McCabe Pilgrimages

HOLY ARMENIA

With the Very Revd Geoffrey Marshall
Dean of Brecon Cathedral

4-15 June 2014

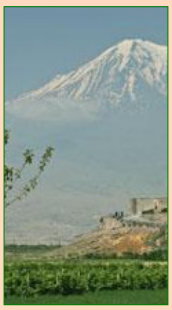
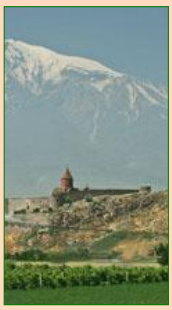
A 12 day ecumenical pilgrimage with some bird watching opportunities & Lake Sevan

A pilgrim journey through

Armenia

with the Very Revd Geoffrey Marshall,
Dean of Brecon Cathedral

4—15 June 2014

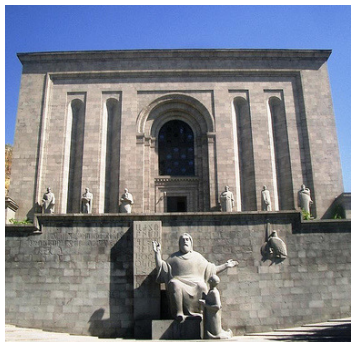
In AD 301, when St Gregory the Illuminator converted King Trdat III to the faith, Armenia became the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion. The Armenian Church is called Apostolic because the country had been evangelised by two of the Twelve Apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew.

Armenians claim descent from Noah's great-great-grandson Haik, from whom their name for their country, Hayastan, derives. Armenia is symbolised by the looming snow-capped peak of Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark landed, now over the Turkish border. Historically often much larger in area, the Republic of Armenia which emerged out of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, is about the same size as Belgium.

Highlights of our tour will include Echmiadzin, the spiritual centre of the nation, Sevan (one of the world's largest fresh-water mountain lakes) and the capital Yerevan. We shall visit monuments from the earliest days of Christianity, together with jewels from the Middle Ages. In addition to seeing many open churches and live monasteries, there should be opportunities to enjoy the wonderful and varied landscapes, flora and fauna of the country – early June is the best time for observing the flowers and birds of Armenia.

This tiny country has an extraordinary 349 species of bird; by comparison, the whole of Europe has 550. Lying on the main migration route through the Caucasus between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, with diverse terrain and vegetation zones overlapping each other, Armenia attracts bird species that are not normally seen together - desert and forest birds, waterfowl, high plains and alpine species living in the same small area.

TOUR INFORMATION



The cost of this 12-day tour is £1,625 per person sharing twin-bedded accommodation on a full board basis (breakfast, lunch and dinner each day). We will be staying at locally graded three star hotels, all rooms having private facilities. Our journey is by air with Ukraine International Airlines flights from Gatwick to Yerevan (via Kiev) and back. Travel through Armenia is by coach accompanied by a local guide. All entrance fees are included, as is the Armenian visa fee. The only extras that will be added to your invoice are the insurance premium of £49, if required. However, you should also budget on an amount of approximately £50 for a group gratuity fund, to be collected by the Tour Leader. A few single rooms are available at an extra charge of £265. Please, however, see our note 'Travelling Alone' overleaf. Any special diets should be printed on the Booking Form.

A deposit is payable now with the balance due eight weeks prior to departure. Full flight/accommodation details will be sent out 2 weeks before departure.

TO MAKE A RESERVATION

To reserve your place on this tour please complete the enclosed booking form and send it with a deposit of £200 plus the insurance premium of £49 (if required) to:

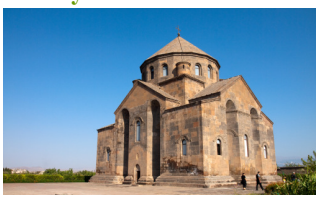
The Very Revd Geoffrey Marshall
The Deanery
Cathedral Close
Brecon LD3 9DP
Tel : 01874 623344
Email: brecondeanery@btinternet.com

DAILY PROGRAMME

Wednesday Travel to Yerevan
Our journey begins as we leave Gatwick to fly to Yerevan via Kiev. Our flight PS112 departs at 12.20 hours and arrives in Kiev at 17.40. Our onward flight PS611 departs at 19.55 and arrives in Yerevan at 23.40 On arrival we transfer to the three star Hotel Hrazdan which overlooks Mount Ararat.

Thursday Yerevan
After breakfast we have a city tour of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, beginning at the Mother Armenia monument, which provides a panoramic view of the city. We visit Erebuni, the fortress of the ancient Urartu kingdom. After lunch we visit the Genocide Memorial Complex with the museum. We end the day at the famous Matenadaran which holds a fantastic collection of ancient Armenian manuscripts.

