PACK LIGHTLY

THE WORLD'S FIRST CHRISTIAN NATION

Armenia

Yerevan under Mount Ararat, monasteries carved into the cliffs, and a brandy older than most countries.



p. 17 The monastery trail: Geghard to Tatev

p. 30 What a day really costs, printed as a till receipt

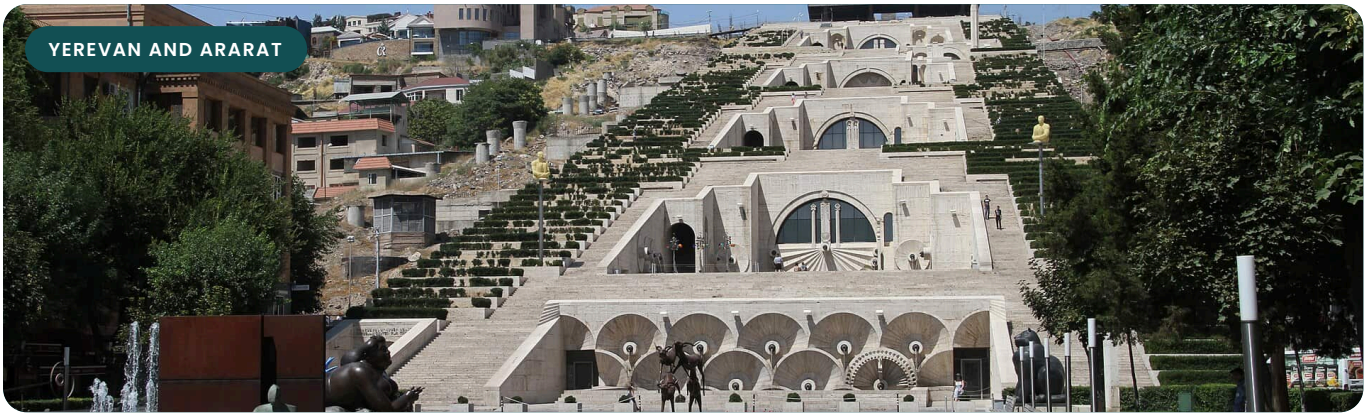
p. 19 Armenian food, dish by dish, with prices

45 PAGES USD PRICES VISA-FREE 180 DAYS EDITION 2026.07

photo: Wikimedia Commons

Start here

the shape of an Armenia trip, what it costs, what to sort first



Armenia is small, ancient and quietly overlooked, which is exactly why it rewards you. A landlocked country the size of Belgium, it packs in the oldest Christian churches on earth, a pink-stone capital under the twin cone of Mount Ararat, and monasteries hung off cliffs and gorges an hour in any direction. It is even cheaper than its Caucasus neighbours and gets a fraction of the visitors. Almost every passport enters free for 180 days. This guide bases you in Yerevan, sends you out on the monastery trail north and south, and shows you how to cross the country by marshrutka for pocket money.

The shape of a trip

Base in Yerevan for the museums and the day trips, loop north to Lake Sevan and Dilijan's forests, and south to the great monasteries of Tatev and Noravank. Ararat watches over all of it.

What a day costs

Backpacking runs about 25 USD a day, mid-range around 55, captured for this edition. The full receipt, bed to nightcap, is itemised on page 30.

Sort before you fly

Most passports enter visa-free for 180 days, so there is little to file. Add travel insurance, an eSIM, and book only your first nights. Page 32 lists the order.





HOW THE LINKS WORK

Some booking links earn Pack Lightly a commission, at no extra cost to you. Full disclosure is on the last page.

Contents

tap a line to jump straight there

01 The country 06

02 Where to go 09

03 What to do 16

04 Routes and itineraries 22

05 When to go 27

06 Practical 31

07 Safe and smart 36

08 Tools, print cards, sources 40

QUICK JUMPS

The route picker 23

What a day really costs 30

The monastery trail 17

Your trip on one page

9-13 days · 25 to 120 USD/day · best May-Jun and Sep-Oct

If you read nothing else, this page is the trip. Base in Yerevan, take the easy day trips to Garni and Geghard, then loop north to Lake Sevan and the forests of Dilijan, and south to the cliffside monasteries of Noravank and Tatev. It is one overland loop on marshrutkas and shared taxis, no domestic flights. Book from the bars below, not from resort rates, and only lock your first couple of nights.

THE ROUTE

Yerevan — day 1-4

1h drive

Sevan + Dilijan — day 5-7

via Yerevan

Areni — day 8-9

2h drive

Tatev + Goris — day 10-12

BUDGET PER DAY

Backpacker	25 USD
Standard	55 USD
Comfort	120 USD

BOOK FIRST

01	International flights, 6 to 8 weeks out	Aviasales
02	First two nights in Yerevan	Booking.com
03	eSIM, install before departure	Saily

BEST MONTHS

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

best: mild, green, the harvest · shoulder: hot lowlands or cool highlands · cold, high passes snowbound

Cards work in Yerevan, but marshrutkas, village guesthouses and rural monastery towns run on cash. Keep small dram on you.

Distances are short but the roads are slow and mountainous. Base in Yerevan and radiate out, rather than moving hotel every night.

Armenia at a glance

scores 0-100 · pack-lightly country-comparison data

SCORECARD

Friendliness	90
Culture	85
Budget friendly	85
Nature	80
Food and drink	75
Active vacation	70

Budget travel	25 USD/day
Mid-range	55 USD/day
Luxury	120 USD/day

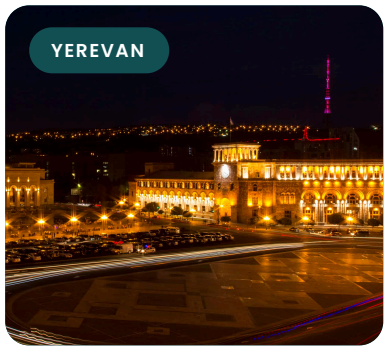
MONASTERIES · HISTORY · BUDGET · BRANDY · OFF-BEAT

source: country-comparison tool, 2026-07

SIX FRAMES OF THE TRIP













01

The country

What Armenia is, why the oldest Christian state on earth carries such a long and heavy memory, and the regions to know before you pick dates.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What Armenia is 07

The first Christian nation 08

What Armenia is

3M people · its own alphabet · the oldest Christian state

A landlocked highland republic of three million, tucked into the southern Caucasus between Turkey, Georgia, Iran and Azerbaijan. Armenia has its own language and its own 1,600-year-old alphabet, and in 301 AD it became the first nation on earth to adopt Christianity as a state religion, four decades before neighbouring Georgia. That faith is written across the landscape in stone churches and cliffside monasteries. It is a proud, resilient, deeply hospitable place shaped by a hard history, and it is one of the cheapest and least-visited corners of the region. Mount Ararat, the national symbol, rises across the closed Turkish border and watches over almost every view from the capital.

