11th Pilgrimage of the Russian Church Abroad to Holy Places of Russia 2019

Beloved in the Lord Archpastors, reverend Pastors and Deacons, Brothers and Sisters!

We are happy to inform you that, with the blessings of our First Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, and our patron, His Eminence, Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal and Canada, we are presenting to you the schedule for the Eleventh Pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Russia. The program includes a visit to the Kursk Root Hermitage of the Nativity of the Mother of God, the St. Seraphim-Diveyevo Convent (which is the "Fourth Lot" of the All-holy Theotokos), Murom, Suzdal, the Northern Caucasus of Russia, Northern Osetia, and ancient Georgia with its sacred sites and its many holy historical landmarks.

We invite you, our "seasoned" pilgrims and those who have not yet traveled with us, to join us on a journey that will positively change and spiritually enrich you for the remainder of your life.

Brothers and sisters, our pilgrimage will begin with the city of Tbilisi. The holy relics and memorable places of Orthodox Georgia, its traditions and culture, have helped the people of this country to maintain their profound faith and national identity.

At the beginning of the 19th century Russia extended a hand of assistance in building the Georgian Military road through the Darial Pass and the high cliffs and mountains of the Caucasus. The Arkhyz face of Christ the Savior appeared in ancient Osetia (Alania) in the 21st century, becoming one of the testimonies of Christian faith in this region. The Orthodox holy places of the Northern Caucasus, where the monastic tradition has been preserved for centuries, are closely connected to the ascetics of Orthodox piety of Kursk, Diveyevo, Moscow and of all Russia.

The Pilgrimage Program

Tbilisi - David Garedzha - Borzhomi - Kakhetia - Bodbe - Mtskheta - Tbilisi - Tbilisi (the Georgian military road - Northern Osetia - Piatigorsk - Kislovodsk - Essentuki - Arkhyz - Mineralniya Vody - Moscow - Kursk - Dzerzhinsk - Diveyevo - Murom - Suzdal - Moscow

1st Day - Tues., 9 July - Tbilisi

The pilgrimage begins in Tbilisi. Arriving members of the pilgrimage group will meet in Tbilisi and will transfer to a hotel. Lunch (depending on the time of arrival) and Supper in the hotel. Rest time.

2nd Day - Wednesday, 10 July - Tbilisi - David-Garedzha - Tbilisi

Commemoration of the finding of the relics of St. Ambrose of Optina.

Breakfast in the hotel. Departure for David-Garedzha (60 kilometres). The David-Garedzha monastery is a large complex of cave monasteries from the 6th century. The most ancient part of the monastery is the Lavra of David. It was founded at the beginning of the 6th century by the Syrian monk David, who was one of the Syrian (or Assyrian) fathers who settled in the natural cave of Garedzha. During the same century his disciples and followers Dodo and Lukian founded two other monasteries - the Monastery of Dodo (Dodos Rka) and the Monastery of Natlis-Mtsemeli (St. John the Baptist). In the 9th century Hilarion Kartveli erected the Transfiguration church with refectory, later enlarged by the son of David the Builder, Dimitry, who was the composer of a remarkable hymn, "Thou art a grape vine", a hymn considered to be the apex of Georgian church music. Lunch box. Supper at a restaurant. Return to the hotel in Tbilisi.

3rd Day - Thursday, 11 July - Tbilisi - Borzhomi - Tbilisi

Day of the commemoration of Sts. Sergius and Germanus of Valaam, the Wonderworkers.

Breakfast in the restaurant. Departure in the direction of Borzhomi.

First we visit the Cathedral of Samtavisi - one of the most famous medieval monuments of Georgian architecture. St. Isidore of Samtavis is buried here.

The Tsilkani Monastery is known for being the resting place of St. Isa of Tsilkani, one of the thirteen Syrian fathers. Isa (Jesse) was one of two preachers chosen to be bishops (the other was Abo, or Abib, of Nekressi), elected to the see of the city of Tsilkani.

The St. George Monastery in Chitakhevi ("Green Monastery") is located in the Borzhomi gorge, a most beautiful site. People lovingly call it the "Green Monastery", because all the trees in the pass possess a shade of green similar to the surrounding rocks, with which the monastery was built. Although all are green, they vary in shades of darkness and light.

