CATTARA
Adventures with Insight

# The Best of the Georgian Caucasus

**July 9 – 21, 2021 (13 days)**

**The Caucasus, one of the world's extraordinary mountain domains**, is the setting for our hiking trip that explores two distinctly different mountain regions of Georgia: dramatic Khevsureti and the even more remote mountain valleys of Tusheti, a hidden "Shangri-La" defended by ancient stone towers, reminders of the not-so-distant past. Still largely untouched, Tusheti is a magnet for those seeking a mosaic of fascinating cultures and superb scenery. For centuries, these areas have been home to venerable mountain clans whose traditions include extending a rich hospitality to visitors (in fact, their hospitality borders on the compulsive—be prepared to accept profuse offerings of food and wine!). Our trek takes us from one historical village to the next, with a chance to meet local people, hear their haunting melodies, listen to poetry, and sleep under the starry sky or stay with them in their traditional homes. Our trip ends in the lowlands of Khakheti province, famed as the birthplace of winemaking.

## TRIP DETAILS

Moderate to Strenuous ▸ 6 days moderate to strenuous hiking at medium elevation (maximum 11,254 feet); 5 nights hotels, 3 nights guesthouses, 4 nights camping

## ITINERARY

(You will need to leave the U.S. on July 7 or 8, in order to arrive in Tbilisi on July 9.)

**Day 1, July 9 ▸ Tbilisi, Georgia**
Arrive early morning in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. You will be met outside of customs by a Cattara representative and transferred to your hotel, located in the old part of town. The remainder of the morning is free to relax and recover from jet lag. After lunch on your own, we set out on foot to explore the city, beautifully set on both banks of the Mtkvari River. Tbilisi is one of the most ancient cities of the Caucasus and on a clear day it is possible to see the mighty peak of Mt. Kazbek jutting from the Greater Caucasus in the north. Our explorations include the Metheki Church and Sioni Cathedral and a stroll along charming Rustaveli Avenue. In the late evening we drive to Mtskheta for a traditional Georgian welcome dinner in an open air restaurant on the banks of the Mtkvari River.
D…Vinotel Hotel, Tbilisi

Note—If you have time, we highly recommend arriving in Tbilisi a day before the trip starts so that you have time to recover from the long flight, as well as allow for any flight delays and baggage issues before we begin our journey.

**Day 2, July 10 ▸ Tbilisi**
Today we further explore downtown Tbilisi on foot. We will discover Tbilisi's small tea houses, quaint carpet shops, pepper pot-roofed churches, and traditional bakeries turning out pointed bread loaves. Other places we visit include the Art and Treasure museum and the Old Bazaar, and in the late afternoon we treat ourselves to a traditional bath house dip in the old hot springs in Tbilisi. The word *tbili* means "warm" in Georgia and refers to these hot springs located near the walls of the 4th century Narikala Fortress. Dinner is at the "Tsiskvili" restaurant.
B,L,D…Vinotel Hotel, Tbilisi

**Day 3, July 11 ▸ Tbilisi | Shatili (6,404')**
As the major route through the greater Caucasus, the Georgia Military Highway crosses the important historical provinces of Georgia. On our drive north we pass through Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia with its sacred 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral and stunningly located Jvari Monastery. Farther along the road we stop at the superb Ananuri church complex and fortress perched over Zhinvali Lake. In the afternoon we continue up the mountains and high alpine grasslands to the small village of Shatili (6,404'), a UNESCO Historical Heritage Site, where we camp overnight. (5-6 hours driving.)
B,L,D...Camp