CAPITAL
Yerevan
one of the world's oldest cities

POPULATION
3M
Apostolic Christian

CURRENCY
AMD
1 USD = ~390 dram

BEST MONTHS
May-Jun
and Sep-Oct

THREE REGIONS, THREE CHARACTERS



Yerevan and the Ararat plain

pink capital · Garni · Khor Virap

Where the trip lives. A warm, cafe-filled capital of pink tufa stone, with the great day-trip sights all within an hour under Ararat.



The north: Sevan, Dilijan, Gyumri

alpine lake · forests · second city

Green and cool: the vast high-altitude Lake Sevan, the forested resort town of Dilijan, and the earthquake-marked second city of Gyumri.



The south: Areni, Noravank, Tatev

red canyons · wine · the great monasteries

The dramatic south: the wine village of Areni, Noravank in its red gorge, and Tatev, reached by the world's longest reversible cable car.

The first Christian nation

a long memory: faith, an alphabet, a mountain, a wound

To understand Armenia, hold four things at once. It became Christian in 301 AD and never let go, which is why the country reads like an open-air museum of churches. It got its own alphabet in 405 AD, invented to translate the Bible, and still writes in it today. Its emblem is Mount Ararat, where Noah is said to have landed, now sitting just across a sealed border in Turkey, visible and unreachable, which tells you a lot. And in 1915 up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed in the genocide, a wound at the center of national identity and its worldwide diaspora. This is a small country with a very long memory, and travelers who grasp that are met with real warmth.

CHRISTIAN SINCE
301 AD
the first state to adopt it

ALPHABET FROM
405 AD
still in daily use

ARARAT
5,137 m
the symbol, over the border

DIASPORA
~7M
more abroad than at home

The Tsitsernakaberd genocide memorial in Yerevan is a quiet, moving visit and the key to understanding the country. Give it a slow morning.

First trip? Give Yerevan and its day trips four nights, then pick either the northern lakes or the southern monasteries. Both is a two-week job.

GO DEEPER

The top picks in best places, the monasteries in religious landmarks, and the traditions in the culture page.

02

Where to go

The capital and its day trips, the northern lakes and forests, and the great monasteries of the south. What each is worth, and which can wait.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Yerevan 10

Garni and Geghard 11

Lake Sevan and Dilijan 12

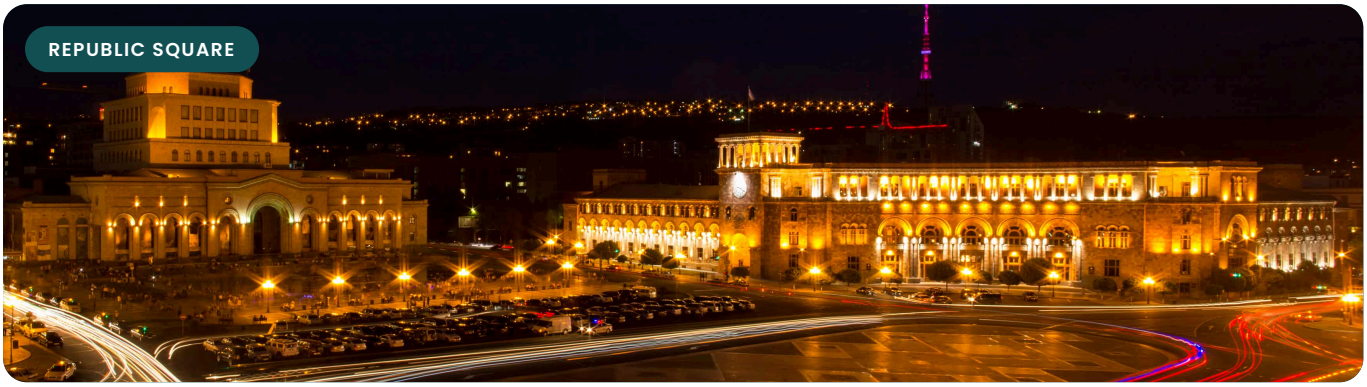
The southern monasteries 13

Gyumri and the north 14

Khor Virap and Echmiadzin 15

Yerevan

the pink city · 3-4 nights · your base for everything



One of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities, and a genuinely lovely one, built almost entirely from pink and apricot volcanic tufa that glows at sunset. Yerevan is where the whole trip is run from. Wander the grand Republic Square and the singing fountains, climb the Cascade, a giant stone stairway of galleries and sculpture, and browse the weekend Vernissage market. The Matenadaran holds a jaw-dropping collection of ancient manuscripts, and the Tsitsernakaberd memorial gives the history its weight. Between the sights it is all leafy cafes, brandy bars and easy nights. Base here three or four days and radiate out.

WORTH THE CITY DAYS

- [ ] **The Cascade.** Stone stairway, modern-art galleries, city-and-Ararat view.
- [ ] **Republic Square.** The grand center; stay for the evening fountains.
- [ ] **Matenadaran.** The museum of ancient Armenian manuscripts.
- [ ] **Tsitsernakaberd.** The genocide memorial and museum, quiet and essential.

→

Use the GG or Yandex app for taxis; both are cheap and metered. The single metro line is handy for the center.

Base near the Cascade or Republic Square to walk the center, the cafes and the museums without a taxi.

MORE ON THE SITE

Neighbourhoods and sights in the Yerevan guide, the stairway in the Cascade, and the ruins at Zvartnots.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

Garni and Geghard

the classic day trip · half a day east of Yerevan



The easiest and most rewarding half-day from the capital pairs two very different sites. Garni is the only standing Greco-Roman colonnaded temple in the former Soviet world, a first-century sun temple perched on a gorge edge, with the strange basalt organ-pipe cliffs of the Symphony of Stones on the canyon floor below. A short drive up the same valley, Geghard is a UNESCO monastery partly hacked straight out of the mountain rock, its chapels and khachkar cross-stones dim and dripping inside the cliff. Together they make the classic introduction to Armenian stone, easily done by taxi or tour in an afternoon.