In the opinion of experts, the church was built by the disciples Christopher and Theodore of a well-known Georgian monastic. During the invasion by Shah Tamaz in the 16th century, many of the monks were martyred. Stones covered with the blood of the slain monks retained the red color, even while lying in the Chitakhevi River. These blood-covered rocks can be seen along the whole length of the river, which runs through the monastery.

The resort town of **Borzhomi** is located in the south-eastern part of Georgia, in the gorge of the River Kura at an altitude of 810-850 metres above sea level. Borzhomi is one of several resorts surrounded by low mountains that are covered with coniferous and deciduous forests. The climate is moderate in both summer and winter.

Borzhomi is known for its medicinal mineral water, helpful in illnesses of the stomach and intestinal tracts, gall bladder, digestion, kidneys and, as a bath, for maladies of the heart and blood vessels, nerves and of the breathing organs.

Return to Tbilisi. Supper in the restaurant.

4th Day - Friday, 12 July - Tbilisi

Day of the commemoration of Sts. Peter and Paul.

We will leave the hotel very early in the morning, so lunch bags will be distributed for breakfast.

The festal Divine Liturgy in the **Church of St. Alexander Nevsky**, where the graves of the revered elders - the holy Metropolitan Zenobius (Mazhuga) and Archimandrite Vitaly (Sidorenko) - are located.

Lunch will be in a restaurant.

The city of Tbilisi is the capital and largest city of Georgia. It was founded in the 5th century by Vakhtang Gorgasali (the king of Kartli) and was made the capital city in the 6th century. Tbilisi is an important industrial, social and cultural centre. The founding of Tbilisi and its origin and name are connected with the local hot springs. King Vakhtang Gorgasali discovered such a hot spring while hunting. The name of the city comes from the word "tbili", which means "warm."

Visit to the **church of Metekhi**, which is the Cathedral dedicated to the Nativity of the Mother of God. It is a Georgian Orthodox church of the 12th century and stands in the center of Tbilisi on the cliff of Metekhi.

This is the city's most visible and popular church edifice. It can be seen from any point of the centre. Together with the nearby statue of King Vakhtang on a horse, it is in fact the virtual symbol of the city. It is believed that the first church was erected during the major building projects of Vakhtang Gorgasali in the 5th century, very likely near the site of his palace. The first Georgian martyr, Queen Shushanik of Ran (5th century), is buried here in the church. The site is mentioned in the literary sources of the 12th century. The territory of the church was fortified, due to the presence of the royal palace. There is evidence that King Tamar (1195) prayed here.

From here we see the unique view of Old Tbilisi.

We descend to the Mira Bridge and the Rika Park. Here is the fort of Narekala (if time will permit, we can ascend to the fort), a complex of various epochs of old Tbilisi. No one knows the exact date of the building of the fort, but it already existed in the 4th century and was called Shuris-Tsikhe. Under David the Builder the walls were strengthened and expanded. It is considered that the Mongols gave this name to the fort.

Next we descend further to the sulphur-smelling **Royal Springs**, an important land-mark of Tbilisi. This quarter in the middle of Tbilisi is known for its complex of baths, based on natural sulphuric springs. Today the springs constitute an entire quarter of the city and are popular with both locals and tourists.

The Church of Sioni is the main historic temple in Tbilisi. It was named in honor of Mount Sion in Jerusalem and dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God.

5th Day - Saturday, 13 July - Tbilisi - Kakhetia - Bodbe - Tbilisi Synaxis of the Glorious and All-honorable 12 Apostles

Breakfast in the hotel.

Kakhetia - a historical region in the eastern part of Georgia, located at the sources of the Rivers Iori and Alazani. The area is named after the Kakhs, a sub-ethnic group of Georgians living here. The suffix "et" indicates the dwelling place of these people. This region was part of the Kartli kingdom until the 8th century, subsequently becoming an independent princedom. In the 12th century it became part of the Kingdom of Georgia, in the second half of the 15th century it became the Kakhetian kingdom, while in 1762 it ended up as the Kartlian-Kakhetian kingdom. The capital city is **Telavi**.

