



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Ancient Armenia

Tour Duration – 10 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ●○○○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore incredible Armenian architecture from ancient and medieval times
- ✓ Try your hand at making traditional Armenian flatbread at a Lavash masterclass
- ✓ Marvel at the views of Mt Ararat from Khor Virap Monastery
- ✓ Breathe in the pristine air at picturesque alpine Lake Sevan
- ✓ Explore the second city of Gyumri
- ✓ Plenty of time to take in the diverse city of Yerevan
- ✓ Visit the spiritual heart of the Armenian Church at Echmiadzin
- ✓ Enjoy the beautiful scenery of Dilijan – known as the little Switzerland of Armenia
- ✓ UNESCO sites such as Haghpat and Geghard monasteries





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	Mix of comfortable mid-range hotels with private bathrooms
Included Meals:	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size:	Maximum of 12 travellers
Start Point:	Yerevan – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point:	Yerevan – you can depart any time on day 10
Transport:	Minibus (size of will depend on the group size)
Country Visited:	Armenia



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Ancient Armenia

Armenia is the world's oldest Christian nation with an astounding collection of ancient churches and monasteries which will captivate you. In contrast is the capital Yerevan, a lively and engaging city which embraces modernity yet manages to retain its traditions, and is packed full of some of the best Soviet style architecture to be found anywhere. This is a busy tour with lots of fabulous history, culture and scenery to enjoy. Isn't it time you learned more about this intriguing region?

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. For very small group sizes (3 people and less), the tour may operate with a driver/guide.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Yerevan

Upon arrival in Armenia, you will be welcomed and transferred to the hotel in central Yerevan. Overnight Tufenkian Historic Hotel or similar. No meals.

Note if you arrive early we can provide a quote for early check in and for any extra activities you may wish to do.

Yerevan

Set on the edge of a ravine above the River Hrazdan, Yerevan is a mixture of architectural styles, with some imposing Soviet-era buildings as well as residential homes where different types of stone are used. Concentric boulevards spill outwards from the city centre interspersed with parkland, and this sense of space and greenery gives Yerevan an almost rural feel at times. The main street of bars, restaurants and shops is Abovian, running north from Republic Square. The cathedral of St Gregory the Illuminator was built with money from the enormous Armenian diaspora to celebrate 1,700 years of Christianity in Armenia. The covered market stands opposite the Blue Mosque, which has been recently restored. A range of museums cover everything from art to natural history – one of the most impressive is the Matenadaran, devoted to ancient manuscripts.

Day 2: The sights of Yerevan (Approximate driving time 2 hours)

Enjoy a city tour of Yerevan, including Victory Park with its high-scale view point over the city, Cascade and the Gafeschian Centre of Art, The North Avenue, the Opera House, Republic Square, and etc. Visit the Genocide Memorial and museum dedicated to the victims of the Great Genocide that took place in 1915 and the memorial with eternal fire. We also have a short visit of **Matenadaran** - a Museum and Scientific Institute of ancient manuscripts, which houses a unique collection of ancient manuscripts covering such topics as philosophy, law, mathematics, medicine and geography. Later visit the Yerevan Brandy Factory for a guided excursion to the cellars and enjoy a degustation of 2 types of local **brandy**. End the tour for the day with a



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visit to a craftsman specialized in khachkars (Armenian cross-stones). Later this afternoon there may be some time for your own exploration. Overnight in Yerevan (B)

Day 3: Yerevan – Khor Virap – Areni – Noravank – Karahunj – Goris (Driving time approximately 4,5 hours)

Start the day by driving through the fertile Ararat valley to the picture postcard monastery of Khor Virap (4-17c), one of the sanctuaries of the Armenian Apostolic church and an important pilgrimage site. Continue to the monastery of Noravank, surely one of the most majestic monuments of medieval Armenia. The church had an atrium, which was rebuilt by the famous sculptor Momik. Visit Karahunj or Zorats Stones (Armenian Stonehenge), an outstanding archaeological site. We spend time exploring this magnificent place before travelling to Goris for the overnight stay. Overnight in Goris (BLD)

Khor Virap

Standing on a hill in the middle of Ararat Plain and affording glorious views of Mount Ararat, Khor Virap, which translates as 'deep dungeon', is a monastery with great historical significance as it was the place where St Gregory the Illuminator, patron saint of Armenia, was imprisoned by King Trdat III in the 3rd century. Most of the monastery dates from 1661, but in St George's chapel you can still see the cell where the unfortunate monk was held - a pit 6m deep which can be reached by ladder.

Areni

The recently excavated and very well preserved Copper Age settlement Areni Bird's Cavern uncovers the secrets of 6000 years old wine production in Armenia. The site boasts incredible items excavated in 2008-2010 including the world's oldest shoe which is 5,500 years old.