**Day 4, July 12 ▸ Shatili | Mutso | Atsunta Pass (9,500')**

We leave Shatili early in the morning and begin hiking up toward the Atsunta Pass. En route we can take an optional one-hour side hike to Mutso, one of the most beautiful villages in Khevsureti, and one of the oldest. Built on the side of a steep mountain, Mutso offers a wide view and is fortified to protect the townspeople from invaders from neighboring Dagestan. Many victorious battles against aggressors were fought at Mutso, the last village in Khevsureti before we enter into the Tusheti Region. En route to Mutso we pass the ancient *alkdamas* gravesite where people would escape to when they had plague. After lunch at a nice spot along the trail, we hike another four to five hours up to our campsite at 9,500 feet just below Atsunta pass. Far from civilization, we eat our dinner under the stars and share stories with our guides around the campfire. (6 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

**Day 5, July 13 ▸ Atsunta Pass | Kvakhidi, Tusheti territory (~9,500')**

Today we hike into Tusheti, Georgia's other beautiful mountain region. We cross the Atsunta Pass (11,254') and descend into the Kvakhidi Valley, home to the headwaters of the Alazani River, the longest river in Tusheti. Schools of trout swim in the blue-green waters of this mountain river, and we will need to cross it on horseback. We'll camp in the beautiful alpine meadows of Kvakhidi. Very few tourists visit Kvakhidi area; there is a small Georgian military base protecting the borders. (6-7 hours hiking).
B,L,D...Camp

**Day 6, July 14 ▸ Kvakhidi | Girevi (7,875')**
In the late morning we leave our Kvakhidi campsite and start hiking down to the village of Girevi. Along the way we pass through the village of Chontio, the first settlement in the Tusheti region, now abandoned because of harsh living conditions. This remote area was once home to a group of orthodox monks, who lived and prayed here. They were kidnapped by Muslims and after several months of captivity the Georgian government brought them back. Only shepherds come this way these days, staying for just a few months during the summer. We will visit their homes and have a chance to see how they make cheese. We continue along the flat valley floor to Girevi and camp outside the village. (6-7 hours hiking.)
B,L,D...Camp

**Day 7, July 15 ▸ Girevi | Dartlo (5,463')**

Today's hike follows the banks of the rushing Pirikriti River. We pass the stone villages of Parsma and Chesho, and after three hours of hiking, we arrive at Dartlo, mentioned in old chronicles as one of most ancient villages in Georgia. The village has some wonderful stone towers, built for protection from enemy attacks and used as homes during peaceful times (a family that owned a tower was considered rich). The Georgian King David the Builder used to pay many visits to this village, where he passed his time reading and resting with the locals. In the afternoon we can take an optional hike up the steep mountainside to the village of Kvavlo, perched like an eagle's nest above Dartlo. Overnight in a guesthouse in Dartlo. (3 - 4 hours hiking.) (Optional hike to Kvavlo is 1.5 hours.)
B,L,D...Guesthouse, Dartlo

**Day 8, July 16 ▸ Dartlo | Omalo (6,627')**
Today we hike to Omalo, the largest village of Tusheti and considered the center of the region. We meet a lot of local people on the way and once in Omalo, we can take a tour of its amazing tower castle, Keselo. Today's hike is easier and partially along one of the new local roads. We will see lots of stunning wildflowers along the way.
B,L,D...Guesthouse Omalo

**Day 9, July 17 ▸ Omalo (6,627')**
This is a day of rest with an optional ½ hour drive to the village of Shenako and then an optional hike to the ruined village of Diklo at the Dagestani border, where we can admire its beautiful towers and stunning views. We'll drive back to Omalo and on the way we'll visit the Tusheti National Park Visitor Center. In the evening we will have a traditional feast and raise our glasses to toast our successful trek from Khevsureti to Tusheti, two distinctly different mountain regions of the greater Caucasus! (Optional hike is about 1 ½ - 2 hours.)
B,L,D...Guesthouse Omalo

**Day 10, July 18 ▸ Shenako | Laliskuri | Telavi**
We board four-wheel-drive vehicles and drive four hours over the Abano Pass (~10,000') and down a steep mountain road to the Kakheti wine region. After lunch and a short rest at a local friend's home in Laliskuri, we will transfer to our beautiful hotel in Telavi to relax, walk the grounds, or swim in the pool. This evening we enjoy a traditional Georgian feast *(Supra)*, a rich repast of meat dishes, salads, pastries, and more. (4-5 hours driving.)
B,L,D...Hotel Chateau Ikalto