The first monastery which we will visit is the **Convent of Bodbe**, the place where St. Nina spent her last years of asceticism. Her burial site is here in the Church of St. George. Here we will have the opportunity to visit the spring of St. Nina, where the pilgrims will be able to immerse themselves in the waters.

Next we travel in the direction of the **Alazan Valley**. Crossing the valley, we will arrive in the **Monastery of Khirsa**, which was founded by St. Stephen, one of the 13 Assyrian holy fathers, and his remains lie within the church. Khirsa was an important missionary centre in medieval Georgia for the preparation of missionaries who spread Christianity to the northern Caucasus.

Crossing the valley, we find ourselves at the beautiful early-medieval Monastery of Nekresi. This monastery is located on the top of one of the smaller mountains of the Caucasian mountain ridges.

6th Day - Sunday, 14 July - Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Tbilisi

Commemoration of the Venerable Fathers of the Pskov-Caves Monastery and the Synaxis of the Saints of Tver.

Breakfast in the hotel for those who are not preparing for Holy Communion.

Divine Liturgy.

We leave for one for the most ancient Georgian cities - Mtskheta.

According to tradition, the city was founded by the legendary Mtskhetos: "After the death of King Kartlos, his wife divided the land among their sons. The eldest son, Mtskhetos, settled at the point where the River Aragvi flows into the River Mtkvari (Kura), built the city and named it after himself." This is a museum city which is listed under the protection of UNESCO.

The Cathedral of Svetitskhoveli ("The Living Pillar") is dedicated to the 12 Apostles. This was the first church built after the conversion to Christianity of King Mirian and Queen Nana (4th century). This church is considered a symbol of the Church of Georgia and the crown of Georgian ecclesiastical architecture. The greatest holy relic is to be found in Svetitskhoveli - the tunic of our Lord and the cape of the holy Prophet Elias, both of which are buried underground. Near Svetitskhoveli is the cathedral of Samtavro in a convent built on the site where St. Nina spent her days in ascetic prayer near a blackberry bush. Here at Makvlovani St. Nina preached Christianity, the light of which began to shine throughout Georgia. In the year 324, during the reign of the holy monarchs Mirian and Nana, the Chris-

tian faith was declared the state religion. The church became the resting place of the royal family and of the hierarchs of the Church. It is possible that this is the origin of its name: the word "samtavro" means "royal territory." The monastery of Samtavro has many holy relics: the blackberry bush of St. Nina (Maklovani), a piece of the Life-giving Svetitskhoveli Pillar, the wonderworking icons of the "Iveron" Mother of God and of St. Nina, the relics of St. Gabriel the Confessor. The holy elder Gabriel (Urgebadze) is one of the most revered Georgian ascetics of our times. On November 29, 2015, after the Patriarch-Catholicos of All Georgia Ilya II celebrated the Divine Liturgy in Samtavro's Transfiguration church, the relics of St. Gabriel were reverently translated into a new sarcophagus.

Next we will visit the famous men's **monastery of St. Shio of Mgvim**, located near the city of Mtskhet. St. Shio, who was one of the Assyrian fathers, spent time in prayer in a specially dug trench. Situated on a mount near the monastery is the basilica church of the Holy Cross, known for its Byzantine iconography from the 13th century (it takes about 35-40 minutes to reach it by foot).

We will then visit one of the most ancient medieval monasteries - **Djvari** (Holy Cross) of the 6th-7th centuries. The monastery stands on the site where the holy and equal-of-the-Apostles Nina erected one of three crosses. The other two crosses were placed in the Udjarma fort in Kakhetia and on Mount Tkhoti in Kartli.

The **Djvari church** was one of the first cross-shaped churches with domes to be built in Georgia. Today it is the primary Georgian church on the UNESCO list. It was built on the so-called Golgotha Mount. After viewing the church, it will be possible to walk down to the spring of St. Nina. Here she lived in a small cave after coming to Mtskheta. The cave was later transformed into a small church, dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of God.

Supper in a restaurant.

Return to the city of Tbilisi. Rest.

7th Day - Monday, 15 July - Tbilisi - Georgian Military road - Northern Osetia Commemoration of the Placing of the honorable Robe of the Theotokos in Vlachernae (5th century).

Breakfast in the hotel.