Karahunj

The first excavation in 1980 focused on religious worship meaning behind the standing 222 stones, while recent researches started lively discussions about site's origin as observatory established 7500years ago. The name Karahunj is interpreted as deriving from two Armenian words: car (or kar) (Armenian: քար), meaning stone, and hunge or hoonch (Armenian: հունչ), meaning sound. Thus the name Carahunge means "speaking stones". This interpretation is related to the fact that the stones make whistling sounds on a windy day, presumably because of multiple reach-through holes bored into the stones at different angles in prehistoric times.

Day 4: Goris – Khndzoresk – Tatev Monastery – Selim – Lake Sevan (Driving time approximately 5,5 hours/ Alternatively – Overnight in Dilijan, driving time 6,5 hours)

This morning we drive to the cave village of Khndzoresk. The Village of Khndzoresk is a huge complex with interesting caves waiting to be explored and we will spend some time walking around this atmospheric site. Continue to Tatev Monastery which we will explore. Journey to beautiful Lake Sevan via Selim Caravanserai and take the stairs to the top of the peninsula to enjoy breathtaking scenery of the splendid mountain chain surrounding the glittering surface of the lake. Continue to Dilijan, also known as Armenian Switzerland. Overnight in Sevan (BL)

Tatev Monastery

An important 9th Century historical monument, Tatev is one of the oldest and most famous monastery complexes in Armenia. During medieval times Tatev Monastery was a vital scholastic, enlightenment and spiritual centre and played a singular role in the country's history. Here you will see mighty fortress walls upon massive cliffs, an ancient oil mill with stone grinders, pendulous column-with unique medieval structure and ancient frescoes by European masters.



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Day 5: Sevan – Haghpat – Dzoraget (Approximate driving time is 3,5 hours)

Stroll through the picturesque old quarter of Dilijan, particularly Sharambeyan Street, renowned for its pottery, carpentry and other artisan shops. Continue to Haghpat and explore the monastery, a masterpiece of medieval Armenian Church architecture. Continue to Gyumri. Overnight in Gyumri (BLD)

Lake Sevan and Sevanavank Monastery

Lake Sevan is one of the largest freshwater high-altitude lakes (2000m above sea level) and is one of the main attractions of Armenia thanks to the picturesque lake and the monastery Sevanavank which is a stunning 9th century monastery situated strategically on the peninsula which used to be an island.

Dilijan

Dilijan attracts visitors with its lush forests, fertile meadows, and the rushing rapids of the River Aghstev. The climate is very different to elsewhere in Armenia and enjoys a sense of quiet nature.

Haghpat Monastery (UNESCO)

The monastery of Haghpat was founded in 976 during the reign of king Ashot III Bagratouni and used to be a spiritual, cultural and educational centre of the region. The village and the monastery lie over a deep "crack" formed by a small river flowing into the Debed River.

Day 6: Dzoraget – Gyumri – ArmAs Winery – Yerevan (Approximate driving time is 4 hours)

Travel to Gyumri and attend a ceramics workshop. We explore the streets of the old town on foot to try to understand why since the ancient times Gyumri has been considered the cultural capital of Armenia and the birthplace of arts and crafts. ArmAs Winery Estate is a picturesque display of agricultural achievement, set against the backdrop of the inspiring Mount Ararat. The 180 hectares of previously desolate and disconnected rock-strewn countryside was diligently transformed into a stunning panorama including vineyards, orchards, and a world-class winery. Here you'll have a guided excursion through the vineyards and distilleries, as well as a degustation of wines. Later we return to Yerevan. Overnight Royal Plaza Hotel or similar (BL)

Gyumri

Gyumri is the second largest city of Armenia, known for its excellent 19th century Tsarist architecture which suffered greatly in the 1988 earthquake. It is the hometown for many talented Armenian artists, poets and musicians; Gyumri is famous for its museums, galleries, art centres, and churches.

Day 7: Yerevan – Echmiadzin – Zvartnots – Yerevan (Driving time approximately 2 hours)

Visit Echmiadzin, the spiritual heart of the Armenian Church including the Mother Cathedral. A short distance from here we visit the ruins of Zvartnots dating back to the 7th Century. Later we enjoy a gastronomic master class of Lavash bread making before finishing the day at the Vernissage flea market, a large open air market for handmade souvenirs, carpets, silver and jewellery. Overnight Royal Plaza Hotel (BL)

Echmiadzin

The spiritual centre of the Armenian Church, Echmiadzin was the setting for a series of visions by St Gregory the Illuminator, where columns of fire turned into churches. The first monastery was built, like many others in Armenia, on the site of a pagan temple in the 4th century, rebuilt in the 5th century in a different style and then renovated in the 17th century. The cathedral treasury is a museum of religious relics, and is where the spear from Geghard that is said to have pierced Christ as he hung on the cross is stored. The treasury also contains a piece of wood said to be from Noah's Ark, which came to rest on the summit of Mt Ararat, today situated in Turkey but long part of Armenia.