In Garni village, watch lavash bread slapped onto the wall of a clay tonir oven, then eat it warm. It is a UNESCO tradition, not a show.

A shared marshrutka runs from Yerevan, but a half-day taxi split between two or three is cheap and far easier for both sites.

MORE ON THE SITE

The temple in Garni Temple, the village in Garni, and the rock monastery at Geghard.

Lake Sevan and Dilijan

the cool north · 1-2 nights · lake and forest



An hour north of Yerevan the land lifts to Lake Sevan, one of the largest high-altitude lakes in the world, a huge sheet of blue at nearly 2,000 metres where Armenians go to swim and eat lake trout in summer. The ninth-century Sevanavank monastery sits on a peninsula above it. Push on into the mountains and you reach Dilijan, a forested spa town Armenians call their little Switzerland, with the beautiful Haghartsin and Goshavank monasteries hidden in the woods nearby and easy walking trails. Together they make a cool, green counterpoint to the arid south, and an easy one or two nights out of the capital.

Sevan is a summer thing: the water is swimmable July and August and cold the rest of the year. Come for the trout and the monastery either way.

Dilijan is the base for the forest monasteries and the Transcaucasian Trail. Guesthouses here do generous half board.

MORE ON THE SITE

The lake in Lake Sevan, the monastery in Sevanavank, and the forest town in Dilijan.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

The southern monasteries

Noravank, Tatev, Goris · 2-3 days · the dramatic south



The south is Armenia at its most cinematic. Beyond the wine village of Areni, the thirteenth-century Noravank church glows against a gorge of rust-red cliffs, its famous facade reached by a narrow external stair. Further south, Tatev Monastery clings to the edge of a deep canyon and is reached by the Wings of Tatev, the world's longest reversible aerial cable car, a five-kilometre glide over the gorge. Base in the small town of Goris to reach it, and to walk out to the cave village of Old Khndzoresk across its swinging footbridge. This corner takes two or three days and is the payoff for coming to Armenia at all.





The Wings of Tatev runs most days but closes on Mondays for maintenance and in high wind. Check before you plan the day around it.

The south is a long haul from Yerevan. A hired driver or a two-day tour beats a punishing return marshrutka run.

MORE ON THE SITE

The monastery in Tatev, the cable car in Wings of Tatev, and the red gorge at Noravank.

Gyumri and the north

the second city and the far monasteries · 1-2 nights



Armenia's second city has a character all its own. Gyumri is a place of handsome black-and-red tufa mansions and a proud craft and humour tradition, still visibly rebuilding from the catastrophic 1988 earthquake that levelled much of it and killed tens of thousands. The restored old quarter around Kumayri is a pleasure to wander, and the city makes a relaxed base for the far north. Up near the Georgian border, the twin UNESCO monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin sit above the Debed canyon, among the finest medieval complexes in the country and an easy add-on if you cross to or from Tbilisi.

Gyumri sits on the main road and rail line to Tbilisi, so it slots neatly into a combined Georgia and Armenia trip.

The Debed canyon monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin, near Alaverdi, are the north's highlight; break the journey there.

MORE ON THE SITE

The city in Gyumri, the quarter in Gyumri old town, and the canyon town of Alaverdi.

Khor Virap and Echmiadzin

under Ararat · half a day west of Yerevan



The other great half-day, west of the capital, is the one for the postcard. Khor Virap is a monastery set on a low hill right against the closed Turkish border, and behind it Mount Ararat fills the entire sky, making this the spot every Armenian photo is taken. It is also where Gregory the Illuminator was held in a pit before converting the king in 301, so it is sacred as well as scenic. Pair it with Echmiadzin, the seat of the Armenian church and its mother cathedral, arguably the oldest in the world, and the ruined round church of Zvartnots nearby. Go on a clear morning for the mountain.

Ararat hides in summer haze by midday. Go early on a clear morning, ideally spring or autumn, for the clean view behind the monastery.

Echmiadzin holds a Sunday liturgy worth catching. Dress modestly; it is the spiritual heart of the whole Armenian world.

MORE ON THE SITE

The monastery in Khor Virap, the ruins at Zvartnots, and more in religious landmarks.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

03

What to do

The monastery trail that defines the country, the brandy and wine that run through its history, what to eat, and where to sleep.

IN THIS CHAPTER

The monastery trail	17
Brandy, wine and the table	18
Food spotlight	19
Where to stay: Yerevan, Dilijan	20
Where to stay: Goris, Gyumri	21

The monastery trail

the sacred landscape · the country's headline draw



If Georgia is about wine and Kazbegi, Armenia is about the monasteries, and stringing them together is the real trip. They are not museums but working, deeply atmospheric places, each set for maximum drama: Geghard cut into a cliff, Tatev hung over a gorge, Noravank glowing red, Khor Virap under Ararat, Haghpat and Sanahin above the Debed. What ties them is the khachkar, the intricately carved Armenian cross-stone, and a spare, muscular medieval architecture found nowhere else. You do not need to be religious to be moved by them. Space them out so they do not blur, and let the drives between be part of it.

THE ESSENTIAL FIVE

- [ ] **Geghard.** UNESCO, half carved into the rock, east of Yerevan.
- [ ] **Khor Virap.** The Ararat view, on the Turkish border.
- [ ] **Noravank.** Red-cliff gorge, the famous cliff-face stair.
- [ ] **Tatev.** Canyon-edge drama, the Wings of Tatev cable car.
- [ ] **Haghpat and Sanahin.** UNESCO twins in the northern canyon.

Dress modestly at all of them: covered shoulders and knees, and a scarf for women. Most are active places of worship.

Two or three a day is plenty before they blur. Pair a monastery with a canyon walk or a wine stop to break the rhythm.

GO DEEPER

The full list in religious landmarks and the wilder corners in off the beaten path.

Brandy, wine and the table

Ararat brandy, the oldest winery, and the long feast



Armenians drink to their history, and two things sit at the center of it. Brandy is the national pride: the Yerevan cognac houses have distilled it for over a century, and the tour and tasting at the Ararat or Noy factory is a fine afternoon. Wine is the older story. In 2007 archaeologists found the world's oldest known winery, six thousand years old, in the Areni-1 cave, and the modern Areni region has a lively cellar scene to match. All of it comes out at the table, where a long meal of shared plates and heartfelt toasts, led like the Georgian supra but in its own key, is the real way to meet the country.





Book the Ararat brandy factory tour ahead in Yerevan; the older-vintage tastings sell out. It is a proper sit-down, not a quick sip.

