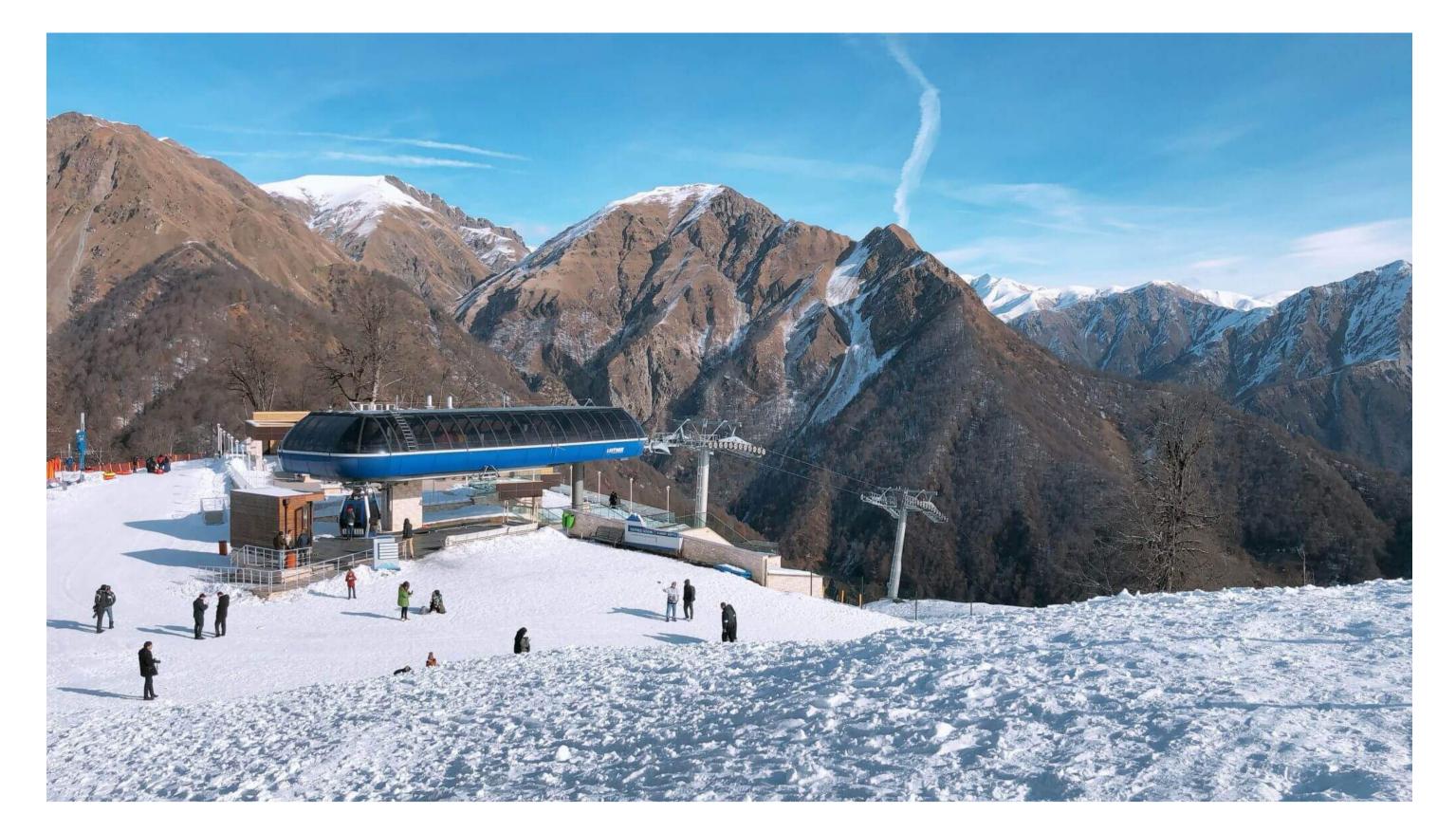


Just Go With Amreen

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Gabala-Concrete Jungle Escape

If you're done with the drudgery of modern life, then pack your bags for a weekend's gateway to the capital of Azerbaijan. Situated 225kms away from Baku, this ancient city, also known, as Qabala is a beautiful gem of Azerbaijan.

My way to the middle of the historic silk route

My husband & me arrived Baku from Dubai via Azerbaijan Airlines at 5:30 am. With our pre-arranged rental car from Marshall Rent A Car, we picked ride from the airport car park and drove straight to our destination, Gabala.



Taking a car proved to be the most sensible option for me (and my budget), despite multiple transport options. I decided this was the best option as we were living away from the city centre and having a car made it easier to explore some of the most popular places in Gabala.

Though I did look up the alternatives. Trains are good options- you get to board one at either 8:45 am or 11 pm from Baku to Ujar, or from Ujar and a 1.5 hours taxi ride to Gabala.

Buses are the cheapest way possible, but reaching Gabala by bus can take up to 6 hours! It was equivalent to setting couple of days aside just to travel to and from my destination so I decided to go with the first option instead.

Azerbaijan, in general, is slightly costlier than Georgia and Armeria. But still, it's an affordable option compared to other European countries. I recommend a car as it will be very useful if your accommodation is slightly out of the city centre. It cost an all-inclusive \$90 for two, for 3 full days.

