

Small Group Tour to the Caucasus | Armenia Azerbaijan Georgia

Reading List

The Caucasus: An Introduction

by Thomas de Waal

In this fascinating book, noted journalist Thomas de Waal--author of the highly acclaimed *Black Garden*--makes the case that while the Caucasus is often treated as a sub-plot in the history of Russia, or as a mere gateway to Asia, the five-day war in Georgia, which flared into a major international crisis in 2008, proves that this is still a combustible region, whose inner dynamics and history deserve a much more complex appreciation from the wider world.

In *The Caucasus*, de Waal provides this richer, deeper, and much-needed appreciation, one that reveals that the South Caucasus--Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and their many smaller regions, enclaves, and breakaway entities--is a fascinating and distinct world unto itself. Providing both historical background and an insightful analysis of the period after 1991, de Waal sheds light on how the region has been scarred by the tumultuous scramble for independence and the three major conflicts that broke out with the end of the Soviet Union--Nagorny Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. The book examines the region as a major energy producer and exporter; offers a compelling account of the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the rise of Mikheil Saakashvili, and the August 2008 war; and considers the failure of the South Caucasus, thus far, to become a single viable region. In addition, the book features a dozen or so "boxes" which provide brief snapshots of such fascinating side topics as the Kurds, Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, the promotion of the region as the "Soviet Florida," and the most famous of all Georgians, Stalin.

The Caucasus delivers a vibrantly written and timely account of this turbulent region, one that will prove indispensable for all concerned with world politics. It is, as well, a stimulating read for armchair travelers and for anyone curious about far-flung corners of the world.

The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus

by Charles King

The Caucasus mountains rise at the intersection of Europe, Russia, and the Middle East. A land of astonishing natural beauty and a dizzying array of ancient cultures, the Caucasus for most of the twentieth century lay inside the Soviet Union, before movements of national liberation created newly

independent countries and sparked the devastating war in Chechnya.

Combining riveting storytelling with insightful analysis, *The Ghost of Freedom* is the first general history of the modern Caucasus, stretching from the beginning of Russian imperial expansion up to the rise of new countries after the Soviet Union's collapse. In evocative and accessible prose, Charles King reveals how tsars, highlanders, revolutionaries, and adventurers have contributed to the fascinating history of this borderland, providing an indispensable guide to the complicated histories, politics, and cultures of this intriguing frontier. Based on new research in multiple languages, the book shows how the struggle for freedom in the mountains, hills, and plains of the Caucasus has been a perennial theme over the last two hundred years--a struggle which has led to liberation as well as to new forms of captivity. The book sheds valuable light on the origins of modern disputes, including the ongoing war in Chechnya, conflicts in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and debates over oil from the Caspian Sea and its impact on world markets.

Ranging from the salons of Russian writers to the circus sideshows of America, from the offices of European diplomats to the villages of Muslim mountaineers, *The Ghost of Freedom* paints a rich portrait of one of the world's most turbulent and least understood regions.

The Caucasus: A History

by James Forsyth

For the first time, this major new survey of the Caucasus traces a unified narrative history of this complex and turbulent region at the borderlands of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, from prehistory to the present. For thousands of years the Caucasus has formed the intersection of routes of migration, invasion, trade and culture, and a geographical bridge between Europe and Asia, subject to recurring imperial invasion. Drawing on sources in English, Russian, Persian and Arabic, amongst others, this authoritative study centres on the region's many indigenous peoples, including Abkhazians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Chechens and Circassians, and their relations with outsiders who still play an important part in the life of the region today. The book presents a critical view of the historical role of Russian imperialism in events in the Caucasian countries, and the violent struggle of some of these peoples in their efforts to establish a precarious independence.

Legends of the Caucasus

by David Hunt (ed.)

The Caucasus has an extremely rich folk literature, almost unknown among English speakers, which includes myths, legends, magical tales, anecdotes, and proverbs.