Stop at an Areni roadside cellar on the way south. The pomegranate and Areni reds are cheap, and the welcome is generous.

GO DEEPER

The wine village in Areni, the ancient winery in the Areni-1 cave, and the table in the culture page.

photos: Wikimedia Commons

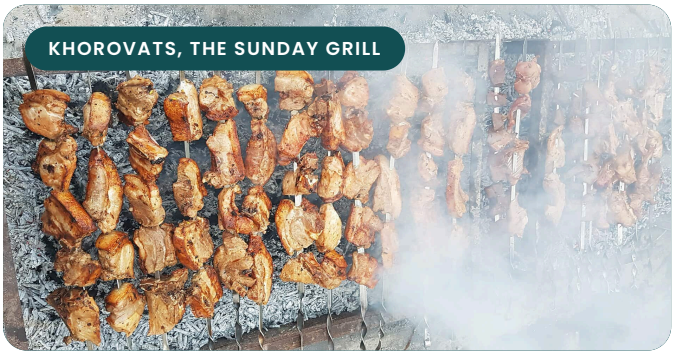
Food spotlight

grilled meat, flatbread and herbs, and what it costs

Armenian food is generous, herby and built around the grill and the tonir clay oven. Khorovats, the barbecue of marinated pork or lamb, is the Sunday centerpiece and a source of real national pride. Lavash, the thin flatbread baked on the oven wall, is a UNESCO tradition and comes with everything. Tolma wraps spiced meat and rice in grape or cabbage leaves. Below is what you will actually order, with typical restaurant prices.

DISH	WHAT IT IS	PRICE
Khorovats	Marinated grilled pork or lamb, the barbecue	USD 8-16
Tolma	Spiced meat and rice in grape or cabbage leaves	USD 5-10
Harissa	Slow-cooked wheat and chicken porridge	USD 5-9
Khash	Winter broth of trotters, a ritual breakfast	USD 6-13
Lavash and cheese	Fresh flatbread rolled with cheese and greens	USD 2-4
Gata	Sweet layered pastry with a coffee	USD 1-3

prices from the local-food-and-drinks dataset, captured 2026-06



KHOROVATS, THE SUNDAY GRILL



LAVASH FROM THE TONIR

See the full dish list with photos, regional variants and prices in the free food tool on pack-lightly.com.

Open What to Eat and Drink

Where to stay: Yerevan and Dilijan

prices per night, double room · the base and the north

Your most-used bases. In Yerevan, sleep near the Cascade or Republic Square to walk the center and the cafes. In Dilijan, the forest guesthouses do generous half board and put the woodland monasteries and trails on your doorstep. Book Yerevan ahead in summer; Dilijan you can usually sort a day out except on peak weekends.

Yerevan (center)

hostel 9 USD mid 35 USD comfort 90 USD

Central near the Cascade puts the museums, the fountains and the brandy bars on your doorstep. Check what a central room costs, or the hostel scene through Hostelworld.

Dilijan

guesthouse 12 USD mid 40 USD comfort 110 USD

Forest guesthouses with half board sit near the trails and the woodland monasteries. See what Dilijan is charging, or budget beds on Hostelworld.

Day tours to Garni, Geghard and Khor Virap fill up in summer; book the popular ones a day or two ahead.

See guided tours from Yerevan

Where to stay: Goris and Gyumri

prices per night, double room · the south and the second city

Two useful bases beyond the capital. Goris is the small, stone-built town everyone uses to reach Tatev and the cave village of Khndzoresk, with simple guesthouses and home cooking. Gyumri, the handsome second city, has boutique stays in its restored old mansions and makes a relaxed stop toward Georgia. Both are cheap and easy to book close to the day.

Goris (for Tatev)

guesthouse 10 USD mid 32 USD comfort 70 USD

Family guesthouses with home cooking, the base for Tatev and Khndzoresk. Check Goris rooms, or budget beds on Hostelworld.

Gyumri

hostel 10 USD mid 35 USD comfort 80 USD

Boutique stays in the restored tufa mansions of the old quarter. See what Gyumri is charging; hostels list on Hostelworld.

Mid-range and up across the country, with free cancellation while your plans are still moving.

Find Stays on Booking.com

04

Routes and itineraries

Eight ready-made trips by who you are and how long you have, a two-week loop from Yerevan, and the real map of how it joins up.

IN THIS CHAPTER

The route picker 23

Two weeks, days 1–7 24

Two weeks, days 8–14 25

The route on a map 26

The route picker

find the closest trip to yours, then adjust

Eight trips by traveler, length and budget. Totals are per person unless noted, on-the-ground costs excluding international flights, using this edition's prices.

SOLO · 6D · BACKPACKER

Yerevan and the day trips

USD 280 · hostels + shared taxis

- Yerevan 4
- Garni + Geghard
- Khor Virap + Echmiadzin

SOLO · 10D · MID

Capital plus the south

USD 720 · adds Tatev

- Yerevan + day trips 4
- Areni + Noravank
- Tatev + Goris 3

COUPLE · 10D · MID

The full circle

USD 1,500 for 2 · guesthouses + a driver

- Yerevan 4 · day trips
- Sevan + Dilijan 2
- Tatev + Goris 3

FAITH · 8D · MID

The monastery pilgrimage

USD 780 · the sacred sites

- Echmiadzin + Khor Virap
- Geghard + Sevanavank
- Noravank + Tatev

NATURE · 12D · MID

Lakes, forests and canyons

USD 1,100 · the green trip

- Dilijan forests 3
- Lake Sevan 2
- Tatev canyon + Goris 3

FAMILY · 9D · MID

Capital, cable car and lake

USD 2,300 · family of 4

- Yerevan 4: Cascade, museums
- Sevan swim 2
- Wings of Tatev day

TWO COUNTRIES · 21D · MID

Armenia into Georgia

USD 1,900 · the overland pair

- Yerevan + south
- North via Gyumri
- Cross to Tbilisi

WINTER · 7D · COMFORT

Ski and the city

USD 980 · Tsaghkadzor base

- Yerevan 3
- Tsaghkadzor ski 3
- Brandy and museums

Two weeks around Armenia

days 1-7 · the capital, the day trips, the north

The first week runs from Yerevan. Knock off the great day trips under Ararat, then loop north to Lake Sevan and the forests of Dilijan, keeping a rest day in the capital between the drives. Sort the day trips through a local operator or a shared taxi.

