discovered here. Pentagonal complex has an open courtyard with temple-altar in the center which was the place of pilgrimage for worshippers. By the decree of the President of Azerbaijan Ateshgah was declared a State historical-architectural reserve. This museum under the open sky was recently restored. Different workshops and souvenir galleries are located here now.

“Gala” State Historical-Ethnographic Preserve

The territory of Azerbaijan is rich with examples proving it to be the home to ancient inhabitants. Absheron Peninsula has special importance in terms of historical monuments. Absheron Peninsula, the ancient settlement, has history dating before century. Barrows, fire traces and tombs were found here during archeological excavations and it proved this fact once again. One of the oldest settlements in Absheron is Gala village which is located in the northeast of the Peninsula. There are 215 architectural and archeological monuments in Gala village and the surrounding regions. The environment which is dated back to 3rd millennium BC is preserved here.



There are several architectural monuments – 5 mosques, 3 bathhouses, 4 water houses (ovdan), agricultural buildings, sepulchers, tombs, barrows, remnants of castle, houses, etc. - of historical importance in Gala which belong to the period between 3rd millennium BC and 20th century. Gala village with its history of five thousand years old had several districts. Of those, Tarakama, Balaverdi, Haji Ramazan, Chambarakand are preserved till today.

Transfer to Heydar Aliyev International Airport