**Day 11, July 19 ▸ Kakheti Wine Tour**
Today we visit a couple of different wineries in the famed Kakheti wine region, where there are more than 350 different varietals. We will taste wines with exotic names such as Mukuzani, a dry red wine made from Saperavi grapes, and Kindzmarauli, a semi-sweet red wine, also made from Saperavi grapes. We will also visit medieval Alaverdi Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is part of an 11th-century Orthodox monastery. We'll enjoy another festive dinner at Pheasant's Tears Winery.
B,L,D...Hotel Kabadoni, Signhagi

**Day 12, July 20 ▸ Signhagi | Tbilisi**
Drive two to three hours to Tbilisi. After checking in at Vinotel, the rest of the day is free to explore, shop, and enjoy the capital of Georgia on your own. Lunch on your own (we will give you a couple of great suggestions). In the evening we enjoy a festive farewell dinner at a traditional Georgian restaurant. (2-3 hours driving.)
B,D...Vinotel Hotel, Tibilisi

**Day 13, July 21 ▸ Depart**
Very early morning group transfer to the airport for departure on homeward-bound flights.

**July 22 ▸ Arrive home**

## LAND COST

$5,895 per person (5 - 6 members)
$5,495 per person (7 - 9 members)
$5,195 per person (10 -12 members)
$750 single supplement

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations

*Should you choose to pay with credit card there will be a service charge of 3.5%, the fee we incur from the bank.

Note—Prices listed are subject to change. We are occasionally faced with unavoidable cost increases or currency fluctuations that we cannot absorb. We will, however, do everything we can to keep prices the same as published.

Single Supplement—If you wish to share accommodations, we'll try to match you up with a roommate. **Singles may be difficult to impossible to get in all of the mountain guesthouses, some of them are small, and it will depend on the size of the group.**

## LAND COST INCLUDES...

- Expert leadership
- Accommodations in hotels and local guesthouses
- All trek arrangements, including tents, Therm-a-Rest sleeping pads, community camping and commissary equipment, services of camp and commissary crew, including camp, cook staff, and horse guides
- Meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Local group transfers by minibus (or Mercedes in the city)
- Sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- Ground transportation (Mitsubishi jeeps or Toyota 4-wheel-drive minivans)

## LAND COST DOES NOT INCLUDE...

International airfare to Tbilisi and return; trip insurance (we strongly recommend you purchase to include emergency evacuation & trip cancellation); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes (if any); cost of medical immunizations; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

## TRIP PAYMENT SCHEDULE

At time of reservation .....25% of land cost
120 days prior to departure .....25% of land cost
90 days prior to departure.....Balance

## CANCELLATION FEE SCHEDULE

From time of reservation
until 90 days prior to departure .....25% of land cost
89-60 days prior to departure.....50% of land cost
59 days of fewer prior to departure……..100% of land cost

## EXPERT LEADERSHIP

Expert leadership is the key to every successful trip. Cattara attracts knowledgeable and gifted leaders who are passionate about guiding trips and truly enjoy sharing the experience with others. They understand the cultures and traditions they work in and are a fountain of information. In addition to making sure everything runs smoothly and safely, Cattara guides enhance your experience by being educators, companions, and the best of friends.

