



Lake Ritsa, Caucasus Mountains – Abkhazia

Traveling in Russia and Iran: Seeing the World in a New Light

The Swiss association “Friends of the Caucasus” organizes immersive trips to Russia and Iran, providing direct access to these societies beyond media narratives.

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In an age when information is abundant but often superficial, travel remains one of the most reliable ways to develop a well-grounded understanding. As part of our partnerships with organizations that share our commitment to on-the-ground analysis, we are highlighting the trips offered by *“Friends of the Caucasus”*, a Swiss organization specializing in organizing trips to Russia, the Caucasus, and Iran.

Off the beaten path, the organization offers immersive trips conceived as genuine opportunities for first-hand observation: meetings with local experts, visits to historical and economic sites, and direct exchanges with residents. These are experiences that have grown increasingly rare for most Europeans, in regions that are widely covered in the media yet rarely accessible firsthand. Travel options there are limited, travel advisories are commonplace, and meaningful contact with local realities is rarely available.

To date, the association has organized more than 74 trips to Iran and 55 to Russia. More than half of the participants have joined multiple times, a strong indicator of the quality and authenticity of the experiences offered. The group includes a diverse range of people: analysts, journalists, students, but also ordinary curious individuals eager to compare their perceptions with reality—and to see for themselves what mainstream media often fails to capture in its full complexity.

What these trips actually offer

The trip to Russia includes visits to Moscow and Saint Petersburg, enriched by meetings and presentations by experts such as [Peter Hänseler](#) and [Karl Eckstein](#)—offering diverse perspectives on history, the economy, and contemporary geopolitical dynamics. Added to this is a rare excursion to **Abkhazia**, nestled south of Sochi. This territory, seldom visited by Westerners, illustrates the complexity of post-Soviet transformations. The trip concludes, on the way back, with a special visit to Istanbul.

The trip to Iran focuses on regions overlooked by conventional tourism, far from Tehran and Isfahan. We travel to the south and southwest of the country, areas we know intimately from having made numerous trips there over the years. On the itinerary: little-known historical sites, meetings with local economic and cultural figures, and the discovery of exceptional landscapes. We have incorporated new highlights into this year's program.

2026 Program

- **May 29 – June 14:** Russia / Abkhazia / Istanbul
- **September 11 – 27:** Russia / Abkhazia / Istanbul
- **November 13 – 28:** Southern and southwestern Iran

Each session has a limited number of participants to ensure the quality of the experience.

Who are these trips for?

These trips are for anyone who wants to look beyond the headlines: academics, journalists, students, or simply travelers curious about the world as it is, in all its complexity.

👉 *For more information or to sign up:*

- www.abchasien.ch
- www.schweiz-iran.ch

This article features our partner, the Friends of the Caucasus association. No compensation is received for this endorsement. All trips are organized directly by the association.

ARTICLE TAGS:

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