We depart for Stepantsminda (Kazbegi) - Ghergheti. On our way we will view the picturesque Ananuri Fort (17th century), located on the Aragvi River, and the amazing beauty of the Zhinvali Reservoir. Passing the ski resort of Gudauri (2200 metres), we will have an amazingly beautiful ride along the Terghi River. Going through a pass at 2400 metres above sea level, we will arrive in Stepantsminda.

From the central square of the city we can take a pleasant one-and-a-half-hour walk along the mountainside to reach the church of the Most Holy Trinity in Ghergheti (14th century), located at a level of 2200 metres.

In good weather one can gaze with wonder at the highest peak in Georgia (at 5047 metres) - the Kazbek Mountain.

Lunch

If there is time, we can visit the Darial Pass, where the monastery and church of the Archangels are located.

We then continue to travel on the **Georgian Military Road** until we reach the **Border** between Georgia and Russia. After crossing the border, we will be met on the Russian side.

Departure for the **Alan Theophany Convent**, where in 2005 there was a mass baptism of Osetian people. Among the relics of the convent are the icon of St. Luke the Surgeon, with a piece of his relics, and a reliquary with relics of the martyred Grand Duchess Elizabeth and the Nun Barbara, brought from Jerusalem.

Tea in the refectory.

The holy Spring of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.

Alaghir. The Ascension cathedral from the 19th century, which was spared from destruction during the communist era, The iconography was executed by the Osetian poet and artist K. Khetagurov.

Departure for Prealbrusiev.

Arrival in Azay.

Supper - Caucasian style.

8th Day - Tuesday, 16 July - Elbrus Mountain - Piatigorsk

Commemoration of the Translation of the relics of St. Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia, the Wonderworker.

Breakfast.

Transfer to the plain of Azay, at the foot of the Elbrus Mountain, the highest peak in Europe (5642 metres). Everyone who wishes can ascend on a cable car along the southern side of Elbrus Mountain to a level of 3850 metres, from where one can view the magnificent panorama of the Caucasian Mountains. (Tickets can be purchased at the station).

Monument to the defenders of the Caucasus during the years of war.

Lunch.

Free time.

Transfer to the Cheghet Mountain. Cable line up the Cheghet Mountain with its blossoming alpine meadows.

A field of Narzan mineral water.

Tyrnuaus - a city in Kabardino-Balkaria.

The Church of St. George the Victorius Great martyr is the first to be built near the Elbrus Mountain. On 13 May 2001, the day of the commemoration of St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, the Bishop of the Caucasus, its priest, Father Igor Rozine, was killed for his faith. The sacred items in the church are the icon called "The Saviour with Golden Hair" and the Vladimir and the "Mozdoks" icons of the Mother of God. The personal items of Fr. Igor are preserved here.

Transfer to Piatigorsk. Hotel Beshtau.

Supper.

Rest.

9th Day. Wednesday, 17 July. Piatigorsk.

Commemoration of St. Andrew Rublev. The holy martyrs and passion-bearers Tsar Nicholas, Tsaritsa Alexandra, Tsarevich Alexis, Grand duchesses Olga, Tatiana,

Maria and Anastasia.

Breakfast.

A walk through the historical section of Piatigorsk to the Church of St. Lazarus of the Four Days,

It was built in 1856 in the Russian baroque style. The commander of the Caucasian line, General Emmanuel, took part in the ceremony for the ground-breaking of the church. For many years the church was the center of the spiritual life in the Caucasian region and was never closed during the atheistic period.

The church preserves an ancient icon belonging to the poet Lermontov. The necropolis with the first burial site of M. Lermontov. The Eolov harp, the Lermontov grotto, the Chinese arbour, the "Flower-garden" park. The cathedral church of Christ the Saviour, Who healed the paralytic at the Sheep's Pool. The place of the duel of M. Lermontov.

Visit to the Dormition Monastery at the Beshtau Mountain.

Lunch at the monastery.

Athonite monasticism in the Caucasus: the light of blessed Mount Athos was brought to the Caucasus from the second half of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, when four Athonite-style monasteries were founded here. It was the holy and righteous John of Kronstadt who blessed the founding of the New Athos Monastery. Grand Duke Dimitry Romanov became the honorary patron of the monastery. The monastery museum contains personal items of St. John of Kronstadt and the monks of the Caucasian Mountains.