## TRIP LEADER

**Cathy Ann Taylor**, a high altitude trekking & cultural guide for the last 31 years will be leading this trip. Cathy Ann has trekked all over Nepal, Tibet, India and Bhutan, with well over 200 trips in the Himalayas (she still considers the Himalayas her "second home")! She has also hiked extensively in the European Alps (Tour du Mont Blanc—six times, The Haute Route, Gran Paradiso, Tour du Monte Rosa, Scotland—two times, and the Dolomites—two times), the Georgian Caucasus—four times, South America (18 trips in Peru, 1 in Patagonia), and Uganda & Rwanda—four times. A devout hiker and mountain biker, she leaves no trail undiscovered, and her passion for the mountains, caring nature, and boundless energy are renowned. Her experience, knowledge, positive attitude (she can find the good in anything!), and her wonderful rapport with the local staff will enhance your experience. With the help of caring and like-minded individuals she has been able to manage the sponsorship of nineteen remote village children, all of whom are in boarding school in Nepal or in universities in India, Nepal, and the United States. She consistently gets rave reviews from members of her groups and has quite a following. Cathy Ann is active in the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners and has participated in sixteen expeditions, including Mount McKinley, Mount Cho Oyu, Mount Fuji, Mount Shasta, and Mount Rainier, which helped increase awareness of breast cancer. Cat's special trekking program, Sacred Treks, benefits Breast Cancer Prevention Partners (formerly the Breast Cancer Fund). Past trips include Bhutan, Mont Blanc, Peru, Everest, Ladakh, Mustang, Georgian Caucasus, Sikkim, Dolomites, Cordillera Blanca, and Annapurna Sanctuary treks (she has raised $1,400,000 to date!). Cathy Ann has also been active in the American Himalayan Foundation and has helped raised $20,000 for their STOP Girl Trafficking project. She has also raised over $15,000 for Lama Pasang's Himalayan Children's Care Home which houses 87 children from Mustang, Nepal, and $35,000 for the National MS Society. She has also reached the summit of Ama Dablam (22,500') in Nepal and Argentina's Aconcagua (22,834'), the highest peak in South America. Cathy Ann received an honorable mention in *Hooked on the Outdoors* magazine's Outdoor Person of the Year Awards, and also received a letter of recognition for her fundraising and environmental work from Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

**Eka Tchvritidze** is a development tourism officer who has worked with various non-governmental organizations in Georgia by leading Georgian "familiarization trips" for groups of tour operators from abroad. She graduated from Trinity Episcopal School in Virginia, USA, and earned a B.A. in International Business at the University of Tbilisi. She is also an accomplished Tushetian horseback rider: in 2000 she was the first woman in all of Tushetian history to win the Tushetoba Horse Race! Eka's enthusiasm for the Georgian mountains and its people is infectious, and her goal is to give all adventurers a personal and life-changing vacation experience.

## PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

You should be an experienced hiker in good physical condition. This trip is rated moderate to strenuous; as you will be hiking three to seven hours a day on trails with steep ascents and descents—count on 2,500-3,000 feet up and down every day! For those who would like to take a break from hiking we provide two horses with comfortable saddles, and you are welcome to try some easy mountain horseback riding. For physical preparation, we recommend regular cardiovascular exercise for one hour at least 4-5 times a week. We suggest stair climbing, running, and mountain biking on hills, or elliptical or treadmill training in the gym. And, of course, the best way to train for a trek is to go hiking! We recommend you get out on the trails at least once a week. Wear your boots and daypack and pick some trails with hills so you can strengthen your leg muscles and build up your stamina.

## LIFE ON THE TRAIL

Your trekking day typically starts at 7:00 a.m., when the camp staff will bring a bowl of hot water to your tent for washing. (Bring along a washcloth and you can have a full sponge bath in the privacy of your tent!) After packing your bags, you'll enjoy a hearty breakfast of cereals, fruits, vegetables, eggs, breads, tea and coffee (It will vary each day). By 8:00 or 8:30 you're off on the trail. A picnic trailside lunch breaks up the day, giving you time to rest and refuel before heading out on the trail for the afternoon hike.

You typically arrive in camp by 5:00 p.m. and have time to wash up and get settled in your tent before enjoying tea and snacks in the dining tent. While waiting for dinner, you can write in your journal, read a book, play cards, or simply relax. The day ends with a hot, multi-course dinner, which often includes delicious Georgian cuisine. After dinner you can gaze at the stars (incredible viewing in this part of the world) and the moonlit ridges and distant peaks, go over the events of the day, or retire to your tent to read for a while before heading off to sleep.