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Day 8: Yerevan – Garni – Geghard (UNESCO) – Megeryan Carpet – Yerevan (Driving time approximately 2.5 hours)

Travel to Kotayk province to explore Geghard Monastery, astonishingly partly carved out of a mountain. Continue to Garni. Continue to nearby Garni to visit the pagan temple. Have lunch in the village of Garni in an authentic rural environment with a master-class of baking lavash - traditional Armenian flatbread. Return to Yerevan and visit Megeryan Carpet where we learn about centuries-old traditions of Armenian carpet weaving. Overnight Royal Plaza or similar (BL)

Optional Walk: 1 hour walk in the gorge of the Azat River. The duration of the walk is approximately 1 hour, with no difficult passages. The walk starts from the village of Garni, taking you down to the Azat river gorge and the famous “Symphony of Stones” basalt columns, located at an altitude of about 50 meters above the ground. Difficulty: Easy to Medium.

Geghard

Geghard means 'spear', and this church set in a narrow gorge is reputed to have once contained the spear which pierced the side of Christ on the cross; the spear now lies in the treasury at Echmiadzin. Built up against a cliff face, the main cathedral was constructed in 1215, but the first monastery on the site is thought to date from the 4th century AD. The monastery is decorated with reliefs depicting animals, crosses and geometrical shapes.

Garni

Garni is a heathen temple which is the only surviving monument of the Hellenistic period in Armenia. The temple is dedicated to the God of the sun Mithra and was built in the 2nd half of the 1st c A.D. during the reign of king Trdat I. Destroyed by an earthquake in 1679, the temple of Garni was reconstructed in the 1970's and is now made up of both original and replacement masonry and is situated in a splendid location overlooking an impressive natural canyon.

Day 9: Yerevan

Spend your last full day in Armenia to discovery Yerevan at your own leisure, perhaps to take in some museums or shop for souvenirs. Overnight Royal Plaza Hotel or similar (B)

Day 10: Tour Departure

Bid farewell to Armenia as you are transferred to the airport for your onward journey (B)

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation
Transportation throughout
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Travel Insurance
Visas if applicable
Drinks



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Items of a personal nature
Tips (Discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At this time there are no warnings in place for areas we travel to on our small group tour to Armenia.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

On our tour of Armenia tour you can expect comfortable accommodation with private bathrooms throughout the trip. Most hotels will have a restaurant and bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that on occasion lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.



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Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £5 / Dinner £10 -£15

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £2 - £3 / Bottle of Water £0.5 - £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. A reasonable amount to bring for tips would be around \$50-60, split between the guides and drivers, if you are travelling on a group tour. For private tours, you should allow more.

Waiters and bar staff in the region are generally low paid and it is common practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Yerevan is well equipped with ATMs for obtaining money

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are widely accepted in the main cities in larger restaurants and hotels

Local Currency: Armenia – Dram (AMD)

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollar

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses (including Covid-19 conditions) and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.



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Visa Information

At the time of writing British nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Armenia but other nationals do. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

There are no compulsory vaccinations required for travel to Armenia. However, we recommend that you speak with your doctor for the most up to date advice regarding any vaccinations that may be recommended.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.



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Preparing for your tour

Climate

Generally speaking, the best time to visit the Caucasus region is between April to October, however the tour can be run outside of this time. It can get very hot in the middle of summer at lower altitudes such as Yerevan. Temperatures at the higher altitudes such as Lake Sevan are somewhat cooler and at night it can be quite cold. Rain showers can be expected at any time of year. Spring can be a lovely time for wildflowers. September and October tend to be the busiest time for tourists but also is generally the driest time of the year with pleasant temperatures.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy. Please note that it can get quite cool at higher elevations in the evening and first thing in the morning.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. It is usually advisable to bring a torch/head torch in case of any electricity outages. You may wish to take walking poles if you are used to using them although this not a trekking tour.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended. When we are travelling between places sandals or other comfortable footwear is fine.

Journey times

All journey times are approximate and these may be impacted by unforeseen incidents such as mechanical problems, roadworks, poor weather etc. The journey times mentioned is the approximate overall driving times each day but of course this is interspersed with the stops mentioned on each day.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs have two round pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 7 July 2023