Maçahel And Highlands Of Şavşat

**ITINERARY**

**Day 1 – Trabzon – Mençuna Waterfall – Şavşat**

Our guide will meet you at the **Trabzon Airport**. After loading our vehicle with our luggage we will drive via Borçka to **Artvin** and **Şavşat**. Lunch will be ‘pide’ in **Borçka**. After a visit to the Ardanuç Cehennem (Hell) River Canyon we will arrive at our hotel in Şavşat. Today will be mostly a travelling day but the beauties to be seen on the way will make us forget our travel fatigue.

**Day 2 – Sarıçayır Plateau – Şavşat Villages**

After breakfast we will drive for an hour to the Sarıçayır Plateau. Both the road there and the plateau itself are breathtaking. You will not believe the flower variety in the summer. We will be so close to the Georgian border that you can actually walk there. This plateau still has not received electricity but it has a stabilized road; however we will use the Erikli Plateau uphill road to get there on foot. We will have arrived at the plateau with marvelous views within 1,5 hours. On one hand we will see the plateau and its hills, while on the other side we will be able to see the Georgian border and the view from Şavşat all the way to the Karçal Mountain. We will walk through the Erikli Plateau and enter the path to the Sarıçayır Plateau. Our walk will continuously be accompanied by hill views and carries on via the military road opened for the border. Another 15 minutes and we will be at the Sarıçayır Plateau which is home to our co-founder and guide **Mikail**’s mother. We will have a delicious lunch here at Mikail’s uncle’s house. After a nice rest we might carry on to Mikail’s father’s home village – **Ilıca (Cinal)** but we cannot promise this as it depends on the weather and road conditions, our timing and the group. Today will be a rather full day as it is. If we can, we will go to the village of Ilıca, if not we will walk back to our hotel passing through other beautiful villages.

**Day 3 – Şirata Lakes – Şavşat Karagöl (lake) – Şavşat**

After breakfast we will drive for 45 minutes and arrive at Balıklıgöl Lake passing through **Şavşat**’s largest village **Pınarlı**. After a short tea break we will start our hike. The views we will see on either side from the foot of the **Arsiyan Mountain** are breathtaking. Our path will be occasionally decorated with oxcart tracks and will take us to the first and smaller one of the **Şirata Lakes**. The water level depends on the time of year. Afterwards, we will carry on walking up to the second and larger lake known as the **Larger Şirata**and here we will take a long break. If we are lucky we might see **Ruddy Shelducks**that make the most of this quiet environment. After another short uphill we will enter the forest. If the weather is clear we will see the Karçal Mountains and further. Next we will go down steep hills to meet the oxcart path again. After another 30 minute walk we will have completed our circle and we will be ready to have lunch. We will have a delicious lunch comprised of meatballs and side dishes at Fevzi & Nazire’s Place. After a siesta break we will head out towards Şavşat Karagöl Lake. We will both drive and walk to get there. We will take a break according to our arrival time. Then it will be time to drive back. We will visit the Cevizli Church en route to our hotel.

**Day 4 – Karçal River – Lekoban Plateau**

After breakfast we will say our farewells to Şavşat. We will drive for approximately 1 hour to reach the beginning of our hike on the banks of the Karçal River. We should warn you here that the hike will begin at the construction site of a hydroelectric power plant. Your guide will inform you about what is happening. Our walk will be on a stabilized village road and will end after two hours on a bridge. Today we have a packed lunch so you can either have it here or at the plateau with nice hot tea. Here at the bridge we will meet our vehicle and start driving up towards the **Lekoban** Plateau. We will be driving below the path that we will be using tomorrow and come out of the forest. When we see the Indastvinda passage we will also start seeing the highland houses. Without wasting any time we will get to our guesthouse and settle in. Those who want to can take walks in the surroundings until it gets dark. We can also walk up the Z shaped stabilized road across from the guesthouse. We will end the night chatting in front of the fireplace.

**Day 5 – Cancir Plateau – Naçadirev Lake**

After a magnificent breakfast we will begin our 4 hour walk right in front of our guesthouse. This hike does not involve a lot of steep ups and downs. Up to the passage we will be slightly ascending. Our whole hike will be through valleys. When we get to the ridge from where we see the Cancir Plateau we know that it is time for the downhill. After this slight descent we reach the ridge from where we will have a complete view of the Cancir Plateau from above. If we are lucky we might be invited to have tea in one of the highland houses and then we will meet up with our vehicle, say goodbye to this almost untouched Cancir Plateau and drive to the Lekoban Plateau for 30 minutes. After lunch we will drive for another 30 minutes and reach the Indastvinda Pass. If the weather is clear we can see the Macahel Valley and the Batumi coastline from here. We will take a photograph break here and then carry on driving up for another 15 minutes and arrive at a point just below the **Naçadirev Lake**. We should keep our fingers crossed for clear weather here because this is the point where we will be closest to the Karçal Mountain. A 5 minute walk will bring us to the lake side. We would love to see the courageous to take a dip in the lake. After enough time on the lake side we will start heading back to our guesthouse. Those who want to can take a 45 minute walk from the **Indatsvinda** Pass to the guesthouse.

**Day 6 – Fındık Valley – Macahel**

After breakfast we will say farewell to the Lekoban Plateau. After checking out we will begin our walk right from the guesthouse. Our first stop is the **Indatsvinda** Pass. From here we have a 2 hour downhill walk to the Fındık Plateau. We will have lunch at the highland house of the owners of our guesthouse in Macahel. They do not hold back from sharing whatever delicious dishes they have depending on the time of year. After lunch and a siesta break we will continue walking down to Macahel from the highland road. Today’s hike in total is 23 km. If the weather permits our vehicle will follow the same road down to Macahel and those who feel tired may use the vehicle whenever they want to. We will be staying at Bumbulay Bungalow Guesthouse. Dinner will be at the guesthouse.

**Day 7 – Maral Waterfall – Camili Village**

After a filling breakfast we will head out towards the **Maral Waterfall** - Turkey’s highest waterfall (63 meters) falling from a single knick point. Our guide will decide the length of our walk today depending on the weather and the group. The vehicle can reach a point at a 30 minutes walking distance from the waterfall. It is preferable to walk down instead of walking up after the visit for those who want a long hike. At the first point where we see the waterfall there is a viewing terrace and those who do not want to walk down may sit and wait here. The walk down is rather steep and requires a lot of attention. The descent comprises mostly of stairs with bannisters and we will all help one another on the way down. There are dressing rooms at the foot of the waterfall for our courageous guests. The water is actually not cold to begin with but it cools during its fall due to the cold winds. We advise you not to miss this wonderful experience. Our cooled off bodies will heat up again on the way back up the steep path. We will take a short tea break at the premises of the gentleman who built the stairs and bannisters after which we will walk back to our vehicle. We will have our lunch at **İremit Guesthouse** on our journey back. After lunch we will carry on driving to the village of Camili and see the border gate and the wooden mosque. After a tiring but magical day full of new experiences we head back to our guesthouse.

**Day 8: Borçka Karagöl - Departures**

Drive to Borçka Karagöl and take a walk around this beautiful landslide lake surrounded by a dark forest.

Continue driving to Hopa and then to Trabzon via the panoramic Artvin-Borçka route.