Friday Echmiadzin



Today we visit the centre of religious life in Armenia, Echmiadzin, meaning "Only Begotten, Descended" because St Gregory founded a church on the spot where he saw the Holy Ghost descend in a vision. Visits today will include Hripsime Church as well as the Cathedral Complex. and the remains of the 7th century circular cathedral at Zvartnots. After having lunch we end the day at the State History Museum.

Saturday Amberd
Today we drive out to Mount Aragats, an extinct volcano which is the highest mountain in modern Armenia. We start the day at Tegher Monastery. We drive on passing by some Kurdish yurts to the Amberd Fortress with its church which dates back to the eleventh century. Situated at an altitude of over 2,000 metres, we enjoy spectacular views over Mount Ararat. Before returning to Yerevan we stop at Saghmos Monastery with its remains of frescoes, which are very unusual in Armenian churches.
We might see White-throated Robins, Siberian Stonechats and Woodlarks; European Honey Buzzards, Common Buzzards and various eagles - Lesser-spotted, Booted and Short-toed. Radde's Accentors, Bluethroats and Ring Ousels. Horned Larks, Water Pipits, Black Redstarts, White-winged Snowfinches, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes and Alpine Accentors.

Sunday Khor Virap
We drive south to Khor Virab, past wonderful views of Mount Ararat. Here in the complex we can see the cave which served as a prison for St Gregory the Illuminator. We drive on south to Norovank, a particularly arid and isolated region with beautiful pink rock. The main church is built on two levels, with an outside stone staircase ascending to the upper level. We drive on to Goris where we stay for two nights at the Hotel Diana.

Monday Tatev Monastery
We spend the day visiting the very isolated Tatev Monastery situated above the Vorotan River. Once off the main road, we drive through the gorge (the deepest in Armenia) in local minibuses to this very remote, but spectacularly situated monastery complex. On the way back to Goris, stopping at the ancient village of Kndzorest.

Tuesday The Selim Pass
Leaving Goris we visit the Zorats Stones, an ancient archaeological site locally known as the Armenian Stonehenge. We drive on across the Selim Pass, stopping at the Selim caravanseri (2400 meters). We also visit Noratus village where there is a cemetery famous for its great collection of beautifully carved khachkars (Armenian carved cross stones). We drive on to Lake Sevan where we stay beside the lake at the Blue Sevan Hotel for one night.

At the Selim Pass we might see Twites, Rock Sparrows and Long-legged Buzzards. Lake Sevan is home to the largest breeding colony of Armenia Gulls.

Wednesday Lake Sevan
Lake Sevan is the largest mountainous lake in the world. We visit the churches on the peninsula. Then we continue our way to north. We will pass through the spa town Dilidjan, an inspiration of many famous artists including Benjamin Britten and Mstislav Rostropovich who stayed here at the holiday retreat for musicians. We also visit Makaravank Monastery, situated in the midst of a forest on Mount Paytatar. We change to local mini buses to ascend the rough, winding road leading to the monastery, situated spectacularly in a clearing in the midst of the trees. We then drive to Lori province to stay for two nights at Dzoraget Hotel

Thursday Haghbat and Sanahin
Our highlight today will be the visit to two UNESCO sites – Sanahin and Haghbat monasteries located on either side of Debed River canyon. After having lunch at a local restaurant which has the best barbeque in Armenia we return to our hotel.

Friday Khachkars
Today we drive back to Yerevan, stopping in Vanadzor at a Khachkar maker's studio. We will learn about this very important Armenian tradition. We will also visit the Park of Letters, dedicated to the 1600th anniversary of the creation of the Armenian alphabet. We continue on to Yerevan for our final two nights at Hrazdan Hotel.

Saturday Garni and Geghard
We drive east and visit Garni's pagan Temple of the Sun, the only site of a Hellenistic monument not to have had a church built over it. It was destroyed in 1679 by an earthquake but restored in the 1970s using original stones where possible. Nearby are the remains of Roman baths. From here we drive on to Geghard Monastery, famous for the tradition that the spear which pierced Christ's side rested here. We arrive back to Yerevan mid afternoon and have some free time for shopping.

We might see Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Finsch's Wheatear, Lesser Grey Shrike, European Roller and Little Owl; Black-headed Buntings; Isabelline Wheatears, Bimaculated Lark, Rosy Starlings; Alpine Swifts and Crag Martins; Egyptian Vulture and Long-legged Buzzard.