1	**Arrive Yerevan** EVN · day zero	Land, eSIM and cash, taxi to the center. Evening walk to Republic Square for the fountains and first khorovats.
2	**Yerevan** Cascade + museums	The Cascade, the Matenadaran manuscripts, and the Tsitsernakaberd memorial. Book the day trips and a brandy tour.
3	**Garni and Geghard** half day east	The Garni temple and gorge, then the rock-cut Geghard monastery. Warm lavash from the tonir in the village.
4	**Khor Virap and Echmiadzin** under Ararat	Early to Khor Virap for the Ararat view, then the mother cathedral at Echmiadzin and the Zvartnots ruins.
5	**To Lake Sevan** the high lake	North to the blue expanse of Sevan, the Sevanavank monastery on its peninsula, lake trout for lunch.
6	**Dilijan** forest monasteries	Over the pass to forested Dilijan, the Haghartsin and Goshavank monasteries, an easy woodland walk.
7	**Back to Yerevan** half day + rest	Return to the capital, a slow afternoon and the brandy bars. Repack for the long haul south.

Two weeks around Armenia

days 8-14 · the wine, the great monasteries, the way out

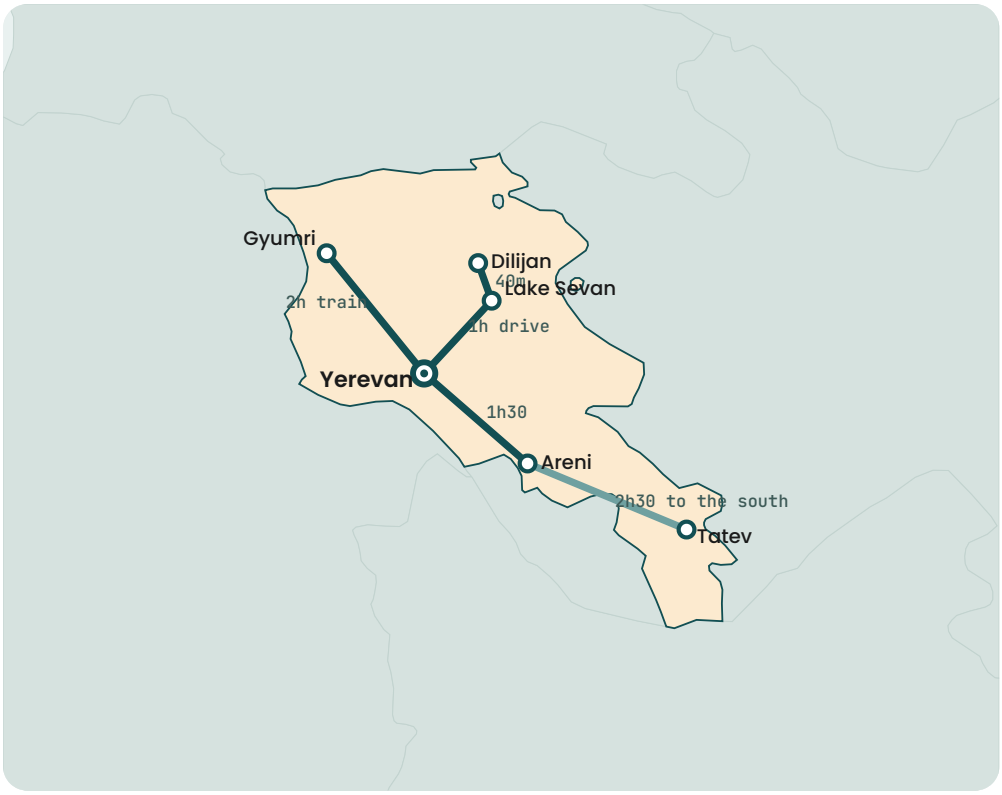
The second week is the south and, if you are combining countries, the exit north. Drop down through the Areni wine country to the cliffside monasteries around Goris, then either loop back to Yerevan or push north through Gyumri toward Georgia.

8	**To Areni** wine + red cliffs	South to the Areni wine village and the Areni-1 cave, then Noravank glowing in its red gorge. Cellar tasting to finish.
9	**On to Goris** the southern base	Continue south through the mountains to the stone town of Goris. Evening stroll and a home-cooked guesthouse dinner.
10	**Tatev** Wings of Tatev	The long cable-car glide to the canyon-edge monastery of Tatev, and the walk out to the swinging bridge at Khndzoresk.
11	**Back north** the long drive	The haul back toward the center, breaking the drive with a last roadside cellar or a mountain view.
12	**Gyumri** the second city	West to Gyumri and its restored tufa old town, a relaxed base and the last easy Armenian night.
13	**The Debed canyon** Haghpat + Sanahin	The UNESCO monasteries above the Debed, on the road that continues to the Georgian border.
14	**Depart or cross** Yerevan or Tbilisi	Fly home from Yerevan, or carry on overland into Georgia to pair the two countries in one trip.

The route on a map

a hub in Yerevan, loops north and south

Armenia is compact but slow, so the plan is a hub in Yerevan with a northern loop to the lakes and a southern loop to the great monasteries. The map shows the real shape: short distances on mountain roads, with Ararat sitting just over the sealed southwestern border.



05

When to go

The windows worth targeting in a country of hot lowlands and snowbound highlands, the festivals and the harvest to time, and what a day really costs.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Weather, crowds, price 28