The one hundred and one legends included in this book reflect the cultures of fourteen different ethnic groups—their dynamism and the matters that concerned them: survival against external dangers, the risk of starvation, and the persistence of the family or clan as a coordinated group. Descended from an oral tradition, much of their knowledge was retained in memories and passed down the generations. Yet, with the introduction of the alphabet, the way of life they portray is rapidly becoming extinct.

The translation is derived from the manuscripts of Russian collectors working out of the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century and from the Soviet Union in the mid-twentieth century. The text is a mixture of prose and verse, reflecting how the legends would have been performed by storytellers within the culture.

This volume includes a map, bibliography, appendix, glossary, keyword and theme analysis, and references.

Caucasus: A Journey to the Land between Christianity and Islam

by Nicholas Griffin

A rugged land between the Black and Caspian seas, the Caucasus is a battle ground for a fascinating and formidable clash of cultures: Russia on one side, the predominantly Muslim mountains on the other. In *Caucasus*, award-winning author Nicholas Griffin recounts his journey to this war torn region to explore the roots of today's conflict, centering his travelogue on Imam Shamil, the great nineteenth century Muslim warrior who commanded a quarter-century resistance against invading Russian forces.

Delving deep into the Caucasus, Griffin transcends the headlines trumpeting Chechen insurgency to give the land and its conflicts dimension: evoking the weather, terrain, and geography alongside national traditions, religious affiliations, and personal legends as barriers to peaceful co-existence. In focusing his tale on Shamil while retracing his steps, Griffin compellingly demonstrates the way history repeats itself.

Let Our Fame Be Great: Journeys Among the Defiant People of the Caucasus

by Oliver Bullough

Part travelogue, part history, *Let Our Fame Be Great* tells the stories of the forgotten peoples of the Caucasus region, an incredible cultural crossroads where Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Turkey and the Middle East meet. The area was once the home of the Golden Fleece and Prometheus' place of exile, and later inspired Pushkin and Lermontov, but its rich history has been overshadowed by

decades of guerrilla warfare. Now, it is better known to us for the struggle in Chechnya and the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia. Traveling through history and throughout this tumultuous region, journalist and Russia expert Oliver Bullough details the major events—from nineteenth-century Tsarist expansionism to the modern day struggles in Chechnya and South Ossetia—that have shaped this fascinating land and its people: the Chechens, Nogais, Circassians, mountain Turks, and Ingush who have been consistently besieged—and woefully overlooked—for nearly two hundred years.

Three Apples Fell From Heaven

by Micheline Aharonian Marcom

A *New York Times* Notable Book that imagines the lives of several sufferers of the twentieth century's first genocide. Anaguil, an Armenian girl taken in by Turkish neighbors after the death of her parents who now views the remains of her world through a Muslim veil; Sargis, a poet hidden away in his mother's attic, dressed in women's clothing, and steadily going mad; Lucine, a servant and lover of the American consul; Maritsa, a rage-filled Muslim wife who becomes a whore; and Dickran, an infant left behind under a tree on the long exodus from an Armenian village, who reaches with tiny hands to touch the stars and dies with his name unrecorded.

Georgia: In the Mountains of Poetry

by Peter Nasmyth

Georgia has been called the world's most beautiful country, yet only little is known about it beyond its borders. This topical and vital book by the "ideal chronicler" (*Literary Review*) Peter Nasmyth is the perfect and much-celebrated introduction to its remarkable people, landscape, and culture.

Over its 3,000-year-old history, Georgia has been ruled by everyone from the Greeks to the Ottomans, became a coveted part of the Russian Empire for a hundred years, and was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1921. In twenty-five years, Georgia has undergone a dramatic socio-economical and political transformation, and although its political situation remains precarious, Georgia's strong sense of nationhood has reinvigorated the country.

Vivid and comprehensive, Nasmyth's *Georgia: In the Mountains of Poetry* is a unique eyewitness account of Georgia's rebirth and creates an unforgettable portrait of its remarkable landscape, history, people and culture. Based on personal experience and offering fascinating insights into the life of ordinary and high profile Georgians, it is essential reading for anyone who does not yet know, or wants to know more, of this astonishing place.