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

You will need a passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of completion of the trip. No visas are required for US citizens to enter the Republic of Georgia. Note—It's a good idea to make a

photocopy of the photo page of your passport and carry it separately from your passport. If your passport is lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local consulate speed up authorization for replacement. You may be asked for your papers not only upon departure but at various times during the trip, even while checking into the hotel in Tbilisi. If you are carrying a customs form, please keep it in a safe place at all times, perhaps in your pouch along with your other valuables (we do not recommend carrying it in the passport because we often must submit the passport at hotels, where reception clerks can easily lose the form). Passports should be brought along on the hike, as we will receive border permits from local guards. You should also plan to carry your vaccination cards with you.

## AIR TRAVEL

Airfare is not included in the land cost of the trip. For air reservations, please contact the airlines directly, either by phone or via the Internet. Plan your arrival in Tbilisi by 3:00 a.m. on Day 1. Many travelers elect to use their "frequent flyer" miles when traveling, but please check with us before purchasing or obtaining your tickets. We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip. Note—Names on air tickets and passports must match exactly!

## MEDICAL MATTERS

The COVID – 19 Vaccine card is required to enter Georgia and a negative PCR (NAAT) or antigen test are required to fly on most airlines and cities we transit through. We are also required to obtain an antigen test the day before we fly back to the USA. You will pay the lab directly for these tests (~ $60 USD). No other vaccinations are currently required to enter Georgia, but immunizations for typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis A, and polio are *recommended*. These regulations and recommendations change frequently, so please check with your local health department or the CDC for more information (www.cdc.gov). Please advise us of any pre-existing medical conditions that may affect your health on the trek (recent injuries or surgeries, chronic illnesses, etc.). We recommend you bring your own personal first-aid kit, pain killers, and allergy medicines if you are prone to allergic reactions (especially epi-pens if you are allergic to bee stings). Moleskin or Second Skin for blisters is also recommended, as well as Band-Aids and antibiotic ointment. Consult your doctor about bringing other medications, such as antibiotics like Cipro. The trip leader will also carry a basic kit for emergencies, but will not have any prescription medications. Common American drugs are not available in Georgia. Complimentary bottled drinking water is available in the hotel. We will provide boiled and potable water while you're on the adventure. Do not drink the tap water in the hotel or local guesthouses as it frequently contains bacteria that will cause stomach problems. One of the most important things while hiking is to keep hydrated with plenty of water. You are much more prone to discomfort when you don't drink enough liquids.

## MONEY MATTERS

The currency in Georgia is the Georgian Lari (GEL). As of this printing, the exchange rate is 3.26 Lari per US dollar. You should bring enough money for any souvenirs you may buy, plus a few items like aperitifs, extra beverages, and the like (most of your meals are included in the cost of the trip). In hotels and some shops in Tbilisi you can use credit cards to charge purchases such as

souvenirs, food, and clothing. American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are widely accepted. Everywhere else, be prepared to use cash. Depending on how much of a shopper you are, $400-$500 should be plenty for incidentals and souvenirs. You should bring an additional amount for optional gratuities to the trip leader, local guide, and staff. At least US $500 is recommended for the trip leader (presenting this personally rather than collectively gives you the opportunity to say thank you individually and is greatly appreciated.); at least $275 for the local guide; at least $125 toward a group tip for the trekking staff. Once on the trail and in mountain villages you can only use Lari in the guesthouses for souvenirs, etc.; small bills are recommended.

## WEATHER & CLIMATE

At this time of year, the weather in Georgia, including its mountain regions, is mostly sunny, warm, and dry. In July and August we can expect day temperatures in the mountains from 55°-75°F and 68°-75°F in September. Nighttime temperatures can fall to 40s – 50s°F. As in most mountain environments, the weather in the Caucasus can be unpredictable, so each day on the trail you need to be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: hot sun, wind, and rain. For that reason you will carry your raingear and jacket in your daypack every day, even if the morning starts out bright and hot. Dressing in layers that can be adjusted to suit the prevailing conditions is highly recommended.