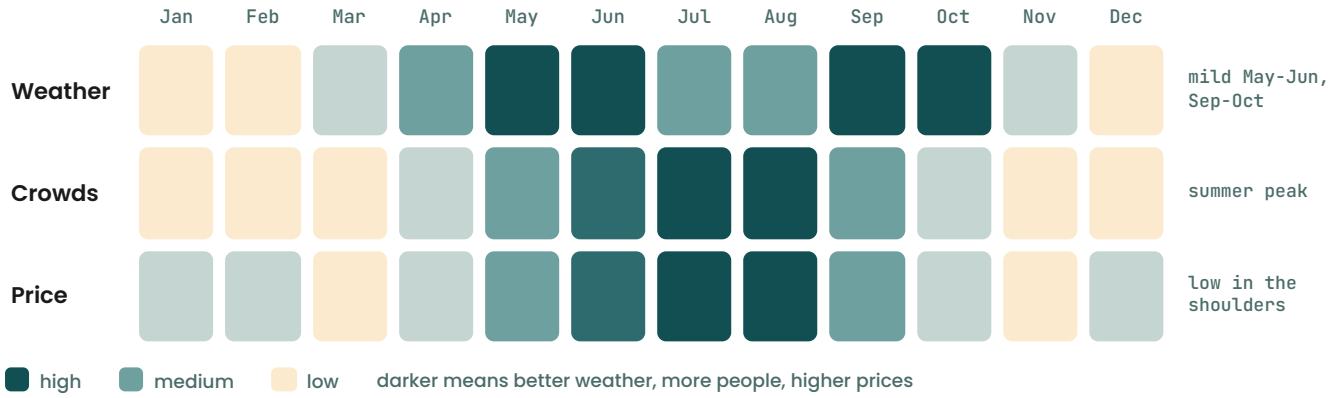
Festivals worth timing 29

What a day costs 30

Weather, crowds, price

12-month calendar · a high, dry, continental climate

Armenia is high and dry, with a sharp continental climate. Yerevan and the Ararat plain bake in July and August, when the heat pushes past 35 degrees, while the highlands stay cool. Winters are cold and the mountain passes to Tatev and the north can snow up. The sweet spots are late spring, May and June, when the country is green and the wildflowers are out, and September into October, when the heat breaks and the grape and fruit harvest fills the markets. Tsaghkadzor gives skiers a winter window.



source: best-travel-time dataset and country-comparison, captured 2026-06

July and August bake the Ararat plain. Escape the midday heat up at Sevan and Dilijan, which stay pleasant all summer.

Autumn is the sweet spot: warm days, clear Ararat views, and the fruit and grape harvest across the markets and cellars.

Festivals worth timing

the dates that change what you see



Most of the year is fine to visit, but a few dates transform a place or fill the guesthouses. The autumn harvest festivals are the ones to plan around; the Orthodox calendar and a couple of joyful summer customs are worth knowing about too.

THE CALENDAR

- [ ] **Areni Wine Festival, early October.** The wine village throws open its cellars for a day of tasting and music.
- [ ] **Vardavar, July.** A joyful summer water festival where everyone, tourists included, soaks everyone else.
- [ ] **Yerevan Wine Days, spring.** The capital's central streets fill with tasting stalls over a weekend.
- [ ] **Armenian Christmas, 6 January.** The main religious feast; churches full, deep winter.
- [ ] **Genocide Remembrance, 24 April.** A solemn national day; the march to Tsitsernakaberd.

GO DEEPER

Dates and closures in the public holidays page and the month-by-month picture in best travel time.

photo: Wikimedia Commons

What a day costs

three travel styles · printed the way the day spends it

Daily budgets hide in averages, so here is the day itemized instead: a bed, meals, getting around, one thing worth doing, and the drink at the end. Three real versions of the same day in Armenia, one of the cheapest trips in the region. Southern monastery drives and brandy tours sit on top of these.

A DAY IN ARMENIA

* backpacker *

hostel bed	9.00
bakery breakfast	2.00
lavash wrap lunch	3.00
guesthouse dinner	6.00
marshrutka + metro	1.50
monastery entry	2.00
a glass of Areni	1.50
TOTAL / DAY	**~25 USD**

country-comparison data · 2026-06

A DAY IN ARMENIA

* standard *

guesthouse double, half	18.00
cafe breakfast	4.00
restaurant lunch	7.00
khorovats dinner	11.00
shared taxi rides	4.00
day tour, split	8.00
brandy and extras	3.00
TOTAL / DAY	**~55 USD**

country-comparison data · 2026-06

A DAY IN ARMENIA

* comfort *

boutique double	60.00
hotel breakfast	incl.
restaurant lunch	12.00
dinner, good table	20.00
private driver, half day	18.00
tour or tasting	7.00
brandy and extras	3.00
TOTAL / DAY	**~120 USD**

country-comparison data · 2026-06

Run the same numbers for your own dates, group size and currency in the free budget calculator on pack-lightly.com.

Open the Budget Calculator

06

Practical

Entry, money, transport, eSIM, health, packing. The boring parts you only read once. Done right, you never think about them again.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Book in this order 32

Money and transport 33

Bed, bag, signal 34

Health basics 35

Book in this order

a few things before you fly · the rest on the ground

Armenia is an easy country to organise, and very little rewards planning ahead. Guesthouses, drivers, marshrutkas and tours are simple to sort once you arrive, and there is no visa to file for most travelers. The short list below is really just the flights, your first nights, and the admin that is cheaper done at home.

8 wk before

International flights

Most routes connect through Moscow, Istanbul, the Gulf or Vienna into Yerevan (EVN), with some direct low-cost flights from Europe. Fares soften six to eight weeks out.

Compare fares on Aviasales

4 wk before

Insurance + entry check

Buy travel insurance with medical evacuation, useful for the mountain drives and remote south. Then confirm entry: most nationalities enter visa-free for 180 days. Keep your passport valid well beyond your stay.

Check entry rules per passport

2 wk before

First nights + a driver

Book only your first two nights in Yerevan. If you want the south, line up a one or two-day driver for Tatev and Noravank; it beats the long marshrutka runs.

Book stays on Booking.com

1 wk before

eSIM

Install before departure, activate on arrival. 10 to 15 GB covers two weeks of maps, taxi apps and uploads, though a local SIM is dirt cheap for longer stays.

Set up a Saily eSIM

The Azerbaijan border is closed and there is no travel between the two. Enter and leave via Georgia, Iran or by air.

Cards cover Yerevan, but carry dram for marshrutkas, village guesthouses and monastery-town cafes, which are cash only.

Money and transport

cheap and cash-friendly · marshrutkas, shared taxis, apps

Armenia is cheap and largely cash-friendly. Cards and contactless work in Yerevan restaurants and hotels, but marshrutka minibuses, village guesthouses and rural cafes want dram, so keep small notes on you. ATMs are common in the towns. Getting around is the marshrutka and the shared taxi: cheap, frequent between the main towns, and leaving when full from the capital's bus stations. There are effectively no useful passenger trains inside the country, so the mountain roads are it, and the GG and Yandex apps run the honest city taxis.

ITEM	BACKPACKER	MID	COMFORT
Bed, hostel to boutique	USD 9	USD 40	USD 110
Meal out	USD 4	USD 10	USD 22
City taxi across town	USD 2	USD 3	USD 5
Marshrutka between towns	USD 2	USD 4	USD 7
Day driver, split	USD 15	USD 30	USD 70

verified 2026-06 · per-category detail in the budget guide

GETTING AROUND: WHAT BEATS WHAT

Marshrutkas and shared taxis are the backbone: cheap, and reaching every town, if you accept the squeeze and the leave-when-full timing. For the great sights the smart move is a hired driver for the day, especially in the far south, where a Tatev and Noravank loop is a long, tiring return by minibus. In Yerevan, the GG and Yandex apps replaced the taxi haggle, and the single metro line covers the center. Buses to Georgia and Iran run daily; compare cross-border options through 12Go.