Transfer to Essentuki.

One of the most beautiful panoramic mountain views is from the St. George Convent. The convent is located on the southern heights of the Elbrus Mountain, opposite Beshtau Mountain and the mountains of Piatigorsk. The convent church contains two revered icons of the Virgin Mother of God - the Feodorovskaya and the "All-Queen." The convent has a home for orphaned girls.

Supper in the monastery refectory.

Rest.

10th Day. Thursday, 18 July - Kislovodsk - Essentuki - Arkhyz

Commemoration of St. Athanasius of Athos. Finding of the honorable relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh.

Breakfast.

Transfer to Kislovodsk.

Along the way we visit the Sts. Peter and Paul complex of churches and chapels. The sculpture of Christ, blessing the Caucasus (22 metres tall). St. Nicholas Cathedral, one of the most magnificent in Russia, stands in the centre of Kislovodsk. Its sacred items include an old icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderwork with relics and an Iveron icon of the Mother of God from Mount Athos. The artist N. Yaroshenko and the composer V. Safonov are buried on the territory of the cathedral.

A walk through the park. The Narzan gallery.

Lunch in the dining hall of the cathedral.

Departure for Arkhyz through the Gumbashi mountain pass.

Supper.

Rest for the night.

11th Day. Friday, 19 July. - Arkhyz - Mineral'nya Vody

The synaxis of the Saints of Radonezh.

Breakfast.

Visit to the high mountain and the Russian Academy of Science.

The Caucasian Font, the place where in the 9th and 10th centuries the Alans and other nationalities of the Caucasus received Holy Baptism. The Lower-Arkhyz historical-archaeological reserve. Ancient churches of Russia (dedicated to St. Elias and to St. George).

A walk through the reserve. History of the monastery, which was founded by monks from Mount Athos in the 19th century in one of the picturesque valleys of the Caucasus.

Lunch in the monastery.

Ascent to the cliff, where in ancient times there was a cave church and where recently the Face of Christ not-made-by-hands was discovered (called the "Arkhyz Face"). One of the most ancient Orthodox icons on the territory of Russia, thought to be wonderworking by to-day's faithful. An account of the life and the spiritual exploits of the Caucasian desert-dwellers.

Transfer to Mineral nya Vody (Mineral Waters) (220 kilometres).

Along the highway we will visit the thermal spring called "The Pearl of the Caucasus" (eight pools with mineral water of varying temperatures. Khamam, hydro-massage. (Those who wish to go into the pools need to wear swimming suits and trunks (for men), schists, towel, hat.)

Arrival in Mineral'nya Vody.

Supper in the Protection cathedral. The holy relics of St. Theodosius of the Caucasus. Rest during the night in a hotel.

12th Day. Saturday, 20 July. - Mineral'nya Vody - Moscow - Kursk

Breakfast.

Transfer to the airport. Early flight to Moscow from Mineral'nya Vody.

12:00 - arrival in Moscow.

Lunch.

17:45 - we take the fast train (Strizh) from Moscow to Kursk (length of ride - 5 hours 38 minutes).

23:23 - arrival in Kursk

Settle in the "Element" or the "Bellagio" Hotels to rest.

13th Day. Sunday, 21 July. - Kursk

Commemoration of the appearance of the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos in the city of Kazan.

Breakfast for those who are not preparing for receiving Holy Communion.

Festal Divine Liturgy in the cathedral of Kursk-Root Hermitage. Acquaintance with the clergy and monastics. The monastery relics. A visit to the spring on the spot where the miraculous Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God was found.

Lunch.

Transfer to the city of Kursk (35 km.). Visit to the cathedral church.

Supper.

Rest in hotel.

14th Day. Monday, July 22. - Kursk - Moscow - Dzerzhinsk - Diveyevo

06:00 - arrival at train station

 $06:\!30$ - departure for Moscow by the fast train Lastochka (length of trip 5 hrs 38 min.).

Breakfast on the train.

12:00 - arrival in Moscow at the Kursk train station

Lunch.

15:40 - departure for the city of **Dzerzhinsk** by the fast train Strizh (time of travel - 3 hrs 19 min.)