The weather in the capital of Tbilisi and lowland Kakheti is much hotter than in the mountains. In July & August the daytime temperature can range from 75°F to 95°F and at night in the upper 60s – low 70s. Check www.weather.com for the most up to date Georgian weather information.

## WHILE ON THE TRIP

Our accommodations while on trek are in wilderness camps or local guesthouses with simple but clean rooms that you will share with another member of the trip. Bathrooms, also shared, and have flush toilets. The staff at the mountain guesthouses are absolutely wonderful and do their best to make your stay as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

While camping we sleep in The North Face tents and have a common cooking and dining tent with space for 12 people—just in case of inclement mountain weather. On warm clear nights we may choose to dine alfresco. We also set up a toilet tent or two depending on the group size.

## INCIDENTALS

**Laundry**: Laundry service is available at the hotel in Tbilisi. We recommend bringing enough clothes just in case laundry facilities are, for whatever reason, unavailable.

**Electricity**: Georgia is on the 220V system. Sockets are usually the round two-pin variety, but they vary. If you are planning to use something like a hairdryer, electric shaver, camera battery, or phone charger, bring a converter and a selection of plug adapters (you can buy these in drugstores or travel specialty stores in the U.S.).

**Time Zones**: Georgia is Greenwich Mean Time plus three hours. That means that Tbilisi is eight hours ahead of New York and eleven hours ahead of California.

**Communications**: While we discourage the use of cell phones on our trip, we can't deny the fact that you may want to be in touch with your friends or family. Please be sensitive to the needs of others and use them in the privacy of your room. Contact your cell phone service about international coverage.

# WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT LIST

## Packing Notes

It's best to go as light as possible and take only the essentials. Excess baggage can be a burden, not only to you but to support personnel.

Always bring all irreplaceable items, such as camera, medications, important documentation, and trekking boots in your carryon luggage.

## Luggage

- ❒ Duffel bag, large enough to hold your trekking clothes and gear (about 3,200-3,600 cubic inches). It should have a full-length zipper (for easy access), and be sturdy and water-resistant or waterproof. This bag will be carried by horses and **should not exceed 30 lbs in weight**. It is possible to leave some things in Tbilisi that you will not need during the trek.
- ❒ Daypack with a capacity of 2,000 to 2,500 cubic inches, with a good padded waist belt. It can double as your carryon bag.*
- ❒ Spare roll-up duffel (optional). This is essential if you wish to bring home those great souvenirs! It should be lockable.

*Remember, you must carry your fleece jacket and rain gear with you every day on the trail, as well as two liters of water, sunscreen, warm hat, gloves, camera, and cover for your daypack in case of rain. Be sure your daypack is large enough!

## Clothing Notes

You should be prepared for unpredictable weather. Bring comfortable clothing that will protect you from cold and possibly wet weather. Synthetic fabrics (such as polypropylene, capilene, or pile) are the most effective barriers against the cold. They provide the best insulation, are light in weight, wick away perspiration, and dry quickly if wet. (Cotton garments are not good in cold or wet mountain conditions.)

When layering, your innermost layer should be a synthetic T-shirt or long underwear. The middle layer can be a synthetic turtleneck or wool shirt, and pants. The outermost layer should be a synthetic fleece jacket, and/or a good quality wind/rain parka and over-pants.

We haven't included quantities for each item listed. Use your own judgment, based on the expected weather conditions, your personal needs, and the overall weight restrictions for your luggage.

### Underwear

- ❒ Regular underwear. Synthetics are easier to wash and dry.
- ❒ Thermal underwear (lightweight), top and bottoms

### Socks

- ❒ Casual socks (synthetic for easy washing and drying) that are suitable for walking (not hiking) shoes.
- ❒ Mid-weight hiking socks (synthetic or wool/synthetic).
- ❒ Synthetic or silk sock liners—optional. Some people wear sock liners to help prevent blisters, and some wear the same pair of hiking socks for three days in a row and achieve the same result.