THE FULL PICTURE

Cash and card detail in the currency rundown, the full cost model in budget saving, and driving notes in traffic.

Bed, bag, signal

hotels · packing · eSIM, the three solved problems

BED

For mid-range and up, Booking.com has the deepest inventory and free-cancellation options across Yerevan and the towns. For hostels and social stays in the capital, Hostelworld has the better review pool. In the regions, a family guesthouse in Dilijan or Goris, with home-cooked half board, beats any hotel for value.

BAG: THE LAYERED LIST

- [ ] Real layers: hot plains, cold highland nights
- [ ] A warm jacket even in summer for Sevan and the passes
- [ ] Sturdy walking shoes for monastery paths and canyons
- [ ] Sun hat, sunglasses, SPF 50; the high-altitude light is strong
- [ ] Rain shell for fast-changing mountain weather
- [ ] Modest layer: a scarf and covered knees for churches
- [ ] Refillable water bottle; tap water is safe in the towns
- [ ] Type C/F plug adapter, 220V
- [ ] A power bank for long marshrutka and driving days
- [ ] Some cash in small dram for rural stops

Signal. Install an eSIM before you fly and activate on arrival. A 10 to 15 GB plan covers two weeks. Local Viva or Ucom SIMs are very cheap for longer stays; bring your passport to register.

Set up a Saily eSIM

06

GO DEEPER The full season-by-season list in the packing list, what to wear in clothes, and plans compared in the eSIM write-up.

Health basics

six weeks out · most of this list is reassurance

Armenia is a low-drama health destination. There is no malaria, pharmacies are common in the towns, and the main risks come from the outdoors: altitude in the highlands, sun and heat in summer, and cold at height. Tap water is safe in the towns and excellent from mountain springs. The list below is everything that actually needs doing, in order.

THE SHORT LIST

- [ ] **Six weeks before:** travel-clinic visit. Confirm routine vaccines (MMR, DPT, flu) are current.
- [ ] **Recommended:** Hepatitis A and typhoid for a food-and-travel trip. Hep A is a two-shot series; start early.
- [ ] **Rabies:** stray dogs turn up in towns and near sites; consider the pre-exposure course for long rural trips.
- [ ] **Altitude:** Sevan and the southern passes sit high; go up gradually and drink plenty of water.
- [ ] **Water:** town tap water and mountain springs are safe; carry a bottle to refill.
- [ ] **Insurance:** medical cover with evacuation, essential for the remote south and mountain roads.

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Yerevan has the best private clinics, with English-speaking doctors; the regional towns cover the basics and serious cases go to the capital. Pharmacies (deghatun) handle stomach upsets, minor infections and altitude headaches over the counter. Dial 911 for the unified emergency line, which covers ambulance, police and fire; hotel reception is the fastest route to a doctor who speaks English.

06

READ ON The shot-by-shot schedule in the vaccinations breakdown, clinics in the hospitals page, and cover compared in the travel insurance rundown.

07

Safe and smart

Why Armenia is one of the safest trips in the region, the few things worth watching, the etiquette of the church and the table, and the language minimum.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Staying smart 37

Etiquette: do and do not 38

Language and emergencies 39

Staying smart

a very safe country, and the few things to watch

Armenia is one of the safest countries you can travel, with very low crime and a culture that treats guests with real warmth. Entry is a formality for most: get your stamp, stay up to 180 days, no registration to file. The things worth attention are ordinary and mostly about the roads, the closed borders, and a single sensitive subject.

WATCH 01

The taxi without a meter

Flagging a car on the street or taking an airport tout usually means a tourist price several times the going rate.

The fix: use the GG or Yandex app for a fixed, honest fare. Both work across Yerevan and at the airport.

WATCH 02

Mountain roads and driving

The real risk here is the road: fast overtaking, blind bends, and long slow passes to the south and north.

The fix: use marshrutkas and experienced local drivers for the mountain legs, and avoid night driving on rural roads.

WATCH 03

The closed borders

The Turkish and Azerbaijani borders are sealed, and the far southeastern frontier zones can be sensitive.

The fix: enter and exit via Georgia, Iran or by air, and check current advice before any travel near the eastern boundary.

BONUS

Stray dogs

Town street dogs are mostly docile, but packs near remote monasteries and villages can be territorial.

The fix: do not run from or feed rural dogs, carry a stick on remote trails, and know where the nearest clinic is.

MORE ON THE SITE

The full safety and entry picture in the safety breakdown and the rules in the visa page.

Etiquette: the short list

first four are load-bearing · the rest smooth the day

Eight things that matter. The first four cause real offense if you ignore them; the rest simply make you a welcome guest. Armenian hospitality is warm and insistent, and rooted in a deep sense of faith and family.

DO

Cover up in churches

Shoulders and knees covered; women a headscarf. It matters at every monastery.

DO NOT

Make light of the genocide

It sits at the center of identity. Approach it with respect, and listen more than you speak.

DO

Accept the hospitality

A refused coffee, fruit or toast can read as cold. Take a little, even when you are full.

DO NOT

Raise Azerbaijan or Karabakh lightly

The conflict and the 2023 loss are raw and recent. Let locals lead if the subject comes up.

DO

Honour the toast at the table

Meals come with heartfelt toasts. Join in, sip the brandy, and thank the host.

DO NOT

Turn your back to the altar

In an active church, leave facing the altar rather than turning straight around.

DO

Learn barev and shnorhakalutyun

Hello and thank you in Armenian land warmly. Merci also works for thanks.

DO NOT

Photograph people without asking

Especially elders and inside churches. A gesture and a smile usually gets a warm yes.

If a family invites you in, a small gift of sweets or something from home is a warm gesture, never expected.

A raised voice loses the room. Patience and a smile solve most snags; Armenians warm fast to a polite guest.

07

MORE ON THE SITE

Customs and hospitality in the culture page and what to wear in clothes.

Language and emergencies

a handful of words · the number to keep

Armenian is the state language, written in its own alphabet, and unrelated to anything nearby. Russian is widely understood, especially by older people, and English is common among the young and in tourism. A few words of Armenian, even badly pronounced, open doors here.