Sunday Homeward bound
A very early start to transfer to the airport for our return flight PS612 which departs Yerevan at 06.40 and arrives in Kiev at 08.30. Our onward flight PS111 departs at 10.00 and arrives into Gatwick at 11.25. *(flight times shown are local)*

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

PASSPORTS, VISAS AND HEALTH

Please ensure that your passport is valid for at least six months after the time of this pilgrimage. If you need a new passport apply early as there can be considerable backlogs at the passport offices. Visas are issued on arrival at Yerevan Airport If you are holding a non-British passport, or require further advice, please consult the McCabe office. Inoculations are not generally required. We, however, do advise you to consult your doctor regarding your own personal requirements.

TRAVELLING ALONE

Many of our passengers travel alone and object to expensive single room supplements. McCabe Pilgrimages will accept individual bookings on a 'guaranteed share' basis. We charge the basic price and accommodate you with a person of the same sex also requesting shared accommodation. If we do not find someone to share with you, you will be accommodated in a single room at only 50% of the usual single room supplement. For single travellers who do require single accommodation this should be requested when booking and, if available, the normal supplement will be payable.

AITO Quality Statement

McCabe Pilgrimages is a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators. The Association represents Britain's leading independent tour operators and encourages high standards of quality and service. McCabe abides by the Association's Code of Conduct and adheres to the AITO Quality Charter which can be viewed on www.aito.co.uk. Visit the website to find out more about the Association or call **020 8744 9280.**

This pilgrimage is ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. The McCabe ATOL number is 2920.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

McCabe will arrange comprehensive travel insurance cover for each passenger unless otherwise indicated on the booking form. We have negotiated the premium (see 'Tour Information' section inside for rate) which as well as offering full medical and baggage cover also gives cover against loss of deposits. Cover is arranged by Preferential Insurance Services Ltd and is underwritten by Optimum Underwriting Limited as underwriting agents for Groupama Insurance Company Limited – each aforementioned organisation is authorised and regulated by The Financial Services Authority (FSA). The policy wording sets out full details of cover and will be sent to you with your confirmation invoice. This document also acts as your insurance certificate so that your booking reference number is also your insurance policy number.

A special feature of the McCabe insurance is that there is no age limit. Please, however, note it is a requirement that all insured persons must adhere to the Medical Health Requirements section on page 5 of the Policy wording document (which we will send you with your confirmation invoice). If you answer yes to any of the questions asked within this section you must contact the **HELPLINE 0843 208 1461**. This is a confidential service that will decide whether or not this insurance is appropriate for you. If they decline to offer cover, or if you are unhappy with any aspect of the cover, you can return the policy within 14 days of issue and receive a full refund. In cases of difficulty, we have specialist insurers we can introduce you to.

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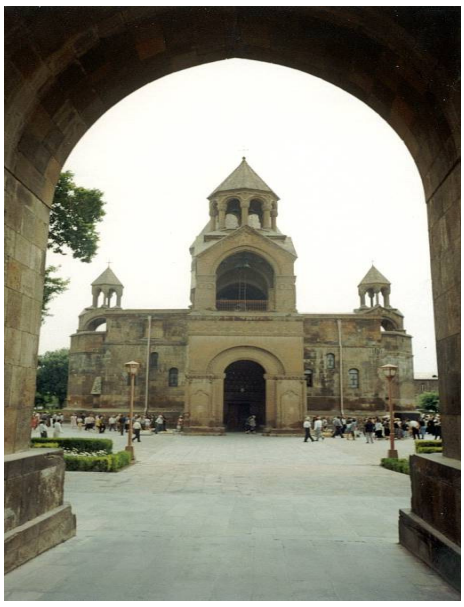

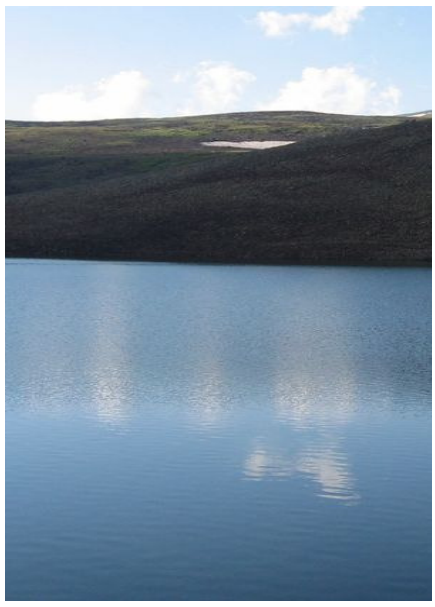

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