### Shirts

- ❒ Long-sleeved, synthetic or wool shirt.
- ❒ Short-sleeved synthetic T-shirts (in case we have some hot, sunny days on trek).

### Pants

- ❒ Full-length synthetic hiking pant. The kind with zip-off legs are also useful.
- ❒ Fleece pants for evenings at camp.
- ❒ Casual pants or skirts for non-hiking activities.

### Outerwear

- ❒ Medium-weight jacket of synthetic fabric, such as fleece.
- ❒ Light-weight rain/wind parka (must fit over bulky clothing).
- ❒ Light-weight rain/wind pants, preferably with full-length side zipper (must fit over your other pants).
- ❒ Gloves or mittens (wool or fleece).
- ❒ Waterproof daypack cover.

### Head Gear

- ❒ Sun hat with wide brim, preferably with a chin strap to keep it from blowing off, or baseball cap.
- ❒ Fleece or wool hat.
- ❒ Waterproof hat, if your jacket doesn't have a hood.
- ❒ Bandanna. A generally useful item—it will keep your neck from getting sunburned and can double as a hand towel in the field.

### Footwear

Please break new boots in well before the trip.

- ❒ Medium-weight, hiking boots with padded ankle, good arch support, and lug sole for traction. Your hiking boots should be waterproofed, well broken in, and suitable for prolonged walking on rocks.
- ❒ Comfortable walking shoes to wear while in towns.
- ❒ River sandals, Tevas, or similar— for possible river crossings and good to wear in camp at the end of the day.

### Sleeping Gear

- ❒ Sleeping bag with a rating of about 20°F. Down is preferable since it is less voluminous in your duffle bag (especially if you use a compression sack). Pack the sleeping bag in a plastic garbage bag before you compress it to keep it 100% dry.
- ❒ Small camping pillow (optional).
- ❒ We provide a full length Therm-a-Rest sleeping pad.

### Other Items

- ❒ Water bottles (2) 1 or 1.5 quart capacity. Make sure they are leak-proof, heavy-duty, and **wide mouthed**. Mark them with your name or initials as several people may have the same bottle. CamelBaks or other bladder hydration systems are also recommended but they can leak or break so you must have bottles as a backup.
- ❒ Hiking sticks—optional, but highly recommended. These are essential to relieve the impact on your knees during long downhills; they are also useful on uphills. Practice with them before the trip.
- ❒ Small headlamp with spare batteries.
- ❒ Toiletry kit—soap, toothbrush, etc.
- ❒ Purell hand sanitizer for quick hand washing and hygiene (a must!).
- ❒ Personal medical kit, including blister protection.
- ❒ Ace bandage or brace if you're prone to sore knees or ankles.
- ❒ Sunglasses (100% UVA/URB protected).
- ❒ Spare pair of prescription glasses, prescription sunglasses, or contact lenses.
- ❒ Sunscreen lotion and lipstick of SPF 25 or higher.
- ❒ Small padlocks or combination locks for your duffels.
- ❒ Heavyweight plastic garbage bag(s) to help keep the contents of your daypack dry during hikes. Ziploc-type bags are also handy.
- ❒ Earplugs—good if you have a snoring tent mate, or for that early morning village rooster!
- ❒ Face masks for flights, vehicles, and to visit shops.

### Optional Travel Accessories

- ❒ Camera and plenty of memory cards, and extra batteries. Bring more than you think you'll need; you won't be able to buy any once we are in the mountains.
- ❒ Repair kit with needle, thread, and safety pins.
- ❒ Swimsuit for a couple of the hotel spas.
- ❒ Pair of compact binoculars.
- ❒ Swiss Army-type pocket knife.

❒ Powdered electrolyte mixes for your water.
❒ Your favorite trail snacks or candy, especially if you have dietary restrictions.
❒ Reading and writing material.
❒ Face shield.

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