Highligh	.ts –
Distance between Baku & Gabala – 225 kms	
Best Mode of Transportation – Self-drive a rental car	
Hottest Month – July	
Coldest Month – January	
Currency – Manat	
Dominant Cuisine – Arabian & Indian	
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A blend of history and natural splendour

Situated at the foot of the Greater Caucasus mountain range, the ancient city of Gabala has many jaw-dropping sights. Here are some of the most popular places in Gabala to visit –

Tufandag Mountain Ski Resort

Located on top of the mountains, at 1920 m above sea level, the Tufandag Mountain Sky Resort is a place hard to miss. Apart from being one of the most popular places in Gabala, it's a spectacular destination for those wanting some adventure at Gabala. Don't forget to take a breather in the Chalet Steak & Wine House.



If you're visiting in the winter like I did, you're bound to find snow up on these mountains. So even if there is no snow, down below, in the city of Gabala, be sure you'll find some up here. Hence, I'd say dress accordingly. We were very lucky to have visited this incredible place on a bright and sunny day. The views from the mountains were clear and we were almost above the cloud cover. There aren't enough words to describe the beauty; you have to be there.

Nohur Lake

Popular for boat rides, the Nohur lake is another popular attraction in Gabala. The 15-minute boat ride costed us 15 Manat, I wish I had spent more time paddling on this calm and serene lake. It's only about 5 km from the main city and is nestled amidst forests and the mountains of Yumru, Goydag, and Gulluburun. It gives you the peace and quiet you need to get away from the hustle and bustle of a city life.. With the perfect view of the gorgeous Caucasus Mountains, the bird chirping and the relaxing atmosphere is something could any day return to.

The Yeddi Gozel (Seven Beauties) Waterfall

Past the seven mountain roads, lies the unmissable Seven Beauties Waterfall. It gets its name from the 7 mountain roads, one needs to pass to arrive at this gorgeous sight. Witnessing the water rushing down from the might peak of Caucasus Mountains, I'd suggest, take your time, when visiting this gem. There are plenty tea stalls at its highest viewing point. Have a seat on one of its wooden benches, and hear the sound of the waterfall while sipping on some hot Azeri tea.

For one to visit this delightful sight, you must leave you car 400m away, in a car park, and take a cab ride to the starting point of the hike. Bear in mind, the hike could be quite slippery and tricky for elders and young kids during the winter season.

Gabala has something for everyone. For those with families, you have the Gabala Land. With over 50 attractions, the little ones will have a ball here. Then again for the wine lovers, you have the Savalan Wine Factory. You can enjoy a wonderful tour around the vineyard and the distiller, apart from bountiful of tastings to conclude your tour with.

Best time to visit

Gabala is one of those rare travel destinations that you can visit throughout the year.

But here's a little insight into the weather- The summer lasts from June to September- the hottest month being July- while the winter season is at its peak from November to March. Octobers and Decembers can be really wet so it's really up to you when you want to explore Gabala!

Winters in Gabala are the coldest in January with the temperature reaching up to -4 degrees! Lucky for me, I visited Gabala in December. In the 5 days that I was there, I experienced all that I could- the rain, snow, wind chill, extreme fog, and also a warm sunny day! So make sure you pack your Snow boots, a windbreaker, thermal wear, a pullover, light jacket, light tshirt, everything!

Places to Eat

Since it was my first day in Azerbaijan, I chose Google's recommendations and chose to visit the Raja Indian & Azerbaijani Restaurant. My first taste of the Azeri cuisine had me gripped! It was the Lyulya kabab which consists of skewered and grilled ground lamb combined with finely chopped onions, salt and pepper. I couldn't stop myself from ordering a second serving!

Also, alcohol... don't be surprised if you cannot find much of it in Gabala. In Europe, it is a common practice to get a glass of wine or beer with your meal but that wasn't the case here. I didn't face this scenario when I was in Baku later on the trip. However, in Gabala there wasn't much option for drinks in the restaurants. Perhaps more drinks would pour as this paradise slowly catches up with the tourist vibes.

Accommodation

If you want to go for the luxury, then Qafqaz Resort hotel is the place to be, the per head expenses being \$96 per night. For those wanting to save on accommodation, Kahran Hostel is a fine option with \$13 per head expenditure per night. I took the middle road with at Firuze Apartments where it cost me \$30 per night. Speaking of which, I'll recommend you to carry Azeri currency only as they rarely accept cards in Gabala.

It was a challenge to find a money exchange in Gabala, as we were staying away from the city. However, you can exchange your dollars at any local grocery for a similar rate to the Airport.

All except the Nightlife

The nightlife in Gabala is not much of a highlight. Gabala doesn't have nightlife really, due to which I found myself turning in a lot earlier than I usually do on trips. As for dinner, we would generally order in or hubby would cook some delicious dinner (the more economical option)

Luckily, we found a lovely restaurant & bar called 'Asgard' situated opposite to where we were staying. That's where we headed to have a couple of drinks before calling it a day. It is one of the restaurants listed in the most popular places in Gabala.

Destinations like Gabala, that are yet to be discovered by tourists, show the authenticity of a country like Azerbaijan. Gabala is a haven to cut off from normal life and recharge yourselves. All you need to do is pack as per the time of the year and learn some Azeri phrases, and just get going!

Want a more visual experience of most popular places in Gabala, Check out my vlog below!

Had enough of the Winter wonderland? Want to have some beach fun, check out my blog on a Hidden Gem of Romania.