THE EIGHT WORDS THAT HELP

ENGLISH	ARMENIAN	SAY IT
Hello	barev	bah-REV
Thank you	shnorhakalutyun	shnor-ha-ka-lu-TYUN
Yes / No	ayo / voch	ah-YO / votch
How much?	inch arje?	inch ar-JE
Water	jur	joor
Delicious	hamov	hah-MOV
Cheers	kenatst	keh-NATS
Sorry	knerek	kneh-REK

UNIFIED	AMBULANCE	POLICE	FIRE
911	103	102	101

GO DEEPER

More phrases and the alphabet in the language page.

08

Tools and reference

The live tools this guide was built from, the cut-out cards for your wallet, and the sources behind every number.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Take the live tools with you 41

Print cards: cut, fold, take 42

Sources and methodology 43

A note on the links 45

Take the live tools with you

scan to open · data updates after this PDF was printed

This guide is a snapshot; the tools behind it keep updating. Scan a code or type the short URL. Each one is preloaded with the same Armenia data this guide was built from.



Trip Budget Calculator

Armenia: 25 USD/day backpacker, 120 USD/day comfort.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/budget-calculator/



Country Map

Yerevan, the monasteries, the lakes and the south, mapped.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/country-map/



Best Time to Travel

Best: May-June and September-October. Month by month.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/best-travel-time-worldmap/



What to Eat and Drink

Khorovats, lavash, tolma and more, with prices.

pack-lightly.com/
tool/local-food-and-drinks/

Print cards: cut, fold, take

print at 100% scale · credit-card size, 85 x 54 mm

Print this page on A4 or US Letter at 100 percent (no fit-to-page), cut along the dashed lines, and the two cards live in your wallet for the trip. The form fields are interactive in Acrobat and iOS Preview if you would rather type than write.

ARMENIAN · ESSENTIALS

Hello	barev
Thank you	shnorhakalutyun
Yes / No	ayo / voch
How much?	inch arje?
Water	jur
Cheers	kenatst
Delicious	hamov
Sorry	knerek

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EMERGENCY · ARMENIA

Unified	911
Ambulance	103
Police	102
Fire	101
Currency	AMD (dram)

My hotel: _____

Address: _____

Insurance #: _____

Left card front, right card back: print double-sided on the short edge and they fold into one.

Lost the guide, kept the card? The QR opens the live Armenia hub with every page this guide links to, plus updates published after this edition.

pack-lightly.com/armenia/

Photograph both cards before you cut. A phone copy of the emergency card still works when the wallet is at the hotel.

Save the GG taxi app and an offline map of Yerevan too. Between them they cover taxis and getting around the center.

Sources and methodology

every number traces to a dated source



WRITTEN BY

Wouter van Kemenade

Founder of Pack Lightly. Twenty-plus countries on the ground, data-led travel writing with a performance-marketing background. Every number in this guide is verified against a source listed below; if a price moves more than 15 percent, the next edition flags it.

SOURCES USED IN THIS EDITION

1. Hotel and hostel pricing: Booking and Hostelworld snapshot 2026-06, Yerevan, Dilijan, Goris and Gyumri centers.
2. Currency rates: ECB and open reference rates, 2026-06.
3. Visa policy: Armenia government guidance (mfa.am), retrieved 2026-05-15.
4. Daily-cost model: Pack Lightly country-comparison dataset, captured 2026-06.
5. Travel advisories: FCDO and US State Department, last checked 2026-06.
6. Climate and seasons: best-travel-time dataset and 10-year averages, captured 2026-06.
7. Pack Lightly Armenia cluster pages, retrieved 2026-07: visa · budget · safety · best travel time · eSIM

Methodology. Pack Lightly's country scores aggregate eleven dimensions into the 0-100 scorecard on page 5, re-scored on a regular cycle. Budget figures come from the country-comparison and budget-calculator datasets, climate verdicts from the best-travel-time dataset, both stamped with their capture date where they appear.

What changed in edition 2026.07: first release of the Armenia guide on the v2 design standard. Next planned update: January 2027. Not covered in depth here: winter ski logistics at Tsaghkadzor, the remote Syunik and Vayots Dzor backcountry, and long-distance Transcaucasian Trail hiking, which are specialist trips of their own.

Photo credits. Every photograph is sourced from Wikimedia Commons under a Creative Commons or public-domain license. The full per-image list, with each photographer and license, is on the next page. The cover shows Khor Virap monastery below Mount Ararat.

Image credits

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1. **Armenian brandy barrels in the Yerevan**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0.
2. **Armenian khorovats barbecue**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
3. **Armenian tolma, stuffed grape leaves**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
4. **Dilijan forested mountains**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
5. **Garni Greco-Roman colonnaded temple**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
6. **Geghard monastery carved into the cliff**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
7. **Gyumri old town, black tufa architecture**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
8. **Khor Virap monastery**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
9. **Khor Virap monastery and Mount Ararat**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
10. **Lavash bread baking in a tonir**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
11. **Noravank monastery against red-rock cliffs**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
12. **Republic Square, Yerevan**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
13. **Sevanavank monastery**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
14. **Tatev Monastery**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
15. **Vineyards in Vayots Dzor wine region**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.
16. **Wings of Tatev aerial cable car**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.
17. **Yerevan Cascade stone stairway complex**. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Tour data and prices: Viator Partner API, captured July 2026. Author portrait and brand marks: Pack Lightly.

A note on the links in this guide

disclosure · why this guide is free

This guide is free because some of the booking links inside it are affiliate links. When a reader books a stay, a transport leg, or an eSIM through one of those links, the merchant pays Pack Lightly. The reader pays the same price either way.

A hotel area or a transport platform is chosen for the trip it makes, and where a partner link exists for it that link is used; where none does, the plain link still points there. An overrated sight is still called overrated, and a cheaper option that beats the famous one keeps the slot. The commission funds the guide; it does not choose what goes in it.

Questions, corrections, or a place you tested that belongs in the next edition: write to hello@pack-lightly.com.

Partners linked in this edition: **Aviasales** · **Booking.com** · **12Go** · **Saily** · **Hostelworld** · **Stay22** · **GetYourGuide** · via **Travelpayouts**

Links can outlive a print run. If one stops working, the live version of every page in this guide sits under pack-lightly.com/armenia.

This file is versioned; the edition is on the cover. The next planned update lands January 2027 and replaces this file at the same download.