Supper on the train.

18:59 - arrival in the city of Dzerzhinsk

19:10 - we take the bus to Diveyevo (150 km). The St. Seraphim Diveyevo Convent is the 4th Lot of the Most Holy Mother of God.

22:30 - Settling into the hotel. Rest.

15th Day. Tuesday, 23 July. - Diveyevo

Commemoration of the placing of the sacred Robe of our Lord Jesus Christ in Moscow.

Early breakfast.

07:00 - Akathist in the Holy Trinity Cathedral before the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov. Veneration of the relics. Acquaintance with the Holy Trinity Cathedral.

General excursion through the convent. Visit to the holy springs dedicated to the Kazan and Umilenie (Compunction) icons of the Mother of God and of St. Panteleimon the Healer.

Lunch in the Diveyevo Sloboda.

Visit to the sacred items of the convent. The **relics** of the three Diveyevo fools-for-Christ - St. Pelagia, St. Paraskeva and St. Maria. The relics of the holy women of Diveyevo - St. Alexandra, St. Martha and St. Helen.

Evening services.

The procession of the convent sisters along the Kanavka of the Mother of God.

Supper in the hotel.

Rest.

16th Day. Wednesday, 24 July. - Diveyevo

Commemoration of the Equal-of-the-Apostles Olga, Grand Princess of Rus, in holy baptism Helen.

Early breakfast.

07:00 - Akathist in the Holy Trinity Cathedral before the relics of St. Seraphim. Veneration of his holy relics.

Divine Liturgy.

Visit to the "Near" Springs of Iveron and of Matushka Alexandra.

Lunch in the Diveyevo Sloboda.

A visit to the "Far" Springs dedicated to St. Seraphim in Tsiganovka.

Supper.

Cross procession with the convent sisters along the Kanavka of the Mother of God.

Rest.

17th Day. 25 July. - Diveyevo - Suzdal - Moscow

Commemoration of the "Three Hands" icon of the Mother of God.

Early breakfast.

06:30 - Departure from Diveyevo to Murom (140 kms).

From there we proceed to Suzdal (165 kms).

12:30 - Arrival in Suzdal.

Lunch in the Protection Monastery.

Excursion through the city of Suzdal.

The old Trader section of the city. Panorama of the city.

The monastery dedicated to the Placing of the Robe (if there will be enough time).

18:00 (30) - Departure for Moscow.

Supper.

23:00 - Arrival in Moscow.

Settling into the Protection Hotel.

Rest.

18th Day. 26 July. - Moscow

The Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel.

The hotel rooms need to be vacated by 12:00 noon.

We transfer to the airport after 12:00 noon.

Arrival at the airport and Departure to our homes.

May our Guardian Angel protect us all as we return home!

Information

The cost of the Pilgrimage trip is \$2950.00 (U.S. dollars).

The cost includes the following:

- 1. Transfers in Tbilisi from the airport.
- 2. An English-speaking guide.
- 3. Transportation service to hotels and travel throughout the pilgrimage.
- 4. Accommodation according to the program.
- 5. Meals according to the program.
- 6. Tickets to museums.
- 7. Excursions according to the program.
- 8. Airline tickets from Mineral'nya Vody to Moscow.
- 9. Train tickets Moscow to Kursk (5 hrs 38 min.), Kursk to Moscow, Moscow to Dzerzhinsk (3 hrs. 19 min.) (comfortable seats).
- 10. One transfer on July 26, 2019 to the airport. We recommend that you make arrangements for flights leaving after 18:00.

The cost does not include the following:

- 1. The air flight to Tbilisi.
- 2. The air flight from Moscow to your place of residence.

Additional non-coverage:

- 1. Transfer from the airport to the hotel in Tbilisi, if your arrival is not on 9 July.
- 2. The travel by cable car on Mount Elbrus (the cost is 1200 roubles for the round $\mathrm{tri}\rho$).

Please contact <u>Galina Konstantinovna Sologub</u>, the regular organizer of our Pilgrimages, by phone, e-mail, or skype: Tel. (WhatsApp or Viber): +7 (910) 402-3511

Email: g.k.sologub@gmail.com Skype: Galina K. Sologub